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**“Continued interest in the  
Appalachian migrant is not warranted”:  
Appalachian out-migrants in the larger southern exodus,  
1940-1980\***

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Many beliefs were expressed in Phase I of this project advancing the uniqueness of the Appalachian migrant residing in Indianapolis. These beliefs, although popular among much of the local population, were not substantiated.

Persons from Appalachia proper do not appear in particularly large numbers. . . and those who do reside here do not differ from others with southern backgrounds. . . Due to the apparent lack of any concentrated Appalachian areas or "pockets" within the city, and the lack of positive findings supporting the uniqueness of the Appalachian in terms of his mobility and length of stay in the city, continued interest in the Appalachian migrant is not warranted.

--Research report of the Community Service  
Council of Metropolitan Indianapolis, 1970<sup>1</sup>

Even as southern Appalachian migrants began to actively assert a group identity in some northern cities in the late 1960s, it was an open question as to whether they ought to be considered a group at all. In the years since the 1960s, the fate of southern Appalachian migrants in the North and Midwest has continued to be the subject of much debate. A flurry of sociological work in the 1970s and 1980s suggested that southern Appalachian migrants to the North encountered extreme hardship that demanded special attention and services. That work both drew from and informed numerous local policy studies. More recent work focusing on southern white out-migration as a whole has sharply challenged the core findings of much of the scholarly work from the 1970s and 1980s, arguing that most southern white migrants moved with relative ease into the North's most coveted skilled blue-collar and white-collar occupations.<sup>2</sup>

In the most broad-ranging and potentially influential statement on the subject to date, James N. Gregory's forthcoming book on the Southern Diaspora devotes an

important chapter to the debate. Gregory argues that "the idea that white southern migrants have suffered high rates of poverty and difficulty is so ingrained that it needs to be confronted head on."<sup>3</sup> Echoing the findings of his own *Journal of American History* article, Chad Berry's recent book, and an undercurrent of the older work on the topic, Gregory attributes the early sociological works' focus on hardship to "geographic confusion."<sup>4</sup> In short, early studies that focused on migrants in highly impoverished neighborhoods (like Chicago's Uptown or Cincinnati's Lower Price Hill) or down-and-out rural areas (like the San Joaquin Valley in California) found--big surprise--a great deal of migrant poverty. The catch, as Gregory sees it, is that most southern white migrants did not live in Uptown, Lower Price Hill, or the San Joaquin Valley. Most lived in the suburbs, quietly, and most were doing quite well.

Scholars of Appalachia and the U.S. South ought to be concerned about a different sort of geographic confusion. Namely, at what point did "southern" and "Appalachian" come to mean the same thing? While the earlier works' focus on migrant hardship most often consisted of myopic case studies of *Appalachian* migrants in particular cities and neighborhoods, the later works have the equally troubling problem of focusing on *all southern white* migrants in the North and Midwest. Whatever the relative merits of each approach, the unfortunate fact is that the two groups of studies do not speak to one another; they operate on different planes. What both approaches have lacked is a region-wide analysis that distinguishes Appalachian migrants from other southern white migrants in the North. How did Appalachian migrants figure in the larger southern white out-migration? Were migrants from the southern Appalachians any worse off than other southerners in the North and Midwest? With the exception of the

occasional study focusing on a given neighborhood or city at one point in time, nobody knows.<sup>5</sup> Focusing on the five industrial midwestern states where most Appalachian migrants went during the main period of southern white out-migration--from 1940 through 1980--this article uses individual-level census data to speak to these questions.<sup>6</sup>

In focusing on the different ways that social scientists have defined the movers in one of the largest mass migrations in American history, this article also seeks to offer a cautionary tale to the broader study of internal migrations around the world. The vast majority of migration studies rely in one way or another on administrative boundaries to determine who is a migrant and who is not. While studies of international migration often use national or even continental borders, studies of internal migration must rely on the far more woolly boundaries defined by groups of regions, states, counties, or other civil divisions. Scholars of internal migration are especially obliged to make the case that the boundaries they choose to work with have cultural meaning, or that the group of people crossing them share some common experience that is worthy of study. This article suggests that the apparently contrasting findings of two generations of scholarship on southern white and Appalachian out-migration can partly be explained by researchers' shifting choices about which set of internal boundaries to privilege.

### **Identifying Appalachians in the Great Migration**

The most broad-ranging studies of southern and Appalachian outmigration have always relied on various forms of census data to identify and characterize the migrants. From the 1940 census onward, respondents have been asked to provide their town and county of residence 5 years prior to the census. Using various versions of these data,

researchers have identified migrants who moved from southern states or Appalachian counties within the 5 years leading up to each census. Of course, focusing on *recent* migrants may not always tell researchers exactly what they would like to know--the amount of time spent at the destination might have made a big difference in the migrants' adjustments. A comparison between short-term migrants and long-term migrants could speak directly to this issue.

Studies of internal migration within the United States have often used information on state of birth in conjunction with information on place of residence 5 years prior to the census to identify separate groups of "recent" and "long term" migrants. In the context of Appalachian outmigration, that would mean identifying two groups of migrants to the Midwest: "recent" migrants who were born in Appalachia and lived in Appalachia five years before the census was taken, and "long term" migrants who were born in Appalachia and lived in the Midwest five years before the census was taken. Since the Appalachian region is defined by a set of counties that cuts across state lines, however, we cannot identify Appalachian *counties* from the census question on *state* of birth. Thus, like most previous census-based research on Appalachian migrants in the Midwest, this analysis focuses only on "recent" migrants who were born in a southern state and moved north within the 5 years leading up to each census.<sup>7</sup> These are the only migrants who we can clearly identify as coming from either Appalachian or non-Appalachian areas in the South.

Most of the previous broad quantitative studies of Appalachian outmigration have relied on the Census Bureau's published county-to-county migration totals. Produced from 1940 onwards, these books (and later datasets) report the number of persons moving

between every pair of counties in the 5 years leading up to each census. With a bit of reformatting--and a great deal of data entry before the information was released in datasets beginning with the 1980 census--it is a fairly straightforward matter to produce totals for those leaving Appalachia for each northern city. Beginning in 1990, these data reveal not only the number of migrants moving between counties, but the aggregate characteristics of the migrants, as well. Researchers have made good use of information on migrant characteristics in explaining recent trends in migration within and out of the Appalachian region.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, the Census Bureau's published migration data are not useful for studying the characteristics of migrants during the heyday of the outmigration, between 1940 and 1980. During this period, the only broad source of information on the migrants themselves comes from the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS), which are a set of one- and five-percent samples of the censuses from 1940-2000. The Census Bureau created the PUMS files specifically for the study of research questions left unanswered by published census reports. The various PUMS samples from 1940-2000 were originally released as more than a dozen separate datasets, each with its own conventions. Researchers at the University of Minnesota have integrated the PUMS of 1940-2000 with one another and with similar samples drawn from the 1850-1930 censuses. For the purposes of studying Appalachian migration, these integrated PUMS files (known as the IPUMS) allow us to identify southern-born Appalachians and non-Appalachians who moved to the Midwest between 1935-1940 and 1975-1980, providing a perspective from both the beginning and end of the period of mass out-migration.<sup>9</sup>

## **Definitions of Appalachia**

The key studies of Appalachian outmigration have used a variety of definitions for the region. Just like definitions of the South, definitions of southern Appalachia inevitably group areas of great economic and cultural diversity. There are no clear regional boundaries; the counties and even states included in the region vary from one definition to another. Rather than trying to make an argument for the best definition before the fact, this article employs two definitions of southern Appalachia that have both been used extensively by scholars and policy makers. These include the broad definition currently endorsed by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and a more narrow definition developed by the Southern Appalachian Studies group (SAS).<sup>10</sup> In the most general terms, the ARC definition is a political boundary that has come to encompass many fringe areas, while the SAS definition attempts to be closer to what most people would consider a "region." Using the census microdata files, it is possible to identify residents of both the ARC and SAS delineations of Appalachia as well as each delineation's outmigrants to the Midwest.

The ARC and SAS definitions of Appalachia differ considerably (see Map 1). The ARC's version of Appalachia was developed in 1965 in order to identify the new governmental organization's primary service area. The ARC's Appalachia came to encompass a sprawling area including not only mountains, but foothills, their adjacent counties, and in many cases counties far into the lowlands (including a large part of Mississippi, which has a peak elevation of 806 feet). By the ARC's definition, the area includes all of West Virginia and parts of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina,

South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. So defined, the ARC's southern Appalachian states together contain 315 counties covering 138,000 square miles. In 1980, the area included just over 11 million people.

**[MAP 1 ABOUT HERE]**

The SAS-defined region, developed in the late 1950s as part of a collaborative research project funded by the Ford Foundation, was much more of a self-conscious attempt to identify a true "region" of social and economic coherence. Of course, even the SAS definition includes a diversity of areas that are differently integrated with one another and with the rest country. The SAS group's definition follows along roughly the same contours as the ARC Appalachia, though it excludes a handful of counties in most states and all counties in South Carolina and Mississippi. SAS Appalachia includes 190 counties and 80,000 square miles. About 6 million people lived in the SAS-defined Appalachia in 1980.

Both delineations of Appalachia can be identified in the IPUMS files with an acceptable degree of precision, though the process is somewhat complicated by the ways in which of geographic areas are classified in the public use microdata. The IPUMS files are based on confidential data, and the Census Bureau restricts the geographic information available on each case to ensure that no respondent's identity can be determined. The data groups proximate counties into single units containing at least 100,000 people. The most detailed level of geography in the 1940 file are groups of counties known as "State Economic Areas." The similar concept in the 1980 file is the "County Group."<sup>11</sup> Most 1940 State Economic Areas are not coterminous with 1980 County Groups, and neither system overlays exactly onto the counties included in the

ARC and SAS definitions of Appalachia. State Economic Areas and County Groups on the fringes of Appalachia often include a combination of Appalachian and non-Appalachian counties. In these cases, I classified a group of counties as Appalachian if the majority of its area was within Appalachia. Using this system, the region ultimately identified as Appalachian was quite similar between 1940 and 1980. Maps 2 and 3 show how the public use census files were capable of identifying the ARC and SAS definitions of Appalachia in 1940 and 1980.

**[MAPS 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE]**

### **Appalachian migrants in the broader southern white exodus**

Using the broad ARC definition of Appalachia, approximately a fifth of all southerners and a quarter of southern whites lived in Appalachia during the mid-twentieth century. Table 1 shows how Appalachia's place in the larger southern population varied over time. Regardless of which definition is employed, the proportion of southerners living in Appalachia decreased significantly between 1940 and 1980. The relative decline of the southern Appalachian population was partly due to Appalachian outmigration, though it also reflected the significant movement of Appalachian southerners and other Americans to the prospering regions of the non-Appalachian South, Appalachia's declining birth rate, and a variety of other factors that have been well-explored elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> By 1980, fewer than a sixth of all southerners and a fifth of all southern whites lived in even the broadest geographical definition of Appalachia.

**[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]**

Even though Appalachians were a relatively small segment of the southern white population, they were overrepresented among mid-twentieth century migrants to the Midwest. As can be seen in Table 2, about a third of southerners moving north during the 1935-40 period came from the ARC-defined area of Appalachia, while less than a quarter of all southerners lived in the same area at that time. The over-representation of Appalachian migrants was also evident for both blacks and whites during 1980, regardless of which definition of Appalachia is employed. Those Appalachian migrants who did move north were most often from Kentucky and West Virginia. While just over a quarter of southern Appalachian whites lived in Kentucky and West Virginia in 1980 (using the ARC definition), more than 70% of the Appalachian stream to the Midwest came from these states.<sup>13</sup>

**[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]**

In every way the census is capable of measuring, Appalachian white out-migrants were disadvantaged relative to other southern white migrants in the Midwest. In both 1940 and 1980, working-age male migrants from southern Appalachia had high higher rates of unemployment, and had lower incomes and lower status jobs when they did work (see Table 3). Adult Appalachian migrants of both sexes had lower levels of education than did other southern white migrants. Appalachian migrants were also more likely to live in female-headed households, and--not coincidentally--they had significantly lower median household incomes. Regardless of which definition of Appalachian is used, these tendencies persisted over the main decades of the Great Migration.

**[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]**

Poverty rates (available only in the 1980 data) are perhaps the most telling measure of migrant families' overall economic distress in the Midwest. Originally developed by the Social Security Administration in 1964 and subsequently revised in 1969 and 1980, poverty thresholds account for the size of a household, the number of children present, and the age of the household head.<sup>14</sup> Using this measure, about 21% of Appalachian-headed households were in poverty in 1980, compared with 12% of households headed by non-Appalachian southern migrants (using the SAS definition of Appalachia). The poverty differences between Appalachian and non-Appalachian southern migrants were substantial and statistically meaningful regardless of which definition of Appalachia is used.

The economic distress of Appalachian migrants is even more evident when the focus is narrowed to particular subgroups, such as those living in cities or those coming from Appalachian Kentucky and West Virginia. About a quarter of those moving from Appalachian Kentucky and West Virginia lived in poverty in the Midwest, as did 30% of Appalachians who moved to midwestern cities of 200,000 or more. Fully one-third of Appalachians who came from West Virginia or Kentucky *and* resided in a large northern city lived in poverty in 1980.<sup>15</sup> Given the fact that many of the earlier studies of Appalachian migrants focused on cities that received most of their Appalachian migrants from Kentucky and West Virginia, it becomes easier to understand the genesis of the old portrait of the down-and-out Appalachian migrant. Some of the older studies can certainly be faulted for their attempts to generalize from a given neighborhood or city to all Appalachian white migrants in the Midwest. Even so, the data presented here should

caution us against forgetting the story those studies told. Urban Appalachian migrants experienced significant and widespread economic hardship in the Midwest.

As bad as things clearly were for some groups of Appalachian migrants to the Midwest, comparing their experiences with southern blacks and other immigrant groups provides a reality check of sorts. Table 4 shows the poverty rates for migrant-headed households and the median wage incomes for working-aged men from various recent migrant groups to the Midwest in 1980. As this table makes clear, southern white migrants of both Appalachian and non-Appalachian backgrounds fared better than most other migrant groups to the Midwest. At the same time, the comparison of southern migrants with black and international migrants offers some perspective on how to interpret the magnitude of the differences between Appalachian and non-Appalachian whites.

With a poverty rate of 12%, households headed by white migrants from the non-Appalachian South fared about as well as those headed by recent migrants from Canada and Western Europe. For this sizeable subgroup of southerners, the newer literature's story of quick ascension into the middle class is almost surely accurate. Appalachian white migrants' poverty rate of 21% placed them more in the range of immigrants from Korea and South America, though still well above southern African-American migrants. With poverty rates around 30%, Appalachian migrants in large cities were economically on par with southern blacks, as well as newcomers from Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Vietnam. Neither southern blacks nor the most impoverished Appalachian subgroups approached the poverty levels of immigrants from China, Africa, and Puerto Rico. Male wage incomes tell a similar story: Appalachian white migrants earned incomes similar to

those of many major international immigrant groups, though still slightly above those of southern blacks and the most impoverished of the international immigrant groups.

Appalachian white migrants in large cities, in the other hand, had incomes that were even lower than those of southern blacks and almost all of the major international immigrant groups.

**[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]**

### **Understanding Appalachian poverty in the Midwest**

These findings should not be altogether surprising. Appalachian migrants were disadvantaged relative to other southern white migrants along just about every dimension that is generally thought to contribute to economic well-being. Perhaps the most obvious reason that Appalachian migrants were worse off than other southerners in the Midwest was that they were much more likely to have come from the poorest and most rural areas of the South. In the South, about 1-in-7 southern Appalachian whites were in poverty in 1980 (using either definition of Appalachia), compared with about 1-in-10 southern whites in general.<sup>16</sup> At the simplest level, migrants from one of the nation's most impoverished regions were themselves especially impoverished in the Midwest. Yet Appalachian out-migrants were actually worse off than Appalachians as whole, largely because the Appalachian migration to the Midwest drew from the poorest parts of the Appalachian region. As Map 4 shows, the central Appalachian coalfields of Kentucky and West Virginia were the heart of Appalachian poverty as well as the main sending regions in the Appalachian migration to the Midwest. Not only were Appalachians over-

represented among southerners in the Great Migration, the poorest parts of Appalachia were heavily over-represented in the Appalachian out-migration itself.

**[MAP 4 ABOUT HERE]**

There were a variety of other causes for Appalachian migrants' relative lack of success on the job market and higher rate of poverty in the Midwest. Appalachians were younger and less educated than other southern migrants. Among adult men with full-time jobs in the Midwest, Appalachian migrants were about a year younger and had about a year and a half less education than migrants from the non-Appalachian South.

Appalachian migrants were slightly more likely to live in female-headed households than were other southern migrants, and female-headed households had triple the poverty rate of male headed households. Finally, Appalachian migrants were also more likely to move to non-metropolitan areas in the Midwest: a quarter of Appalachian migrants lived in non-metropolitan areas, compared with a fifth of non-Appalachian southern migrants.<sup>17</sup> Southern white migrants to the non-metropolitan Midwest had a median male wage income that was about 25% lower and a poverty rate that was almost 50% higher than was the case among those in metropolitan areas (which include both big cities and their suburbs).<sup>18</sup>

Since most of the factors contributing to Appalachian poverty in the Midwest were inter-related, it is difficult to be confident that Appalachian status itself meant anything concrete for migrant adjustment in the Midwest. For instance, migrants from across the rural South were younger and less educated than those who moved north from the urban South. It is possible that Appalachian migrants' characteristics were simply about being rural southerners, rather than about being from the Appalachian region in

particular. Alternatively, Appalachian migrants' apparent poverty may have been chiefly explained by their tendency to move to the rural Midwest, where most people earned less money and experienced higher rates of poverty. Again, Appalachian background may have been beside the point, except for the fact that Appalachians were more likely to choose destinations in the rural Midwest.

The regression analyses in Table 5 allow us to consider the extent to which the variety of factors contributed to Appalachian migrant incomes and poverty, and--controlling for various characteristics--whether there was anything uniquely Appalachian about Appalachian poverty in the Midwest. The first model seeks to explain the logged wage income of migrant men aged 25-59 working in full-time jobs.<sup>19</sup> The second model seeks to explain the poverty status of migrant-headed households. Both models control for age, educational attainment, metropolitan status before leaving the South, and metropolitan status in the Midwest. The model explaining poverty status additionally controls for the gender of the household head.<sup>20</sup>

In the first model presented in Table 5, the key determinants of male wage income (logged) were age, years of schooling, and metropolitan status in the Midwest. These variables' coefficients were all statistically significant in the model. The age variable's coefficient of 0.023 suggests that each year of age was associated with a 2.3% increase in wage income, controlling for other factors. Each year of schooling for the household head was associated with a 6.5% increase in wage income. Living in a northern metropolitan area (as opposed to a non-metropolitan area) was associated with a 22% increase in wage income. When controlling for all of these factors, neither Appalachian

status nor prior residence in the rural South helped to explain male migrants' wage income.

The second model in Table 5 seeks to explain recent southern migrants' poverty status; the results are similar to those produced in the first model. Age, education, and gender of the household head were all statistically significant predictors of poverty status, as was residence in the metropolitan Midwest. Since poverty status is a dichotomous variable (people were either in poverty or not), the coefficients in this model are presented as odds ratios. For instance, each year of schooling for the household head meant that the household was 1.25 times more likely to live above the poverty level, controlling for other factors. Households headed by a man were 4.2 times more likely to be out of poverty than female-headed households. Households in metropolitan areas were 1.6 times more likely to be out of poverty than were those in non-metropolitan areas. These factors do not explain all of the variation in southern migrants' income and poverty; there were surely other important variables contributing to southern migrant poverty in the Midwest as well. What is important here is even when taking only these factors into account, Appalachian and rural background themselves do not independently contribute to our understanding of southern migrant poverty in the Midwest.

**[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]**

It is important to note that these models do not challenge the idea that Appalachian migrants had distinctive and disadvantaged socioeconomic experiences in the Midwest. They clearly did. What these models suggest is that the essential determinants of southern white migrants' economic experiences in the Midwest were age, education, the gender of the household head, and whether or not the migrants lived in a

metropolitan area. Appalachian status was associated with higher rates of poverty in the Midwest *because* it was so tightly coupled with these key factors contributing to economic well-being. There is no doubt that Appalachian migrants did significantly worse than other southerners in the Midwest. The models presented here help us to understand why that was the case.

## **Conclusion**

Migrants from the southern Appalachian region were clearly a group apart in the broader southern white exodus. In socioeconomic terms, Appalachian migrants looked like international immigrants from all over the world. If non-Appalachian southerners most closely resembled migrants from Canada and Western Europe, Appalachian migrants' economic experiences were more like those of migrants from Korea, South America, and Eastern Europe. In great contrast to the overwhelmingly successful southern white migrants portrayed in some recent historical studies, migrants from the Appalachian South seem to have been just as much at risk as nearly any other group of newcomers short of southern African-Americans and the most impoverished international immigrant groups.

It is not difficult to understand how the recent literature on southern white migration to the Midwest has come to de-emphasize the experiences of Appalachian white outmigrants. Most southern white migrants to the Midwest were not from Appalachia. When Appalachians are grouped together with all southern white migrants, the overall portrait of "the southern migrant" looks extremely positive. Still, even if scholars choose to cast the net wide and focus on all southern out-migrants, the older

portrait of "the Appalachian migrant" should not get lost. Numerous studies have made the case that groups of migrants from the southern Appalachian region fostered a meaningful group identity in the Midwest. Even as recently as the 2000 census, thousands of individuals reported having Appalachian ancestry, and the majority of these "Appalachians" lived in the industrial Midwest.<sup>21</sup> In other words, if a distinctive Appalachian identity ever existed anywhere, it was probably among migrants in the Midwest. It should not be surprising to learn that these southerners shared identifiably distinctive experiences in their migration.

Studies of internal migration are particularly burdened with the basic but critical issue of deciding who should and should not be considered a migrant. In the case of twentieth-century white migration out of the U.S. South, acknowledging the particular experiences of Appalachian migrants helps to reconcile two streams of scholarly literature that appeared to arrive at very different conclusions. More generally, as is true in any study of internal migration, our decisions about which types of mobility to focus on have consequences for how we understand migration and how we understand our own history. We must choose our boundaries carefully, and we must remain sensitive to the experiences of migrants from potentially meaningful sub-regions that could affect our interpretation of the overall story that we are trying to tell.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The Appalachian In Indianapolis, Phase I: Summary of Background Interviews and Phase II: Survey of Selected Schools Within the Indianapolis Public School System," December 1970. Located in the Community Service Council Historical File, United Way of Central Indiana Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana, pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> For early sociological works on Appalachian migrants in the Midwest, William W. Philliber and Clyde B. McCoy, eds., with Harry C. Dillingham, *The Invisible Minority: Urban Appalachians* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981); William W. Philliber, *Appalachian Migrants in Urban America: Cultural Conflict or Ethnic Group Formation?* (New York: Praeger, 1981); and Kathryn M. Borman and Phillip J. Obermiller, *From Mountain to Metropolis: Appalachian Migrants in American Cities* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1994). For more recent considerations of this literature, see Chad Berry, *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); James N. Gregory, "The Southern Diaspora and Urban Dispossessed," *Journal of American History* (June 1995): 111-134.; Phillip J. Obermiller, Thomas E. Wagner, and E. Bruce Tucker, eds., *Appalachian Odyssey: Historical Perspectives on the Great Migration* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), forthcoming, citation from draft manuscript provided to the author by James N. Gregory.

<sup>4</sup> See Gregory, "Southern Diaspora and Urban Dispossessed"; and Berry, *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles*. Two important chapters from Jacqueline Jones's *The Dispossessed* fall somewhere between the older and newer literatures, both methodologically and substantively. Jones has an explicit focus on Appalachian migrants, though her discussion of southern white migrants' lives in the Midwest draws on the experiences of whites from across the South. In terms of her overall argument, Jones makes extensive use of the journalism and scholarly work emphasizing migrant hardship, but ultimately argues that white migrants' race was the usually the ultimate advantage in the northern economy, even for the most unprepared Appalachian migrants. Several of the earlier works on Appalachian outmigration also emphasized the extent to which Appalachian white migrants successfully avoided urban ghetto life. See Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: America's Underclass from the Civil War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); John D. Photiadis, *Social and Sociopsychological Characteristics of West Virginians in Their Own State and in Cleveland, Ohio* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginian University Appalachian Center, 1970); and Harry K. Schwarzweller, James S. Brown, and J. J. Mangalam, *Mountain Families in Transition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Several studies have estimated the volume of Appalachian out-migration in the mid-twentieth century, but none have examined migrants' socioeconomic characteristics. Phillip Obermiller and Steven Howe's work on the 1985-2000 period, on the other hand, does consider the socioeconomic characteristics of Appalachian out-migrants. Obermiller and Howe's focus is not on migration to the North or Midwest, however, and they do not compare the experiences of Appalachian out-migrants with other southern

white out-migrants. See James S. Brown and George A. Hillary, Jr., "The Great Migration, 1940-1960," pp. 54-78 in Thomas R. Ford, ed., *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962); Clyde B. McCoy and James S. Brown, "Appalachian Migration to Midwestern Cities," pp. 35-78 in *The Invisible Minority*; Phillip J. Obermiller and Steven Howe, "New Paths and Patterns of Appalachian Migration, 1975-1990," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* (Fall 2001): 331-348; and Phillip J. Obermiller and Steven R. Howe, "Moving Mountains: Appalachian Migration Patterns, 1995-2000," *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, forthcoming, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> In this paper I focus exclusively on the migrants in the Census Bureau's East North Central division (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin), which I also refer to as the Midwest. States in the East North Central region were by far the most significant non-southern destinations for Appalachian out-migrants, and nearly all studies of southern white migration have focused on this subregion as a whole or on a city within it. A focus on these states allows for a more direct comparison with earlier studies. See, for instance, Berry *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles*; Gregory, "Southern Diaspora and Urban Dispossessed"; Jones, *The Dispossessed*; McCoy and Brown, "Appalachian Migration to Midwestern Cities"; and Borman and Obermiller, *From Mountain to Metropolis*.

<sup>7</sup> I have further restricted the analysis to migrants who were born in the South. It is impossible to be certain of whether they were born in the Appalachian or non-Appalachian South, but we can be sure that they were not northern-born migrants to the South who were simply returning to their homes in the Midwest.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Obermiller and Howe, "New Paths and Patterns of Appalachian Migration, 1975-1990"; and Obermiller and Howe, "Moving Mountains: Appalachian Migration Patterns, 1995 -2000."

<sup>9</sup> The Minnesota samples are together known as the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS). See, Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0* [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2004. The IPUMS files from the censuses of 1950, 1960, and 1970 differ enough from one another that the analyses conducted in this paper are not possible in those years.

<sup>10</sup> The ARC definition was original established in *Appalachian Regional Development Act, U.S. Congress Public Law 94-188* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1965). A map and list of counties can be see at the Appalachian Regional Commission website: <http://www.arc.gov>. The SAS definition was originally established for the purposes of the essays in Thomas R. Ford, ed. *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962).

<sup>11</sup> The State Economic Area concept was created by the Census Bureau in 1951 to facilitate the analysis of counties that were economically integrated and had similar characteristics at that time. The 1980 County Group concept was developed in the early 1980s during the creation of the 1980 Public Use Microdata Sample. More information on both concepts is available via the IPUMS online documentation at <http://www.ipums.org>.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, see John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 309-398.

<sup>13</sup> Of the 9.3 million southern-born whites living in Appalachia in 1980, 2.6 million lived in Kentucky or West Virginia. Of the fifty-eight thousand southern-born Appalachian whites who moved north between 1975 and 1980, forty thousand came from Appalachian Kentucky or West Virginia. Source: IPUMS 1980 5% file.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on the history of the official poverty measure and the calculation of poverty thresholds, see U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty in the United States*, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 210, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Data on the poverty rate of Appalachian subgroups is derived from the 1980 5% IPUMS file. This information is presented in Table 5.

<sup>16</sup> Of the 52 million whites who lived in the non-Appalachian South in 1980, 5.2 million lived in poverty. Of the 6.8 million whites who lived in the Southern Appalachian Studies group's definition of southern Appalachia at that time, just under a million lived in poverty. Source: IPUMS 1980 5% file.

<sup>17</sup> The Census Bureau developed the concept of "metropolitan areas" as a part of the 1950 census, and they have continued to identify metropolitan areas in the years since. In general, a county is considered to be metropolitan if it contains a population center of 50,000 people or more or is adjacent to such a county and has a high degree of economic and social interaction with that center. The IPUMS project identifies metropolitan areas using consistent criteria for the entire 1850-2000 period. For a more complete definition of metropolitan areas, see

<http://www.ipums.org/usa/hgeographic/metareaa.html>. Of the southern born whites who moved north from the non-Appalachian South between 1975-1980, 20 percent lived in non-metropolitan areas in the Midwest; the corresponding number for those who moved from the Appalachian South was 25 percent (using the SAS definition of Appalachia). Source: IPUMS 1980 5% file.

<sup>18</sup> Recent southern white migrants to the metropolitan Midwest had a poverty rate of 12% and a median male wage income (for employed men aged 24-59) of \$15,005. Those in the non-metropolitan Midwest had a poverty rate of 18% and a median male wage income of \$11,005. Source: IPUMS 1980 5% file, using the SAS definition of Appalachia.

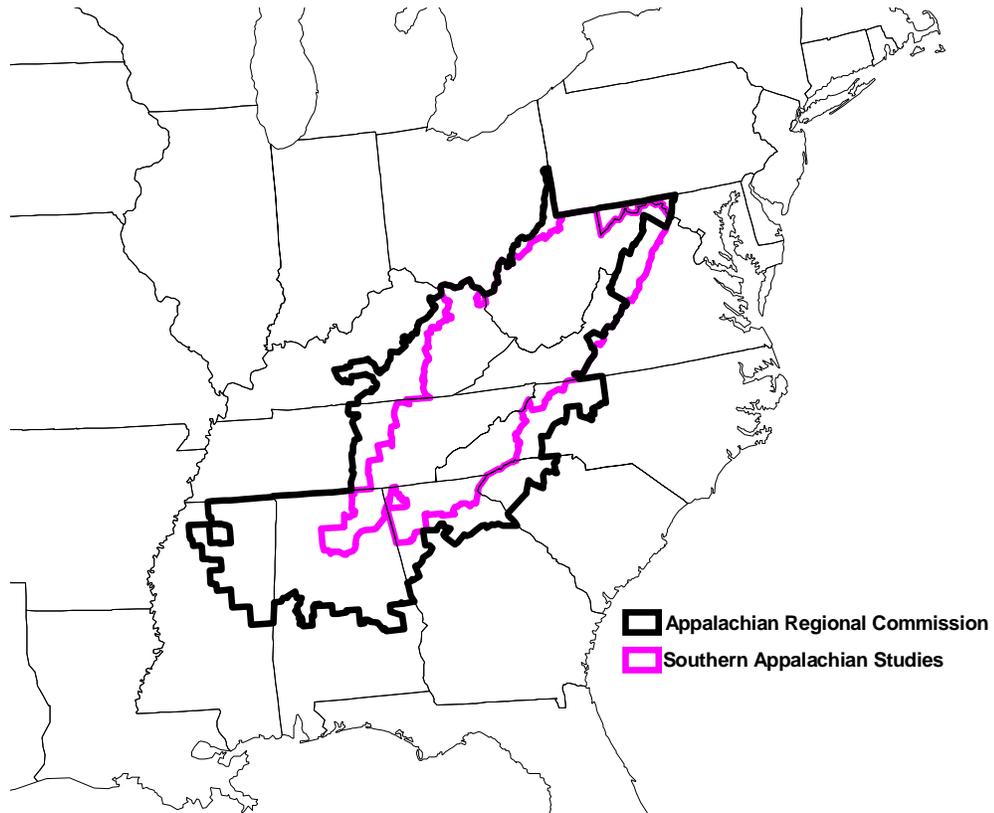
<sup>19</sup> I considered migrants to be full-time employees if they worked 35 or more hours the previous week and 50 or more weeks the previous year (including paid vacation, paid sick time, and military service).

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the models presented in Table 5, I tested versions of both models that included an age-squared variable and an interaction term for metropolitan status before and after moving to the Midwest. These variables did not change the direction or significance of any other variables in the equations. I present versions of the equations without these variables for ease of interpretation.

<sup>21</sup> "Appalachian" was not a choice on the census form; respondents needed to check an "other" box and write their ancestry on a blank line. About 12,000 individuals reported having Appalachian ancestry in 2000. The main states for those reporting Appalachian ancestry were Ohio (34%), Indiana (9%), and Michigan (9%). More than

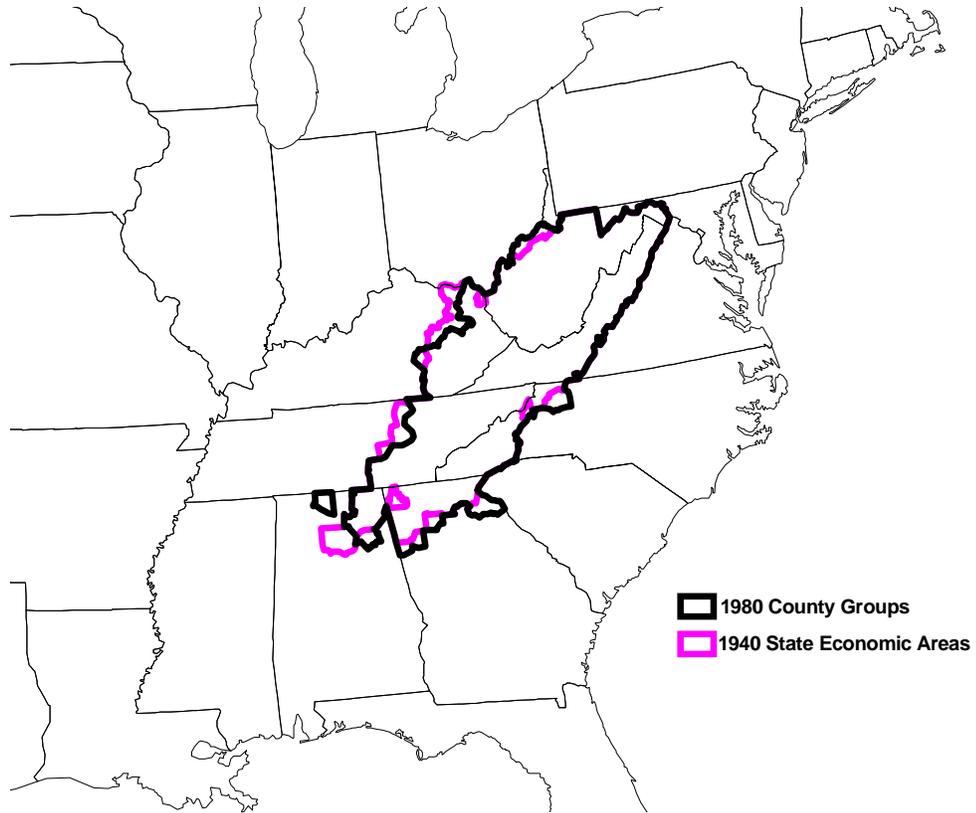
four-fifths of the Ohioans claiming Appalachian ancestry lived in non-Appalachian portions of the state. Kentucky and Tennessee each contributed 6% to the total. West Virginia contributed 2%. Ninety-eight percent of those claiming Appalachian ancestry were white. Source: pooled data from the 2000 5% and 1% IPUMS samples (N=756).

**Map 1**  
Two definitions of Appalachia:  
Appalachian Regional Commission and the Southern Appalachian Studies group



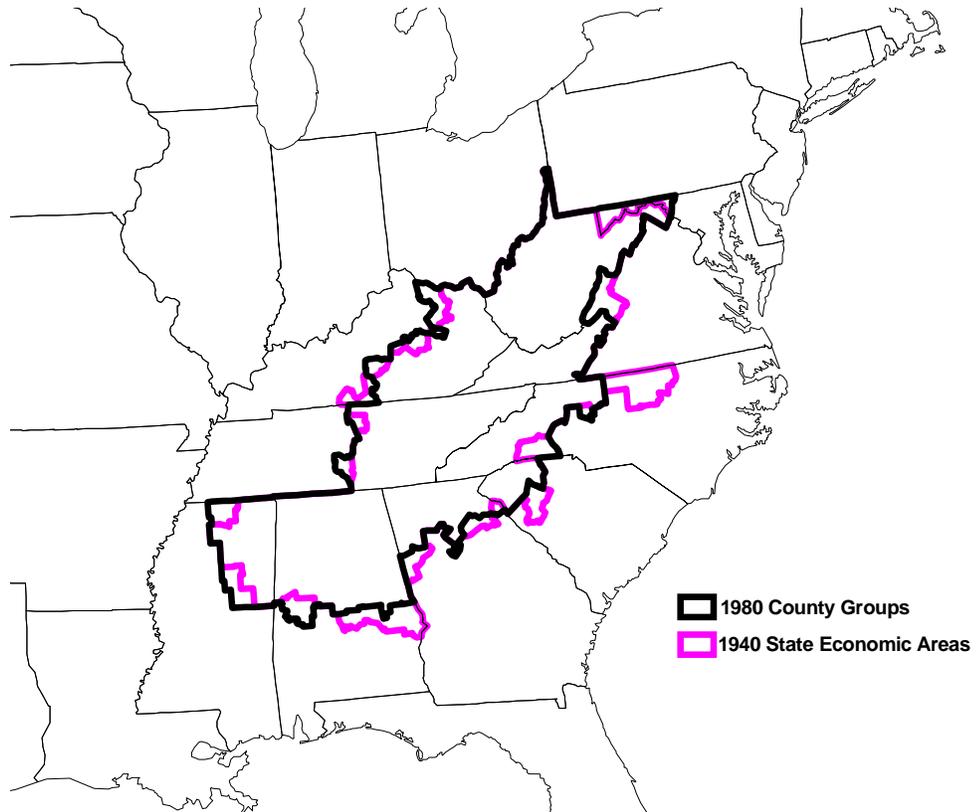
Sources: *Appalachian Regional Development Act, U.S. Congress Public Law 94-188* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1965); and Thomas R. Ford, ed. *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962).

**Map 2**  
Southern Appalachian Studies group definition of Appalachia:  
Using 1940 State Economic Areas and 1980 County Groups



Sources: Thomas R. Ford, ed. *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962); and IPUMS. A complete list of Appalachian State Economic Areas and County Groups is available from the author upon request.

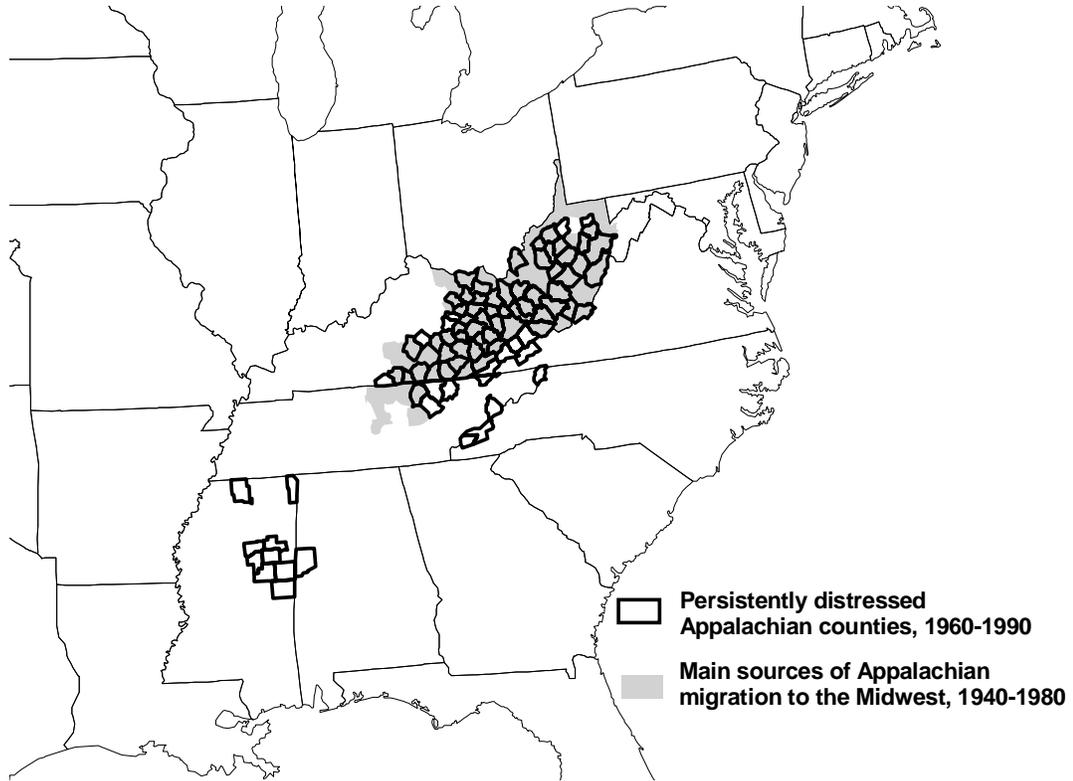
**Map 3**  
Appalachian Regional Commission definition of Appalachia:  
Using 1940 State Economic Areas and 1980 County Groups



Sources: *Appalachian Regional Development Act, U.S. Congress Public Law 94-188* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1965); and IPUMS. The complete list of Appalachian State Economic Areas and County Groups is available from the author upon request.

### Map 4

Key areas of northward out-migration and economic distress in Appalachia  
(ARC definition)



Sources: Lawrence E. Wood and Gregory A Bischak, "Progress and Challenges in Reducing Economic Distress in Appalachia: An Analysis of National and Regional Trends Since 1960," Appalachian Regional Commission Working Paper, January 2000; and top twenty sending areas in the Appalachian migration to the East North Central region, from IPUMS. The top twenty sending areas combined sent two-thirds of the total Appalachian white migrant stream.

**Table 1** Proportion of the southern population living in Appalachia

		ARC definition	SAS definition
<b>1940</b>	White	25%	16%
	Black	13%	3%
	All	22%	13%
<b>1980</b>	White	17%	10%
	Black	7%	2%
	All	15%	9%

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS), 1940 1% sample and 1980 5% sample.

**Table 2** Proportion of southern migrants in the Midwest who came from Appalachia

		ARC definition	SAS definition
<b>1940</b>	White	33%	22%
	Black	23%	8%
	All	31%	19%
<b>1980</b>	White	25%	17%
	Black	13%	5%
	All	22%	14%

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS), 1940 1% sample and 1980 5% sample.

**Table 3** Social and economic characteristics of recent southern-born migrants to the Midwest

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	<b>1980</b>		
	Non-Appalachian whites, ARC	Appalachian whites, ARC	Appalachian whites, SAS
unemployment rate (men 25-59)	8%	13%	14%
median income (employed men 25-59)	\$16,005	\$14,005	\$13,540
% professiona/clerical (employed men 25-59)	47%	29%	32%
% with h.s. education or more (all 25+)	76%	56%	53%
% of households headed by a woman	21%	26%	26%
median family income	\$18,300	\$13,010	\$12,005
% of migrant-headed households in poverty	12%	20%	21%

	<b>1940</b>		
	Non-Appalachian whites, ARC	Appalachian whites, ARC	Appalachian whites, SAS
unemployment rate (men 25-59)	6%	14%	15%
median income (employed men 25-59)	\$1,200	\$780	\$842
% professiona/clerical (employed men 25-59)	35%	26%	27%
% with a h.s. education or more (all 25+)	33%	21%	22%
% of households headed by a woman	6%	7%	7%

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Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS), 1940 1% sample and 1980 5% sample.

**Table 4** Characteristics of recent migrants to the Midwest, 1980

	Poverty rate: migrant-headed households	Median wage income: migrant men aged 25-59
Southern white migrants, Non-Appalachian		
<i>All</i>	12%	\$16,005
<i>In cities of 200,000+</i>	14%	\$13,500
Southern white migrants, Appalachian		
<i>All</i>	21%	\$13,540
<i>In cities of 200,000+</i>	30%	\$10,755
<i>In cities of 200,000+ and from West Va.</i>	35%	\$8,825
Southern black migrants		
<i>All</i>	33%	\$12,005
<i>In cities of 200,000+</i>	32%	\$12,305
Foreign-born migrants (all races)		
<i>All</i>	29%	\$10,405
Selected subregions:		
<i>Phillipines</i>	10%	\$12,005
<i>Canada</i>	11%	\$20,005
<i>Western Europe</i>	12%	\$18,005
<i>India</i>	14%	\$11,670
<i>Korea</i>	21%	\$11,505
<i>South America</i>	23%	\$9,005
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	27%	\$10,005
<i>Mexico</i>	30%	\$8,005
<i>Vietnam</i>	33%	\$11,135
<i>Puerto Rico</i>	37%	\$11,005
<i>China</i>	40%	\$7,005
<i>Africa</i>	40%	\$8,005

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS), 1980 5% sample.

Note: Southern white migrant data use the Southern Appalachian Studies group (SAS) definition of Appalachia. Midwestern cities of 200,000+ in 1980 included Akron, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and Toledo.

**Table 5** Regression models of the predictors of male wage income and poverty status of recent southern white migrants to the Midwest, 1980

	Male Wage Income <sup>a</sup> (Beta coefficients)	Poverty Status <sup>b</sup> (odds ratios)
Age	0.023 *** (0.003)	1.020 *** (0.028)
Years of schooling	0.065 *** (0.008)	1.252 *** (0.025)
Gender of Household Head (0=Female, 1=Male)		4.257 *** (0.696)
Metropolitan Status After Arriving in the North (0=Non-metropolitan, 1=Metropolitan)	0.215 ** (0.075)	1.630 ** (0.292)
Metropolitan Status Before Leaving the South (0=Non-metropolitan, 1=Metropolitan)	0.080 (0.066)	1.097 (0.342)
Appalachian Status Before Leaving the South (0=SAS Appalachian, 1=Non-Appalachian)	0.114 (0.080)	1.303 (0.253)
Intercept	7.396 *** (0.197)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> /Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.111	0.154
Number of cases (N)	1,027	1,589

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series files (IPUMS), 1980 5% sample.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Wage income is logged. Analysis includes only men aged 25-59 with full-time jobs.

<sup>b</sup> Logistic regression model where unit of analysis is the migrant-headed household.

Individual-level variables refer to characteristics of the migrant household head.

In poverty=0, Not in poverty=1

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$