

Occupational Mobility among Returned Migrants in Latin America: A Comparative Analysis

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This article draws on data from the Mexican Migration Project and the Latin American Migration Project to study patterns of occupational mobility among male migrant household heads who have returned from the United States to Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. In general, migration to the United States increases the likelihood of upward mobility relative to nonmigrants if it begins at a relatively young age (before twenty-five), particularly in Costa Rica and Guatemala, where mobility is generally more fluid. In all countries, but especially Mexico, mobility prospects depend on a migrant's own characteristics and the characteristics of the U.S. trip, as well the context of return. Education generally enhances occupational achievement upon return, as does greater U.S. experience and the holding of a nonmanual U.S. job, but taking more trips and having legal U.S. documents are generally associated with lower odds of occupational achievement at home.

Keywords: international migration; Latin America; Mexico; Caribbean; social mobility; occupational mobility

International migration is among the most important demographic phenomena affecting the world today. In an environment where advances in transportation and communications are steadily shortening geographic distances, cross-border flows of people have become ever more salient (Castles and Miller 2004). Immigration has accordingly become a subject of considerable debate within government and academia, as well as among the general public. Research on this topic has historically focused on the consequences of migration, principally for destination countries. In recent years, however, the effect of international migration on economic development within sending countries has received greater attention. Financial remittances, in particular, have been studied intensively, though other dimensions of international migration, such as effects on sending-country labor markets, have also been studied (Parrado 1998; Yúñez-Naude 2001; Lindstrom and Giorguli 2002; Frank and Wildsmith 2003; Giorguli 2004).

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In this article, we seek to broaden our understanding of international migration's consequences in sending countries by studying occupational mobility among Latin American migrants who have returned from the United States.

Studies to date suggest that foreign labor market experience provides migrants with human capital and financial assets that facilitate their reentry at home, often yielding improved occupational circumstances (Lindstrom and Kim 2002; Papail and Arroyo 2004; Cobo 2004). In the case of Mexico, migration to the United States is connected to upward occupational mobility through the accumulation of financial capital that allows returnees to purchase land or establish business enterprises (Cobo 2004). Here we argue that this apparent link between international migration and occupational mobility is mediated by characteristics of the home community, particularly its job market, as well as the extent and nature of the migrant's foreign labor market experience. Social characteristics of the place of origin (its occupational structure, employment options, and economic trends) define opportunities for upward mobility locally, and the form of labor participation in the destination country (the migrant's legal status, age, occupation, and duration of stay) determine the possibilities for accumulating human capital, financial assets, and physical assets while abroad.

In this study, we undertake a comparative analysis of the labor market trajectories of U.S. migrants upon their return to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. All of these places depend heavily on international migrants and their remittances, but they offer different patterns of economic organization to returning migrants. Like other studies in this volume, we draw on data from the Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and the Mexican Migration Project (MMP). We focus on the occupations held by returned migrants at two points in time: at an early stage of their work experience and after return migration from the United States. We use these data to investigate two basic issues: whether international migration yields upward or downward occupational mobility compared with nonmigrants and whether mobility patterns observed in each setting can be

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linked to socioeconomic characteristics of the sending community and the migrants themselves.

We begin with a brief history of Latin American migration to the United States and outline salient differences among the four locales. We then discuss international migration as a potential mechanism for the accumulation of resources that might facilitate occupational mobility upon return. After describing our methodology and data, we estimate multivariate models to predict mobility patterns in each country of origin.

Latin American Migration to the United States

Although migration between developing countries is quite common, here we focus on movement from developing to developed nations. The United States is the world's principal recipient of immigrants, with around 35 million foreign-born residents counted in the 2000 census. By 2005, the U.S. Current Population Survey revealed that immigrants made up 15.9 percent of the total U.S. population and held more than 20 percent of all jobs in extraction, manufacturing, and personal services (Giorguli, Gaspar, and Leite 2006). The influx of immigrants over the past several decades has contributed to the restructuring of the U.S. labor force, the transformation of the nation's economy, and rapid shifts in demographic composition.

The history of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is closely linked with international migration and with commercial, financial, scientific, and technical ties to the rest of the world and other nations in the region. LAC migration patterns have shifted over the years, but today the United States is the principal destination for the region's international migrants. The Pew Hispanic Center (2008) found that about 40 percent of all U.S. Hispanics, around 44 million people, were born in Latin America. The rate of migration to the United States is very different from country to country, however. Mexico is overwhelmingly the leading source of migration to the United States, although migration from Central and South America has substantially increased in recent decades. This study seeks to highlight the heterogeneity and complexity of these international flows with regard to each nation's particular history of migration, selectivity of migrants, documentation, local economic conditions, and national job markets.

In the past, armed conflicts and civil violence drove many Latin Americans to seek refuge in the United States, particularly from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala. At present, however, it is more labor opportunities and migrant networks that continue to draw in Latin Americans to the United States. The economic recession, stronger in some sending countries than others, and the corresponding lack of opportunities for local social mobility, make migration to the United States a popular strategy to gain resources (monetary or otherwise) for households to survive and prosper. To date, however, little work has been done on the prospects for occupational mobility upon return or the modalities of reentry. This article analyzes this aspect of migration, looking at how money saved or remitted from the United States and a migrant's specific work experience acquired abroad determine the pattern of mobility experienced

TABLE 1
Selected Indicators of Socioeconomic Conditions
in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, 2000

| Socioeconomic Indicators | Costa Rica | Guatemala | Mexico | Puerto Rico |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| GNP per capita (in dollars) | 4,062.8 | 1,531.9 | 5,826.3 | 6,839 |
| Average growth GNP per capita 1995–2000 | 2.6 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.5 |
| EAP total (thousands of people) | 1,583 | 3,539 | 40,601 | 11,57 |
| Percentage EAP in agriculture | 16.9 | 36.5 | 17.5 | 2.9 |
| Percentage EAP in industry | 22.6 | 20.5 | 28.3 | 21.6 |
| Percentage EAP in services | 60.5 | 43 | 54.2 | 75.5 |
| Total (%) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Percent urban population | 58.7 | 43 | 74.8 | 71.9 |
| Percent salaried urban population | 68.7 | 54.2 | 74.8 | 85.5 |
| Unemployment rate | 5.8 | 5.4 ^a | 3.4 | 10.1 |
| Gini coefficient | .470 ^b | .543 ^a | .528 ^b | .535 |
| Percentage illiterate | 4.4 | 31.5 | 8.8 | 6.2 |

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration based on the information reported in the Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006, based on World Bank data about development indicators, from the statistics reported by the OIT (LABORSTA) and the U.S. Census Bureau. NOTE: EAP = economically active population.

a. Data for 2003.

b. Data for 2005.

at home. We also argue that new research needs to be conducted on how the economic structure of communities influences occupational achievement at the individual and household levels.¹

The sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and their acquisition of assets to facilitate social mobility are crucial to understanding the occupational attainments of migrants after their return. Foreign work experience constitutes a potential resource to facilitate the advancement of returning migrants. Indeed, throughout LAC the act of migration might itself be construed as a strategic attempt to achieve occupational mobility in settings where prospects for upward mobility via local workforce participation are limited.

The four places of origin selected for this study represent very different environments for returning U.S. migrants. Table 1 summarizes basic economic indicators for each place in 2000. In general, the four had similar economic growth dynamics in the years surrounding the survey, though they differ on particular economic and social indicators. Rates of economic growth fluctuated around 2 percent per year during the late 1990s, ranging from 1.5 percent in Puerto Rico to 2.6 percent in Costa Rica. Levels of economic development varied more widely, ranging from a gross national product (GNP) per capita of around \$1,500 in Guatemala to \$6,800 in Puerto Rico, with Costa Rica and Mexico in between at \$4,100 and \$5,800, respectively.

Table 1 also shows the industrial composition of the economically active population (EAP). Differences in the percentage employed in services stand out and largely correspond to the percentage of the population that is urban and to overall wealth. Around 72 percent of Puerto Ricans live in cities, and more than three-quarters of its EAP work in services, with just 2.9 percent in agriculture; this is compared with an urbanization rate of 43 percent in Guatemala, with 43 percent in services and 37 percent in agriculture. Again Mexico and Costa Rica generally lie between these two extremes, with urbanization rates, respectively, of 75 and 59 percent; 54 and 61 percent, respectively, in services; and around 17 to 18 percent in agriculture.

Another revealing statistic is the percentage of urban workers who are salaried, which is a rough indicator of labor market opportunities and the degree to which self-employment is an option. In a less developed economy such as Guatemala's, nearly half of the urban population is unsalaried. In contrast, Puerto Rico's economic development is closely tied to that of the mainland United States, yielding a much higher proportion of salaried workers (86 percent), compared to values of 75 percent in Mexico and 69 percent in Costa Rica. Illiteracy has virtually disappeared in Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Costa Rica, especially among the young, but a third of Guatemalans still cannot read or write. All countries are marked by great inequality, although Costa Rica is somewhat more egalitarian than the others, with a Gini coefficient of 0.47 compared with values of 0.529 or greater in the other three locales.

Migration to the United States, Return, and Occupational Mobility

There are relatively few analytic frameworks available to study the interrelationship of migration and occupational mobility. Since our study assumes an intention to return to the home country,² the most promising framework would be one that focuses on migrant motivations, which we consider to be paramount. From this perspective, migration is hypothesized to be oriented toward obtaining savings, sending remittances, and acquiring assets, essentially enabling migrants to accumulate capital through their own labor (Singer, Durand, and Massey 1995; Taylor 1987). Indeed, migration often forms part of an explicit strategy to purchase physical capital, increase household consumption, or finance new forms of production (Durand et al. 1996), offering migrants a chance to begin a private business or acquire farmland. In other words, the acquisition of financial capital through migration provides a mechanism of occupational mobility for returned migrants.

International migration also offers migrants a way of increasing their human capital, which also yields dividends in the form of occupational mobility upon return. Through foreign wage labor, migrants increase their skills and abilities. While abroad they are exposed to different lifestyles, languages, and work practices and new occupational regimes.³ In this way, international migration contributes to building knowledge and abilities that increase the odds of employment and raise the chances of securing a higher-status, better-paying job after returning home. It is thus essential to consider both the accumulation of migratory

experience itself as well as the influence of this experience on the accumulation of human capital, financial capital, and physical assets.⁴

The list of factors relevant in determining occupational mobility is potentially quite extensive; and without seeking to be comprehensive here, we trace out several key variables and their expected influence on migrants' mobility upon their return. Legal status, of course, is of central importance in determining a migrant's opportunities for accumulating resources, since those with legal documents are in a better position to work, save, and invest while living in the United States and therefore to launch a business enterprise upon their return (Baca and Bryan 1981). The kind of U.S. work done by migrants also influences their ability to accumulate resources, since jobs are linked not only to wages but to the degree of labor stability and access to benefits (Giorguli and Gaspar 2008). Stable jobs also tend to require more qualifications and offer greater possibilities for acquiring new skills. As far as the accumulation of financial capital is concerned, Durand et al. (1996) show that the most important explanatory variable is the monthly U.S. income, since it determines the capacity for saving and remitting. The amounts a migrant devotes to taxes, food, and rent also influence the ability to save and remit.

Lindstrom (1996) argues that over time, international migration leads to changes in the economic structure of migrant-sending communities, since it allows migrants to become landowners or business operators or enter more skilled occupations when they return. Labor experience in nonagricultural jobs in the United States, particularly in the commercial and service sectors, can provide migrants with new knowledge and skills to upgrade occupations or become entrepreneurs back home. In contrast, agricultural jobs yield little in the way of human or financial capital that can be translated into occupational mobility at home.

Duration of stay in the United States is another fundamental factor for the accumulation of capital. The longer a migrant works in the United States, the greater the opportunity to learn a new trade or receive training that might increase the odds of occupational mobility upon return (Papail and Arroyo 2004). Various studies also suggest that prolonged stays in the United States facilitate the creation of businesses and the improvement of retail skills (Papail and Arroyo 2002, 2004; Mooney 2004).

The literature on how conditions in countries of origin affect occupational mobility after return is much smaller than the literature on the relationship between trip characteristics and social mobility. The economic context in sending countries and communities also needs to be considered in assessing the possibilities for social mobility following a return. Other things being equal, we expect an urban setting to offer more possibilities for social mobility than rural areas. Likewise, we expect greater mobility among migrants who return to an economically dynamic, growing setting than those who come home to a stagnant, backward economy in which acquired skills cannot be converted into productive outcomes (Conway and Cohen 1998). A community's degree of migratory participation might also influence the odds of employment, if employers are less willing to contract a

workforce with high international migratory experience, given the high likelihood of further migration by contracted workers (Lindstrom 1996).

Data and Methods

Based on the above discussion, we defined a set of key independent variables to employ in our analysis of occupational mobility among returned migrants, divided into three basic categories as shown in Table 2: individual characteristics, trip characteristics, and contextual conditions. To operationalize these variables, we draw on data from the LAMP and the MMP. Since the LAMP began only in 1998 whereas the MMP goes all the way back to 1982, we use only community samples from the MMP that were done in 1998 or later.

As shown in Table 3, this selection yields sixty-five communities for Mexico, forty-six rural and nineteen urban. Given that the LAMP survey moves from country to country each year, the number of communities corresponding to the other places is naturally much smaller, with seven in Costa Rica (one rural and six urban), three in Guatemala (one rural and two urban), and five in Puerto Rico (one rural and four urban). Given that in these countries the large majority of migrants are male household heads, we focus attention on this group. In Mexico and Guatemala some 85 to 86 percent of households were male-headed, whereas in Costa Rica 77 percent were headed by males. Female-headed households were most common in Puerto Rico, where just 57 percent were headed by males. Among household heads, 46 percent had mainland U.S. migratory experience in Puerto Rico and 33 percent in Mexico, compared with just 12 percent and 15 percent in Costa Rica and Guatemala, respectively.

Occupational Mobility among Returned Migrants

We began with the assumption that return migration involves a diversity of stories that potentially explain the return. These are linked to the reasons for migration, to experiences in the receiving country, to sociodemographic characteristics of the migrants, and to conditions in migrant-sending communities. A return completes the international migratory cycle and could be brought about by a variety of circumstances. It might be a consequence of migratory policies in the United States: in a restrictive and discriminatory environment, migrants might decide to reestablish residence in their countries of origin. Likewise, the possession or lack of legal work or residence documents also leads to different perspectives on the desirability of returning to one's place of origin. Migrants might choose to return home when they have met their original goals, such as generating enough savings to start a business or acquiring skills to advance at home. In some circumstances, migrants, despite not having achieved their objectives, may decide to return for other reasons entirely, such as loneliness, a death in the family, or the birth of a child. From our perspective, the reasons for return represent individual

TABLE 2
 Independent Variables Used in Analyses of Occupational Mobility
 by Returned Migrants from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico

| Key Explanatory Variables | Combined Models | Models by Country | General Description |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Individual characteristics | | | |
| Birth cohort | X | X | Cohort defined by year of birth |
| Education | X | X | Years of schooling |
| Labor experience | X | X | Years of labor experience accumulated by age 45 |
| Age U.S. experience accumulated | X | | Identifier of the condition of migration. Three categories: with previous experience before the age of 25, with migratory experience after the age of 25, and nonmigrant |
| Trip characteristics | | | |
| Age at migration | | X | Age at which the first migration to the U.S. occurred |
| Number of trips | | X | The total of migratory journeys to the United States |
| Legal status | | X | The possession of legal documents during the last migration to the U.S. Two categories: with and without documents |
| Occupation in the U.S. | | X | Type of employment during the last migration to the U.S. Three categories: other occupations, manual, and agrarian jobs |
| Accumulated U.S. experience | | X | Total months of migratory experience in the U.S. |
| Contextual conditions | | | |
| Type of locality | X | | The rural-urban condition of the selected community |
| Percentage earning less than two times the minimum wage in service sector | X | X | Proportion of the EAP in the service sector and earning less than twice the minimum wage |
| Variable of the country | X | | Dummy variable for the country in question |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP) (Files: Life File and Community File).

TABLE 3
 General Characteristics of the Sample Selected from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) and the Latin American Migration Project (LAMP)

| Information | Costa Rica | Guatemala | Mexico | Puerto Rico |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Year of the survey | 2000–2003 | 2004 | 1998–2007 | 1998–1999 |
| Total selected communities | 7 | 3 | 65 | 5 |
| Rural | 1 | 1 | 46 | 1 |
| Urban | 6 | 2 | 19 | 4 |
| Sex of the head of the household (%) | | | | |
| Female | 23 | 14.6 | 14.1 | 42.7 |
| Male | 77 | 85.4 | 85.9 | 57.3 |
| Migratory condition of the head of the household (%) | | | | |
| With experience in the U.S. | 12.4 | 15 | 33 | 46.3 |
| Without experience in the U.S. | 87.6 | 85 | 67 | 53.7 |
| Percentage of migrant women | 18.1 | 5.1 | 6.1 | 55.9 |
| Percentage of migrant men | 81.9 | 94.9 | 93.9 | 44.1 |
| N | 6,532 | 1,954 | 73,756 | 4,066 |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from LAMP and MMP (File: House File).

choices made by migrants within a conjunction of specific socioeconomic and political conditions in countries of both origin and destination.

One cannot speak of a “definitive” return among migrants, since at any moment there could be a new decision to migrate again to the United States. For our purposes, a returned migrant is understood as someone who completed at least one migratory circuit from one of the four comparison places of origin to the United States. Table 4 presents information on the ages at which migrants departed for and returned from the United States. Among all male household heads with U.S. migratory experience, most had returned by the time of the survey. Only around one-quarter of all Puerto Rican male migrants were still in the mainland United States (with information about them being provided by family members), compared with roughly a third in Costa Rica and Guatemala. Mexico stood out, with 46 percent still in the United States at the time of the survey, reflecting the effect of border militarization after 1998, which discourages border crossing (see Riosmena and Massey, this volume).

The age of departure is generally younger for Puerto Ricans (twenty-two years) and Mexicans (twenty-five years) than for Costa Ricans (thirty years) and Guatemalans (thirty-one years). Moreover, whereas the typical Costa Rican and Guatemalan migrant returns within three years (at ages thirty-three and thirty-four, respectively), trip durations are much longer for Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Because they began migrating at an earlier age, the same age of return

TABLE 4
Age at Time of Migration to and Return from the United States for Male Household Heads in Four Countries

| Selected Ages | Costa Rica | Guatemala | Mexico | Puerto Rico |
|---|------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Age at the time of migration to the U.S. | | | | |
| Average | 30 | 31 | 25 | 22 |
| First quartile | 21 | 23 | 19 | 18 |
| Median | 27 | 31 | 25 | 21 |
| Third quartile | 37 | 35 | 29 | 25 |
| Age upon returning from the U.S. | | | | |
| Average | 33 | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| First quartile | 26 | 27 | 25 | 24 |
| Median | 31 | 34 | 32 | 31 |
| Third quartile | 41 | 39 | 39 | 44 |
| Percentage of the migrant population who returned | 68 | 69 | 54 | 74 |

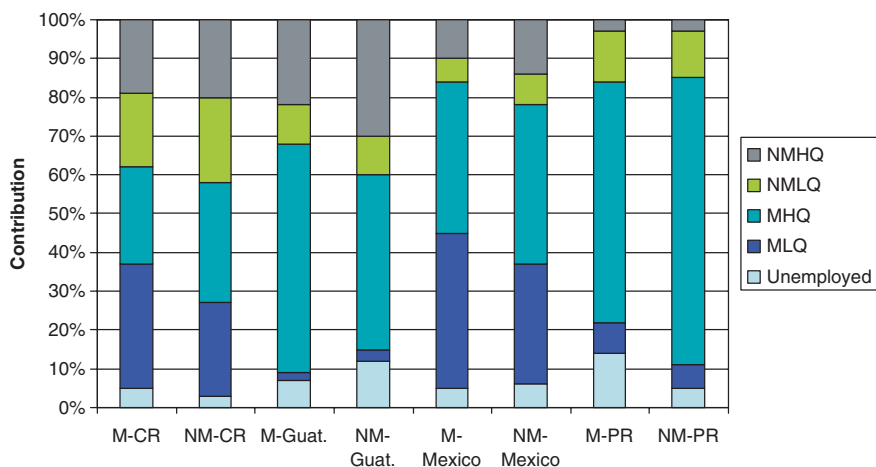
SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP) (Files: Life File).

(thirty-four years) yields much longer trips (nine years for Mexicans and twelve years for Puerto Ricans).

As noted above, the questions that guide the present investigation are (1) whether migration to the United States constitutes a mechanism of occupational mobility for returned migrants in diverse Latin American countries; (2) if so, what forms does that occupational mobility assume; (3) whether mobility patterns differ from country to country; and (4) what elements of the migratory experience help to explain the types of occupational mobility observed in each context. There are two ways to study occupational mobility: intragenerational and intergenerational. The first looks at the changes an individual experiences from the beginning of his work history to the time of return migration; the second compares a migrant's occupational achievement to that of his father at a comparable age (Zenteno 2003).

In this study we focus on intragenerational, or career, mobility. We begin by considering the occupations held by migrant and nonmigrant household heads at two points in the life cycle: at ages twenty-five and forty-five. We expect differences between countries to reflect differences in economic context and level of urbanization but differences between migrants and nonmigrants within each setting to indicate the marginal effect of migration to the United States, holding constant these contextual differences. Figure 1 shows the occupational distributions for migrants and nonmigrants at age twenty-five, when men are at the beginning of their working lives. It is likely that many will experience changes over time as they accumulate human capital and convert it into better jobs.

FIGURE 1
 Percentage Distribution of the Jobs of Migrants and Nonmigrants at Age
 Twenty-Five—Heads of Households, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico



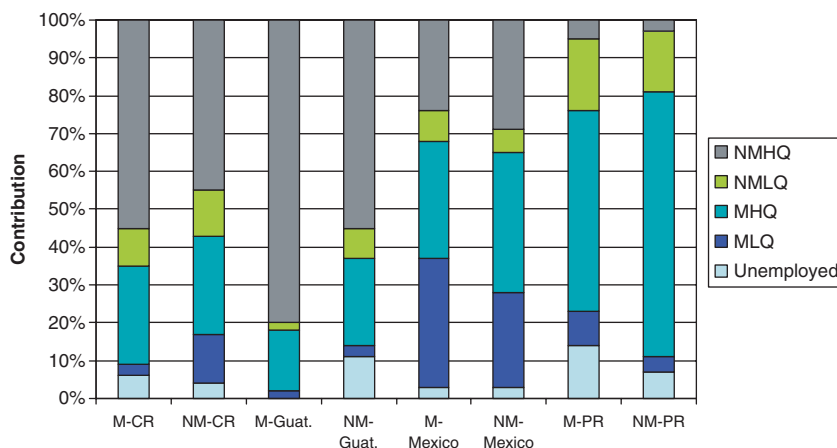
SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project and Mexican Migration Project (Archives: Life).

NOTE: M = migrant; NM = nonmigrant; NMHQ = nonmanual of high qualification; NMLQ = nonmanual of low qualification; MHQ = manual of high qualification; MLQ = manual of low qualification.

In Figure 1 we code occupations into one of five ranked categories. At the top are nonmanual jobs of high qualification (e.g., professionals, teachers, and managers). This category is followed in descending order by nonmanual jobs of low qualification (e.g., sales workers and personal services), manual jobs of high qualification (e.g., plumbers, electricians, and technicians), manual jobs of low qualification (e.g., factory workers, common laborers, and farmworkers), and the unemployed.

As seen in the figure, manual occupations (of both high and low qualification) make up a majority of the jobs held in all countries, whereas nonmanual occupations make up much fewer than half of all jobs in each context. Apart from this general pattern, however, we do observe certain differences among countries. In Costa Rica and Guatemala, for example, we generally observe a higher frequency of nonmanual occupations compared with Mexico or Puerto Rico. In the latter case, the unemployed constitute a significant share of the labor force, especially among former mainland U.S. migrants. Puerto Ricans, of course, have access to the U.S. system of unemployment insurance, which could help explain the higher rates observed there. The heavy concentration of Mexicans in manual occupations of low qualification probably reflects the prevalence of rural communities in the sample.

FIGURE 2
 Percentage Distribution of Migrant and Nonmigrant Jobs at Age Forty-Five—Heads of Households, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico



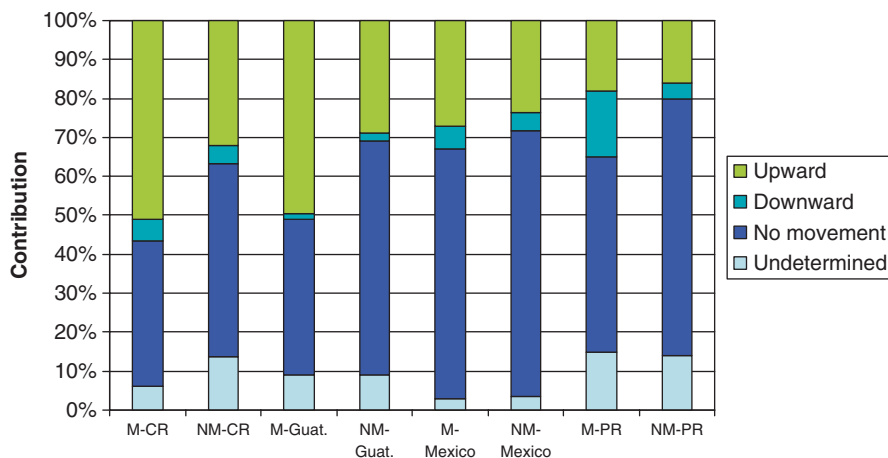
SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project and Mexican Migration Project (Archives: Life).

NOTE: M = migrant; NM = nonmigrant; NMHQ = nonmanual of high qualification; NMLQ = nonmanual of low qualification; MHQ = manual of high qualification; MLQ = manual of low qualification.

In general, the share in nonmanual occupations is greater for nonmigrants than migrants at age twenty-five; this likely reflects the occupational selectivity of migration to the United States, since those in higher-status jobs are less likely to leave. Figure 2 shows the distribution of occupations held by migrants and nonmigrants at age forty-five, when workers should be at or near their peak status. At this age, the share in nonmanual occupations is indeed much greater than at age twenty-five; and in the case of Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico, the share is now greater for migrant than nonmigrant household heads, suggesting the possibility of upward occupational mobility.

Figure 3 takes up the issue of occupational mobility directly by classifying occupational changes between age twenty-five and forty-five into four categories: upward (into a higher occupational category), downward (into a lower category), no movement (remaining in the same category), and undetermined (missing data for either the initial or final occupation). As can be seen, there are rather sizable intercountry differences in the likelihood of experiencing upward mobility between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five. Upward was most common in Costa Rica, followed in order by Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. In general, the most likely outcome was stasis: no change in occupational status between the two ages. Downward mobility was relatively rare, except among returned

FIGURE 3
Types of Occupational Mobility Experienced by Migrants and Nonmigrants—Heads of Households, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico



SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project and Mexican Migration Project (Archives: Life).

NOTE: M = migrant; NM = nonmigrant.

migrants in Puerto Rico, about 15 percent of whom experienced downward mobility. In general, however, U.S. experience appears to be positively associated with upward mobility. In each case the bar indicating upward mobility is greater for migrants than for nonmigrants, though in Mexico and Puerto Rico the difference is rather small compared with Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Determinants of Occupational Mobility

Although raw comparisons suggest the possibility of migration-related upward occupational mobility in several countries, they tell us little about the determinants of mobility or whether gross differences between migrants and nonmigrants will persist once individual and community characteristics are controlled. Table 5 presents mean values for our leading indicators of migratory experience to reveal that there are significant differences among migrants from different countries. As noted earlier, the age of migrants on their first U.S. trip is much younger in Puerto Rico and Mexico than in Costa Rica and Guatemala. Moreover, by the time of the last trip, the vast majority of Costa Ricans (79 percent) had obtained documentation, compared with minorities of Guatemalans and Mexicans (45 and 46 percent, respectively). All Puerto Ricans, of course, are documented

TABLE 5
Indicators of U.S. Experience for U.S. Migrants from Four Countries

| Selected Characteristics | Costa Rica | Guatemala | Mexico | Puerto Rico |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Age at first migration | | | | |
| Average | 30 | 30.5 | 25 | 22 |
| Median | 27 | 31 | 25 | 21 |
| Number of trips | | | | |
| Average | 1.5 | 2.4 | 2 | 1.4 |
| Median | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Legal status on last trip (%) | | | | |
| With documents | 79.2 | 44.5 | 45.7 | N/A |
| Without documents | 20.8 | 55.5 | 54.3 | N/A |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | N/A |
| Occupation on last trip (%) | | | | |
| Other occupations | 18.1 | 20.2 | 10.7 | 23.4 |
| Manual | 79.4 | 51.2 | 53.1 | 65.7 |
| Agricultural work | 2.5 | 4.5 | 31.7 | 10.9 |
| Not specified | 0 | 24.1 | 4.5 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Accumulated U.S. experience (months) | | | | |
| Average | 40 | 53 | 83 | 91 |
| Median | 36 | 48 | 77 | 86 |
| <i>N</i> | 252 | 112 | 6,586 | 325 |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP) (Files: Life File).

by definition, being native U.S. citizens. Across all nations, a majority of migrants worked in manual jobs while in the United States; but among Mexicans, a sizable plurality—nearly a third—worked in agriculture. Puerto Rican migrants had accumulated the most experience in the United States (ninety-one months), followed by Mexicans (eighty-three months), Guatemalans (fifty-three months), and Costa Ricans (forty months).

To control for the effects of these background differences and to measure the independent effect of migration on mobility, we estimated multinomial logit equations to predict the type of occupational mobility observed between age twenty-five and forty-five: upward, downward, or undetermined, compared with a reference category of no mobility. Results for all countries pooled together are shown in the left-hand columns of Table 6, labeled model 1. In general, the control variables have the effects one might expect. Education significantly increases the odds of upward mobility while lowering the odds of downward mobility. Increasing time spent in the labor force reduces the odds of either upward or downward mobility—the longer one stays in an occupation without moving, the lower are the chances that any move will occur—and an urban location strongly reduces the odds of downward mobility.

TABLE 6
 Multinomial Logit Models Predicting Kind of Mobility
 Experienced after Return from the United States

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | UM | DM | Und | UM | DM | Und |
| Individuals | | | | | | |
| Year of birth | | | | | | |
| Before 1939 | 0.182° | 0.230° | -0.115° | 0.177° | 0.247° | -0.204° |
| 1950 and later | 0.201° | 0.355° | 0.320° | 0.192° | 0.347° | 0.253° |
| 1940-1949 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Years of education | 0.050° | -0.079° | 0.002° | 0.050° | -0.073° | 0.002° |
| Labor experience | -0.006° | -0.007° | -0.003° | -0.006° | -0.007° | -0.002° |
| Age of first U.S. experience | | | | | | |
| MEB 25 years | -0.104° | -0.046 | 0.176° | -0.165° | -0.077 | 0.249° |
| MEA 25 years | -0.513° | -0.884° | -0.286° | -0.565° | -1.451° | -0.384° |
| Nonmigrant | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Socioeconomic characteristics | | | | | | |
| Type of locality | | | | | | |
| Urban | -0.155° | -0.606° | 1.016° | -0.156° | -0.761° | 0.911° |
| Rural | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Percentage < 2 times minimum wage | 0.010° | 0.057° | 0.030° | 0.010° | 0.057° | 0.030° |
| Countries | | | | | | |
| Costa Rica | 0.718° | 0.439 | 0.198° | 0.646° | 0.381° | 0.245° |
| Guatemala | 1.004° | -0.018 | 0.192° | 0.909° | 0.062 | 0.156 |
| Puerto Rico | -0.304° | 0.967° | 0.391° | -0.386° | 0.203 | 0.313° |
| Mexico | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Interactions | | | | | | |
| CR × MEB 25 | | | | 0.586° | 0.391° | -1.240° |
| CR × MEA 25 | | | | 0.508 | -1.778 | 0.847° |
| GUA × MEB 25 | | | | 0.864° | -1.929 | 0.452 |
| GUA × MEA 25 | | | | -1.972 | -1.508 | -1.787 |
| PR × MEB 25 | | | | -0.200 | 0.181 | -0.764° |
| PR × MEA 25 | | | | 0.505 | 3.003° | 0.870° |
| Constant | 0.392° | -0.301° | -1.889° | 0.407° | -0.239° | -1.290° |
| Wald χ^2 | | 6,406° | | | 6,600° | |
| Pseudo R^2 | | .099 | | | .102 | |
| N | | 31,467 | | | 31,467 | |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP) (Files: Life File and Community File).

NOTE: Dependant variables: UM = upward mobility; DM = downward mobility; Und = undetermined. Independent variables: MEB = migratory experience before the age of 25; MEA = migratory experience after the age of 25; CR = Costa Rica; GUA = Guatemala; PR = Puerto Rico; — = Reference Category.

° $p < .001$.

To study the effect of U.S. migration, we divide people with migratory experience into two categories: those who began migrating before age twenty-five and those who began migrating after age twenty-five. Other things being equal, migration to the United States lowers the odds of experiencing mobility of any sort, reducing the likelihood of both upward and downward movement, but the negative effect is less when migration begins before age twenty-five.

Compared with Mexico, upward mobility is more likely in Costa Rica and Guatemala and less likely in Puerto Rico, which suggests the possibility of country-specific differences, which we explore in a model that adds interaction terms between country and first migration experience before and after age twenty-five. This modification reveals that in both Costa Rica and Guatemala, early migration experience is associated with a significantly increased likelihood of upward mobility upon return. Because it is difficult to sort out the net effect of interactions by inspecting coefficients alone, Table 7 reports probabilities of experiencing different kinds of mobility for returned migrants coming back to different countries.

As can be seen, in Costa Rica a returned migrant who began migrating before age twenty-five has a 51 percent chance of upward mobility and a 15 percent chance of downward mobility, whereas a nonmigrant has a 50 percent chance of upward mobility but a 23 percent chance of downward mobility. Thus, in Costa Rica, migratory experience begun at a young age affects occupational achievement more by reducing downward mobility than by enhancing upward mobility, compared with nonmigrants, whereas migrant experience begun at older ages yields no clear benefit. In contrast, youthful migratory experience very clearly enhances the prospects for upward mobility in Guatemala. Whereas a migrant who left before age twenty-five had a 58 percent chance of upward mobility after his return, the chance was only 49 percent for nonmigrants, and the prospects for downward mobility were about the same (20 percent for the young-departing migrant and 17 percent for the nonmigrant). In Mexico and Puerto Rico, however, migration is generally associated with a lower likelihood of upward mobility, irrespective of the age at which it began, and in Puerto Rico it is also associated with a greater likelihood of downward mobility.

Thus, Puerto Rico stands out for its dim prospects for occupational achievement, especially for returned migrants, and the lack of consistent effects of U.S. experience across countries indicates the need to control for the nature of that experience in assessing the effects of international migration. Working in the United States as a farm laborer can generally be expected to yield few resources for occupational mobility upon return; in contrast, working in occupations such as busboy or waiter in a restaurant affords workers the opportunity to learn English and interact with English-speaking customers, a potentially valuable skill in Mexico's large tourist industry. We therefore use country-specific models only for returned migrants to predict upward and downward mobility, adding in information about the amount and nature of the U.S. experience. These equations are included in the appendix, and the results are summarized in Table 8.

TABLE 7
 Predicted Probabilities of Experiencing Different Kinds
 of Mobility after Return from the United States

| Country and Migratory Condition in the United States | Type of Occupational Mobility | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|------|------|-----|
| | UM | DM | Und | WM |
| Costa Rica | | | | |
| MEB 25 years | .51° | .15° | .16° | .18 |
| MEA 25 years | .45 | .17 | .17° | .21 |
| Nonmigrant | .50 | .23 | .16 | .11 |
| Guatemala | | | | |
| MEB 25 years | .58° | .20 | .08 | .14 |
| MEA 25 years | .48 | .18 | .10 | .24 |
| Nonmigrant | .49 | .17 | .13 | .21 |
| Mexico | | | | |
| MEB 25 years | .35° | .10 | .16 | .4 |
| MEA 25 years | .28° | .02° | .22 | .48 |
| Nonmigrant | .39 | .10 | .31 | .21 |
| Puerto Rico | | | | |
| MEB 25 years | .15 | .30 | .18° | .37 |
| MEA 25 years | .16 | .23° | .20° | .41 |
| Nonmigrant | .26 | .15 | .22 | .37 |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP).

NOTE: The simulated probabilities are based on the combined model 2 contained in Table 8; these were estimated using the average values of the other independent variables. UM = upward mobility; DM = downward mobility; Und = undetermined; WM = without mobility. MEB = migratory experience before the age of 25; MEA = migratory experience after the age of 25.

° $p < .001$.

This table suggests that much of the heterogeneity observed in how U.S. migratory experience affects occupational mobility can be traced to underlying heterogeneity in the nature of that experience. A greater age at first migration is associated with a significantly higher likelihood of upward mobility in Costa Rica and Mexico, but in Guatemala a higher age of departure lowers the likelihood of upward mobility and raises the likelihood of downward mobility. A larger number of trips is associated with an increased probability of downward mobility in Costa Rica and Mexico, probably because it indicates the selection of migrants into seasonal, low-paid work in the United States. In contrast, the total amount of U.S. experience (holding number of trips constant) is positively associated with upward mobility in Costa Rica and Guatemala but negatively predicts both upward and downward mobility in Mexico. Migrants who are undocumented in the United States generally can expect to experience downward mobility in the

TABLE 8
Summary of Effects of Migration-Related Characteristics
on Kind of Mobility Experienced upon Return

| Selected Variables | Countries and Type of Occupational Mobility | | | | | | | |
|--|---|----|-----|----|-------|----|------|-----|
| | CR | | GUA | | MX | | PR | |
| | UM | DM | UM | DM | UM | DM | UM | DM |
| Age at first migration | + | | - | + | + | | - | - |
| Number of U.S. trips | | + | | | | + | - | - |
| Undocumented migrant | | + | | + | | | N/A | N/A |
| Last job in the U.S. | | | | | | | | |
| Other occupations | + | | + | | + | | - | - |
| Manual | | - | + | | | | - | - |
| Agricultural worker | | | | | | | | |
| Accumulated U.S. experience | + | | + | | - | - | - | + |
| Percent earning <2 times minimum wage | - | | + | + | - | + | | |
| Pseudo R^2 | .684 | | .78 | | .157 | | .476 | |
| N | 188 | | 86 | | 2,140 | | 314 | |

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration based on selected samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP).

NOTE: The table shows the relations of the significant coefficients. CR = Costa Rica; GUA = Guatemala; MX = Mexico; PR = Puerto Rico; UM = upward mobility; DM = downward mobility.

sending country, but Mexicans, Costa Ricans, and Guatemalans who held non-manual jobs in the United States could generally expect to experience upward mobility upon their return.

The economic context of the community to which migrants return also makes a difference. The percentage of service workers who earn less than twice the minimum wage is a rough indicator of poverty. As can be seen, returning to a high-poverty area is associated with a lower likelihood of upward mobility in Mexico and Costa Rica and a higher likelihood of downward mobility. Guatemala is anomalous in that poverty is associated simultaneously with lower probabilities of both upward and downward mobility. In Guatemala, therefore, poverty is associated with stasis, whereas in Mexico and Costa Rica it is associated with greater odds of downward mobility and lower odds of upward mobility.

Once again, Puerto Rico is the clear outlier. Virtually all of the effects shown in the table are negative. Thus, a higher age of first departure, a larger number of U.S. trips, and holding either a manual or nonmanual U.S. occupation all reduce the odds of upward and downward mobility alike. Greater U.S. experience lowers the odds of upward mobility while raising the odds of downward mobility. In Puerto Rico, the most likely scenario for returned migrants is stasis; and if they move anywhere, it appears to be downward.

Conclusions

The results of this study suggest the inherent complexity of the phenomenon of return migration. In particular, there is great interest in the effects of international migration on economic development, especially given the high hopes many have about the development potential latent in migrants and their earnings. The topic is also of interest to political leaders in countries of origin, who seek to develop policies that enhance the positive effects of international migration on national development and facilitate socioeconomic advancement by migrant-sending communities and households.

The study also calls attention to the importance of international migration for sending communities, although effects on receiving societies have been given most of the attention to date. The effect of return migration on origin nations has only recently become a topic of systematic investigation. However, it can be expected to gain in importance as destination countries implement policies designed to bring about the return movement of their immigrants and as a result of recent proposals by influential international organizations to channel labor migration into temporary worker programs to promote circular rather than settled migration.

Return migration can be considered from multiple perspectives. The first perspective, taken here, is the migrant's viewpoint; it involves understanding the goals and motivations of the migrants and their thinking in using international migration to promote the socioeconomic well-being of their families. We have considered immigration using the theoretical framework of social mobility. That is, we conceptualize migration as a strategy for achieving occupational mobility at home and for improving the economic circumstances of migrant households and overcoming the barriers associated with poverty and a lack of local opportunity. A second perspective adopts the viewpoint of the country of origin, where the focus is, obviously, on maximizing the development potential of returning migrants. We believe that discussions to date have created, in a rather simplistic manner, excessive expectations about the "development potential" stemming from returning migrants and the repatriation of their remittances.

The results of this study emphasize the complexity and the heterogeneity of the process of return migration. The study highlights the variety of possible economic outcomes that follow from the reentry of migrants and how these outcomes are contingent on both the characteristics of individuals and the communities to which they return. This heterogeneity underscores the responsibility of policy-makers in countries of origin to improve the decision-making environment for policy directed toward returning migrants, enacting measures that encourage local production and investment in both human and physical capital.

Our comparative analysis indicates that migrants returning from the United States have distinct sociodemographic profiles and distinct histories of success and failure in the United States that may or may not be associated with the decision to return. The diversity of migrant backgrounds and the variability in the

reasons expressed for coming home point to considerable heterogeneity in occupational trajectories after their return. Our analytic framework thus took into consideration the nature of the migrant's experience in the United States (legal status, U.S. occupation, number of trips, and total months spent north of the border) as well as the structure, organization, and opportunities prevailing in the place of return.

We focused on male household heads and began our analysis by describing the occupations they held at two points in their life cycles: at the beginning of their work lives when they were twenty-five and at the peak of their occupational potential when they were forty-five. We then went on to assess occupational mobility between these two points for migrants and nonmigrants in four settings: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. We found that returned migrants experienced both upward and downward occupational mobility, depending on context and trip characteristics, which led us to conclude that U.S. experience, in and of itself, does not always lead to the accumulation of resources that translate into upward mobility at home.

For example, in Costa Rica and Guatemala, upward occupational mobility was relatively common, and these elevated prospects were enhanced by migratory experience in the United States. In contrast, returned migrants from Mexico and Puerto Rico experienced strong downward mobility in the context of more limited opportunity structures. Economic context seemed to interact with the age of migration, however, in predicting the likelihood of upward mobility for migrants versus nonmigrants. In general, those who first left for the United States before the age of twenty-five were in a better position to capitalize on their migration experience upon returning.

Having described overall patterns by place of origin, we then investigated how occupational achievement varied with the peculiarities of migratory experience as well as by country context. We found that repeated trips to the United States generally had adverse effects on occupational achievement, suggesting that too many absences undermined occupational mobility. Legal status and occupation in the United States also conditioned occupational achievement upon return, with documentation generally increasing the odds of downward mobility in the home country while nonmanual occupations raised the likelihood of upward mobility. For those with documents, occupational mobility is greater in the United States, but those holding nonmanual occupations are better able to accumulate resources that can be converted into occupational mobility at home. Likewise, the more time migrants spend north of the border the more resources they can accumulate and apply later to occupational achievement.

Finally, we found evidence to suggest that the possibilities for occupational achievement were conditioned by economic conditions in sending communities. Urban communities were generally associated with lower odds of downward mobility. Local poverty was associated with a lower likelihood of upward mobility and a higher likelihood of downward mobility, with the exception of Puerto Rico,

in which there were relatively low likelihoods of either upward or downward mobility. There the most common outcome for migrants and nonmigrants alike was stasis, and this pattern was not really influenced by the characteristics of migrants or communities.

These cross-national differences in the association between international migration and occupational mobility after return suggest the need for a broader and more systematic framework that specifies the conditions under which foreign work experience can and cannot translate into occupational achievement at home. As noted earlier, most studies up to now have focused on the specific case of Mexico–U.S. migration, but our results suggest that effects are quite distinct in Costa Rica and Guatemala on one hand and Puerto Rico on the other.

If scholars are to develop a broader theoretical framework, more comparative research needs to be done to identify which factors enhance or reduce the odds of upward mobility. Based on our work here, these factors fall into three basic categories that together act to determine occupational outcomes: the characteristics of the trip itself, experiences in the destination country, and the context of return. Perhaps the most promising avenue for advancement is analysis of the interaction between the context of return and experiences in the United States or, more generally, between local economic opportunities and the motivations for and the conditions of the return.

Although here we focus on migration to only one international destination, the development of a comprehensive model of migration and occupational mobility requires investigating movement to other nations besides the United States to examine the complete range of conditions at places of destination. The legal auspices of entry, the point of occupational insertion, the system of labor protections, and immigration policies in general vary from country to country and surely affect the ability of migrants to accumulate human capital, financial capital, and physical assets that might enhance the prospects for occupational mobility at home.

The methodological strategy employed here focused on the mobility of heads of households; but in light of the diversity of migratory experiences that prevail within families and households, it is advisable in the future to expand analysis to children, spouses, and other household members. Such an endeavor might well require a different methodology than that used in the MMP or LAMP, which collect the most detailed data for household heads and only more basic items of information about other family members with migrant experience.

Although this study focused on movement between occupational categories at two points in the lifetime of respondents, other outcomes are also of interest in the study of socioeconomic mobility, most notably earnings, land acquisition, business formation, and productive investment more broadly. In the current context, however, research on migrant remittances and spending have been overemphasized, and we hope this article's emphasis on another outcome—occupational mobility—will broaden and amplify future discussion about international migration's developmental effects.

Appendix

Multinomial Regression Models Predicting Type of Occupational Mobility among Returned Migrants

| Selected Variables | Costa Rica | | | Guatemala | | | Mexico | | | Puerto Rico | | |
|---|------------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | UM | DM | Und | UM | DM | Und | UM | DM | Und | UM | DM | Und |
| Individuals | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Circumstances of birth | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Before 1939 | -0.680 | -1.082 | -3.909 | -1.249* | -9.312* | -1.467 | -0.607* | 1.038* | 0.423* | 2.414* | 2.249* | 0.325 |
| 1950 and beyond | -1.11 | -2.308 | -2.315 | -1.789 | 4.408 | 2.346 | -0.72* | 0.741* | 0.560* | 2.045* | 2.402* | -0.541 |
| 1940-1949 | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** |
| Years of education | -0.011* | -3.450 | -2.866 | -4.015* | 8.31 | -2.356 | -0.027 | 0.087* | 0.165* | -0.067 | -0.185* | 0.184* |
| Accumulated labor experience | -0.036 | 0.474 | 0.101* | 1.217 | 0.678 | 0.879 | -0.002* | -0.012* | 0.056 | -0.033* | -0.021* | -0.003 |
| About the characteristics of the migratory experience | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age at the time of the first migration | 0.122* | -5.120 | 7.809 | -1.183* | 1.847* | -1.139* | 0.026* | 0.015 | 0.011 | -0.250* | -0.852* | -0.210* |
| Number of journeys | 0.388 | 2.560* | 2.028* | -6.652 | -5.275 | 4.823 | -0.022 | 0.248* | 0.014 | -3.483* | -7.032* | -1.300* |
| Legal status | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Without documentation | 0.831 | 2.345* | -1.256 | -4.320 | 6.652* | -2.293 | 0.120 | -0.175 | -0.086 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| With documentation | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Last employment in the United States | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other occupations | 2.608* | 2.345 | 1.219 | 1.353* | 4.654 | 1.762 | 0.734* | 0.569 | 1.604* | -2.697* | -2.783* | -4.286* |
| Agricultural worker | 1.954 | -1.333* | 1.608 | 1.743 | 1.109 | 2.187 | -0.163 | 0.056 | 1.243* | -1.879* | -2.243* | -4.284* |
| Manual labor | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** |
| Accumulated migratory experience | 0.182* | -4.043 | 3.716 | 1.609* | 0.125 | 0.785 | -0.019* | -0.27* | -0.005 | -0.001* | 0.02* | -0.004* |
| About the socioeconomic conditions | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percentage earning <2 times minimum wage | -0.074* | -2.731 | -3.245* | 1.235* | 0.987* | 0.896* | -0.014* | 0.3* | -2.785 | 1.789 | 9.103 | |
| Constant | 20.189* | 61.58* | 21.67* | 12.74* | 12.12* | 13.45* | 17.8* | -3.69* | -3.58* | -7.378* | 10.812* | |
| Wald χ^2 | | 243* | 393.02* | | | | | 523* | | | 391.2* | |
| Pseudo R ² | | .538 | .78 | | | | | .157 | | | .476 | |
| N | | 188 | 86 | | | | | 2,140 | | | 314 | |

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration based on selected urban samples from Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) and Mexican Migration Project (MMP).

NOTE: UM = upward mobility; DM = downward mobility; Und = undetermined. *****Reference Category

* $p < .001$.

Notes

1. In the 1970s, social mobility occupied the attention of researchers throughout Latin America, but that interest later waned when classic structural paradigms did not provide convincing explanations for occupational stratification and mobility. Then studies came to focus on poverty and the distribution of income (Filgueira 2000). Today, the academic debate reflects a resurgence of interest in social mobility in light of the neoliberal economic models implemented by governments in the region (Solís 2003, 2005; Escobar 2001; Filgueira 2000; Cortés, Escobar, and Solís 2007). They signal a return to theoretical perspectives that allow changes in social stratification stemming not only from the operation of economies and the heterogeneities of the job markets but also from the characteristics of individuals. They require good data on sociodemographic, educational, and vocational characteristics as well as physical and human capital as key determinants of social status. Zenteno and Solís (2006) affirm that the most common way to access material status is by means of the job market. The living conditions of the majority of the population and their social status are determined by their job, and one's occupational categories have thus become a frame of reference for studies of social mobility (Solís 2002).

2. Mobility differences between temporary migrants (temporary worker programs) and permanent migrants are not addressed in this study.

3. Massey, Espinosa, and Durand (1998) suggest that migrants, from the beginnings of the migratory adventure to the United States, are acquiring new knowledge. As a corollary, this knowledge can be utilized within the destination societies.

4. While this study is concerned with the case of Mexico, there is no reason to suppose that one could not extrapolate other contexts and regions of return.

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