

The history of the great migration: Movement to the urban north (1916-1970) and its cultural, social, and political impact

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Abstract: The main purpose of the article is to conduct a historical analysis of the extensive migration that took place during 1916-1970. The object of the study is the cultural, social and political effect of this phenomenon. The methodology of the study involves the use of historical analysis methods, methods of systematization of available historical information, the method of expert analysis, the method of hierarchical analysis and the method of pair comparison. As a result of the study, key cultural, social and political factors that influenced the process of formation of large migration in the period 1916-1970 were identified through the conducted expert historians. A model of the hierarchical influence of these factors on the formation and development of migration processes is presented. The study has a limitation and takes into account only a specific period in history. At the same time, in further studies, a significant scientific emphasis should be placed on economic factors.

Keywords: *Great migration, Historical analysis, Historical impact, Modeling, Cultural factors, Political factors, Social factors.*

1. Introduction

1.1. The Essence of Key Concepts

The term "Great Migration" refers to a pivotal era in American history when African Americans moved in large numbers from the rural Southern United States to urban centers in the North and Midwest. This migration began around 1916 and continued through the 1970s, with significant peaks during and after both World Wars. Historically, the Great Migration is divided into two phases: the first wave from 1916 to 1940 and the second wave from 1940 to 1970. The primary motivations for this movement were to escape the pervasive racism and lack of economic opportunities in the Jim Crow South, and to seek better jobs, educational prospects, and living conditions in the North. Industrial cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York offered substantial employment opportunities, particularly as labor shortages during the World Wars opened up industrial jobs to African American workers (Figure1).

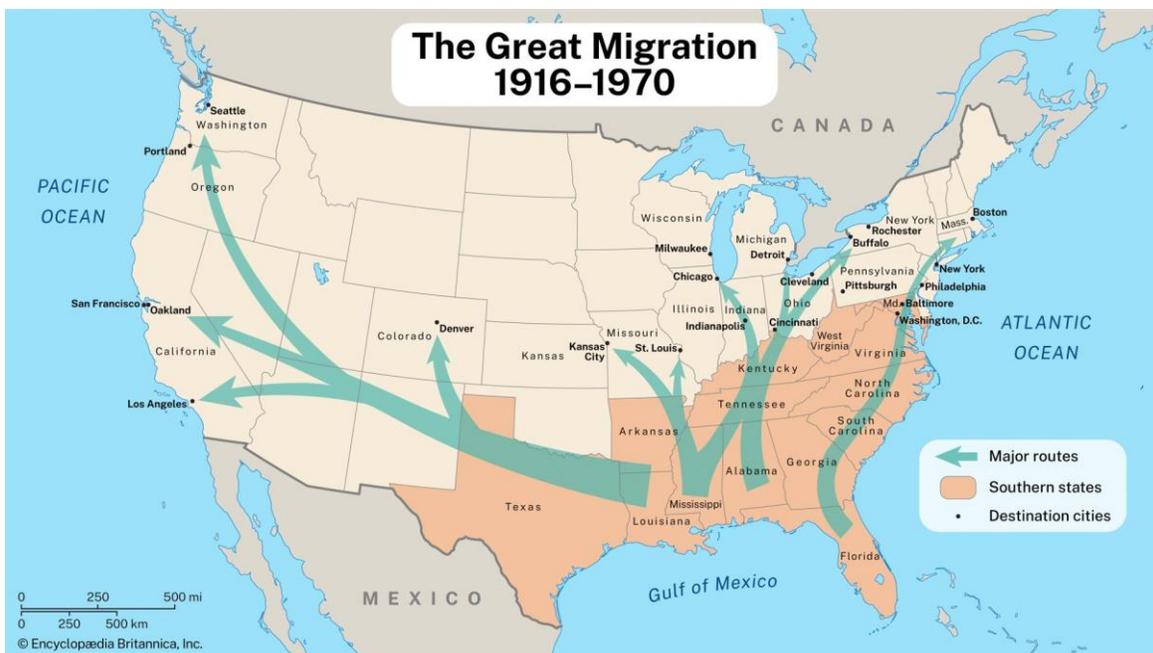


Figure 1.
Historical map of great migration.

Thus, the "Movement to the Urban North" during the Great Migration period was not just a physical relocation of individuals; it was a transformative event that had deep social, economic, political, and cultural ramifications for the United States.

1.2. Relevance of the Topic

The Great Migration was one of the largest and most rapid mass internal movements in history. It significantly altered the demographic landscape of the United States, with profound impacts on urban growth and the social structure of cities. Understanding this migration helps explain the historical origins of urban African-American communities and the evolution of demographic patterns in American cities (Al-Janafawi & Al-Hazza, 2023). This study illuminates how these shifts influenced everything from cultural expressions in music and art to the development of new social and political ideologies. The migration was primarily driven by African Americans' pursuit of better economic opportunities and escape from the oppressive conditions of the Jim Crow South. Analyzing this migration allows scholars and students to assess how economic factors like job availability, wages, and labor demands interact with race and class (Al-Araishi et al., 2023). This exploration can provide insights into the broader themes of economic disparity, systemic racism, and the fight for civil rights, illustrating how economic conditions can drive social change.

The relocation of millions of African Americans to northern cities transformed the political landscape of the United States. Migrants brought their political and social perspectives with them, which significantly influenced local and national policies (Ababneh, et al., 2024). Studying these changes highlights the importance of voting patterns, the emergence of African-American political leadership, and the impact of civic engagement on civil rights legislation. The history of the Great Migration is thus essential for understanding the roots of political activism and the struggle for racial equality in urban settings. The Great Migration had a substantial impact on American culture, particularly in the realms of music, literature, and art (Jarrah et al., 2024). Cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York became hotbeds of African-American culture, leading to the birth of influential cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance. Studying these contributions helps illustrate the ways in which African

Americans have shaped and enriched American cultural identity, providing a broader appreciation for the diversity of American artistic and cultural heritage (Abdel Aleem, 2022).

1.3. Structure of the article

The structure of the article involves a review of the literature, presentation of key methods, coverage of the main results of the research, their discussion and conclusions.

The main purpose of the article is to conduct a historical analysis of the extensive migration that took place during 1916-1970. The object of the study is the cultural, social and political effect of this phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Main Scientific and Practical Developments on the Topic of the Article

Boustan (2016) provides a crucial starting point with an analysis of labor market competitions in Northern cities, emphasizing the challenges and competition black migrants faced within these burgeoning urban economies. Similarly, Collins and Wanamaker (2015) delve into the persistence of racial inequality, illustrating that despite the northward movement, economic disparities remained a formidable challenge for African Americans. These insights are complemented by Eichenlaub et al. (2010), who discuss the limited economic mobility migrants faced, which often resulted in "moving out but not up" within the socio-economic ladder.

The spatial and residential dynamics of the Great Migration are thoroughly analyzed by Flippen (2010), who studies the metropolitan context and its influence on population redistribution and homeownership among African Americans and Hispanics. Iceland (2004) broadens this discussion by exploring the complexities of residential segregation in a multiethnic context, highlighting the nuanced patterns of segregation that extended beyond black and white binaries. Gregory (2005) examines the broader diaspora of both black and white southerners, showing how these migrations transformed American culture and social structures across different states. This transformation is deeply intertwined with the narratives captured by Cooke (1999), who portrays the personal sacrifices and the blissful triumphs of African American elders who lived through the migration. Lemann (2006) and Grossman (1989) further enrich this discussion by chronicling the profound cultural shifts and the birth of new African American communities in Northern cities like Chicago, linking these movements to broader social changes and the eventual civil rights movements. Price-Spratlen (1999) focuses on the criteria African Americans used in selecting their urban destinations during the 1950s, shedding light on the motivations and aspirations that guided their choices. This aspect of destination selection is crucial for understanding the strategic decisions migrants made within the constraints and opportunities of the era.

Together, these works paint a comprehensive picture of the Great Migration's multidimensional impacts. From economic challenges and opportunities to the profound cultural and social reshaping of American cities, the literature underscores the complexity of this significant historical movement.

2.2. The Main Gaps in Literature

Despite the significant scientific contribution among leading scientists, there are a number of gaps in the literature that only confirm the relevance of the topic of the article even today (Figure 2).

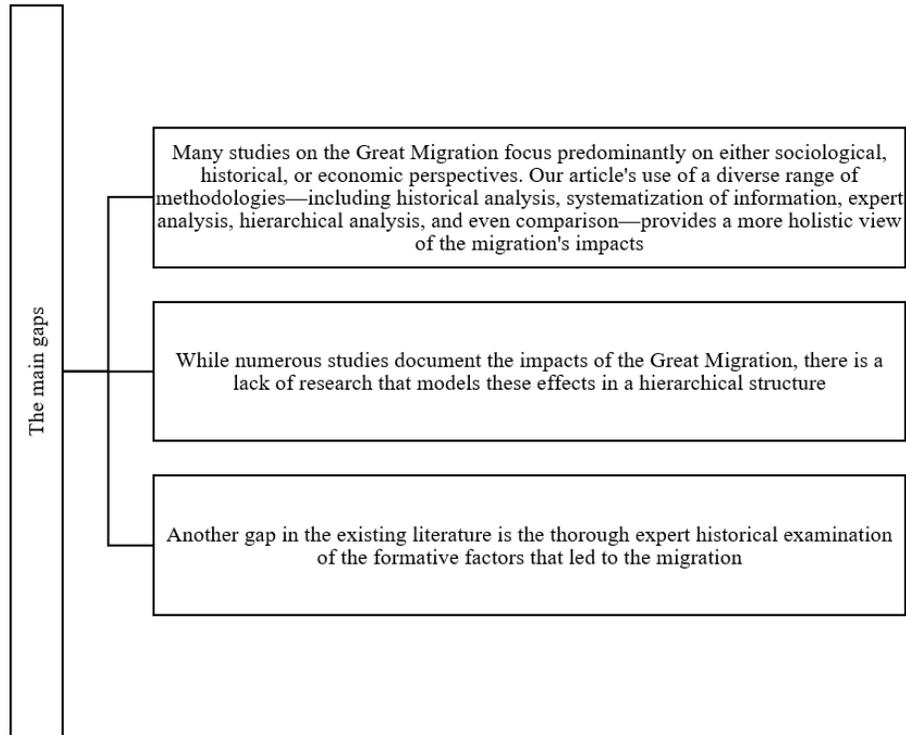


Figure 2.
The main gaps in literature.

Thus, based on the results of the literature review, we will formulate the following scientific task: to enable and organize the key social, cultural and political factors that influenced the development of the great migration.

3. Methodology

3.1. *The Historical Analysis Methods, Methods of Systematization of Available Historical Information*

Historical analysis is a broad field that involves various methods to examine and interpret past events, situations, and developments to understand their causes, contexts, and consequences. Comparative history, another critical approach, involves contrasting different cultures or epochs to highlight similarities and differences, thus revealing universal factors or distinct outcomes shaped by varying environments. Quantitative analysis applies statistical tools to dissect trends in historical data like economic figures or demographics, offering a numerical perspective on historical phenomena. Lastly, historiography examines the evolution of historical writing, reflecting on how historians' biases and societal values shape interpretations over time. This systematization of historical information is vital for a structured, comprehensive understanding of history, ensuring that interpretations are based on a rigorous examination of evidence and broad contextual knowledge.

3.2. *The Method of Expert Analysis, the Method of Hierarchical Analysis and the Method of Pair Comparison*

An expert survey is used in studying all areas of activity for diagnostics and forecasting, design, assessment of the state of a social subject and decision-making. Various forms of expert surveys can be used at different stages of applied sociological research. Expert assessment is an expert opinion on various areas of human activity, which provides for a procedure for comparing objects and their qualities according to selected criteria. The correspondence version of the "weighted assessment method" is called the Delphi method or Delphi technique. The Delphi technique guarantees the anonymity of

respondents - experts do not meet with each other and fill out anonymous questionnaires or connect to work on a computer using a special program. After the first round of examinations, the experts get acquainted with the final characteristics of the position of the group as a whole. In the second round, they get the opportunity to either bring their opinion closer to the majority, or find out the reason for the deviation. In the third round, new information makes it possible to reconsider their point of view again. Simplified variations of the Delphi method allow collecting expert assessments in 3-4 rounds in a few hours or days (the classic version is 12 rounds). We selected 40 expert historians to conduct a survey to identify the most significant factors of social, political and cultural significance that influenced the great migration.

The hierarchy analysis method was proposed in the late 1970s by the American mathematician T. Saati. The method consists of decomposing the problem into simpler components and gradually establishing priorities for the components being assessed using paired comparisons. The hierarchy analysis method includes a procedure for synthesizing multiple judgments, obtaining the priority of criteria, and finding alternative solutions. The essence of the hierarchy analysis method is to build a hierarchical model, determine the eigenvectors and eigenvalues of square inversely symmetric matrices, and check the consistency of the results. The advantage of the hierarchy analysis method is its dimensionlessness and obtaining strict estimates. In the hierarchy analysis method, elements are compared in pairs based on their influence on the overall characteristic. The sequence of conducting the hierarchy analysis model analysis is: studying the influence of criteria on overall goals, studying the influence of alternatives on criteria, assessing the influence of alternatives on overall goals. The method consists of determining the advantages of elements located in the left column over elements located in the top row. In this case, a matrix is created, in the rows and columns of which the factors being compared are arranged.

4. Research Results

4.1. Initial Data for Modeling

As a result of the expert survey using the Delphi method, we identified the most significant social, cultural and political factors that influenced large-scale migration. We will designate them with symbols for further better modeling (Table 1).

Table 1.
Cultural, social and political factors that influenced the development of the great migration (1916-1970).

F	Factors	Characteristics
<i>Cultural Factors</i>		
F1	Cultural renaissance and community building	The Harlem renaissance and similar cultural movements across northern cities offered African Americans a chance to express their cultural identity and foster community solidarity, making these cities attractive destinations
F2	Violence and lynching in the south	The high incidence of racial violence, including lynching, in the Southern states pushed many African Americans to move to what they perceived as the relative safety of the North
<i>Political Factors</i>		
F3	Media and propaganda	The portrayal of the North as a place of opportunity by various media influenced the perceptions and decisions of potential migrants, shaping their expectations and encouraging the migration despite the challenges they might face
F4	Jim crow laws and racial oppression	Legalized segregation and the systemic disenfranchisement of African Americans in the South were primary drivers of migration, as individuals sought to escape oppressive environments where their civil rights were routinely denied

F	Factors	Characteristics
F5	Political enfranchisement	The potential for political participation and influence in the Northern states, where African Americans could exercise their voting rights more freely, was a significant draw
F6	World war I and II drafts	Government policies and drafts for the World Wars facilitated the relocation of African Americans to northern cities, where war-related industries were in dire need of labor
<i>Social Factors</i>		
F7	Education and access to services	Better educational opportunities and social services available in the North drew families seeking to enhance their children's future prospects and quality of life
F8	Family and social networks	Existing relationships and networks provided crucial support systems for new migrants, offering guidance and resources that facilitated their relocation and adaptation to urban life
F9	Economic opportunities	The availability of better-paying jobs, particularly in industrial sectors during the economic booms associated with World War I and II, greatly influenced the migration, as African Americans sought improved economic conditions compared to the agricultural-based economy of the South

Next, it is important to understand that there is a set/multitude of factors $F=\{F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F9\}$. At the same time, there is a certain connection between the factors, for the demonstration of which a graph of connections will be constructed (Figure 3).

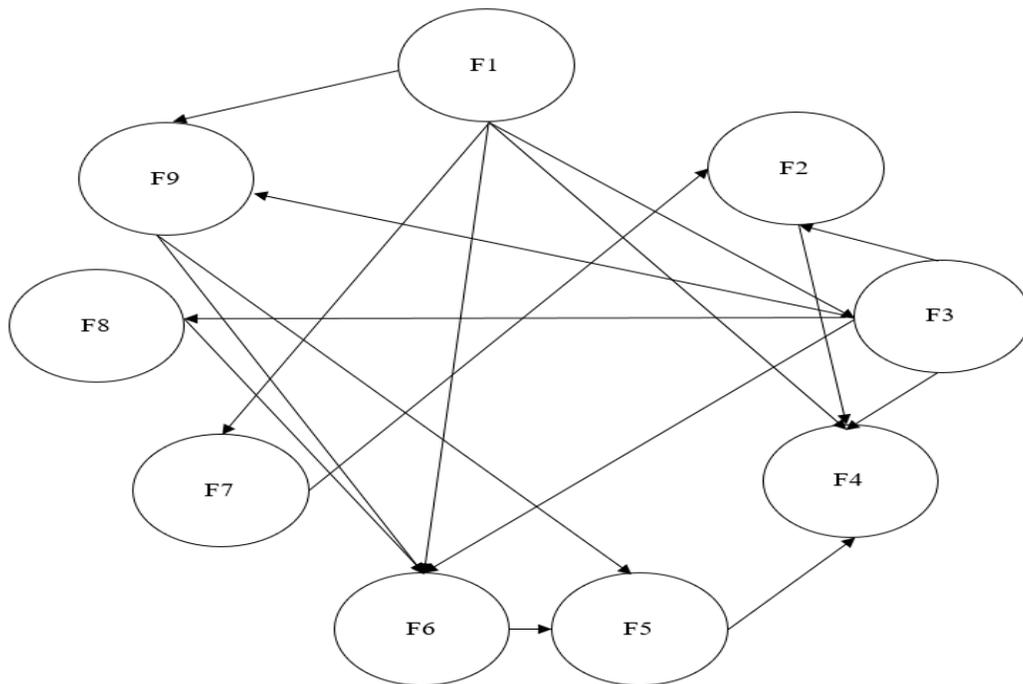


Figure 3.
Graph of connections between influencing factors on the development of the great migration in 1916-1970.

Next, it is necessary to fill in the matrix, for this the following rule (1) must be met:

$$F_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } i \text{ input to } j \\ 0 & \text{if don't} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

As a result, we obtain the following matrix of reachability among the factors we have identified that influenced the development of great migration in 1916-1970 (Table 2).

Table 2.

The matrix of reachability among the factors we have identified that influenced the development of great migration in 1916-1970

F	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9
F1	F1/1=1	F1/2=0	F1/3=1	F1/4=1	F1/5=0	F1/6=1	F1/7=1	F1/8=0	F1/9=1
F2	F2/1=0	F2/2=1	F2/3=0	F2/4=1	F2/5=0	F2/6=0	F2/7=0	F2/8=0	F2/9=0
F3	F3/1=0	F3/2=1	F3/3=1	F3/4=1	F3/5=0	F3/6=1	F3/7=0	F3/8=1	F3/9=1
F4	F4/1=0	F4/2=0	F4/3=0	F4/4=1	F4/5=0	F4/6=0	F4/7=0	F4/8=0	F4/9=0
F5	F5/1=0	F5/2=0	F5/3=0	F5/4=1	F5/5=1	F5/6=0	F5/7=0	F5/8=0	F5/9=0
F6	F6/1=0	F6/2=0	F6/3=0	F6/4=0	F6/5=1	F6/6=1	F6/7=0	F6/8=0	F6/9=0
F7	F7/1=0	F7/2=1	F7/3=0	F7/4=0	F7/5=0	F7/6=0	F7/7=1	F7/8=0	F7/9=0
F8	F8/1=0	F8/2=0	F8/3=0	F8/4=0	F8/5=0	F8/6=1	F8/7=0	F8/8=1	F8/9=1
F9	F9/1=0	F9/2=0	F9/3=0	F9/4=0	F9/5=1	F9/6=1	F9/7=0	F9/8=1	F9/9=1

4.2. Calculation Results

Taking into account the previously constructed graphs and the results of the reachability matrix, we can construct an iterative table to determine the level of influence of a particular factor on the development of the great migration in 1916-1970. In this case, the hierarchy of factors is determined based on iterative calculations, where the column $S(F_i)$ means the number of reachable vertices of the graph, the column $P(F_i)$ is a subset of the previous vertices, and the column $S(F_i) \cap P(F_i)$ is precisely the fulfillment of the condition regarding a certain factor (Table 3).

Table 3.

Iterative table for determining the first level of hierarchical ordering among the factors influencing the development of great migration in 1916-1970.

F	$S(F_i)$	$P(F_i)$	$S(F_i) \cap P(F_i)$
F1	=1;=3;=4;=6;=7;=9	=1	1
F2	=2;=4	=2;=3;=7	2
F3	=2;=3;=4;=6;=8;=9	=1;=3	3
F4	=4	=1;=2;=3;=4;=5	4
F5	=4;=5	=5;=6;=9	5
F6	=5;=6	=1;=3;=6;=8;=9	6
F7	=2;=7	=1;=7	7
F8	=6;=8;=9	=3;=8	8
F9	=5;=6;=9	=1;=3;=8;=9	9

Consequently, the lowest level in the hierarchical ordering, as we see, falls on F1. It will occupy the lowest level of influence on the development of large-scale migration in 1916-1970. Further, this process is presented in Table 3 and continues until we reach the highest level. Bypassing the intermediate results, we will directly construct a model of the influence of social, cultural and political factors on the development of great migration (Figure 4).

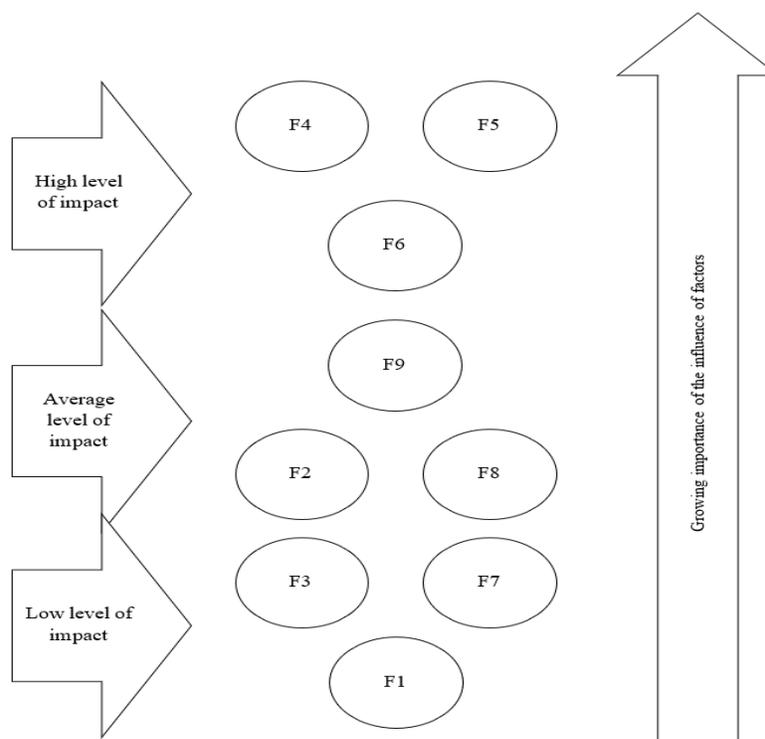


Figure 4.
The model of the influence of social, cultural and political factors on the development of great migration.

The Great Migration (1916-1970) was profoundly shaped by cultural, social, and political factors, primarily the harsh realities of Jim Crow laws and racial oppression in the South. Legalized segregation and the systematic disenfranchisement compelled many African Americans to leave in search of less oppressive environments where they could enjoy basic civil rights. Additionally, the opportunity for political enfranchisement in Northern states, where they could vote and participate more freely in the political process, served as a significant incentive, drawing African Americans towards these areas where they could exert greater influence and claim a fuller share of American civic life.

5. Discussions

5.1. Discussion and Comparison of Results

Barnett, M. C. (1997): Barnett's research focuses on the role of African American religion during the Great Migration. While Barnett emphasizes the spiritual and communal aspects of migration, our study broadens this perspective by highlighting the overarching cultural impacts, such as the evolution of African American arts and social norms in urban environments. Both studies acknowledge the critical role of cultural transformation but from different angles—Barnett through religion and our work through a broader cultural lens.

Tolnay, S. E. (2003): Tolnay provides a comprehensive demographic and socioeconomic analysis, which complements our findings on the social impacts of the migration. While Tolnay delves into the economic conditions that migrants faced, our research has a stronger focus on the political consequences and social dynamics instigated by these demographic shifts.

Wilkerson, I. (2010): Wilkerson's narrative approach in "The Warmth of Other Suns" provides personal insights into the lives of migrants, which adds depth to the statistical and hierarchical models used in our study. Wilkerson's work is vital in humanizing the migration experience, thereby providing anecdotal evidence that supports our more systematic analysis of cultural impacts.

Woods, L. B. (1998) and Zimmerman, A. (2010): These studies explore migrations in different contexts—the movement to Canada and the influence of American ideals abroad, respectively. Our study benefits from these comparisons, as they highlight the unique features of the Great Migration within the broader spectrum of diasporic movements. Wright, R. (2016) and Xie, Y., & Greenman, E. (2011): These works delve into the economics of migration and the segmented assimilation theory, respectively. Our research suggests similar socioeconomic underpinnings but has not focused extensively on them, pointing to a gap that future research could fill, especially in understanding economic motivations and outcomes in more depth. Yancey, G., et al. (2001) and Young, A. A. (2006): These studies examine the themes of residential segregation and social mobility. Our findings on the social impacts align with these themes, particularly in how migration influenced urban racial dynamics and segregation patterns, albeit our focus is more on the overarching societal changes rather than individual or group-level preferences. Zeitz, J. (2007): Zeitz’s analysis of ethnic politics in post-war New York provides a backdrop against which to assess our findings on the political influence of African Americans post-migration. Both studies reveal how migration influenced political structures and policies, though from different ethnic perspectives.

5.2. Innovativeness of the Obtained Results

In the study of the Great Migration and its impacts from 1916 to 1970, our research introduces several methodological and analytical innovations that enhance our understanding of this pivotal period (Figure 5).

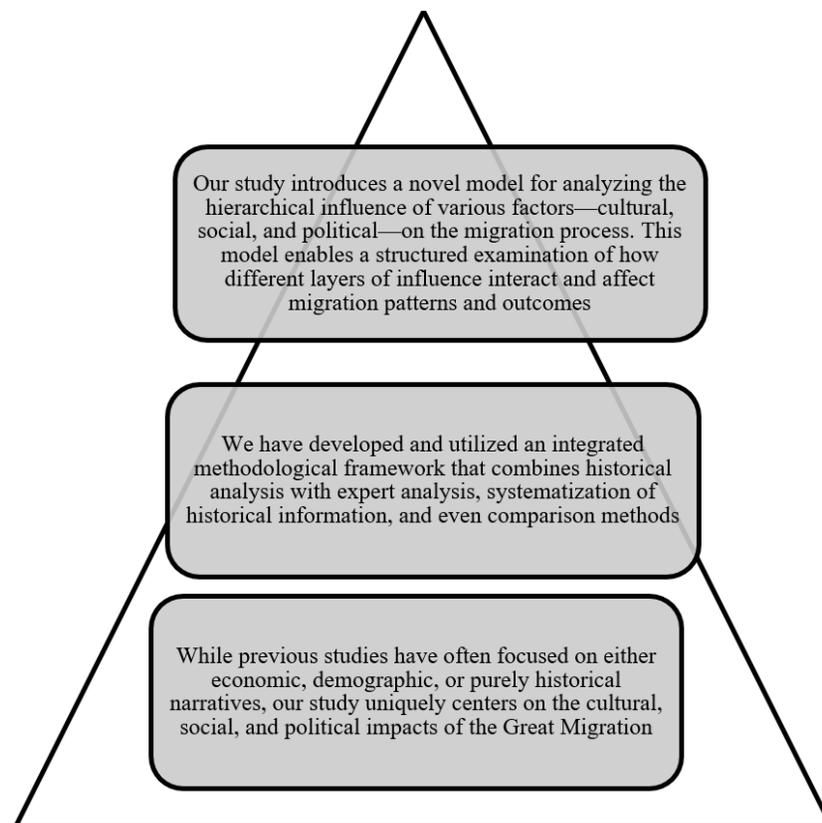


Figure 5.
The main innovations we achieved.

These innovations not only enhance the academic understanding of the Great Migration but also provide a robust framework for future research to build upon, especially in areas that may have been previously neglected or underrepresented in migration studies.

6. Conclusions

6.1. The Main Conclusions After Research Results

This article has conducted a comprehensive historical analysis of the Great Migration, focusing on the period from 1916 to 1970. Through meticulous historical methods, systematization of data, and expert analyses, we have elucidated the profound cultural, social, and political impacts of this significant demographic shift. Additionally, the study presented a model of hierarchical influence, detailing how various factors interplayed to drive the migration and shape its outcomes. This model serves as a crucial tool for understanding the multi-faceted nature of such a large-scale human movement.

6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

The study has a limitation and takes into account only a specific period in history. At the same time, in further studies, a significant scientific emphasis should be placed on economic factors. Future studies should incorporate economic factors to provide a more holistic understanding of the migration. Economic dynamics play a critical role in migration patterns, and their inclusion could offer deeper insights into the reasons behind the migration and the long-term outcomes for migrants and their descendants. It would be beneficial to conduct comparative studies with other significant migrations within the same period, both within the United States and globally. This could help in identifying unique and common factors across migrations and provide a broader context to the findings.

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