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Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration from the Carolinas, 1870-1900

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Abstract

In the period following the US Civil War, firms wished to capitalize on the availability of African American labor. To do so they hired emigrant agents, also known as labor agents, to hire and help with the migration of individuals from the South. Faced with out-migration at the hands of the labor force, some southern states licensed the profession as a substantial barrier to practice. I use linked full-count US Censuses to determine the effect that licensing emigrant agents had on the individual probability of migration both out of state, and out of the South. A difference-in-differences analysis on the border counties of North and South Carolina suggests that the licensing of emigrant agents reduced the probability of migration out of the South by more than 1 percentage point.

JEL Classifications: N41, J44, R23.

Keywords: African American Migration, Emigrant Agents, Reconstruction.

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Introduction

After the Civil War and the passing of the 13th Amendment newly freed African Americans, now able to freely seek gainful employment from any firm, became available for hire. For firms, this created a profit opportunity as these individuals did not expect to be paid as high of wages as native-born whites or European immigrants (Warren C. Whatley 1993). To recruit this new labor resource, firms hired emigrant agents, sometimes called labor agents or labor recruiters, to travel into the South, recruit large numbers of African American workers, and assist in their migration. Emigrant agents were viewed as such a threat by Southern firm owners and politicians that many states in the South began licensing the profession prohibitively (David E. Bernstein 1997; William Cohen 1991; Kha Prentice, László Kónya, and David Prentice 2018).

Despite anecdotal accounts of the successes of emigrant agents moving large numbers of African Americans out of the South, there is disagreement on the overall effectiveness of licensing emigrant agents in preventing migration prior to the Great Migration (Bernstein 1997; William J. Collins 1997; Trevon D. Logan 2009; Prentice et al. 2018). From this disagreement comes a puzzle; if emigrant agents were ineffective in assisting the migration of many African Americans, why prohibitively license them? Or, if licensing emigrant agents was ineffective, why are there many accounts of emigrant agents ceasing to practice and decreases in emigration due to licensing barriers?¹

In 1891, North and South Carolina each passed emigrant agent laws that licensed at the same fee, \$1000 per county. In 1893 the North Carolina Supreme Court deemed the state's emigrant agent licensing law unconstitutional on the grounds that it was not being evenly applied across the state and that the profession did not pose a threat to the public and the fee was unreasonable (Leo Alilunas 1937). South Carolina retained their law. The actions of the North Carolina Supreme Court make this a natural experiment. There are two states that both attempted to implement these laws at the same time, they are observationally similar, and they are a geographic pair.

This paper uses linked samples of full-count US Censuses from 1870, 1880, and 1900 and a difference-in-differences design to estimate how the change in licensing affected African American migration. I find that licensing emigrant agents reduced an individual's probability of migration out of the South by more than 1 percentage point.

Until recently, analysis of African American migration used net-migration rates or small-samples of time-linked historic data (Collins and Marianne H. Wanamaker 2014; Prentice et al. 2018). Net migration numbers tend to underplay the amount of interstate migration happening over the time period after the Civil War as most states were experiencing both large amounts of out- and in-migration. In addition to simple natural experiments of states licensing over different periods of time, this paper also focuses on border analyses for additional causal evidence and investigates an especially novel natural experiment first noted by Prentice et al. (2018).

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section provides an overview on emigrant agent history and a summary of the related literature. Section four discusses the natural experiment of North and South Carolina, the methodological approach and data. The penultimate section presents results. A brief conclusion follows.

¹ See *The Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia) February 25, 1890; January 2, 1895; February 3, 1900; *The Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, Louisiana) March 26, 1914; *The Birmingham News* (Birmingham, Alabama) June 19, 1917.

Historic Context and Related Literature

Emigrant agents in the United States rose to prominence during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. Labor became scarcer in the South after the war as newly freed men and women began the process of developing bargaining power over work, building communities, and pursuing personal goals that were not possible during the era of slavery (Phillip Sheldon Foner 1988). Cotton planters in the Southeast, sugar cane farmers in Louisiana, railroads out West, coal fields in Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, etc. were all desirous of African Americans as a less expensive labor source (Bernstein 1997; Cohen 1991; Ronald Lewis 1989). To facilitate the recruitment of labor, firms would hire emigrant agents to travel into the South, recruit laborers, and bring them North or West to work (Cohen 1991). According to Cohen (1991) the occupation first started through efforts and funding of the Freedmen's Bureau. The Bureau was interested in getting African Americans back to work after emancipation and emigrant agents facilitated matching employers with labor. After the Bureau ceased operations, the profession of emigrant agent continued to sustain at the expense of private individuals and firms.

Emigrant agents lowered the transaction costs of moving both in terms of information costs and monetary costs by advertising the opportunities available elsewhere and forwarding money for or outright paying for travel (Bernstein 1997; Cohen 1991). Emigrant agents were credited with the out-migration of a number of individuals in southern states, especially after the end of Reconstruction and major mass migrations such as the Great Kansas Exodus of 1879 (Bernstein 1997; Wm. O. Scroggs 1917; William Windom and Henry W. Blair 1919).

To alleviate the tensions of plantation owners and potentially stem the out-migration, Southern states began to license the occupation of emigrant agent. The licensing laws put in place were written such that they appeared neutral, not technically targeting any one group, however as Cohen (1991, 235) notes, "everyone knew the aim was to limit black movement".

Scroggs (1917, 1034) notes a quote from James L. Orr, Governor of South Carolina in 1866, in which he states that African Americans were invaluable to the production of resources of the state and if they migrated it would "convert thousands of acres of productive land to dreary wilderness", and thus it was his job to discourage migration.

The first state to enact emigrant agent laws was Virginia in 1870, although that law only required a \$25 licensing fee, approximately \$500 in 2021, which is not a comparatively restrictive barrier to practice when compared to later licensing laws in other states (Cohen 1991). Six years later, Georgia enacted a much more significant licensing law requiring a yearly fee of \$100 per county per year in which an agent was active. In 1877 the fee was raised to \$500 (Alilunas 1937; Cohen 1991), which adjusted for inflation represents a licensing fee of over \$14,000 in 2021. If an individual agent wanted to be active in multiple counties, the upfront cost of doing so legally was immense. The 1876 Georgia law marks the first significant barrier to emigrant agents in the South. Following Georgia's example, other states began prohibitively licensing emigrant agents. Table 1 summarizes when emigrant agent licensure was first introduced in Southern states. The licensure happens in waves across the South, often with pairs or trios of states licensing within one or two years. We can see Alabama and Georgia licensing within one year, 1876 and 1877. North Carolina and South Carolina license in the same year, 1891, and are shortly followed by Louisiana. Later, Arkansas and Tennessee license within two years, 1915 and 1917.

The definition of what explicitly fell under the scope of emigrant agent laws varied across states as well. In some states, anyone who was explicitly recruiting others to move out of the state was an emigrant agent, but their assistants may not have fallen under that label. According to Jennifer Roback (1984, 1169), in Montgomery, Alabama an emigrant agent was, "Anyone who printed, published, wrote, delivered, posted, or distributed any advertisement, pamphlet, or newspaper persuading people to leave the city".

Table 1

Years in which Emigrant Agents were First Licensed

State	Year
Virginia	1870
Georgia	1876
Alabama	1877
North Carolina	1891
South Carolina	1891
Louisiana	1894
Florida	1903
Mississippi	1912
Arkansas	1915
Tennessee	1917
Texas	1923

Though most accounts of recruitment restrictions, such as those of emigrant agent licensing, and African Americans have considered historic or legal perspectives, some scholars have examined recruitment restrictions and the effect on migration from an empirical standpoint. Suresh Naidu (2010) finds that criminal fines for enticement, recruiting laborers already under contract, led to lower mobility, wages, and returns to experience for black workers; specifically, a 10 percent increase in enticement fines caused a 0.5 percent decrease in the probability of migration and between a 0.11 percent and 0.17 percent decrease in wage (Naidu 2010).

Emigrant agent licensure did not go completely unchallenged. The first appeal occurred in Georgia with *Shepherd v. Commissioners*, 59 Ga. 535 (1877) and this was followed by challenges in Alabama and North Carolina with *Joseph v. Randolph*, 71 Ala. 499 (1882) and *State v. Moore*, 113 N.C. 697 (1893) respectively. These cases led to different outcomes; the Supreme Court of Georgia holding that the law was constitutional while the supreme courts of Alabama and North Carolina holding that their laws were unconstitutional. According to Alilunas (1937), in the case of *Joseph v. Randolph*, the court felt it “affected the right of free egress from the state” and in *State v. Moore* the court decided that the occupation was not dangerous to the public interest, and the fee was unreasonable.

The debate over the constitutionality of emigrant agent laws culminated in the case of *Williams v. Fears* in Georgia which challenged Georgia’s 1898 expansion of emigrant agent laws. In the case R.A. “Peg Leg” Williams, a famous emigrant agent, had been arrested for practicing without a license. The case eventually was appealed to the United States Supreme Court, *Williams v. Fears*, 179 U.S. 270 (1900), where the Court held that it was not unconstitutional to license emigrant agents and, specifically, that licensing emigrant agents “did not amount to such an interference with the freedom of transit... as to violate the Federal Constitution”.

Williams v. Fears set precedent for the constitutionality of emigrant agent licensure and was subsequently followed by a wave of states licensing successfully. Alabama and North Carolina re-licensed in 1903. The precedent set by *Williams v. Fears* supported two more decisions in South Carolina that challenged the constitutionality of the state’s licensure laws, *State v. Bates*, 113 S.C. 129, 101 S.E. 651 (1919) and *State v. Reeves*, 112 S.C. 383, 99 S.E. 841 (1919) (Alilunas 1937).

Trudeau: Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration

Emigrant agent licensing, among other restrictive laws, remained in place through the Great Migration. The Great Migration, the mass migration of African Americans out of the South, is generally considered to have started in 1910 and marks a major redistribution of the African American population in the United States (Collins 2021). Leah Platt Boustan (2016) notes many of the post-migration effects experienced by African Americans who did participate. African Americans who migrated did have increased wages, but there were also multiple negative outcomes experienced by those who migrated and those African Americans who were prior residents including slower black economic growth and White flight. Additionally, Boustan (2009) has shaped the modern economic history literature by using matched census data to study the effects of migration on economic outcomes, specifically in the case of African Americans.

Cohen (1991) discusses the historic account of mobility in the post-Civil war era from the beginning of Reconstruction through the beginning of the Great Migration including suffrage restrictions, recruitment restrictions, and segregation providing historic and anecdotal context to how emigrant agent licensure reduced African American mobility. Bernstein (1997) and Bernstein (2001) discuss the legal aspect of licensing emigrant agents and how the laws were exploited specifically to the detriment of the African American population and specifically note emigrant agent licensure as one of the means of exploitation. In one of the earliest accounts of scholarship on the subject, Alilunas (1937) discusses the various licenses and subsequent court rulings on licensing laws for emigrant agents.

Prentice et al. (2018) attempt to empirically test the effects of licensing emigrant agents using the pseudo-natural experiment of Alabama and North Carolina deeming their licensing laws unconstitutional. Using two linked samples of data from the Linked Representative Samples 1870-1880 and 1880-1900 via IPUMS, Prentice et al. (2018) find that emigrant agents had an insignificant effect on the migration of African Americans and ultimately conclude that licensing emigrant agents was not the cause of the delay of the Great Migration. The main difference between Prentice et al. (2018) and this paper is in the data sources. The IPUMS Linked Representative Samples are much smaller samples than possible with full census linking. The main differences in findings are that Prentice et. al. (2018) find a negative but insignificant effect on migration and this paper finds a negative and significant effect on migration of about half the size, approximately 3 percentage points compared to approximately 6 percentage points.

The literature on emigrant agents does not only apply to the United States. Marjory Harper (2004) summarizes the promotion of immigration to Canada by emigrant agents in Scotland and Ireland in the late nineteenth century. Similar to the emigrant agents in the US South, these agents would recruit through large public lectures, advertise Canada through picturesque displays, and would in some cases accompany those recruited across the Atlantic to secure the recruits work and help them settle in their new home (Harper 2004). Other instances of labor recruiters being present were the use of padrones for recruiting labor for the American and Canadian West between 1880 and 1930, contemporary with emigrant agents recruiting African Americans. Gunther Peck (2000) covers the stories of three padrones: Antonio Cordasco, who recruited Italians for the Canadian Pacific Railway; Leon Skliris, who recruited Greek men to work in mines in the American West; and Roman Gonzalez, who recruited Mexican men to work as farmers and labors in the American West and Midwest. Other instances of reports of labor agents being used in Europe to recruit labor for projects in the United States are present in a report of the House Select Committee on Investigation of Foreign Immigration, page 18 of the Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Emigration which notes, "In a large number of instances this emigration is caused by offers of employment at better wages than are to be obtained in this country for same [sic] labor sometimes by agents of mills direct from United States and in many other cases men living here who act as agents for the procuration of various kinds of labor" (United States 1889).

This paper also contributes to the greater literature on African American emigration, discrimination, and the effects of immigration on economic and social mobility. Despite poor social and economic standing for African American agricultural workers in the South, there was some potential for upward movement in economic status (Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie 2005). Emigration due to the Great Migration additionally had health effects on African Americans. Using proximity of birthplace to railroads as an instrumental variable for migration, Dan A. Black, Seth G. Sanders, Evan J. Taylor, and Lowell J. Taylor (2015) show that African Americans who migrated experienced higher levels of mortality, implying that while there were economic gains from moving, the professions that individuals were moving into were possibly more dangerous or more hazardous to long-term health (Black et al. 2015). In the same period, licensing was used to directly harm African American employment prospects. Tanner Corley, Wendy Lucas, and Marcus Witcher (2023) note how barber licensure directly limited minority participation in the field of barbering. In the present, occupational licensing continues to affect African Americans. Peter Q. Blair and Bobby W. Chung (2025) note that occupational licensing can provide information in cases where there is asymmetric information regarding felons and the occupational wage premium is largest in states that prevent asking if an applicant is a convicted felon. Blair and Chung (2021) further show that wage premiums are highest in demographic groups that have a higher cost of licensing, for example Black men as opposed to White men.

There are multiple hypotheses on why mass migration out of the South did not happen earlier than the Great Migration. Collins (1997) finds evidence that foreign-born migration from Europe may have had a crowding-out effect on African American migration North. Logan (2009) shows that while human capital and what appears to be “educational selection” into migration appear to be a major cause, health status played a more significant role than was previously thought. Cohen (1976) notes how the combination of contract laws, vagrancy statutes, criminal surety laws, and convict labor laws led to a system of involuntary servitude, and restricted mobility for African Americans through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The interplay of mobility as the power of exit to show displeasure with the current political regime is a popular theme throughout much of the literature (Albert O. Hirschman 1972). Naidu (2012) shows how suppression of suffrage of African Americans through various barriers including poll taxes and literacy tests resulted in poorer public good provision for African Americans in terms of public schooling and often incited out-migration. Elections at this time were complicated at best if not completely spoiled by fraud and intimidation of the African American populace (Ronald F. King 2001a, 2001b).

Furthermore, mobility as a mechanism for selecting appropriate public good provision such as education is directly related to Charles M. Tiebout (1956) in which individuals migrate to political districts that best fit their public good provision preferences, colloquially referred to as voting with one’s feet. As African Americans migrated in search of a better political and social climate as well as for economic purposes, they both incited political change where they were leaving and sorted into places that better fit their preferences. Richard Hornbeck and Naidu (2014) show that African American out-migration may have been helpful to the development of the South as well because places that experienced major out-migration were forced into investing in agricultural capital and modernized scale of firm operations.

In establishing precedent for using linked censuses to show the importance of economic status and migration, Ran Abramitzky, Leah Platt Boustan, and Katherine Eriksson (2012) show that individuals who had lower economic prospects in Europe were more likely to migrate to the US. This could potentially be expanded to African Americans in the South after the Civil War. While they had higher economic prospects than under the practice of slavery, they likely still had lower economic prospects than their white counterparts, even those who were laborers. Collins and Wanamaker (2014) expand on the selection idea and apply it to African

Americans; while there was some selection into migration, there were large gains for African American migrants. Abramitzky, Platt Boustan, Elisa Jacome, and Santiago Pérez (2021a) show that historically and currently children of immigrants have higher rates of upward economic mobility as compared to children of US-born individuals. Ferrie (2005) shows that the nineteenth-century United States was more mobile socially and physically than other places and the phenomenon persisted through the cohort of studied individuals who were in their thirties by 1920, which would apply to a large portion of the group studied here. Laura Salisbury (2014) notes that in the nineteenth century, US migration was motivated more by the possibility of upward economic mobility rather than simply higher average wages. James I. Stewart (2012) suggests that migration to US frontier cities was most likely from young, city-originating, white collar, and literate individuals and that migration often led to higher quality jobs for immigrants and facilitated mobility between blue- and white-collar jobs which relates to the Exoduster movement or Great Exodus of 1879 where many African Americans left the South in pursuit of opportunity in Kansas, noting the first large migration of African Americans out of the South. In terms of moving North as opposed to West, as African Americans migrated North, they were also used as strikebreakers for industrialized jobs (Whatley 1993).

Finally, this paper also helps to understand some aspects of the discrimination literature. Anne O. Krueger (1963) shows that theoretically a majority group can benefit economically by discriminating against a minority group. Marc T. Law and Mindy S. Marks (2009) note that occupational licensing in the Progressive Era allowed for current practitioners to exclude minorities. Thomas Sowell (2019) notes the power of African American labor in the South was what often broke attempts to suppress earnings and specifically notes the use of emigrant agents in recruiting African Americans to move North. Roback (1984) attempts to disentangle whether labor markets were exploitative or competitive in the Jim Crow Era and finds that labor laws were attempts to enforce a cartel of which employers had no other way to sustain due to the bargaining power of African American labor. Ralph Shlomowitz (1984) similarly found that there were attempts by farmers to set wages, but contemporary articles suggest that labor markets were competitive as the rhetoric often referred to the “theft” of labor among farmers bidding up wages.

Methodology and Data

In 1893, the North Carolina Supreme Court declared the state’s emigrant agent licensing law unconstitutional (Alilunas 1937). This decision is thus viewed as an exogenous event, unlikely to have influenced South Carolina’s decision to pass its own licensing law. Thus, this paper uses the North Carolina Supreme Court’s decision in 1893 as a natural experiment to study the effect of emigrant agent licensing on African American migration.

The novelty of the North and South Carolina natural experiment was first noted by Prentice et al. (2018). Over the 1870-1880 census periods both states exhibit similar trends in out-migration of African Americans, both had similar political reactions, and both chose to license emigrant agents at \$1000 per county in 1891 (Cohen 1991). The states are a geographic pair as well.²

² Prentice et al. (2018) additionally point out that a similar natural experiment occurs between Alabama and Georgia. In 1882 the Supreme Court of Alabama declared that state’s emigrant agent law unconstitutional. However, the argument that out-migration from Alabama exhibits similar trends to that of Georgia is more difficult to make based on the net and sample migratory trends. Over the two census periods of 1870-1880 and 1880-1900, the net migration rates from Alabama were 0.075 to 0.066 per 10000 and from Georgia were 0.042 and 0.06 (Prentice et al. 2018). Thus, the conditional parallel trends would need to account for a decrease in Alabama’s out-migration while Georgia had an increase in out-migration.

Data used in this project consist of linked 100 percent US Census records between 1870-1880 and 1880-1900, which include all African American males that can be linked between either pair of censuses. 1890 census manuscripts (and their accompanying data) do not exist as they were destroyed in a fire (Daniel P. O'mahony 1991). These two linked samples are treated as a repeated cross section although there are some individuals that are linked across all three censuses.

The census records are retrieved from IPUMS and are linked using the ABE Exact Method developed by Abramitzky, Platt Boustan, Eriksson, James Feigenbaum, and Pérez (2021b). For an individual to be linked across two historic data sets according to the ABE Exact Method requires unique first and last names, implied birth year based on age, and birthplace. If there are multiple potential matches, then that individual is discarded. According to Abramitzky et al. (2021b), automated linking methods such as the ABE Exact Method are matched with hand-linked genealogist records over 95 percent of the time. In addition, coefficient estimates and parameters of interest are robust when using automated linking methods, regardless of approach. This method will produce a sample of individuals with unique name, birth year, birthplace combinations. It is unlikely that excluding individuals with non-unique combinations would create sample bias. Rather, it creates a smaller set of data than the true unknown of individuals that are measured from one census to another. As an example, one reason an individual would be excluded from census matching is by having a common name, William Smith, and having been born in a city in the same year as other William Smiths. Thus, the people most likely to be excluded are people from larger cities with common first and last names for the period. It is difficult to say that having a more common name would change an individual's likelihood of migration.

Using these linked samples provides a much larger data set than has been available to researchers in the past. For example, the North and South Carolina sample contains over 50,000 observations of individual African Americans across the 1870-1880 and 1880-1900 periods as opposed to Prentice et al. (2018) who have just under 600 observations. This paper's large linked samples are thus a major distinction from Prentice et al. (2018). Fully linked censuses provide more information on overall migration and more data within occupation classifications. For example, Prentice et al. (2018) have no individuals classified as having managerial or professional occupations in South Carolina and no individuals classified as having clerical occupations in North Carolina or South Carolina. Using full count censuses gives this paper depth in occupation classification in that there are individuals that fit all occupation classifications: Technical, Farm, Managerial, Clerical, Sales, Craft, Operative, Service, and the Unclassified/Unknown classification.

The first fact that becomes evident when analyzing this data is that net migration rates understate the amount of emigration that is occurring. This data shows that what appears to be a small outflow when looking at net migration may be a much larger shuffling or sorting of the African American population. Table 2 contains the sample migration rates of men between the ages of 13 and 65 for the 1870-1880 and 1880-1900 periods for states in the South. There is significant out- and in-migration to most southern states. Of the flows from 1870 to 1880, only Alabama and Arkansas had no in-migration greater than 100 individuals, only out-migration. Additionally, the largest migration was from Alabama to Mississippi and consisted of more than 1500 individuals within the sample.

To discern the causal effect of licensing emigrant agents on the individual probability of migration this paper will use difference-in-differences techniques with the natural experiment of North Carolina deeming their emigrant agent licensure unconstitutional. Summary statistics for North and South Carolina pre- and post-treatment can be found in Table 3.

Table 2
Sample Migration Rates (per capita)

State	1870 Obs.	1880 Obs.	1870-1880 Migration Rate	Std. Dev	1880-1890 Migration Rate	Std. Dev
Alabama	12846	13600	0.28	(0.48)	0.23	(0.42)
Arkansas	3152	4397	0.37	(0.48)	0.32	(0.47)
Florida	2629	3165	0.33	(0.47)	0.25	(0.43)
Georgia	16615	16514	0.18	(0.39)	0.19	(0.39)
Louisiana	8862	10450	0.27	(0.45)	0.24	(0.43)
Mississippi	11020	14997	0.28	(0.45)	0.26	(0.44)
North Carolina	13156	13199	0.14	(0.34)	0.21	(0.40)
South Carolina	12928	15178	0.13	(0.34)	0.18	(0.38)
Tennessee	6693	7464	0.27	(0.44)	0.30	(0.46)
Texas	5489	8753	0.34	(0.47)	0.22	(0.42)
Virginia	15483	14815	0.23	(0.42)	0.29	(0.45)

The potential variables of interest are *Migrate* and *Migrate Out of South*. These are determined by what state an individual lives in at time t and $t+1$. If an individual is living in a different state at $t+1$ the indicator *Migrate* takes the value of one, and if the state is not a former Confederate State the indicator *Migrate Out of South* takes the value of one as well. Family size includes how many family members are reported to be living with the individual at the time of the census. *Age* is the individual's age in years. *Technical, Farm, Managerial, Clerical, Sales, Craft, Operative, Service, and Occupation NA* are all indicator variables that deal with what type of occupation an individual has, they are coded based on the Census's OCC1950 classification at the broadest scale. *Occupation NA* is any non-occupational response which can include missing/unknown and occupations left blank.

The comparison group for occupation in any regression is *Farm* as it is the largest classification, followed by *Occupation NA*. *Large City* denotes whether an individual is living somewhere with a population greater than 25,000. Finally, *Illiterate* is an indicator variable representing whether an individual was illiterate, and only takes the value of 1 if the individual is explicitly coded as "No, illiterate (cannot read nor write)" while taking the value of zero if the individual can either read or write, or if literacy status was unknown due to being illegible or blank. *Ever Married* is a lag variable for if the individual was married, separated, divorced, or a widower. *Ever Married* cannot be included contemporaneously because marital status was not reported in the 1870 Census. In addition to the individual characteristics available through the censuses this study also uses proximity to railroads as an independent variable. As Black et al. (2015) use proximity of birthplace to railroad lines, and many anecdotal accounts of emigrant agents reference travel by railroad, it is of importance to account for possible rail travel. To account for railroad presence and expansion of railroads across the two time periods, maps from The Association of American Railroads (1958) are digitized and georeferenced with GIS software. Distance from county centroids was then calculated. Therefore, *Distance to Nearest Railroad* is a county level variable measuring centroid proximity to railroads (see Appendix).

Table 3
North Carolina and South Carolina Pre- and Post-treatment

Pre-treatment	North Carolina			South Carolina		
VARIABLES	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Migrate	13,156	0.136	0.343	12,928	0.131	0.337
Migrate Out of South	13,156	0.0215	0.145	12,928	0.00975	0.0982
Family Size	13,156	5.221	3.071	12,928	5.089	2.813
Age	13,156	29.20	13.38	12,928	28.85	13.08
Ever Married	13,156	0.857	0.350	12,928	0.908	0.289
Technical	13,156	0.00258	0.0508	12,928	0.00309	0.0555
Farm	13,156	0.746	0.436	12,928	0.723	0.448
Managerial	13,156	0.00365	0.0603	12,928	0.00379	0.0615
Clerical	13,156	0.000228	0.0151	12,928	0.000309	0.0176
Sales	13,156	0.00144	0.0380	12,928	0.00162	0.0403
Craft	13,156	0.0363	0.187	12,928	0.0295	0.169
Operative	13,156	0.0252	0.157	12,928	0.0160	0.126
Service	13,156	0.0186	0.135	12,928	0.0228	0.149
Occupation NA	13,156	0.1665	0.373	12,928	0.200	0.400
Large City	13,156	0.0186	0.135	12,928	0.0521	0.222
Illiterate	13,156	0.713	0.453	12,928	0.747	0.435
Distance to Nearest Railroad (miles)	13,156	9.121	10.80	12,928	6.563	6.515
Post-treatment	North Carolina			South Carolina		
VARIABLES	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Migrate	13,199	0.213	0.409	15,178	0.176	0.381
Migrate Out of South	13,199	0.0492	0.216	15,178	0.0174	0.131
Family Size	13,199	5.723	3.112	15,178	5.548	2.937
Age	13,199	28.75	12.19	15,178	27.38	11.47
Ever Married	13,199	0.936	0.245	15,178	0.948	0.221
Technical	13,199	0.00606	0.0776	15,178	0.00507	0.0710
Farm	13,199	0.642	0.479	15,178	0.628	0.483
Managerial	13,199	0.00235	0.0484	15,178	0.00198	0.0444
Clerical	13,199	0.00053	0.0230	15,178	0.000593	0.0243
Sales	13,199	0.00129	0.0359	15,178	0.00152	0.0389
Craft	13,199	0.0285	0.166	15,178	0.0274	0.163
Operative	13,199	0.0303	0.171	15,178	0.0214	0.145
Service	13,199	0.0230	0.150	15,178	0.0246	0.155
Occupation NA	13,199	0.2659	0.442	15,178	0.289	0.453
Large City	13,199	0.0136	0.116	15,178	0.0516	0.221
Illiterate	13,199	0.579	0.494	15,178	0.612	0.487
Distance to Nearest Railroad (miles)	13,199	7.686	8.546	15,178	4.076	4.279

Trudeau: Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration

The comparison group for occupation in any regression is *Farm* as it is the largest classification, followed by *Occupation NA*. *Large City* denotes whether an individual is living somewhere with a population greater than 25,000. Finally, *Illiterate* is an indicator variable representing whether an individual was illiterate, and only takes the value of 1 if the individual is explicitly coded as “No, illiterate (cannot read nor write)” while taking the value of zero if the individual can either read or write, or if literacy status was unknown due to being illegible or blank. *Ever Married* is a lag variable for if the individual was married, separated, divorced, or a widower. *Ever Married* cannot be included contemporaneously because marital status was not reported in the 1870 Census. In addition to the individual characteristics available through the censuses this study also uses proximity to railroads as an independent variable. As Black et al. (2015) use proximity of birthplace to railroad lines, and many anecdotal accounts of emigrant agents reference travel by railroad, it is of importance to account for possible rail travel. To account for railroad presence and expansion of railroads across the two time periods, maps from The Association of American Railroads (1958) are digitized and georeferenced with GIS software. Distance from county centroids was then calculated. Therefore, *Distance to Nearest Railroad* is a county level variable measuring centroid proximity to railroads (see Appendix).

The model to be estimated is a difference-in-differences linear probability model of the form:

$$Migrate_{ij} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 DTreatState + \delta_2 DTreatPeriod + \delta_3 DTreatStateDTreatPeriod + X_i \beta + \epsilon_{ij}$$

Where *Migrate* is an indicator variable equal to 1 if the individual migrated, regardless if it was out of state or out of the South, in the period. X is a vector of individual characteristics including age, family size, ever married, large city, occupation classification, literacy, and proximity to railroad. Each individual in South Carolina in 1880 is considered to be treated as South Carolina enacted their law in the 1880-1900 period. Each individual in North Carolina is considered to be not treated. This model is the same as the initial model found in Prentice et al. (2018) but includes the additional occupation data and railroad data.

Ultimately, it is expected that having an emigrant agent law should reduce the probability of migration both out of state and out of the South. This would be consistent with the results for North Carolina and South Carolina found in Prentice et al. (2018), but with a much larger sample size is more likely to be statistically significant.

The a priori expectation for the various characteristics in vector X is that any occupation classification compared to *Farm* will have a positive coefficient as some skill is implied. It is difficult to assign a coefficient to *Occupation NA* although it does imply that the person's occupation was more difficult to assign than simply farming. It is expected that individuals who are older will be less likely to migrate, but with a diminishing effect hence the inclusion of Age^2 . Increasing family size either through marriage, children, or other dependents is also expected to reduce the probability of migration as it is more costly to move oneself and others, or more emotionally costly to move oneself without family members. Illiteracy is expected to reduce migration, given the inability to read a written advertisement. Physically located in a large city is expected to increase probability of migration due to lower transport costs and greater potential mobility in general. Finally, railroads were explicitly noted in journals and accounts of emigrant agents. Thus, as the distance from the nearest railroad increases, the probability of migration should decrease.

One concern may be that North Carolina is not a reliable counterfactual for South Carolina. Table 4 shows the difference-in-means t-tests for the independent variables in the pre-treatment period. There are small, but statistically significant differences for many of the independent variables. *Age*, *Ever Married*, *Farm*, *Craft*, *Service*, *Occupation NA*, *Large City*, *Illiterate*, and *Railroad Distance (miles)* are all significant differences at the 0.05 alpha, likely

due to the large sample sizes. The largest difference in occupation shares is a 3.5 percentage point difference in the share of *Occupation NA* between North Carolina and South Carolina. Distance to the nearest railroad is statistically further in North Carolina than South Carolina. To allay any concerns that the two states are not similar enough to facilitate a difference-in-differences approach an additional model is entropy balanced at the first moment for robustness. Entropy balancing is a method of constructing weights to ensure treatment and control observations are matched at specified moments. In this case the weights would ensure that the observations from North Carolina and South Carolina have statistically similar means and a t-test with the weights would show no statistically significant differences between the two states.

Table 4
Difference in Means for Pre-Treatment Independent Variables

VARIABLES	North Carolina	South Carolina	Diff-in-means	t
	Mean	Mean		
Age	29.20	28.85	0.351**	(2.142)
Ever Married	0.857	0.908	0.051***	(-12.812)
Technical	0.00258	0.00309	-0.0005	(-0.773)
Farm	0.746	0.723	0.023***	(4.159)
Managerial	0.00365	0.00379	-0.0001	(-0.180)
Clerical	0.000228	0.000309	-0.0001	(-0.401)
Sales	0.00144	0.00162	-0.0002	(-0.372)
Craft	0.0363	0.0295	0.007**	(3.036)
Operative	0.0252	0.0160	0.009	(5.200)
Service	0.0186	0.0228	-0.004**	(-2.38)
Occupation NA	0.167	0.200	-0.033***	(6.998)
Large City	0.0186	0.0521	-0.034***	(-14.738)
Illiterate	0.713	0.747	-0.035***	(-6.283)
Railroad Distance (miles)	9.121	6.563	2.558***	(23.110)

Note: *p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01. N = 26,084

This study also makes use of the density of the data set made available through 100 percent Census data which allows for a border analysis of North and South Carolina. The analysis is restricted to just the counties of North and South Carolina that border each other. The sample size becomes more restrictive, but the arguments for a causal relationship are stronger. The border analysis is done with the same model and outcome variables, however in terms of out-of-state migration, migration from North to South Carolina and vice-versa is excluded as that is comparably costless as opposed to other out-of-state migration.

Results

The results for *Migrate* and *Migrate Out of South* can be found in Table 5. The table has been arranged such that it mirrors a similar model present in Prentice et al. (2018). The variable of interest, *Treatment Effect*, is found at the bottom of the table above the constant. Estimations

Trudeau: Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration

Table 5
Linear Probability of Migration

VARIABLES	(1) Migrate	(2) Migrate Out of South	(3) Migrate	(4) Migrate Out of South
Age	-0.00118* (0.000665)	-0.000714*** (0.000269)	-0.00116 (0.00184)	-0.000662 (0.000659)
Age ²	1.97e-05** (9.65e-06)	4.91e-06 (3.74e-06)	1.06e-05 (2.63e-05)	4.55e-06 (8.83e-06)
Ever Married	-0.0756*** (0.00648)	-0.0333*** (0.00355)	-0.0685*** (0.0191)	-0.0435*** (0.0110)
Family Size	-0.00393*** (0.000538)	-0.000199 (0.000233)	-0.00359** (0.00150)	-0.000803 (0.000604)
Illiterate	-0.00403 (0.00348)	-0.00586*** (0.00149)	-0.0225** (0.00984)	-0.0105** (0.00413)
Technical	0.0683** (0.0282)	0.0186 (0.0133)	0.0949 (0.0851)	-0.0178*** (0.00391)
Managerial	0.133*** (0.0361)	0.0242 (0.0161)	-0.0400 (0.0759)	0.0642 (0.0779)
Clerical	0.0270 (0.0819)	0.0110 (0.0412)	0.156 (0.263)	-0.0340*** (0.00462)
Sales	0.0643 (0.0471)	0.0353 (0.0270)	0.106 (0.175)	-0.00766 (0.00512)
Craft	0.0196** (0.00988)	0.0115** (0.00449)	0.0375 (0.0327)	0.000516 (0.0108)
Operative	0.0565*** (0.0122)	0.0253*** (0.00634)	0.108*** (0.0397)	-0.00364 (0.0118)
Service	0.0420*** (0.0121)	0.0185*** (0.00604)	0.0412 (0.0399)	0.0171 (0.0203)
Occupation NA	0.0162*** (0.00401)	0.00460*** (0.00170)	0.0240** (0.0118)	-0.000571 (0.00466)
Large City	0.0450*** (0.0104)	0.0114** (0.00483)		
Railroad (miles)	-0.000160 (0.000199)	1.68e-05 (8.75e-05)	0.000645 (0.000690)	-0.000228 (0.000230)
Treatment State	-0.00331 (0.00426)	-0.0103*** (0.00156)	0.00281 (0.0122)	0.000559 (0.00416)
Treatment Period	0.0832*** (0.00473)	0.0290*** (0.00232)	0.0584*** (0.0128)	0.0206*** (0.00549)
Treatment Effect	-0.0352*** (0.00631)	-0.0217*** (0.00266)	0.0123 (0.0178)	-0.0142** (0.00690)
Constant	0.232*** (0.0119)	0.0683*** (0.00522)	0.214*** (0.0337)	0.0789*** (0.0149)
Observations	54,461	54,461	6,160	6,160
R-squared	0.015	0.017	0.018	0.016

Note: *p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses

(1) and (2) estimate the effects when looking at all of North Carolina and South Carolina, estimations (3) and (4) are the border counties only.

The results found in Estimation (1) are consistent with economic theory. The treatment effect is negative and significant, implying that licensing emigrant agents reduces an individual's probability of moving out-of-state by 3.5 percentage points. This is significant at the 1 percent level. Here the findings differ significantly from Prentice et al. (2018) who found an insignificant, (p-value 0.22), -6.4 percentage point change. As an individual gets older, they are less likely to migrate but at a diminishing rate, implying that migration is more costly with age. Increasing family size, either through a spouse or having children would also increase the cost of migration, and similarly the coefficients are negative and significant. Marriage appears to reduce the probability of migration by about 7.5 percentage points, where each additional family member appears to decrease the probability of migration by just under 0.4 percentage points.

The occupational classifications that are statistically significant at the 5 percent level are *Managerial*, *Operative*, *Service*, and *Occupation NA*. Managerial, operative, and service occupations increase the individual probability of migration by 13.3, 5.65, and 4.2 percentage points respectively compared to farming occupations. The non-classified category was also significantly more likely to migrate than farmers by 1.62 percentage points. Being in a large city also accounts for an increase in probability of migration, by roughly 4.5 percentage points. These results are consistent with Stewart (2012) on migration to frontier cities in that young, white-collar, city-originating individuals were more likely to migrate. This appears true for migration of African American males out of North and South Carolina in general.

Estimation (2) is consistent with (1)—though with smaller coefficients—potentially due to less migration out of the South as opposed to simply migration out of state. The treatment effect is still negative and significant at the 1 percent level which implies licensure adversely affected both migration within and out of the South.

Estimations (3) and (4) are the border analyses. Investigating only the bordering counties of North and South Carolina drastically reduces the sample size, however most of the results remain the same. A border analysis makes for a stronger causal argument as the counties face the same relative geography, weather, and distance to other states. This leaves the major defining difference between counties on either side of the border as the state they are in and the laws of each respective state. One noticeable difference is the lack of large cities on the border of the two states. Additionally, the treatment effect is not significant for migration out-of-state but is significant for migration out of the South. Somewhat surprising is the positive but insignificant coefficient on *Migrate* in Estimation (3). This could be skewed by excluding the intermigration between North and South Carolina by restricting to border counties and not excluding migration between North Carolina and South Carolina it is possible that an individual living at the border migrated one county over the border and then eventually migrated somewhere else, all within the second time period. There is also no way of identifying if this occurred using merged census data. In the most restrictive estimation, (4), licensing emigrant agents reduces the probability of migrating out of the South by approximately 1.4 percentage points. If 1.4 percent of African American men in South Carolina at this time were prevented from moving that would be 212 of the 15,178 who were matched between 1880 and 1900. Of those 15,178 there were 2,672 who migrated. Thus, decreasing the probability of migrating by 1.4 percentage points would be like reducing the number of men who migrated by 7.93 percent. These results are also economically significant when considering the migration rates out of state in the sample are between 13 and 21 percent for both states. Ultimately, the results support the theory that licensing emigrant agents increases uncertainty and therefore increases the cost of migration, reducing observed migration.

As a robustness check these regressions were also performed with entropy balancing weights. As there are small but statistically significant differences in the means of the

Trudeau: Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration

independent variables, it is possible that North Carolina may not be a perfect counterfactual for South Carolina.

Jens Hainmueller (2012) provides a method for entropy balancing. The method creates a system of weights such that the reweighted treatment and control groups are more similar, in this case the treatment and control groups reweighted to satisfy similar first moments. These weights from entropy balancing the sample were used in weighted regressions 1-4 in Table 6. These equations are modeled the same as those in Table 4, the first two being the full samples of North and South Carolina and the second two being the border counties. Weighting the regression according to the entropy balancing weights only strengthens the effects in columns 1 and 2. The treatment effect increases from -3.52 percentage points to -4.10 percentage points for migration out-of-state and from -2.17 percentage points to -2.2 for migration out of the South. For the border analysis the insignificant treatment effect moves closer to zero from 1.23 percentage points to 1.17 percentage points and the treatment effect on migration out of the South decreases slightly from 1.42 percentage points to 1.41 percentage points. This robustness check suggests that at worst any bias introduced in the results in Table 4 are causing the treatment effect to be understated.

Do these results imply that licensing emigrant agents postponed the Great Migration for any amount of time? Probably not. However, the results do imply that without the licensing of emigrant agents, there would have been more out-migration from South Carolina. If that would have forced locales and firms to offer better alternatives to African Americans to keep them from migrating, it is possible that licensing did result in greater discrimination than may have happened otherwise.

Conclusion

Using newly developed ABE Exact Method linked census records this paper has shown that licensing emigrant agents could have reduced the probability of migration up to 3.5 percentage points. While this may not be evidence that the Great Migration was postponed due to the licensing, there could potentially have been much more migration had emigrant agents not been licensed.

With new data available and more advanced empirical techniques being developed constantly, the discussion on the effects of emigrant agents is likely to evolve substantially. Future research could expand the analysis to other applicable states. Specifically, Louisiana and Mississippi could be investigated as Louisiana began licensing emigrant agents in 1894, while Mississippi remained unlicensed until 1912. Arkansas and Missouri can similarly be tested as Arkansas began licensing in 1915, while Missouri never did so. Tennessee and Kentucky make for a potential bordered pair as well, with Tennessee licensing in 1917 and Kentucky never licensing. Future research into this topic could also include investigating the effects of preventing out-migration on later generations. As father-son pairs can be linked it is possible to carry the effects of licensing emigrant agents forward to census records that report income and other variables of interest.

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Table 6
Entropy Balanced Linear Probability of Migration

VARIABLES	(1) Migrate	(2) Migrate Out of South	(3) Migrate	(4) Migrate Out of South
Age	-0.00160** (0.000716)	-0.000720** (0.000300)	-0.00191 (0.00186)	-0.000757 (0.000649)
Age ²	2.61e-05** (1.04e-05)	4.74e-06 (4.13e-06)	1.96e-05 -2.66E-05	6.31e-06 (8.81e-06)
Ever Married	-0.0749*** (0.00694)	-0.0330*** (0.00386)	-0.0618*** (0.0192)	-0.0420*** (0.0109)
Family Size	-0.00384*** (0.000579)	-0.000108 (0.000262)	-0.00350** (0.00153)	-0.000584 (0.000597)
Illiterate	-0.00435 (0.00378)	-0.00685*** (0.00170)	-0.0223** (0.00997)	-0.00908** (0.00404)
Technical	0.0764** (0.0305)	0.0266 (0.0180)	0.0675 (0.0789)	-0.0187*** (0.00399)
Managerial	0.119*** (0.0384)	0.0247 (0.0199)	-0.0727 (0.0494)	0.0343 (0.0498)
Clerical	0.0896 (0.108)	0.0605 (0.0901)	0.315 (0.295)	-0.0323*** (0.00467)
Sales	0.0733 (0.0572)	0.0203 (0.0232)	0.155 (0.208)	-0.00917** (0.00446)
Craft	0.0195* (0.0113)	0.00322 (0.00442)	0.0391 (0.0331)	-0.000236 (0.00970)
Operative	0.0461*** (0.0137)	0.0256*** (0.00746)	0.120*** (0.0438)	0.000175 (0.0137)
Service	0.0394*** (0.0137)	0.0196** (0.00780)	0.0441 (0.0415)	0.0244 (0.0226)
Occupation NA	0.0141*** (0.00426)	0.00305* (0.00183)	0.0229* (0.0120)	-0.00147 (0.00448)
Large City	0.0606*** (0.0131)	0.0213*** (0.00729)		
Railroad (miles)	-2.52e-05 (0.000239)	6.86e-05 (0.000100)	0.00106 (0.000760)	-0.000297 (0.000188)
Treatment State	-0.00323 (0.00451)	-0.0106*** (0.00173)	0.00125 (0.0124)	0.000425 (0.00386)
Treatment Period	0.0896*** (0.00534)	0.0300*** (0.00265)	0.0618*** (0.0132)	0.0202*** (0.00539)
Treatment Effect	-0.0410*** (0.00677)	-0.0226*** (0.00294)	0.0117 (0.0182)	-0.0141** (0.00673)
Constant	0.236*** (0.0129)	0.0686*** (0.00592)	0.217*** (0.0343)	0.0772*** (0.0148)
Observations	54,461	54,461	6,160	6,160
R-squared	0.016	0.018	0.018	0.015

Note: *p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses

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Trudeau: Licensing Emigrant Agents and African American Migration

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Appendix: Georeferencing

For this analysis, maps from the Association of American Railroads publication *American Railroads, Their Growth and Development* (1958) were used. The railroads were extracted from the image and georeferenced onto the US Census Bureau's state and county shapefiles. The railroads were then converted to a GIS vector and the distance from each county's central position was calculated. See the 1870 example in Figure 1 below. The shaded lines connect each county's central point to the nearest point of railroad in black. Railroad distances (in miles) for the 1870 and 1880 years are available from the author upon request.

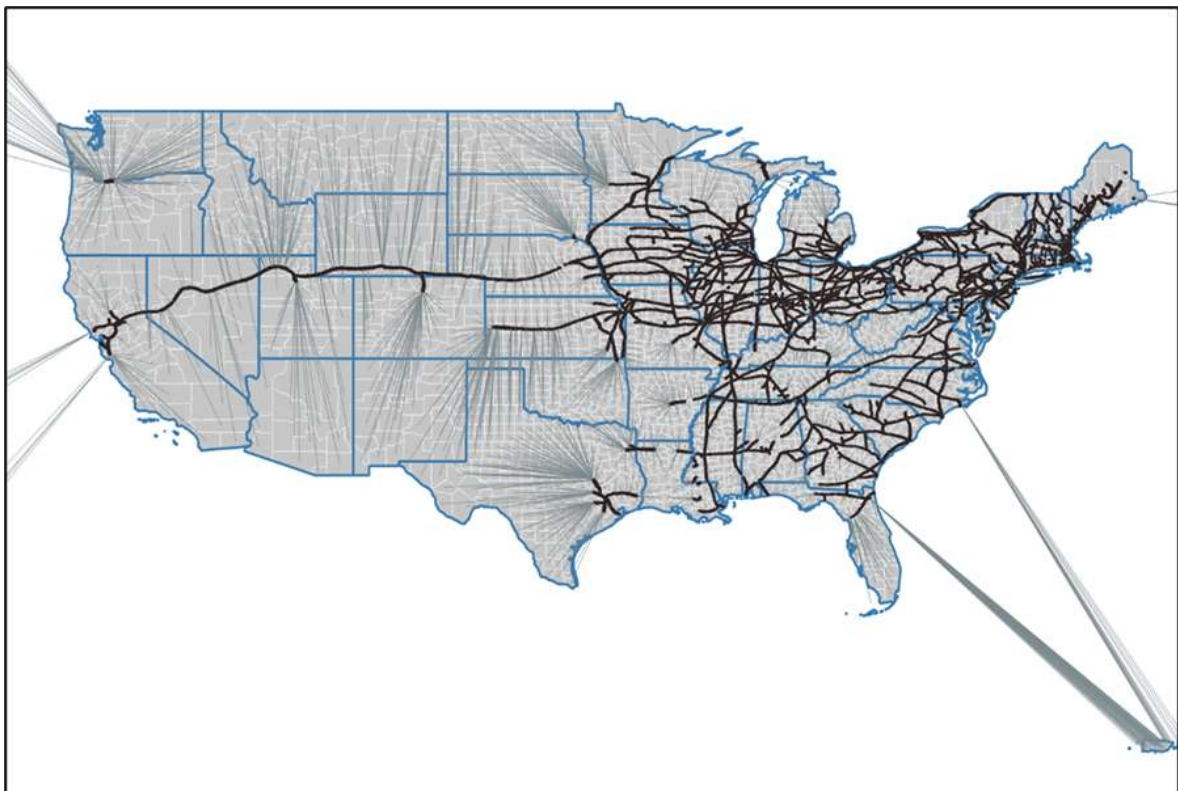


Figure 1
1870 Railroad Map Georeferenced