# AFDC PAYMENT LEVELS AND NONWHITE MIGRATION TO CITIES

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The problem is public welfare, and to many governmental officials public welfare is a problem. This is particularly true of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program which is at the heart of proposals for welfare reform. The problems attributed to AFDC are many, but three themes are repetitive: (1) Benefits are inadequate and hardly begin to care for the needs of the dependent; (2) Family breakups are encouraged by rules which frequently make families with males present ineligible for assistance; and (3) Migration, usually to urban areas, is encouraged by regional differences in levels of payment. To quote President Nixon's message on welfare reform (1969; 2): "By breaking up homes, the present welfare system has added to social unrest and robbed millions of children the joys of childhood; by widely varying payments among regions, it has helped to draw millions into the slums of our cities." The interest here is in the migration thesis as it applies to nonwhites in the United States. Do differential AFDC payment levels predict, at least in part, nonwhite migration to U.S. cities?

AFDC (formerly ADC - Aid to Dependent Children) is a federal participation program through grant-in-aid to states. As a national average the federal government contributes nearly sixty percent, state governments about one-third, and local governments the remainder. The basic purpose of the program is to enable needy children who are deprived of parental support or care to have the economic support and services they need for health, education, and family-based development. The AFDC program was a product of the 1930's when its typical recipient was pictured as a West Virginia mother whose husband had died in a mine accident. Honest, hard-working, rural, God-fearing, white Protestant folk. Gradually the typical recipient has become an urban Negro or a member of some other minority group (Moynihan, 1967; 11). As a result of the changing clientele, many policy makers feel that the nonwhite population is the key sub-population for a test of whether or not different AFDC payment levels affect migration.

The rapid increase in the AFDC program is notable. In 1936, the first year of its operation, there were about one-half million recipients. By 1960 this figure increased to more than three million and to nearly seven and a half million children and adults by 1970. The number of children aided per 1,000 under the age of 18 years also increased from 20 in 1940, to 35 in 1960, and 85 in 1970. Not only have the number of participants increased but also payment levels. Using 1957-59 purchasing power as a base, average AFDC payment per month per recipient increased from $20.05 in 1940, to $27.25 in 1960, to $39.00 in 1970 (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1966; and 1970). However, national averages in payment levels mask state variations. For example, in 1967 the average amount paid per recipient in Louisiana was $24.00, in Georgia $25.35, and in North Carolina $25.40, compared with $43.50 in Illinois, $44.85 in California, and $59.70 in New York (Bureau of Social Science Research, 1968; 27).

## Frame of Reference

The unit of analysis in this study is population aggregates - Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) counties of the contiguous United States. The more usual framework for welfare research is the analysis of case materials with individual records as the basis for generalizations. The perspective here is that area variations in AFDC payment levels can be viewed, along with other social aggregate and demographic characteristics, as indicators of community structure which influence human behavior. These data do not, however, provide a direct test of the motivations of welfare clients.

The frame of reference is applicable to an analysis of social and economic conditions that stimulate or retard migration to or from an area. Viewed behaviorally, an index of migration (in this study the net migration rate of nonwhites aged 25-29) is influenced by actual or perceived differences in the social and economic conditions and services of areas. As Bogue notes (1959; 501), there have been relatively few opportunities to study how net migration rates of given age and color groups of the population are related to social and economic conditions of ecological areas. This type of research provides an ecological complement to studies of the differential migration in that migration forces are sensitive to the social and demographic characteristics of the migrant.

Since most SMSA counties have experienced net migration gains in nonwhites during recent decades the primary link to migration research concerns the forces which "pull" nonwhite migrants to cities. Largely ignored by the definition of the problem are areas of origin "push" factors in nonwhite migration (Myrdal, 1944; Bogue and Hagood, 1953; Bowles, 1956; Ginzberg, 1956; Hamilton, 1959 and 1964; Cowhig, 1964; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1964; Stinner and DeJong, 1969). While the "push-pull" distinction may be somewhat artificial, it is a useful one when assessing the attracting forces of areas largely on the receiving end of net migration flows. Particularly in view of the finding that the pull of better conditions in the city is quite influential as a capturing mechanism, while the push of poor conditions at home is less effective in encouraging departure (Lowry, 1966; Lansing and Mueller, 1967; and Morrison, 1970).

Development of the Model

The basic goal of the study is to test the level of AFDC payment per family in a model which includes "pull" factors which are most applicable to nonwhite migration to metropolitan United States counties. The dependent variable is the 1950-60 county net migration rate for nonwhites aged 25-29 developed by Bowles and Tarver (1965). The choice of this age group is on the basis of our regression analyses of other age categories and the findings of case study materials which indicate that the 25-29 age group includes adults family members most involved with the AFDC program. An alternate would be the 20-24 age group; however, this cohort was only 10-14 years of age at the beginning of the decade, and it is likely that they were relatively nonmigratory as an independent family unit, during a better part of the period. Although the research is based on evidence from the 1950-60 period the continuation of heavy nonwhite migration to metropolitan areas since 1960 as well as upward trends in AFDC payment levels and numbers of clients argue for the importance of available evidence in testing the migration thesis.

AFDC payment levels are measured here by the average county payment per family in 1960. Unpublished statistical data of county AFDC programs was kindly provided by the Welfare Administration, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

From the literature it is clear that a most important attracting force in migration is superior opportunities for employment which reflect differences in economic conditions. It is true for nonwhites as well as whites (Tilly, 1968; 141), and has been confirmed in different research models. When asked why they move, Lansing and Mueller (1967) found that nearly three-fourths mentioned economic or occupational reasons. Some migrants already had a job while other migrants, and nonwhites are more likely to be in this group, were looking for work. Low levels of employment opportunity or low income levels in an area did not stimulate out-migration, but high levels of employment opportunity attracted in-migrants (Lansing and Mueller, 1967; 89-123). Using SMSA data Lowry (1967) came to a similar conclusion that in-migration is a function of the characteristics and conditions of the area's labor market. And Negroes were found to respond more sharply than whites to changes and regional variations in economic opportunity during the period from 1870 to 1950 (Eldridge and Thomas, 1964).

Closely related to the attraction of superior opportunities for employment in one's preferred occupation is the opportunity to earn a larger income. Migrants tend to be attracted to areas with populations of higher socio-economic status (Rogers, 1969; Blevins, 1969). In addition to the broader aspects of social status, the potential for more satisfactory family income itself may be a "pull" factor, particularly for nonwhite migrants who frequently must work at low-paying jobs. A complement to level of family income is the relative gap between nonwhite and white income levels. Following the general rationale of the relative deprivation thesis, one would expect a higher migration rate for nonwhites to areas where family income levels for whites and nonwhites were similar.

Numerous indicators of employment opportunities and socio-economic structure of an area's population have been used by researchers. Some of the more frequent include change in civilian nonagricultural employment; unemployment rate; change in civilian labor force employment in various occupational groups such as white collar, professional, laborer; family income and wage structure, and levels of educational attainment (Anderson, 1956; ter Heide, 1963; Blanco, 1964; Lowry, 1966; Tarver and Beale, 1968; Blevins, 1969; Rogers, 1969; Stinner and DeJong, 1969; Zuches, 1970; Greenwood and Gormely, 1971). Through empirical tests with the above indicators (Donnelly, 1970), three variables were selected as most sensitive to employment opportunities and socio-economic structure in relation to AFDC and nonwhite migration to cities. First, the indicator of employment opportunities is the percent change in employed persons, 1950-60, adjusted to exclude estimated employment change attributable to the net in-migration of nonwhites 25-29 years of age.[1] Second, median income in 1959 for all families is used as an indicator of income levels and the socio-economic structure of the area's population. Median family income is highly interrelated with occupation and education status indicators. The third variable is nonwhite median family income as a percent of median family income of all families. Data for all measures were derived from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Bureau of the Census publications.

From Bogue's (1969; 754) summary of "pull" factors in migration, a final variable which seems particularly applicable to the migration of nonwhites in the 25-29 age category is the lure of new or different activities, environments, and people in the city. Such activities - cultural, recreational, and intellectual - are captured in the life of the larger metropolitan areas more than in the life of smaller cities or rural areas. Undoubtedly included is the lure of perceived freedoms which also tend to be identified with larger cities. Total county population in 1960 is used as an indicator of this factor.

The sample, described in Table 1, is composed of all 185 SMSA counties for which age-color specific 1950-60 net migration rates are available. Further specification of net migration rates by sex added no new findings to the analysis. Bowles and Tarver (1965) calculated net migration data by age and color only for counties which had at least 5,000 nonwhites in 1960. A multiple regression statistical analysis is employed with a two-fold format. First the model is tested for all 185 counties.

Then the sample is divided into three sub-samples: southern SMSA counties, larger northern and western SMSA counties, and smaller northern and western SMSA counties (Table 1). The purpose of testing the model for these divisions of the sample is to assess the significance of disaggregating the relationships by regional and metropolitan character.

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each sample and sub-sample and Tables 3 and 4 give zero-order correlations. As expected the net in-migration of nonwhites aged 25-29 to southern metropolitan counties was very low - average rate of 12.26 - while the average net migration rate for larger and smaller northern and western SMSA counties was much higher, 94.59 and 101.33, respectively (Table 2). Average AFDC payment level per family also varied considerably by region with southern counties averaging nearly $80 as compared with $146 for larger and $140 for smaller northern and western metropolitan counties.

## Findings

Looking at the results for all SMSA counties in Table 5, the nonwhite total income ratio, family income level, and AFDC payment per family appear as the most significant factors in the model. All three factors either directly or indirectly tap differentials in income potential and perhaps indicate the importance (for this age cohort of young nonwhites) of moving to areas most indicative of the affluent society. Population size, as an indicator of the range of experiences and services available in the city, was of less significance than income and AFDC indicators in predicting nonwhite migration, and changes in employment opportunities was not a significant "pull" factor for this migratory age group.

The total model accounted for 39 percent of the variance explained in net migration rates for all SMSA counties (Table 5). However, the predictive value of the model is sharply differentiated by region. The model has the highest predictive value for nonwhite migration to southern SMSA counties with 44.9 percent of the variance explained (Table 6). This compared with 33.8 percent of the variance explained for migration to larger northern and western cities (Table 7) and 12.5 percent for smaller northern and western cities (Table 8).

City size is the strongest attracting force in the migration of young nonwhites in the South (Table 6), while a second highly significant factor is a more equal ratio between nonwhite and total income levels. Change in employed persons is also a significant factor, perhaps because of proximity to and information about actual developments in employment opportunities in southern cities. AFDC payment level is not a "pull" factor, and this is not attributable to a lack of variation in payment levels between southern metropolitan counties (Table 2).

The crux of the migration thesis is usually considered to be the northern and western cities, and for the larger SMSA counties AFDC payment level is a significant component of the model (Table 7). None of the other variables, except perhaps median family income level, even approaches statistical significance. However, for the smaller northern and western cities AFDC is not a "pull" factor and, as before, only median family income level approaches statistical significance. In summary, then, AFDC is a significant factor in nonwhite net in-migration to larger but not smaller northern and western cities, and not important in nonwhite migration to southern cities where the chance to earn larger incomes, more equal to those of whites, and the size of the SMSA are more significant attracting factors.

## Discussion

There may be several ways to view the findings, albeit we choose to generalize at the aggregate level, that is the urban community, rather than at the individual level. However, findings from this perspective are seen as relevant to the more social psychological formulations involving individual motivations and migratory behavior, in that predictive results contrary to the findings of aggregate models would be open to question.

In terms of migration theory, the model has minimal predictive power, particularly for nonwhite net migration to northern and western SMSA counties. Perhaps "push" factors at areas of origin are more important in the urbanward migration of young nonwhites than the literature for all migrants would seem to indicate (Stinner and DeJong, 1969). Much of the past research on "pull" factors has not explicitly considered attracting factors for racial groups, particularly in regard to the consistently reported influence of employment opportunities.

Not tapped in this model but inexorably intertwined with employment opportunities and higher income potentials for nonwhite migrants are variables which represent distance between origin and destination and the existence of friends and relatives in the region of origin and/or destination (Barth, 1970; 188-189). Friends and relatives in a metropolitan area of destination often provide information concerning perceived and/or potential job opportunities, and this helps determine why migrants choose one destination rather than another (Blumberg and Bell, 1959; Rubin, 1960; MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964). Among groups subject to discrimination, the support of friends and family may be quite important (Lurie and Rayack, 1966). Even though opportunities for employment may be relatively near the area of origin, economic and social costs of migration may be less if a migrant goes to a distant place where initial accommodations, job information, and primary group social relationships are available through friends and relatives. Important as distance and friends and relatives may be in explaining

nonwhite migration to cities, they cannot be adequately operationalized in a model based on net instead of stream migration data where counties rather than individuals or families are the unit of analysis.

Turning to the findings concerning AFDC payment level as a "pull" factor in nonwhite migration, the hypothesis receives some support, although the picture is complex and inconsistent. First, AFDC is related to net in-migration to larger but not smaller northern and western SMSA counties, yet payment structures are basically the same for all metropolitan counties within a given state. In other words, despite within-state similarities in payment levels, AFDC appears to "pull" migrants to the New Yorks, the Philadelphias, the Detroits, and the San Franciscos but not to the Albanies, the Harrisburgs, the Flints, and the Fresnos. Second, AFDC is not a "pull" factor in the migration of young nonwhites to southern SMSA counties. Third, level of AFDC payment and median family income are interrelated which may suggest that income level has both a direct and indirect affect on nonwhite migration, with the indirect affect being through higher AFDC payment.

Accepting the migration hypothesis for larger northern and western cities, the frame of reference here would suggest that AFDC is a community resource for income support which migrants and nonmigrants can fall back on if necessary. But to interpret this resource, greater in some cities than others, as a primary cause of net in-migration seems questionable at best. Not all nonwhite migrants are the "welfare poor." In fact, perhaps only a small number are. Characteristics of migrants studies (Hamilton, 1964; Suval and Hamilton, 1965) indicate that nonwhite migrants to the north and west have a higher level of years of school completed than the nonwhite population in the areas of destination. If education is related to employment, migrants may not be disproportionally unemployed. And since the measure here is net migration, it must be recognized that some migrants who "didn't make it" return to their area of origin rather than go on welfare. Finally, the 25-29 age cohort was 15-19 years of age at the beginning of the decade, and it seems reasonable that many migrated before they entered the life-cycle stage that necessitated AFDC assistance.

Lending substantiation to the argument that AFDC is not a primary cause of migration is a New York City study of welfare clients which found that a maximum of 14 percent of AFDC cases were people who had migrated to New York in a 23-month period prior to the study. "In spite of the coping problems facing the newly arrived migrant family, they appeared to be less likely to use public assistance than long-term migrant families" (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the New York State Department of Social Services, 1969; 39). Supporting evidence also comes from another study of welfare families in New York City (Podell, 1967) which reported that 75 percent of the mothers responding to the survey had either been raised in New York City or were ten-year residents and had not migrated solely for the purpose of becoming AFDC clients.

Perhaps it can be concluded that once the decision is made to migrate to a northern or western SMSA, the area of destination for young nonwhites is more likely to be a large city in a state that provides a higher AFDC benefit than one that provides a lower benefit. The point to be made is that nonwhite migrants tend to move to areas which appear to offer them greater civil and economic opportunities. It is, however, these same areas (especially large cities in the northern and western states) which also provide the most liberal AFDC programs and payments. From this conclusion we find agreement with Steiner (1970; 13) that welfare reform which standardizes AFDC benefits throughout the nation, admirable as it may be from a humanitarian viewpoint, is unlikely to make Mississippi as attractive as New York to Blacks in search of greater freedom and opportunity.

## FOOTNOTE

1. To eliminate the contribution of nonwhite in-migrants aged 25-29 from the 1950-1960 percent change in employed persons in the civilian labor force, the following procedure was applied to data for SMSA counties with a 1950-60 net in-migration of nonwhites aged 25-29.

$$\frac{\Delta E - M}{E_{1950}}$$

where:

$\Delta E$ = change in the number of employed persons in the civilian labor force, 1950-1960.
$M$ = number of nonwhite net in-migrants aged 25-29, 1950-1960.
$E_{1950}$ = number of employed persons in the civilian labor force, 1950.

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Table 1. Description of Total Sample and Sub-Samples

| Area | Sample Size |
|---|---|
| Counties composing the 211 SMSA's of the contiguous United States, 1960 | 346 |
| SMSA counties for which age-sex-color specific 1950-60 net migration rates are available;* > 5,000 nonwhites, 1960 | 185 |
| Southern SMSA counties** | 85 |
| Northern and western SMSA counties | 100 |
| Larger SMSA counties with populations of 500,000 or more and their suburban counties | 64 |
| Smaller SMSA counties with populations of less than 500,000 | 36 |

*Source: Bowles and Tarver, Net Migration of Population, 1950-60 by Age, Sex, and Color.

**South as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviation of Each Variable

| Variables* | All SMSA Counties | | Southern SMSA Counties | | Northern and Western SMSA Counties | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | LARGER CITIES | | SMALLER CITIES | |
| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| $X_1$ | 29.97 | 35.26 | 36.30 | 41.35 | 26.70 | 29.87 | 20.84 | 25.00 |
| $X_2$ | $5,956 | $1,015 | $5,332 | $989 | $6,572 | $742 | $6,337 | $541 |
| $X_3$ | 0.62 | 0.11 | 0.55 | 0.09 | 0.67 | 0.11 | 0.68 | 0.06 |
| $X_4$ | 500,393 | 691,267 | 279,940 | 255,425 | 823,054 | 785,321 | 446,772 | 96,475 |
| $X_5$ | $114.46 | $40.62 | $79.93 | $25.64 | $146.09 | $26.68 | $139.79 | $20.76 |
| $X_6$ | 58.08 | 86.29 | 12.26 | 49.24 | 94.59 | 84.34 | 101.33 | 105.17 |

* $X_1$ = Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60.
$X_2$ = Median family income, 1959.
$X_3$ = Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959.
$X_4$ = Total population, 1960.
$X_5$ = AFDC payment per family, 1960.
$X_6$ = Net migration rate, 1950-60, for nonwhites aged 25-29.

Table 3. Matrix of Zero-order Correlations; All SMSA Counties Above the Diagonal and Southern SMSA Counties Below the Diagonal

| Variables | $X_1$ | $X_2$ | $X_3$ | $X_4$ | $X_5$ | $X_6$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | -- | 0.156 | -0.030 | 0.006 | -0.008 | 0.029 |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | 0.388 | -- | 0.380 | 0.306 | 0.688 | 0.512 |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | 0.136 | -0.021 | -- | 0.241 | 0.515 | 0.483 |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.042 | 0.290 | 0.043 | -- | 0.340 | 0.332 |
| $X_5$ AFDC payment per family, 1960 | 0.218 | 0.575 | 0.023 | 0.078 | -- | 0.563 |
| $X_6$ Net migration rate; 1950-60, for nonwhites aged 25-29 | 0.325 | 0.337 | 0.375 | 0.528 | 0.171 | -- |

Table 4. Matrix of Zero-order Correlations: Larger Northern and Western SMSA Counties Above the Diagonal and Smaller Northern and Western SMSA Counties Below the Diagonal

| Variables | $X_1$ | $X_2$ | $X_3$ | $X_4$ | $X_5$ | $X_6$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | -- | 0.231 | 0.055 | -0.150 | 0.174 | 0.073 |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | -0.077 | -- | 0.189 | 0.126 | 0.372 | 0.379 |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | -0.094 | 0.276 | -- | 0.124 | 0.287 | 0.226 |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.447 | 0.278 | 0.143 | -- | 0.269 | 0.199 |
| $X_5$ AFDC payment per family, 1960 | 0.177 | 0.270 | -0.072 | 0.152 | -- | 0.591 |
| $X_6$ Net migration rate; 1950-60, for nonwhites aged 25-29 | -0.049 | 0.461 | 0.278 | 0.204 | 0.175 | -- |

Table 5. Measures of Relationship Between Model Components and the 1950-60 Net Migration Rate for Nonwhites Aged 25-29 for All SMSA Counties

| Model Components | Standardized Regression Coefficient | Standard Error | Student t |
|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | 0.005 | 0.059 | 0.088 |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | 0.207 | 0.082 | 2.524* |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | 0.244 | 0.067 | 3.624** |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.124 | 0.062 | 2.008* |
| $X_5$ AFDC Payment per family, 1960 | 0.253 | 0.087 | 2.898** |
| Multiple Coefficient of Determination ($R^2$) = 0.391; F (5,179) = 24.83 | | | |

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 6. Measures of Relationship Between Model Components and the 1950-60 Net Migration Rate for Nonwhites Aged 25-29 for Southern SMSA Counties

| Model Components | Standardized Regression Coefficient | Standard Error | Student t |
|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | 0.211 | 0.089 | 2.363* |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | 0.119 | 0.111 | 1.075 |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | 0.329 | 0.082 | 3.993** |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.469 | 0.086 | 5.480** |
| $X_5$ AFDC payment per family, 1960 | 0.012 | 0.100 | 0.124 |
| Multiple Coefficient of Determination ($R^2$) = 0.449; F (5,79) = 14.70 | | | |

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 7. Measures of Relationship Between Model Components and the 1950-60 Net Migration Rate for Nonwhites Aged 25-29 for Larger Northern and Western SMSA Counties

| Model Components | Standardized Regression Coefficient | Standard Error | Student t |
|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | -0.059 | 0.108 | 0.544 |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | 0.187 | 0.113 | 1.658 |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | 0.090 | 0.108 | 0.836 |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.021 | 0.109 | 0.193 |
| $X_5$ AFDC payment per family, 1960 | 0.500 | 0.118 | 4.242** |
| Multiple Coefficient of Determination ($R^2$) = 0.338; F (5,58) = 7.44 | | | |

**p < .01

Table 8. Measures of Relationship Between Model Components and the 1950-60 Net Migration Rate for Nonwhites Aged 25-29 for Smaller Northern and Western SMSA Counties

| Model Components | Standardized Regression Coefficient | Standard Error | Student t |
|---|---|---|---|
| $X_1$ Percent change in employed persons, 1950-60 | -0.065 | 0.186 | 0.347 |
| $X_2$ Median family income, 1959 | 0.360 | 0.182 | 1.980 |
| $X_3$ Nonwhite/total income ratio, 1959 | 0.165 | 0.168 | 0.984 |
| $X_4$ Total population, 1960 | 0.096 | 0.190 | 0.507 |
| $X_5$ AFDC payment per family, 1960 | 0.086 | 0.170 | 0.510 |
| Multiple Coefficient of Determination ($R^2$) = 0.125; F (5,30) = 2.00 | | | |