The Southwest-Midwest Mexican American Migration Flows, 1985-1990

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ABSTRACT

Despite their continued concentration in the Southwest, Mexican Americans have migrated to Midwest throughout the 20th century. This paper provides a historical overview describing the movement of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and Midwest over the century. The major focus of the analysis, however, is on the contemporary migration of Mexican Americans between these two regions. It is predicted that in light of the well-established historical migration routes between the Southwest and Midwest, the more favorable economic conditions of the Midwest in the 1980s relative to the earlier decade, and the expanding employment opportunities for Mexican Americans and other Latinos in certain industrial sectors in the Midwest, the net flow of Mexican American migrants occurred from the Southwest to the Midwest in the 1985-1990 period. The analysis seeks to assess this prediction and to determine the extent to which this pattern is observed across states in the region. Data from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) are used to conduct the analysis. The results demonstrate a net flow of Mexican Americans in the expected direction (i.e., from the Southwest to the Midwest), with the Midwest experiencing a net gain of nearly 7,400 migrants who moved between the two regions in the 1985-1990 period. While all states except Illinois and South Dakota experienced net gains of Mexican American migrants, Kansas, Minnesota, and Michigan were the only ones whose net gains were larger than 1,000. A variety of other more indepth analyses are also reported in the paper.

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