

A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF RETURN MIGRATION  
TO PUERTO RICO USING 1970 CENSUS DATA

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Section I

Introduction

A. Rationale for the Study

The idea of this study emerged from the increasing interest in recent years on the changing character of the direction of the net migration stream between Puerto Rico and the United States. The increasing movement of people between Puerto Rico and the States has been a subject of considerable concern to demographers, economists, and sociologists interested in the process of rapid economic and social change underway in Puerto Rico since the end of the Second World War. The major concern until recently, however, has been with the out-migration stream and its demographic and socio-economic consequences for the Island. Little concern had been evidenced with the in-migration stream until the end of the 1960's when the socio-economic implications of the reversal of the migration movement became noticeable.

According to Census figures some 34,000 Puerto Ricans returned to the Island between 1955 and 1960 and more than 225,000 between 1965 and 1970. In other words, as early as 1960 it became evident that the migration stream was taking a different shape because of the tendency to accelerate of the return migration flow and that its impact on the social and economic parameters of the Island could not be overlooked. Yet, the only comprehensive study about return migration in the 1960's was the one undertaken by Hernández Alvarez<sup>1/</sup> using original data from the 1960 Census. Hernández' study was an original and penetrating analysis of the characteristics (age, sex, education, family composition, fertility, economic activity, resettlement patterns) of the group that returned to the Island during the period of 1955 to 1960. According to the 1960 Census a person was identified as a return migrant if he was born in Puerto Rico, had a residence in the United States in April 1st, 1955, and was enumerated as living in Puerto Rico in April 1st, 1960. A serious limitation of this definition was the exclusion of migrants who left Puerto Rico after April 1955, but returned to the Island before the Census date (April 1, 1960). Another limitation was the inclusion of persons living in the United States in April, 1955 even for a few days or weeks, e.g., tourists, visitors, etc. Persons born in the States of Puerto Rican parentage were excluded from the definition.

<sup>1/</sup>José Hernández Alvarez. Return Migration to Puerto Rico. Berkeley, California, University of California. 1967.

Since Hernández' study, no other studies on return migration were undertaken until Zell's analyses of the 1971 and 1972 Immigration Surveys.<sup>1/</sup> The statistical analysis of the data obtained in the 1971 Immigration Survey, though, threw no new light about the return movement to Puerto Rico.<sup>2/</sup> The definition of return migrant utilized in this survey was similar to that of the 1960 Census but on a year basis; migration figures were obtained for the period of April 1970 to April 1971. In the 1972 survey, Zell introduced two major changes. One had to do with the definition of return migration. This was modified to include any person who had lived outside of Puerto Rico for three consecutive months or more at any time during his life. The other major change was the inclusion of the year of last return to Puerto Rico as an item in the survey. In this way Zell obtained information about all persons living in Puerto Rico at the time of the interview (April 1972) who had spent three months or more outside of Puerto Rico any time during their lives, i.e. about their "lifetime" migration. He also obtained data about the year of last return to Puerto Rico.<sup>3/</sup>

"Lifetime" migration data as obtained by Zell is a helpful measure and undoubtedly can provide new insights in relation to this phenomena. But in explaining the rationale of his definition, he is highly critical of the Census questions considering them as "very special definitions of return migrants... necessitating very careful considerations..." Notwithstanding the limitations, there is nothing wrong or special, in our opinion, in utilizing a fixed interval of time in obtaining estimates of return migration. All demographic events (mortality, natality and migration) are obtained in a similar fashion in order to make them comparable. One serious limitation, though, of the Census question is that persons going to the United States after the date which represents the lower limit of the time interval and the date representing the upper limit are excluded.

On the other hand, "lifetime" return migration as obtained by Zell poses very serious problems of interpretation as a result of re-emigration and mortality and the fact that the migration event occurred at an unknown time in the individual's lifetime. Those migrants who

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<sup>1/</sup> Since 1963 the Puerto Rico Planning Board, with the collaboration of the Department of Labor, had been collecting some data about immigration to the Island in conjunction with the April Household Sample Survey of the Labor Force, but no in-depth analysis of these data had been made.

<sup>2/</sup> Steven Zell "Statistical Analysis of the 1971 Immigration Survey," In Puerto Rican Migrants: A Socio-Economic Study. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico Planning Board. 1972.

<sup>3/</sup> Steven Zell. A Comparative Study of the Labor Market Characteristics of Return Migrants and Non-Migrants in Puerto Rico. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico Planning Board. 1973.

returned to Puerto Rico after being residents in the United States and re-emigrated again before the date of the interview are excluded. This group is probably considerable and very different from those return migrants who reincorporated to the Puerto Rican society. In addition, the data gathered in this way represent the survivors of those who returned and stayed on the Island.

The major contribution of Zell's study was the analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the returnees by year of last return to Puerto Rico. He found significant differences between the time spent in Puerto Rico after last return and such variables as unemployment, occupational status, and participation rates.

Information of a longitudinal nature supplementary to that obtained by Zell was generated by CINTRÓN and VALES<sup>1/</sup> in 1973 using a sub-sample of returnees drawn from the sample used by Zell in 1972. One of the most interesting findings of this study has to do with the migratory experience of the group. The traveling experience for the group ranged from one trip to the United States to thirteen, the average being 2.1 trips per person. The majority of the trips were to New York (53 percent for the first trip and also 53 percent for the last trip). Other important areas in which some new data were obtained include: motivations for emigrating; English language proficiency and work experience before first trip; job experience and other activity during their stay in the States; and, occupational mobility and income differentials upon return to Puerto Rico.

No comprehensive analysis, however, has been made thus far of the data on return migration generated from the 1970 Population Census. Such an analysis could provide new data comparable to the one obtained by Hernández Alvarez for 1955-1960<sup>2/</sup> that might yield useful insights into the changes that occurred in the pattern and in the socio-demographic and manpower profile of return migration in the 1960's. The inclusion of parentage in the definition of return migration in the 1970 Census also permits comparisons along socio-demographic dimensions between first generation Puerto Ricans and second generation Puerto Ricans, a group about which very little information has been generated up to now. Furthermore, and given the labor resource allocation problems that plague Puerto Rico, the new data and insights produced by such an analysis could provide supplementary information to the one provided by Zell<sup>3/</sup> on the relationship between migration experience and labor force behavior of the Puerto Rican population useful to policy makers in the Island as well as to scholars interested in the problems of

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<sup>1/</sup> Celia Fernández de CINTRÓN and Pedro A. Vales. Social Dynamics of Return Migration to Puerto Rico. Rio Piedras; Social Science Research Center, 1975.

<sup>2/</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>3/</sup> Op. cit.

labor resource allocation in surplus labor economies, i.e. economies with high unemployment rates.

## B. Objectives and Scope of the Study.

This study sought to develop additional data and analytic insights on the relationship between the labor force behavior of the population in Puerto Rico and their migration experience, with special emphasis on "recent" migration experience. The general aim was to use the data generated from the 1970 Population Census to define systematic differentials in labor force behavior among return migrants from the United States and the non-migrant population and to attempt to relate these differentials to variations in selected economic and socio-demographic factors. Specifically, the study was directed to provide answers to questions such as: What share of the Puerto Ricans living on the Island in 1970 returned from the United States between 1965 and 1970? Of these returnees, how many were living in the United States in 1965, and how many in Puerto Rico in 1965? What is the recent labor force behavior of these two groups and to what extent are differences between the two groups associated with the degree of recency of their migration experience? How well have both groups of migrants adjusted to labor market conditions upon return to Puerto Rico? What economic and socio-demographic factors are associated with varying labor force behavior of these groups? What are the socio-demographic dimensions of the second generation Puerto Ricans that moved to the Island between 1965 and 1970? How does the labor force behavior of the return migrants compare with that of the non-migrant population and what economic and socio-demographic factors accounted for the differences? Did the labor force behavior of the return migrants have any significant impact on the labor force behavior of the total population? Of what sort, if any?

The research approach adopted in linking labor force behavior with migration experience entailed the analysis of twenty special tabulations of data from the 1970 Population Census for Puerto Rico. Responses to the set of Census questions relevant for migration analysis were cross-tabulated with those of the new Census questions on labor force status (activity status in the States, vocational training) and with the traditional labor force and other socio-economic items in the Census. The new questions relevant to migration included for the first time in the 1970 Census made possible to identify, in addition to the return migrants living in U.S. in 1965, those return migrants who migrated to the States between 1965 and 1970 but returned on time to be enumerated on the Island in 1970, and also to establish the duration of their last migration experience and the year of last return to Puerto Rico. This made it possible not only to generate comparable data with that produced by Hernández but to develop new data to establish comparisons among return migrants in terms of place of residence in 1965, birth and parentage, duration of their stay in the States, and the year they came back to the Island. These new questions also allowed, granted the problems of differences in

methodology, a comparison of our findings with those of Zell and to draw inferences as to similarities or differences between the migrants that returned to Puerto Rico in 1971-72 and those that returned before 1970.

UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO  
RECINTO DE CIENCIAS MEDICAS  
FACULTAD CIENCIAS BIOSOCIALES Y ESCUELA  
GRADUADA DE SALUD PUBLICA

SEMINARIO SOBRE LA "MIGRACION DE RETORNO" A PUERTO RICO  
Y SUS IMPLICACIONES

Objetivos:

Al finalizar el seminario los participantes:

1. habrán comprendido la magnitud del fenómeno de la "migración de retorno" durante las últimas décadas, así como las características socio-demográficas de estos migrantes.
2. habrán analizado y determinado las consecuencias e implicaciones que tiene la "migración de retorno" en la sociedad puertorriqueña, especialmente en el aspecto de salud.

Actividades:

Martes 14 de junio

9:00 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.

Presentación del fenómeno de "migración de retorno".  
Diseño del estudio basado en los datos del censo de 1970.

11:00 A.M. - 12:00 M

Distribución Material y Discusión de las Limitaciones Metodológicas del Estudio.

1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Grupos Pequeños:

Análisis del perfil demográfico y socio-económico de los migrantes de retorno.

3:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Informes de los grupos y discusión general

Miércoles 15 de junio

9:00 A.M. - 12:00 M

Grupos pequeños de trabajo: Análisis de las implicaciones de la migración de retorno y redacción de informe sobre este aspecto.

1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Lectura y discusión de los Informes

2:45 - 3:30 P.M.

Redacción Informe Final (líderes de grupo)  
Posibles Areas de Investigación en Relación con la Migración de Retorno (resto de los participantes)

3:30 - 4:00 P.M.

Presentación Informes Finales

Material a Utilizarse:

- A. Objetivos del estudio y resumen de datos.
- B. Tablas estadísticas obtenidas del Negociado del Censo.
- C. Capítulos 3 y 4 libro sobre Población de Puerto Rico (Por: José L. Vázquez).
- D. Censo de 1970