

Do Healthier Mexicans Migrate to the United States? New Findings from the Mexican Family Life Survey

Luis Rubalcava, *University of California, Los Angeles and Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE)*

Graciela M. Teruel, *University of California, Los Angeles and Universidad Iberoamericana*

Duncan Thomas, *University of California, Los Angeles*

We evaluate the widespread presumption among health and social scientists that migrants to the U.S. are healthier than non-migrants. We use nationally-representative longitudinal data from the Mexican Family Life Survey to determine whether recent migrants from Mexico to the U.S. are healthier than other Mexicans. The analysis is based on logistical regressions of whether respondents moved to the U.S. between surveys in 2002 and 2005. Covariates include physical measurements of health status, self-assessments of health, and education, all measured in 2002. Results show that male migrants are neither healthier nor better educated than males who do not move to the U.S. Health and education are significantly associated with migration among females, although the associations are generally small in magnitude. Based on recent data for Mexico, the largest source of migrants to the U.S., we find little support for the healthy migrant hypothesis.

Note: The draft paper dated July 18, 2006 was removed at the request of the authors. For more information or to request a copy please email luis.rubalcava@cide.edu, graciela.teruel@s2.uia.mx, or dt@ucla.edu.