

A NOTE ON RETURN MIGRATION TO PUERTO RICO, 1970*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the extent of return migration to Puerto Rico based on data from the 1970 Census. The addition of new questions to the 1970 Census of Puerto Rico permits a more detailed analysis than was possible in the past. In addition to the traditional five-year fixed interval question, persons five years old and over who were residents of Puerto Rico in 1970 were asked whether they resided in the United States for six months or more between 1965 and 1970. Those who did, were further asked to report the year they returned to Puerto Rico, and how long they stayed in the United States the last time they were there. Thus, by using the new question, a part of the migrant population which was not counted in the past is identified.

The obvious question is whether the newly identified part of the migrant population differs from the part that is identified by the traditional five-year question. This paper presents a description of the return migration and the characteristics of the migrants based on both the traditional and the new question. Data were obtained from the combined 3 per cent Public Use Sample of the 1970 Census of Puerto Rico.

ANALYSIS

Migrants to Puerto Rico who were not Puerto Ricans by birth were excluded from the sample. 1/ The two migrant groups discussed in this paper are therefore return migrants to Puerto Rico. 2/ Those Puerto Rican migrants who were in the United States in 1965 and in Puerto Rico in 1970 were labeled Migrants US/65, and those in Puerto Rico in 1965 and in April, 1970, but who resided in the United States for six months or more during 1965-1970 were labeled Migrants, PR/65.

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An analysis of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the migrants identified by the two questions show differences which merit consideration. The first point to be made is that return migrants to Puerto Rico are not primarily retirees, but are in the economically active ages. The return migrants are predominantly 15 to 64 years of age. Less than six per cent, irrespective of place of residence in 1965, were 65 years of age and over. Among migrants in US/65 eighty-six per cent of the men and 82 per cent of the women were in the working ages compared to 88 per cent and 83 per cent respectively of those in PR/65.

Approximately 40 per cent of all the migrants were found between the ages of 20 and 34. These are the ages of entry or recent incorporation into the labor force. By that age most Puerto Ricans have completed their education. It is possible that given the prevailing conditions in Puerto Rico at the end of the decade, the United States became the place of first entry into the labor force for many in this migrant group. It is also reasonable to suggest that under prevailing condition in the United States the migrants were unable to obtain permanent jobs or were the first to be laid off from the jobs they had acquired.

The changing occupational structure in New York, where most Puerto Ricans are concentrated, requires a higher level of formal education than in previous decades. 3/ At the same time, the economic crisis which began unfolding in the last years of the past decade imposed additional strictures in a market with a highly stratified labor demand. It is, therefore, important to examine the educational level of the return migrants.

Among male migrants 25 to 44 years of age, fifty-two per cent of those in PR/65 and thirty-five per cent of those in US/65 had completed eight or less years of school. One third of the male migrants in this age group, irrespective of place of residence in 1965, were high school graduates. In contrast, more than seventy per cent of the male migrants 45 to 64 years of age, irrespective of place of residence in 1965, had completed eight years or less of school

and only eighteen per cent had completed high school or more.

Among female migrants 25 to 44 years of age, approximately forty-one per cent, in each migrant group, had completed eight years of school or less. Twenty-nine per cent of those in US/65, and thirty-nine per cent in PR/65 were high school graduates. More than eighty per cent of the female migrants 45 to 64 years of age, irrespective of place of residence in 1965, had completed eight years or less of school and only nine per cent were high school graduates. It is important to note a small well educated segment, however. The proportion of persons with 13 or more years of school completed in the PR/65 female migrant group 25 to 44 years of age, was higher than that shown for any other group of migrants irrespective of age or sex. This differential illustrates the need, in future studies, to analyze both differences within a given migrant stream as well as the criteria used to identify sub-groups within that stream.

In general, the migrants in our sample, irrespective of age, sex, or place of residence in 1965 were not high school graduates. In fact, about forty per cent of all the migrants had completed less than nine years of school. This is a return migration of young and, primarily, poorly educated persons.

The census in Puerto Rico included questions on the length of stay in the United States, and on the year of last return to Puerto Rico. Among the US/65 migrants about 73 per cent resided in the United States for five years or more. Unfortunately the Census does not provide any further breakdown of the five years or more category. Nevertheless, given the sizable Puerto Rican population in the United States in 1960, it is possible that some of them were residing in the United States at that time. Furthermore, in a study of return migrants to Puerto Rico covering the years 1972 and earlier, Zell ⁴ shows that 22 per cent of all men and 29 per cent of all women, 14 years old and over had been in the United States for eight years or more. The sampling procedures and the definition of migrant used by Zell tend to understate the proportion of long term stayers and to favor the proportion of short-term migrants included. Therefore his findings support the suggestion that a considerable number of those in the United States in 1965 were also there for several years prior to 1965.

Among migrants in PR/65, 83 per cent resided in the United States for less than two years. Since most of the migrants returned between 1968 and 1970 it is likely that the larger number of migrants in PR/65 came to the United States during or after 1967. A study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on the labor force experience of the Puerto Rican worker in the United States indicated that after several years of moderate to negative net migration to the United States, the 1966 and 1967 net migration totals moved up to the 1958-1959 levels. The relatively short stay of the PR/65 group may be the result of worsening economic conditions in the United States in 1969-70.

In sum, the data suggest that length of stay in the United States extended for more than five years for a large proportion of those in US/65 and it was compressed into two years for most of those in PR/65. Thus, this analysis of data derived from several questions on migration appears to identify long term and short term migrations. There is no way to establish from the available Census data the number or pattern of repeated migrations among these migrant groups. It is possible, but hypothetical at this point, that those in PR/65 included a higher proportion of repeated migrations than the other group.

The most obvious limitation of available Census data for the analysis of migration is the lack of longitudinal and cohort data. This is especially the case when trying to discern the effect of duration of residence on the socio-economic characteristics of the migrant population. Such characteristics as earnings, labor force participation, occupation and industry of employment are effected by the recency of arrival of the migrant population. Incorporation into a new setting takes time, even in the case of return migrants. The shorter the duration of residence, other things being equal, the greater the impact of migration on socio-economic status. For example, in our sample some men reported No Earnings in 1969. Since half the migrants returned in 1969-1970, it is possible that the lack of earnings in 1969 may be explained as much by year of arrival in Puerto Rico as by any other characteristic of the migrants. A further limitation is introduced when the occupational distribution is analyzed. Occupation is reported for 1970 and only for employed persons. Given the recency of arrival, it is possible that those who were employed might differ significantly from

those unemployed or out of the labor force. They may include more or those with higher educational attainment except, of course, among rural workers.

Among female employed migrants in each group approximately 24 per cent were Sales and Clerical Workers. Four out of ten of all employed women migrants were Craftsmen or Operatives and one of every eight were Service Workers.

Among the male employed migrants, 5.6 per cent were professionals, about one-third Operatives or Craftsmen, and one-fifth were Transport Operatives or Laborers.

Among PR/65 migrants about 15 per cent of employed males were reported as Farm Laborers compared to 4.1 per cent among the US/65 group. Several reasons may be advanced to explain this relatively high proportion of Farm Laborers in the PR/65 group. Given the age distribution of this group it is possible that they were young males in the rural areas whose migration to the States was a consequence of demographic pressures on the constrained economic conditions in Puerto Rico and who returned to Puerto Rico to their barrio of origin where they found employment as farm laborers. Furthermore, the worsening of the economic conditions in Puerto Rico by the end of the last decade reduced the structure of opportunities available to the return migrant in the urban centers, especially for those migrants with lower educational and occupational skills, thereby forcing them to move to the rural areas of origin. These speculations are consistent with the findings of Cintron-Vales ^{5/} and Zell. ^{6/} They are also consistent with published data on return migration to Puerto Rico. ^{7/} Finally, it is possible that these were migrant farm workers who were already contracted at the time of census enumeration and who reported their future employment and occupation.

The analysis of the differentials in the occupational distribution of migrant groups is an indicator of the position these migrants occupy in the receiving society. It may also reflect differences in the type of areas of residence of the two migrant groups, as well as in their occupational skill. The type of work available to return migrants will also have an impact on their earnings and on their experience of settlement and adjustment into the Puerto Rican society.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of the age composition of the return migrants showed that most

of them were in the working ages, clustered between the ages of first entry or recent incorporation to the labor market and the ages of peak economic activity. These findings raise two important questions. On the one hand, to what extent is the North-Eastern United States the point of entry into the labor market for Puerto Rican youth? On the other hand, what socio-historical factors explain the return migration of persons in the peak ages of economic activity to a severely depressed economic area such as Puerto Rico in 1970?

This return migration may be an indicator of changes in the prevailing socio-economic conditions both in the United States and in Puerto Rico. In New York City for example, there was a net increase of 110,100 jobs during the years 1964-67, but four out of five of these were in white collar occupations. Conversely there has been a long run (since 1950) decline and substantial loss of factory jobs in New York, especially in the industrial sector in which Puerto Ricans have been heavily concentrated. ^{8/} Given the occupational characteristics of the return migrants, this population may be considered part of the labor reserve in North-Eastern United States and Puerto Rico. Such reserves play an important role in the fluctuations, character and composition of the labor force in these markets. The differentials within the same stream are most likely reflections of the impact of socio-economic transformation on different sectors of a given migrant population.

FOOTNOTES

- ^{1/} The migrant population included only those who were residing in Puerto Rico, 1970. It is a count of stayers who have survived. Those who left Puerto Rico during the 1965-70 period and re-emigrated to the United States or died before the date of enumeration were not included.
- ^{2/} Of all the Puerto Rican migrants to Puerto Rico in the three per cent PUS, 15% were persons of Puerto Rican parentage.
- ^{3/} USDL Bureau of Labor Statistics, Regional Reports No. 9, Labor Force Experience of the Puerto Rican Worker, June, 1968, p. 18.
- ^{4/} Steven Zell, A Comparative Study of the Labor Market Characteristics of Return Migrants & Non-Migrants in Puerto Rico. (Puerto Rico Planning Board), p. 76.
- ^{5/} C. Cintron & P. Vales, A Pilot Study: Return Migration to Puerto Rico. (Centro De Investigaciones Sociales-UPR, Rio Piedras), pp. 22-31, 47-48.
- ^{6/} Zell, op. cit.

TABLE I: AGE-SEX DISTRIBUTION OF PUERTO RICANS BY RESIDENCE IN 1965, PUERTO RICO: 1970

Age	Residence in Puerto Rico in 1970							
	Residence in U.S. in 1965				Residence in P.R. in 1965			
	Birth		Parentage		Birth		Parentage	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Number	1,029	1,117	371	399	2,066	1,323	84	105
Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
5-9 years	5.5	5.2	44.5	47.6	3.8	5.1	36.9	34.3
10-14	4.7	6.6	29.4	32.8	4.2	6.7	22.6	24.8
15-19	6.2	7.1	14.0	9.3	10.1	13.3	13.1	15.2
20-24	11.0	13.0	4.3	3.3	24.7	20.8	10.7	9.5
25-29	15.0	12.7	.8	.8	16.0	13.3	2.4	3.8
30-34	14.1	12.8	2.2	2.0	10.5	7.8	4.8	-
35-39	12.4	10.7	1.9	1.3	6.8	5.1	2.4	4.8
40-44	8.2	8.1	1.4	.8	5.8	5.2	2.4	1.0
45-49	8.1	6.0	.5	.8	4.8	4.8	-	2.9
50-54	4.6	4.9	.3	.5	4.0	4.2	2.4	-
55-59	3.3	3.8	-	-	3.6	4.7	-	-
60-64	3.0	3.3	.3	.3	1.5	3.7	1.2	3.8
65-69	1.4	2.4	-	.3	1.8	2.3	-	-
70-74	1.4	1.6	-	.5	1.0	1.8	-	-
75-79	.8	.5	.5	-	.4	.8	-	-
80-84	.3	.8	-	-	.5	.3	-	-
85+	.1	.5	-	-	.3	.5	1.2	-
Median Age	32.7	32.1	10.9	10.4	27.2	26.5	12.9	13.2

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970. Puerto Rico Public Use Samples: "State," Municipio and Neighborhood Characteristics Files.

TABLE II: YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY PUERTO RICANS, 25 TO 64 YEARS OLD, BY RESIDENCE IN 1965, AGE, AND SEX, PUERTO RICO: 1970

Years of School Completed	Residence in Puerto Rico in 1970			
	Residence in U.S. in 1965		Residence in P.R. in 1965	
	25-44 Years of Age	45-64 Years of Age	25-44 Years of Age	45-64 Years of Age
<u>MALE</u>				
Total Number	519	195	810	290
Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-8 years	35.5	70.2	52.0	78.9
9-11	30.1	10.7	17.8	6.5
12	25.8	14.3	18.7	10.7
13 years or more	8.3	4.6	11.2	3.7
Per cent High School Graduates	34.1	18.9	30.1	17.9
<u>FEMALE</u>				
Total Number	498	202	416	231
Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-8 years	40.9	81.7	41.8	86.5
9-11	29.6	9.3	20.1	4.2
12	19.7	2.9	21.9	5.2
13 years or more	9.6	5.8	16.1	3.8
Per cent High School Graduates	29.3	8.7	38.0	9.1

SOURCE: See Table I.

TABLE III: OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED PUERTO RICAN RETURN MIGRANTS, 15 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE, BY RESIDENCE IN 1965, AND SEX, PUERTO RICO: 1970

Occupations	Residence in Puerto Rico in 1970			
	Residence in U.S. 1965		Residence in P.R. in 1965	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Number	532	204	1,047	259
Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical, and kindred workers	5.8	12.8	5.5	15.0
Managers and administrators, except farm	6.5	3.4	4.4	3.4
Sales workers	9.0	6.8	5.5	5.0
Clerical and kindred workers	10.3	16.6	4.6	19.3
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	21.6	6.3	20.1	6.1
Operatives, except transport	10.7	36.7	12.6	30.1
Transport equipment operatives	9.2	.5	8.3	.7
Laborers, except farm	7.1	.9	11.6	1.1
Farmers and farm managers	.7	-	1.7	-
Farm laborers and farm foremen	3.3	.5	14.5	.7
Service workers, except private household	15.2	12.2	10.8	12.7
Private household workers	.2	2.9	.1	5.4

SOURCE: See Table I.