UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Coping with the Crisis: Migration and Settlement Decisions of Yucateco Migrants to the United States

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies (International Migration)

by

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Professor David FitzGerald, Chair
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Professor Wayne Cornelius

2010

The Thesis of Georgia Lynne Hartman is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

The University of California, San Diego

2010

DEDICATION

For my parents who have made so many sacrifices to further my education. To my Mama who has encouraged me to pursue my dreams without judgment. I could not have done any of this without her support. And to my father, who would have been so proud.

EPIGRAPH

"La idea del indocumentado, al menos como yo pienso, lo que se fueron de aquí de Yucatán para EUA, se van con la idea de irse por un par de años, uno, dos, tres o cuatro años, piensan que con eso pueden hacer dinero para hacer una casa, porque aquí los que no tienen casita, pueden hacer, no una residencia, pero si un cuarto donde dormir, un baño y una cocina y con eso la gente se siente feliz, peor no hay dinero para eso, entonces se deja a la familia, a los chiquitos, porque se desesperan que no hay más dinero para comprar leche para el niño, si no, tengo que irme a EUA a trabajar y les mandan dinero, si mandan dinero pero lo que mandan sólo es para la comida, o si alcanza es a largo plazo, a veces son dos años alcanzan una casita de una recamara, entonces el 10% regresa, el 90% no regresa hasta después de 5 o 10 años, a veces hacen una vida allí, conocen a otra mujer, se van a vivir juntos se olvidan de la familia de México y si no se olvidan mandan poquito dinero, para que tengan un poquito para acá en Tunkas y un poquito para allá en EUA, para las dos familias entonces no les alcanza para hacer una casa, entonces los dos años que piensan ir se convierte en 10 o 20 años, algunos no regresan porque se quedan ahí con su familia otros regresan y dejan a su familia de allá, lo mismo que hicieron con la de aquí, abandonan a la de allí y regresan aquí pero vuelven pobres, sin dinero, sin ningún patrimonio, sin ningún capital para trabajar, sin la mentalidad de que negocio poner, que hacer para poder quedarse a vivir aquí, porque a su familia no pueden llevarlos porque tienen miedo de cruzar o no tienen dinero para pagar al coyote a veces tienen tres o cuatro hijos no les completa, o que su familia ya están muy viejitos y no quieren dejarlos de ver, mucha gente decide quedarse allá o regresar sin dinero.

Otros que les va bien, yo no me puedo quejar, no me fue muy bien pero tampoco me fue mal, porque pude hacer lo que quise, pero finalmente regrese después de 15 años, regresamos por motivos sentimentales, por la familia, por sus papás de ella, que ya están viejitos, porque no queríamos que un día nos dieran la noticia que ya se murieron y tuviéramos que venir corriendo, para venirlos a enterrar, no tiene caso, entonces decidimos venir, quizás con el tiempo se mueren y podemos regresar a EUA."

- Ricardo, 52 year-old returned migrant from the United States

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Transnational Perspective, The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, The University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California. Portions of Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 were previously published in this chapter. Indeed, research conducted for that chapter has been integral to the conception and subsequent execution of my thesis.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

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Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (International Migration)

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor David FitzGerald, Chair

This thesis explores the effect of the recent economic crisis on the migration and settlement decisions of the transnational community of Tunkás. News reports early into the crisis hypothesized that stripped of employment in the United States, unauthorized Mexican immigrants would return to their hometowns en masse. In fact, a mass return migration has failed to materialize. How and why are migrants deciding to stay in the

United States? Also, how is the crisis affecting Tunkaseños decisions about new migration? By utilizing migrants' narratives, this paper aims to explain the complexities of migration and settlement decisions in the context of this current crisis. The author finds that despite job loss and reductions in wages, most migrants conclude that remaining in the U.S. is the best way to ensure the economic survival of their families. It is evident that these decisions are influenced by a myriad of economic, social, and personal factors that transcend the Tunkaseño community in the United States and Mexico. Throughout the paper, the author contextualizes migrants' narratives within various frameworks offered by migration theory. Rather than allowing these theories to guide an analysis of migrant narratives, the author uses these narratives to steer an interpretation of major theories of migration.

Introduction

"Yo quiero un cargo de algo que me puedan dar dinero, juguetes, alimento para repartir a niños, ancianos, inválidos, huérfanos, maltratados que son los que hay que ayudar, ya ves que ni el gobierno se enfoca en ello, los presidentes o los alcaldes ya no se dan cuenta de ese detalle a veces les entra la avaricia y quieren más para ellos, hay mucha crisis. Esa crisis es lo que hace que uno se vaya de este país, EUA debería de vivir mucho mas tranquilo con la indocumentación de personas, menos barreras, menos vigilancia, no habiendo tanta gente que tenga que migrar, pero a consecuencia que los países están en crisis económica, eso hace que la gente se vaya, desgraciadamente la migración es su trabajo, te pone barreras que te pone desde que llegas a la frontera, te ponen barreras, vigilantes, bardas hasta perros para que te correteen y en algunos lugares hasta francotiradores, los rancheros que son duros de corazón que no quieren a la gente, están matando, es a lo que se arriesga uno, es doloroso y lamentable decirlo y vivirlo sobre todo pero esa es la necesitad que hay en el fondo" – Ricardo, 52 year-old former migrant to the United States

In the early days of the U.S. economic crisis that erupted in 2008 there was much speculation in the media about what kind of effect it would have on unauthorized migration to the United States. Headlines proclaimed "Mexican laborers giving up, going home" (O'Boyle 2009) and "Reverse Migration Rocks Mexico (Beith 2009). It is clear now though that such claims were exaggerated. The mass return predicted by the media has failed to materialize. It is clear though that the crisis has had a disproportionately negative impact on foreign-born Latinos, whose rates of unemployment have been consistently higher than the average rate for the population as a whole (Kochhar 2008; Camarota and Jensenius 2009; Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009; Kochhar 2009; Papademetriou and Terrazas 2009). It seems that the reduction in available jobs has lead to a decrease in new migration. The Department of Homeland Security reports consistently fewer apprehensions this year from last year. While the agency is quick to conclude that this is the result of increased enforcement, the importance of the variable of a potentially negative economic outlook for new migrants cannot be overstated. The

economic crisis thus appears to be encouraging migrants and potential migrants on both sides of the border to stay put.

Neoclassical economic theories of migration relied upon by popular media suggest that immigration is the result of supply and demand and corresponding wage differentials between states. The popular understanding is that Mexican laborers migrate to the United States because there is a demand for their labor and that they choose to come (rather than remain in Mexico) because the wages are higher than those earned at home. It follows then that if there are no jobs in the United States, new migration will cease and that those without jobs will return to Mexico. This is of course not what is happening, which begs the question, if supply and demand between states are not the driving forces behind migration, then what is? Theorists have attempted to answer this question with a wide variety of theories, each addressing different aspects of migration. In this thesis I attempt to understand the forces driving migration by focusing on the perspective of individual migrants and their communities. I am particularly concerned with exploring the way external forces such as government policies and cultural constraints play out in the lives of migrants and potential migrants. Situated in the context of the current economic crisis, I attempt to highlight the dynamics of migration through an ethnographic study of the town of Tunkás, Yucatán.

Tunkás, Yucatán, México & Tunkás, U.S.A.

This work focuses on migrants and non-migrants from the village of Tunkás. It is a small town of about 2,600 inhabitants located in the middle of the state of Yucatán. The majority of population is bilingual in Maya and Spanish, though the level of fluency in Maya dissipates considerably from older to younger generations. The Tunkaseño economy is traditionally based on subsistence agriculture, though remittances from domestic and international migrants are playing an increasingly important role in the economy as a whole and in the daily lives of families receiving them. While short-term labor migration has long played a role in the economic lives of Tunkaseños, it has been since the 1960s that migrants have been traveling further and for longer periods of time. Today Tunkaseños engage in a system of migration linking them with urban centers in the Yucatán Peninsula and cities in the United States. The majority of migrants - men and women - work and live in the nearby cities of Cancún, Playa del Carmen, and Mérida. There is also a significant migrant population in the United States, with the majority of migrants living in the Southern California cities of Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Inglewood. Migrants to California work primarily in the service and industrial sectors. Large portions of Tunkaseños work in car washes in Inglewood, factories in Anaheim, and restaurants throughout the Los Angeles area. There is also a relatively new and growing population of Tunkaseños living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where the most work in Chinese restaurants.

Tunkás itself is a small but active town. Unlike many northern Mexican towns with longer histories of migration to the United States, there is a sizable year-round

population including many young men. In the summer time it is extremely hot, with temperatures consistently reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The streets fill with people early in the morning, as people try to finish their errands before the heat of the day settles in. The streets begin to clear by mid-morning, as the heat intensifies. By midday men begin returning from their *milpas*, settling in for some rest during the afternoon. The town is mostly quiet during the hottest part of the day. As the light dims and the air cools, people emerge from their homes to visit with neighbors and walk with their kids to the new playground in the town plaza. People fill the square, merchants sell popsicles and *chicharones*, and loud music plays from a nearby store. In the summer there is always a major activity. While I was in Tunkás there was a month-long basketball tournament and a traveling circus. A sleepy town to visitors by day, Tunkás lights up at night, with children and their families socializing in the plaza until after midnight.

A Note on Methodology

I first came to Tunkás as a participant in the Mexican Migration Field Research Program (MMFRP), a research-training program run by the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies (CCIS) at UC San Diego. Through quantitative and qualitative research methods, the program aims to produce a thorough picture of migration in three particular Mexican sending communities. Each year participants are divided into groups of 3-4 students who work collaboratively to develop a research question. Students then design a research project, carry out qualitative and quantitative research, and write a chapter of a book describing their findings. In academic year 2008-2009 MMFRP

focused research in Tunkás. My research team developed a project investigating the effect of the economic crisis on Tunkaseños living in Tunkás and Tunkaseño migrants living in Southern California. This thesis draws heavily from research conducted as a participant in MMFRP, and most importantly, it is my participation in the program that inspired the development of my M.A thesis project.

In February 2009 I traveled to Tunkás with the 30 other MMFRP participants to conduct surveys and gather life history interviews. This experience provided me with a valuable snapshot of the effect of the economic crisis at a particular moment in time. Upon return to the United States, we continued quantitative and qualitative research in the Tunkaseño communities in Southern California. Over the course of these few months many things changed in the economic lives of Tunkaseños on both sides of the border. The most significant event was the outbreak of H1N1 swine flu in Mexico and its devastating effect on the country's tourist industry. Extended field research made possible by participation in the MMFRP program and during the following summer gave me valuable perspective on the sense of continuity and change in the economic lives of Tunkaseños as they responded to economic crisis.

I felt that our book chapter on "Coping with *La Crisis*" only begun to skim the surface of the effect of the crisis on migration and settlement decisions. It was very successful in its reporting of how people were coping with the crisis and what affects it was having on their migration and settlement decisions, but I wanted to better understand why they were responding the way they were. I ultimately became curious about the underlying causes of migration as they manifest in the daily lives of migrants, and I

wanted to understand how the crisis had shaped these decisions as understood by the migrants themselves. By spending a longer period of time in Tunkás, I aimed to deepen my understanding of day-to-day life there and the economic and social pressures influencing migration decisions.

With these questions in mind, I traveled to Tunkás in July 2009 to begin ethnographic field research. I lived for two months with Estefani, a retired housekeeper and permanent resident of the United States. Spending long days and nights there provided me with a deeper appreciation of daily life, though I want to be careful not to overemphasize how much can be learned about a place and a community in just two months. Still, my extended stay expanded my understanding of daily life in Tunkás and allowed me to form close relationships with some wonderful people. Many of my closest friends in Tunkás also became some of my most important informants. During my stay I conducted over 35 life history interviews with migrant and non-migrant men and women of various ages. Upon my return to the U.S., I continued research in the Tunkaseño community in Southern California. I traveled frequently to Inglewood, Anaheim, and Santa Ana to spend time with migrants there. It was very important for me to spend time with families divided by the U.S.-Mexico border, and speaking with migrants in the U.S. gave me a very different perspective than if I had spoken only to returned migrants in Tunkás. The very different pressures of life in Tunkás and the United States inform very different perspectives on the value of migrating and settling in a particular location. Having this bi-national perspective has been invaluable to my project.

Thesis Organization

In this thesis I attempt to provide an ethnographic analysis of migration and settlement decisions of Tunkaseño migrants and non-migrants in the context of the current economic crisis. In Chapter 1 I provide important statistical and theoretical background on the subject of migration and the current economic crisis. I start with a review of the events and macro-level implications of the economic crisis. I then offer a review of major theories of migration. A basic understanding of these theories will be important to an appreciation of Chapter 3. Following this I will discuss major political and economic events in the past 60 years that have had significant influence on migration and settlement decisions of Mexican migrants to the United States. I end with a brief review of current statistical evidence documenting the demographic flow of Mexican migrants to and from the United States.

Chapter 2 aims to provide historical and economic information specific to Tunkás. In this chapter I discuss historical events leading to increased migration to the United States as reported by some of the first migrants themselves. This is followed by an assessment of the local economy today and how Tunkaseños survive economically.

Chapter 3 attempts to dig into the underlying causes of migration by focusing on accounts of current, former, and potential migrants. Rather than fit their testimonies into existing theories of migration, I seek to provide an analysis of the causes of migrating from the ground up, allowing their testimonies to inform my understanding of prevailing theories.

In Chapter 4 I review the effect of the economic crisis on the broader Tunkaseño community. I start with a discussion of the crisis' impact on migrants in the United States and what they are doing to cope with the constraints it has imposed in their lives. I then discuss how migrants view the option of return migration. I find that while most have chosen to remain in the United States, some single male migrants are choosing to return. I then provide a brief discussion of the effect of the crisis on migrants to Cancún. Because I was unable to conduct research in Cancún and thus have limited data on the subject, this discussion is very brief. However, Tunkaseño migration to Cancún provides a valuable perspective on the implications of the economic crisis in the absence of a major impediment like U.S. immigration enforcement. I conclude with a discussion of the effect of the crisis on Tunkaseños in Tunkás and how it has affected the decision to migrate to the United States.

Chapter 1: Economic and Political Variables for Migration and Settlement

Georgia: "Tiene algo que quiere decir de EUA o de inmigración?"

Víctor: "De EUA, le quiero decir que voy a ir no sé cuando y que espero que me vaya bien, que si me gustaría estar otra vez allá"

-Interview with Victor, 32-year-old frequent migrant to the United States

A myriad of social, economic, and political factors - past and present - have significant influence on the decision to migrate to and/or settle in the United States. U.S. immigration policies such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) and the build up in border security since 1993 have contributed to increased migrant settlement. The economies of both Mexico and the United States have historically been central to the intensification and weakening of migration flows. I will begin by providing a review of the current economic crisis and its potential implications for the economic livelihood of Mexican migrants and their families in Mexico. I then review major theories of migration, followed by a discussion of major recent historical factors contributing to the increased settlement of Mexican migrants in the United States. I conclude with a brief review of available demographic data on the current movement of migrants across the border.

A Brief History of the Economic Crisis

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), the economy of the United States officially entered a state of recession in November 2007. The effects

of the plunge of the U.S. economy quickly spread to economies around the world. With an economy inextricably linked to the United States though trade, tourism, and remittances from migrants living in the U.S., Mexico has been among the countries most affected. Tunkaseños in Tunkás, the United States, and in the neighboring state of Quintana Roo have experienced the effects of the global crisis according to the particular circumstances and pressures of their geographic location. As a result, all members of this transnational community have been forced to make adjustments to their social and economic lives.

In the United States, Latino workers have been among those hardest hit, with foreign-born Latinos bearing the worst of the economic burden (Kochhar 2008; Camarota and Jensenius 2009; Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009; Kochhar 2009; Papademetriou and Terrazas 2009). Between July 2007 and July 2009, the unemployment rate for Mexican and Central American workers rose from 4.7 percent to 11.1 percent, a rate higher than the average rate of unemployment of the overall population. One of the primary reasons for this steep rise in unemployment has to do with the high concentration of Latinos in the construction industry, one of the sectors most negatively affected by the economic crisis. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that in 2006 two in every three new construction jobs went to a Latino worker (Center 2007). In 2007, this sector accounted for 54.2% of the total jobs lost by Latinos (Kochhar 2008). Fix, Papademetriou et al. propose that migrants are especially vulnerable to the effects of economic crisis because of their limited education credentials, low local language skills, concentration in low-skilled labor and in boom-bust sectors of the economy (like construction), contingent

work contracts and arrangements, and (especially for those lacking legal status) their inability to access the benefits of the federal social safety-net (Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009).

Available data suggest that one of the major effects of high unemployment has been a significant drop in the amount of money remitted by U.S.-based migrants to Mexico. From 2007-2008 Mexico saw a 4 percent drop in the total volume of remittances. From 2008-2009 the amount of money remitted to Mexico decreased dramatically, constituting a 12 percent drop in the total volume of remittances (Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009). It appears that remittances are continuing to drop, even despite economist's projections that the Mexican economy will grow by 3.9 percent in 2010. In March 2010 Mexico's Central Bank reported that remittances had fallen an additional 16 percent in January 2010 from January of the previous year (Press 2010).

This dramatic decrease is significant for a country whose second largest source of foreign income is money remitted from Mexicans living abroad. For many of Mexico's citizens, money sent home by relatives is central to their livelihood. The Mexican government estimates that remittances are responsible for lifting 2.3 million rural Mexicans out of food poverty. Research suggests that remittances do more to reduce the depth of poverty than reducing the quantity of people suffering from it (Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009). Indeed Tunkás relies on remittances from migrants in the United States, Merída and the Mayan Riviera to fuel the local economy. Remittance money goes to purchasing building materials to build migrants' homes, paying for children's schooling, and everyday household items that can be purchased in town. With

an economy so connected to the U.S. and to U.S. tourist destinations in the Yucatán Peninsula, even those without migrant family members have felt the effects of the crisis. Though some of the decrease in the volume of remittances may have been offset by the devaluation of the peso, it cannot compensate for a drop in the frequency of remittances received or rising food costs throughout the country (Aguilar, Hartman et al. 2009).

Given the importance of North American tourist dollars to the economy of the Yucatán Peninsula, the states of Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo have been hit particularly hard by the crisis. With North Americans feeling the crunch of the crisis in the U.S., tourist destinations in Cancún and the Mayan Riviera saw a major decline in the number of international visitors and, thus, a decline in the amount of foreign dollars being invested in the local economy. The Yucatán's already suffering tourist industry was brought to a near stand still in May 2009 when news of the outbreak of H1N1 Swine Flu scared off already dwindling numbers of international tourists. Major resort hotels closed their doors and/or scaled back their workforces. While the state of Quintana Roo - home to Cancún and the Mayan Riviera - was most directly affected, the strain of the plummeting tourist economy soon spread across the Peninsula. Migrants from the neighboring states of Campeche, and especially Yucatán are a major part of the labor force in Quintana Roo. Migrants send money home to family members remaining in their home villages, and just like remittances from the United States, these families rely on this money for economic survival.

Theories of Migration

Neoclassical economic theories of migration propose that international migration results from differences in the supply and demand of labor between states. According to this theory, Mexican migration to the United States is the result of a demand for migrant labor in the U.S., and the wage-differential between the two countries motivating Mexicans to migrate north. It assumes that without a wage-differential, or more appropriately, without a perceived wage differential, the migration flow would cease (Massey 1993, 1999). Neoclassical economics conceives of migrants as rational actors basing their decision to migrate on a cost-benefit analysis (Massey 1993).

Neoclassical economics is how popular culture understands the causes of migration. Its presumptions are also foundational to the formation of immigration policies in the United States. Indeed, since the 1990s, the U.S. Government's approach to immigration policy with regard the southern border has been "prevention through deterrence" (Cornelius 2004). By making it far more difficult, indeed dangerous, as well as more expensive, U.S. officials have assumed that the overall "cost" of entering the United States clandestinely will ultimately deter potential migrants from attempting to make the journey.

The current economic crisis presents a unique opportunity to examine neoclassical economic theories of migration. With the potential payoff of migrating to the U.S. significantly diminished, the presumption is that migration will cease. Indeed, there is evidence that this is occurring. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Mexican emigration was down 13 percent in the first quarter of 2009

(Associated Press 2009). While there is evidence to suggest that Mexican-U.S. migration has slowed, it has not stopped altogether, as hundreds of thousands of apprehensions continue to be made along the border each year.

Dual labor market theory (also know as segmented labor market theory) proposes that international migration is a structurally embedded feature of modern industrial societies. The inherent dualism between capital and labor yields a segmented labor market structure, with high-skilled, secure jobs in the primary sector and low-skilled, expendable jobs in the secondary, labor-intensive sector (Massey 1993, 1999). The secondary sector is fundamental to the survival of the economic system, though the demand for labor in this sector is subject to the fluctuations of the market. As a result, employers (members of the primary sector) require a flexible labor force to populate the secondary sector.

International migrants are an ideal source of labor for the secondary sector for a number of reasons. Dual labor market theory reasons that there is a hierarchy of jobs in any given workplace, and that varying degrees of social status are attached to each position. Because immigrants are target-earners and remain socially engaged with their communities abroad, they are unconcerned with low social status associated with low-level jobs in the receiving country. Actually, while the social status of their jobs in the receiving country may be small, the money they earn from their position and send home wins them significant status in their communities abroad (Massey 1993, 1999). Migrant populations, especially unauthorized migrants, are also an ideal source of labor because

their status frequently (depending on destination country and visa status) allows them few rights, making them easily exploitable and expendable.

Whereas dual labor market theory deals with the context for the creation of the need for migrant labor in destination countries, world systems theory seeks to explain the source of mobile, migrant populations. It explains the causes of this mobile population as the result of, "the penetration of capitalist economic relations into non-capitalist or pre-capitalist societies" (Massey 1999, 41). Elites in pre-capitalist societies encourage foreign investment by selling land to multinational corporations for development. Highly mechanized and chemically intensive farming methods employed by multinational agricultural businesses decreases the need for manual labor, undermines traditional social and economic relations based on subsistence farming, and ultimately drives small-scale farmers out of the market (Massey 1993, 1999; Sassen 1998).

With their traditional forms of subsistence devastated, farmers are forced to move to cities in search of wage labor, frequently in factories established by other multi-national corporations. These factories in turn undermine the local economy by competing with locally produced goods, and paying a meager wage that is barely enough to survive on. The result is the creation of a highly mobile population prone to international migration. Despite the promise of wages in factories, the wages in the primary country remain significantly higher. Individuals from non-capitalist peripheral countries tend to migrate to those primary countries with the biggest presence in peripheral countries. Communication and transportation lines created as an investment by the primary country establish networks between the two countries that are utilized by migrants.

Network theory or social capital theory proposes that the cumulative effects of individual migration lead to the creation of migrant networks that encourage and sustain migration in and of themselves. Initial migrants bear the highest risk and highest cost of migration because they do so with limited knowledge and without the benefit of a social safety net. Once established, these migrants possess significant social capital: knowledge of the migration process, knowledge of destination country, employment access, financial capital, and a physical home in the destination country.

Subsequent migrants with social connections to pioneer migrants benefit from the experience of the predecessors. They already possess knowledge of the migration process, enjoy a connection to potential employers in the destination country, receive funding for their journey from pioneer migrants, and have a place to stay when they arrive. This knowledge gained from social networks constitutes a particularly strong form of social capital. Ultimately, migrant networks reduce the cost and risk of each subsequent migration and over time, these networks become self-sustaining. Institutions aiding and promoting migration grow up around them (such as people-smugglers, etc.), thus constituting another form of social capital (Massey 1993, 1999).

The theory of cumulative causation, which incorporates aspects of each of the preceding theories, offers a comprehensive and dynamic approach to the understanding of migration. The primary tenet of this theory is that, over time, international migration sustains itself such that subsequent acts of migration are more likely. Massey proposes that, “causation is cumulative in the sense that each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that

make additional movement more likely" (Massey 1993, 451). Migration upsets the distribution of wealth in the sending community, with returning migrants displaying their wealth such that other community members are encouraged to migrate to increase their own relative wealth within the community. Migrants may also purchase land in their home community, either allowing it to lay fallow, or utilizing capital-intensive methods for cultivation. After being sustained for many years, across generations, a culture of migration may also emerge that ingrains youth with the expectation of migrating from an early age. Borrowing from dual labor market theory, cumulative causation also asserts that the social meaning of work within the destination country changes, relegating certain low-skill jobs as "immigrant work". Because of their low social status, natives consider these jobs undesirable, and thus the need for migrant labor in the economy becomes socially and structurally embedded in the economy of the destination country.

Historical Factors of Increased Mexican Migrant Settlement in the United States

Since the 1980s Mexican-U.S. migration has shifted from circular migration to a more permanent pattern of settlement in the United States. Several factors have led to increased U.S. settlement including a shift from seasonal to year-round employment, fluctuations in the Mexican economy, and changes in U.S. immigration policy.

Since the 1960s, a significant portion of Mexican migrant workers have transitioned from seasonal agricultural labor to year-round employment in the construction, service, and manufacturing industries. Cornelius found that young migrants

entering the United States for the first time in the 1970s and 1980s were more likely to choose less strenuous, higher paying work outside of the agricultural sector (Cornelius 1992). Year-round employment means that vacation time must be negotiated with the employer. If awarded, vacation time is likely to be for a relatively short period of time (from a few weeks to a month), and especially in the service sector, may be unpaid. Daily living expenses of living in urban areas further contributes to economic settlement. Whereas in the past agricultural migrants frequently set up temporary camps close to the fields in which they worked, migrants in year-round employment rent or purchase homes in the United States. Limited vacation time prevents them from traveling back to their hometowns frequently, and economic obligations in the United States prevent them from remaining in Mexico for significant periods of time.

The Mexican economic crisis in the 1980s contributed to an increase in migration from non-traditional sending areas, and discouraged many migrants from keeping an economic foothold in Mexico. With a reduction of real wages within Mexico by 40 to 50 percent, large numbers of new migrants left for the United States in search of work (Cornelius 1992). With little to return to, and little to invest in, migrants already living in the U.S. were discouraged from maintaining economic investments in Mexico (Appleby, Moreno et al. 2008).

By granting legal status to 2.7 million formerly unauthorized migrants (Rytina 2002), the 1986 passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) played a significant role in the consolodation of migrant settlement in the United States. With millions of migrants able to transition to legally secure lives, formerly unauthorized

migrants were able to put down roots in the United States, thus strengthening migrant networks on the U.S. side of the border (Cornelius 1992; Marcelli 2001; Riosmena 2004; Appleby, Moreno et al. 2008). Prior to IRCA, unauthorized migrants (then as now) lived with a constant fear of apprehension and deportation. The granting of legal status allowed previously unauthorized migrants to strengthen economic and social ties to the U.S. Further, it also allowed the legal migration of millions more previously non-migrant family members to join their relatives in the United States. This meant that there was an additional shift in migration trends from largely single-male migration to female and/or whole family migration (Cornelius 1992). Families who had formerly been split along both sides of the border were able to reunite and settle in the United States. Whole family settlement has lead to increased permanent settlement since such families have few social ties remaining with their hometowns in Mexico.

The buildup in border security starting in the 1990s and continuing today has contributing factor in increasing settlement in the United States. U.S. government efforts to discourage illegal immigration by investing millions of dollars in the militarization of the border have actually had the effect of increasing the likelihood of migrant settlement in the United States. The highly publicized implementation of Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, California (1994), Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Texas (1993), and Operation Safeguard in Nogales, Arizona (1995) included fence-building and increased manpower in specific, traditionally high-traffic regions of the border. These operations were very successful at bringing traffic in these regions to a near halt. However, migration did not cease, it merely changed location (Cornelius 1998; Marcelli 2001;

Massey, Durand et al. 2002; Reyes 2004; Riosmena 2004). Smugglers opened up new migration corridors through the deserts of Arizona and in the mountains east of San Diego. As a result, a crossing that typically took a few hours from one urban center such as Tijuana to another such as San Diego transitioned to one that took three days walking through extreme conditions. The new, unfamiliar territory and the tough terrain increasingly necessitated the use of use of *coyotes* (human traffickers). As a result, the cost of crossing increased exponentially. Whereas in the 1980s the average price for hiring a *coyote* was a few hundred dollars, by 2009 the average price among Tunkaseño migrants was $2,858 (Cornelius, Fitzgerald et al. 2009). With the boom of the U.S. economy in the 1990s the number of migrants entering the country actually increased, undeterred by the increased cost and risk of an initial crossing. However, these factors have been found to play a significant role in deterring *return* migration. Thus, border enforcement has been central to the increased settlement of unauthorized migrants in the United States.

Macro-Level Evidence for the Effect of the Crisis on Mexican Migration

Available macro-level data suggest that the economic crisis has had the effect of slowing movement on both sides of the border. While the Mexican-born population grew steadily throughout the early part of this decade, in 2007 the growth began to level off, remaining steady at about 11.5 million (Passel and Cohn 2009). This leveling off of the population suggests that those who are already in the United States are remaining and that potential migrants are choosing to remain in Mexico. Indeed the U.S. Border Patrol

reports that the number of apprehensions of Mexicans attempting to cross into the United States without authorization dropped by nearly a third between 2006 and 2008, from 981,069 to 661,773 (Fix, Papademetriou et al. 2009). While it is evident that the economic crisis has had a significant effect on new migration, there is no evidence of a large-scale return migration to Mexico.

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Chapter 2: An Introduction to Economy and Migration in Tunkás

"Tunkás ha cambiado mucho, estaban las calles todas feas, las casas eran de paja, hoy ya no hay, si hay es por mucha casualidad que lo conservan, ahora todos hacen sus casas, con 4 o 5 años que se vayan a trabajar a EUA y tienen su bonita casa."
–Don Paulo, first Bracero from Tunkás

I sat with Don Paulo in the shade of the *carnicería* he built with the money he made working in the United States. Paulo first left Tunkás in 1960 as one of the town's first participants in the Bracero Program of contract labor for U.S. agriculture. After three months of picking strawberries in Arizona, he returned to Tunkás with his substantial earnings. The next time he returned to the United States he was joined by more young men who had been encouraged by Paulo's impressive show of wealth and left now with the hope of returning with their own riches. In the subsequent years more men left, first as Braceros, and later, when then program ended in 1964, many traveled without authorization. Of these first U.S.-bound migrants, some chose to remain, marrying women in the United States or sending for their Tunkaseño families to join them. These first settled migrants established the roots of the now sizable Tunkaseño community in Southern California. While there are established members of the community, it is by no means static. New and returning migrants start lives in the United States and former migrants return to Tunkás to visit or to live permanently. This migrant network and the years of constant migration it has helped to sustain has exerted a profound effect on the economic and cultural life of Tunkás. It has created a culture of migration.

Political and economic changes within Mexico have also played a central role in establishing labor migration as a necessary economic strategy for Mexican peasants.

Government policies aimed at "modernizing" rural Mexico, coupled with trade policies with the United States and competition from foreign producers (Baños Ramírez 2003) have rendered traditional, agriculturally based rural economies unsustainable. In the 1960s and 70s, with the value of their agricultural products seriously devalued, thousands of rural Mexicans were forced to look to urban centers for wage labor to support their families. During this time many Tunkaseños migrated to Cancún and worked to build many of the city's first major resort hotels. Others left to work in the growing manufacturing industry in nearby Mérida. Because of the continuing poor economic climate of the local economy, and because of the promise of "soft[1]", profitable work in urban areas, migration to these cities has continued to the point that today leaving has become an expectation for young Tunkaseños and their families.

The Tunkaseño community is spread across the Yucatán Peninsula and across North America. Members of the community engage in a system of migration linking Tunkás, Cancún, Playa del Carmen, Mérida, Southern California, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.[2] This migration is sustained by political and economic forces occurring within Mexico and by a growing culture of migration resulting from the economic and social effects of years of continued out-migration. The result of these forces has been a Tunkás that looks and feels very different from the Tunkás that Don Paulo left all those years ago. In this chapter I will provide a review of the historical-structural reasons for

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[1] Tunkaseños frequently refer to non-milpa work as "trabajo suave", or "soft work" because it is not as physically demanding as farming.

[2] While there are Tunkaseños in other parts of the United States (such as Texas and Oregon), and in other parts of Yucatán and Mexico (such as Campeche and Sonora), the areas listed above have the most sizable communities.

Tunkaseño out-migration and a discussion of the Tunkaseño economy and the role of migration within it.

The Development of the Yucatán and the Political Economic Origins of Extended Migration in Tunkás

In research in the neighboring town of Cenotillo (10 kilometers from Tunkás), Solís-Lizama found that older Cenotillenses recall that prior to the 1960s they were able to make a sustainable living almost entirely from the harvest of their *milpa*. Farmers kept a portion of their harvest for personal consumption and sold the rest for a profit. She notes, however, that even then many farmers subsidized their income by working building roads in Quintana Roo, laboring on nearby cattle ranches, and harvesting timber in Campeche and Tabasco (Solís Lizama 2005).

Migrating for wage labor has long been employed by Tunkaseños as part of a diverse income-earning strategy. The oldest male members of the Tunkaseño community - now in their 70s and 80s – recall migrating to other parts of the Yucatán to harvest henequen and timber in these once thriving industries. Don Pedro, now 76-years-old, recalled, "Salimos a trabajar cuando era el apogeo del henequén. Trabajábamos en Motul para trasladarnos en el Poblado de Baca. Ahí trabajamos en la limpieza de bajo la mata del henequén que nos perdía aquí." At the time that Don Pedro was growing up the only school in Tunkás was a primary school. After the 4th grade, children from all but the wealthiest families were expected to help their parents generating income for the home.

Migration was frequently employed as a part of the strategy for the economic survival of the family. Following his withdrawal from school, Don Pedro began helping his father in his family's *milpa*. By the time he was a teenager he left Tunkás for the first time working to harvest henequen to contribute to the support of his family.

Formerly central to the economy of the Yucatán Peninsula, the henequen industry began to decline in the 1960s as a result of competition from international henequen producers and the invention of synthetic fibers. The industry steadily shed employees throughout the 70s and 80s, until it was dealt a deathblow by the agricultural reforms of the Salinas de Gortari government in 1992 (Lewin-Fischer 2007; Baklanoff and Moseley 2008). With the loss of the henequen industry, Tunkaseños were forced to look to different industries further away for sources of cash income. The need for additional disposable income became increasingly important as expenses related to the rapid modernization of the Mexican state began to take hold.

In 1940 President Lázaro Cárdenas initiated a program of agricultural reform and rapid modernization of the Mexican state (Baños Ramírez 2003). Reforms devalued agricultural goods and simultaneously invested in the industrialization of the Mexican economy. Roads and electricity spread over rural Mexico, facilitating what would become a massive rural to urban migration across the country. From 1940 to 1970 the urban population of Mexico jumped from 40 to 61 percent of the country's total population (Baños Ramírez 2003).

By the 1960s Yucateco peasants were feeling the effects of these reforms. While it was dubbed "agricultural reform" by the federal government, for *campesinos* it came to

be known as the “agricultural crisis”. Unable to yield a profit from their agricultural produce, Tunkaseño peasants began looking elsewhere for employment to support their families. It was during this time that the first Tunkaseño migrants left for the United States as participants in the Bracero Program. Around that same time new opportunities for work in the Yucatán opened up as well. In the 1970s the Mexican state began developing the tourist industry in the Yucatán Peninsula. During this time many Tunkaseños were recruited to labor clearing ancient Mayan ruins across the Peninsula. Most importantly though, it was in the 1970s that Cancún - then just a small outcrop of uninhabited ejido lands - was selected by the Mexican government as the site of the nation’s first master-planned tourist resort (Torres and Momsen 2005; Adler 2008). Many Tunkaseños worked in Cancún constructing the first resort hotels. Many more migrated over the course of the following decades working in construction, the service industry, and much more. In the 1980s Mérida and the surrounding areas were selected by the Mexican government as priorities for the development of industry. The state of Yucatán worked to attract multinational corporations, and by 2000 it boasted twenty-seven manufacturing plants (Wilson and Kayne 2000).

Years of sustained migration to Mérida, Cancún, and more recently in Playa del Carmen and the Mayan Riviera have established these locations as major destinations of Tunkaseño migration. Buses pass through the town plaza every hour transporting workers to nearby Mérida (about an hour and a half by bus) and Cancún (about 6 hours by bus). Because of their proximity, these urban destinations allow for the resettlement of whole families without the risks involved in U.S. migration. Migrants to these destinations are

able to travel back to Tunkás easily to visit family, however, it should also be noted that the cost of the bus fare can frequently serve to restrict the ease of movement. While many nuclear families have resettled in these destinations, other families remain split across the Yucatán. It is common for male heads of household to live and work in Cancún, while their wife and children remain in Tunkás. Men and women in these situations cite the danger and expense of living in the city. Because of their proximity, these cities are also destinations for young, single migrants, both male and female. Young women migrate to live with extended family members in these cities and work most frequently as domestic workers. Indeed, for Tunkaseño youth today, migration to these cities is all but a given. In turn, Remittances from domestic migrants play an important role in the economic survival of their families in Tunkás. Cash from remittances is then used to purchase goods in town and thus becomes central to the day-to-day functioning of the local economy.

The Beginning of Migration to the United States

As the possibility of sustaining a livelihood based on agriculture began to wane, some Tunkaseños began looking to the United States as a potential destination for wage-employment. The Bracero Program is of central importance to U.S.-bound migration from Tunkás, for, as noted above, it was the migrants that participated in this program that sowed the seeds of a migrant network rooted in the United States. According to official state records, Tunkás sent three Braceros in 1960, two in 1961, and five in 1962 (Silva, Niño et al. 2007). Don Paulo - the butcher shop owner discussed at the beginning

of this chapter - claims that he and a friend were the first to leave for the United States. Though official state records are not available to support his claim, he was undoubtedly *one of* the first Bracero migrants and his account of his migration is important to the telling of the history of U.S. migration from Tunkás.

Don Paulo recalls his first trip to the United States thus:

> Bueno ya era yo casado tenía yo como unos 22 años digamos, siempre muy joven, entonces yo y un compadre, veíamos el periódico que iban mucho de otros pueblos, de Mérida, de todos los pueblos, me dice mi compadre, vamos a ir, vamos a averiguar en Gobernación donde se inscribe uno, que hay que hacer para que nos vayamos, yo me quiero ir. En ese entonces yo era casado creo que con tres niños, tanto que platica me dice vamos compadre y otro, si Dios nos permite regresamos, cualquier tierra es bendecida, nos fuimos a Mérida y vimos a otros amigos que también estaban viendo, empezamos a ver que también se querían ir, conversaciones.
>
> . . . Pues ahí andamos, andamos como 15 días tardamos creo que logramos contratarnos y esa vez yo trabaje en el Tucson, Arizona, cerca de Arizona, empezamos a trabajar a mí me toco en la fresa, nos dieron dos contratos de 45 días y te sacan, te llevan otra vez a la frontera . . .
>
> . . . Pasaron 90 días, retornamos y veíamos a los paisanos y nos decían, eh mare que pasó compadre, mira hasta más fuerte, más gordito, pero bueno allí (EUA) si hay que comer, digo, eso es el motivo que me animo a ir, porque acá pues, y ya mi familia estaba creciendo, mi esposa ya estaba esperando, tenía como dos tres meses.

Don Paulo's account provides valuable personal insight into the decision to undertake the first migration to the United States. His account of his experience highlights the riskiness of the journey. At the time Paulo left, Yucatán was remote from the rest of Mexico, let alone the United States (Adler 2008; Loewe and Taylor 2008). As he recalls, he and his friend had to first travel to Mérida and then to Mexico City before they were finally able to enter the United States, taking them a total of 15 days. When he

left he had no idea what the journey would be like, much less what the United States would be like or if he would be able to return. His departure was a major risk with the unknown, but one that he was willing to take in order to put food on his family's table.

Don Paulo comes from relatively wealthy family of merchants. He did not grow up laboring in his family's milpa, and he never had the expectation that he would have to do "trabajo del campesino." Before he left he was working in his family's bakery, a bakery that remains to this day. His relative wealth made him an ideal candidate for being a pioneer migrant. While he clearly had the need to seek other ways of supporting his family, because of his family's business activities he was able to provide the substantial initial investment in migrating to the United States. Moreover, he was able to read news about the Bracero Program in a local newspaper. This is a notable achievement given that at that time schooling in Tunkás ended in the 4th grade, and his family was likely able to send him away from Tunkás for schooling.

When he and his friend returned to Tunkás after 90 days, they brought a large sum of cash and most importantly, stories of wealth and adventure. Each time they returned they were joined by more young men hoping to acquire their own wealth in the United States. Tunkaseños worked harvesting crops across the southwestern United States, many returning more than once as contracted laborers.

When the U.S. government ended the Bracero Program in 1964, the momentum of U.S.-bound migration did not cease. Many more young men, and increasing numbers of women and children, migrated to the United States without authorization. Don Pedro, a 76-year-old former migrant also made his first trip to the United States as a Bracero.

When the Bracero Program ended, he returned to the U.S., this time migrating to California without legal authorization. He explains his transition from contracted laborer to unauthorized migrant as follows:

> Es que yo fui primero en las contrataciones. Fui de Bracero. Y de allí volví y ya de Bracero oigo decir que muchos van de mojado. Dice yo "por que no voy a ir?" Agarré y me fui. Pero esa época Chula, había trabajo de sobra cuando nosotros entramos allá a los dos días o tres días ya buscamos trabajo , *rápido*, no como ahora.

Following the conclusion of the Bracero program, Don Paulo, like Don Pedro, also returned to the United States and worked without authorization. On his first unauthorized trip he traveled to Inglewood, California. Curious about the origins of the now sizable Tunkaseño community there, I asked him why he chose to migrate to Inglewood. He explained: "Porque el autobús que nos llevo ahí nos dejó, allí habían unos paisanos de Motul que nos dieron un lugar donde dormir." Since then many more Tunkaseños have migrated to Inglewood. But the Tunkaseño community has also expanded to include sizable populations in Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Fullerton, California.

The end of the Bracero Program marked both the transition from authorized to unauthorized status and from seasonal to year-round labor. These transitions were key to the establishment of a settled population of Tunkaseño migrants. Don Pedro and Don Paulo both remained in Inglewood for over a decade before returning to Tunkás. Many of their contemporaries,-including other former Braceros – chose to remain in the U.S., many of them bringing their families with them. Over the course of the next few decades

the size of the Tunkaseño migrant community grew steadily. Young men have continued to be the largest group of U.S.-bound migrants, though increasing numbers of young women – usually wives and daughters of migrants – have joined them. Today many Tunkaseño families are divided across the U.S.-Mexico border, and many of those with family in the United States possess a variety of legal statuses.

In the late 1980s many formerly undocumented members of the community legalized their status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Today, many of these migrants possessing citizenship or permanent residency travel regularly to Tunkás during the town fiesta. They return during these two weeks to live in the homes they have built with the money they earned in the U.S. These homes were built with the expectation that they would someday return to Tunkás. The reality of return remains unclear, however, as many of these aging migrants are still working. Even as they near retirement, the possibility of eventual return for many of these migrants is diminishing. Those with family have established their lives on that side of the border. Many have children and grandchildren who are U.S. citizens.

An Introduction to Tunkaseño Economic Life

The *milpa* is traditionally central to the cultural and economic life of Mayan people (Bever 1999; Hervik 1999; Re Cruz 2008), and despite significant changes, it remains an important part of the Tunkaseño economy. According to the 2009 MMFRP conducted in Tunkás, 51 percent of economically active men were working in the

agricultural sector (Cornelius, Fitzgerald et al. 2009). Other than agriculture, there are few economic opportunities available locally. There are a few small stores of varying sizes and varying profitability, typically owned by the wealthiest members of the community. Faced with few economic opportunities locally in Tunkás, many must resort to finding work in the Yucatán's urban centers or the United States.

The arid land and rocky soil on which Tunkás sits limits the variety of agricultural goods farmers are able to grow. The primary crops are corn and squash and both are cultivated primarily for personal consumption. Leftover crops may be sold on the market, but do not yield a significant profit. With no irrigation or mechanization of agriculture, crops are highly vulnerable to uncertain environmental conditions. In fact, a visitor accustomed to the kind of mono-crop farms found across the United States would likely not even recognize a Tunkaseño *milpa* when they saw it. I myself nearly trampled all over an ejiditario's squash harvest walking to a nearby *cenote*[3].

Cattle ranching is a more lucrative and more desired activity in Tunkás. Wealthier residents, including many current and former U.S.-migrants own private ranches where they raise cattle for sale. Frequently ranchers hire laborers to work as ranch hands for about 100 pesos (about U.S. $10) per day. Thus, in addition to supplying a source of income to the owner, the ranching sector provides opportunities for employment to other community members. The pay is minimal but such work provides many landless Tunkaseño men with a source of income.

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[3] Cenotes are sinkholes containing groundwater. They are found primarily in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Beekeeping is another relatively lucrative part of the town's agricultural sector. Many Tunkaseños own a number of bee hives. Some men participate in this sector as their primary source of income, though many more own just a few hives placed on nearby farms. They use the income generated from the honey produced to supplement other income sources. The honey produced in Tunkás is high-quality; 95 percent of it is exported (Cornelius, Fitzgerald et al. 2007). Beekeepers sell their honey through a cooperative or work with private middlemen who then export it, primarily to European markets.

Outside of agriculture, there are a few small businesses that are usually operated by the owner, and occasionally employ wage-laborers. Tunkás has a few small grocery and general stores, a construction supply store, an ice cream store, a few butcher shops, two pharmacies, a number of clothing shops, and at least two small restaurants (not including people who sell food they make in their homes). The storeowners are typically wealthier members of the community and frequently supply the labor needed to run their shops. The amount of opportunities provided by wage-labor by these businesses is small.

Remittances from family members in other parts of the Yucatán and the United States play a central role in the economy of Tunkás and in the economic survival of many families. One in four Tunkaseños living in Tunkás report receiving remittances from relatives in the United States and/or other parts of Yucatán. While some portion of remittances may be used toward the construction of a home or even the establishment of a business, most of the money is used to cover everyday household expenses (Aguilar,

Hartman et al. 2009). This reliance on remittances for daily expenses (as opposed to non-essential, durable goods) illustrates their importance to the household economy.

Diversified Economic Strategies

The diversification of income is an important part of economic life for Tunkaseños. Both men and women typically engage in a number of economic activities to ensure survival through tough economic times. This is especially important given the traditional reliance on a frequently precarious agricultural harvest. Beyond the individual's diverse economic activities, there is also an important economy of scale that takes place on the familial level. Extended families pool resources, facilitating the subsistence of a larger number of people. It is important to discuss this aspect of Tunkaseño economic life since these economic strategies play an important role in attitudes about immigration.

Men and women traditionally occupy distinct economic roles that are complementary in the continued subsistene of the family. Men's traditional role is outside of the home, and is seen as the family's primary source of income (Bever 1999). Traditionally, male income comes from working in the *milpa*, though increasingly many have also supplemented this income with wage-labor activities outside of Tunkás. By contrast, women's traditional economic role is contained within the home. While many of a woman's expected duties deal with activities such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and childcare, it would be a mistake to overlook women's important economic role. Women

are active participants in the informal economy, generating important cash income for their families (Bever 1999).

One of the first questions in the MMFRP survey in Tunkás, dealt with the respondent's occupation. The list of possible options was divided into those "professions" which were deemed economically active and economically inactive. For example, someone who reported working in the service industry was recorded as being economically active, while someone who reported being retired was recorded as being economically inactive. In this survey, "ama de casa" was classified as economically inactive. However, shortly into the process of administering the questionnaires, interviewers found that women were reporting that they were just "amas de casa," and not disclosing their informal economic activities, such as making food for sale. Interviewers were then instructed to inquire more specifically about females' economic activities and select the appropriate "economically active" category. The result is an ambiguous classification of economically active and inactive women in Tunkás[4].

Going into my field research with this framework, and with my North American assumptions about what is means to be a "housewife," I was surprised to find that nearly every woman I met was economically active in some way. The problem had not been that they were misreporting their economic activities; rather, it was that these informal economic activities conducted from within the home are perceived as being a part of the responsibility of a woman performing the role of "ama de casa." Women engage in a

[4] In the end, the survey found that of 409 women who reported Tunkás as their primary place of residence, 289 were "amas de casa".

variety of economic activities, including animal husbandry, small-scale agriculture on the land surrounding the home, hammock making, food preparation (for sale), handicrafts, participation in *tandas*[5], and much more. The distinction is that this money is perceived to be supplemental to the income generated by men outside of the home. In her dissertation on migration and the household economy in the town of Sudzal, Yucatán, Sandra Bever finds that women describe their work as performed "para ayudarme un poco," while men's work is "para mantener la familia" (Bever 1999).

Juana and her family are an excellent example of both the importance of the diversification of income and of economies of scale in Tunkás. Juana grew up with her 13 brothers and sisters in a small house made of *paja* where her parents still live. As of this summer, her brothers and sisters are scattered all over the Yucatán in Tunkás, Mérida, and Cancún. She has two children, ages 10 and 4, and is in a committed "union libre" with Carlos, who at the time of my field research was living in Inglewood, California. With the money raised from Carlos' work in the United States, and from bank loans in Tunkás, Juana was able to build a large, two-bedroom home made of concrete where she lived with her two children and her younger sister Ana Maria (the living arrangement has since changed). Another of her sisters lives a few doors down, and two of her brothers live about a ten-minute walk down the road, one of them living in a small concrete home on the same lot with their parents.

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[5] Tandas are rotating credit systems. Participants make regular contributions to the tanda. In turn, participants receive all or part of the contributions made during particular rotations.

Juana is quick to assert that she is a mother first, and that her primary role is as "ama de casa," however, she also engages in money-raising activities. The money she received from Carlos in California was centrally important to the income of her family, though she also played an important role in income generation. The most obvious is her work as a beautician. She completed one year of study at a local beauty school, and runs a small salon out of her home. Starting midday, women line up on the couches in her living room waiting for their turn to get their hair cut and colored, or to have their nails painted. As one of only three barbers in town, and certainly the one with the most training with regard to female beautification, she manages to stay busy. In addition to this she makes banana and chocolate popsicles for sale to local children for one peso each. Finally, in the yard surrounding her home she had geese, chickens, turkeys, one pig, and a sprawling garden of squash and melon. While she raises animals primarily for personal consumption, she is also able to sell them or their produce (eggs, chicks) when she needs cash. Juana emphasized the importance of motherhood, noting that her beauty salon is in her home so that she can be with her children. When asked about her income she always referred to the money she made as her "dinerito."

Juana's family remaining in Tunkás - including two sisters, two brothers, two children aged ten and twelve who were adopted by her mother, one brother-in-law, two sisters-in-law, and four nieces and nephews - pool their resources in order to ensure the survival of the family as a whole. Some meals are eaten separately, within the nuclear family, though many meals, especially lunches (the largest meal of the day) are made in volume to feed the larger family. Family members combine their resources, donating a

chicken, produce, tortillas, etc. to the family who will make that day's meal. Frequently, Juana's mother, Doña Carla, an exceptional cook, makes a large quantity of *sopa de pavo* or *relleno negro* and brings a portion of it to Juana's house for her family.

Economic diversification and economies of scale are an important survival strategy utilized by Tunkaseño families. In Tunkás these strategies provide stability during volatile economic times, especially the fluctuating agricultural harvest. In the chapters that follow I will show the strategy of diversification has grown to incorporate migration as an important component of contribution to a family's survival.

Chapter 3: An Ethnographic look at Migration Decisions

"Dicen que Los Ángeles es Yucatán. Hay más de Yucatán que gabachos" – José, 18-year-old Tunkaseño who unsuccessfully attempted to cross the border in May 2009, gave up and returned to Tunkás

Theories of migration offer an important template for understanding broad trends in the movement of people. Precisely because of their broad focus, however, the migrant as a complex human being is often lost. In my research I have sought to understand these broad trends as individuals within the transnational Tunkaseño community experience them. Rather than seeking out accounts that support one theory or another, I have tried to allow migrants' testimonies to guide my interpretation of these theories. In this chapter I will discuss the motivations and underlying reasons for migration, drawing on major theories of migration where appropriate.

The Construction of Need as the Motivation for Migration

The intensification of economic need in Tunkás can be traced to the project of modernization undertaken by the Mexican government starting in the 1940s. By devaluing agricultural goods and promoting large-scale agricultural production, Mexico's agricultural reforms undermined traditional economic relations based on subsistence farming. With their traditional forms of subsistence devastated, farmers were and

continue to be forced to look beyond their villages in search of wage labor. Conveniently, the government's parallel attempt to attract foreign investment into Mexico's manufacturing and tourism sectors necessitated the creation of a large, low-skilled labor force in the country's urban areas to fuel development. In the period from 1940 to 1970, Mexico's urban population jumped from 40 to 61 percent of the country's total population (Baños Ramírez 2003). In Tunkás, many young men found work clearing ancient Mayan ruins targeted for tourist development, or they traveled to the growing city of Cancún to work in construction. Others looked further afield, to the United States, drawn by an institutionalized temporary migrant worker program and the promise of higher wages.

This stage of capitalist development in Yucatán and the subsequent mobilization of formerly subsistence farmers into a wage-earning workforce resonates with the world systems theory of migration. This theory holds that the penetration of capitalist economic relations into non-capitalist societies disrupts traditional economic relations and leads to the production of a mobile workforce (Sassen 1988; Massey, Arango et al. 1993). Farmers migrate to urban centers in search of wage labor, and whether they are able to find it or not, they have thus been converted into mobile members of the urban wage-labor pool (Sassen 1988). In places like Tunkás, inhabitants become both a casualty of development policies, and through their wage-labor activities in urban centers, they also become instrumental facilitators of capitalist growth.

The first U.S.-bound migrants from Tunkás recall leaving because they were no longer able to support themselves and their families based on their earnings in Tunkás (or

from short-term migratory labor on nearby henequen plantations). When I asked Don Paulo - the self-described first Bracero migrant from Tunkás – what made him decide to migrate to the United States, he told me simply, "porque aquí no había trabajo." He recalled: "Yo ya era casado con tres hijos, dos y mi esposa tenía tres meses de embarazo. Acá no había trabajo, no se gana, y la ilusión de tener algo y lo tuve!". With two children and another one on the way, and no means of supporting himself and his family in Tunkás, he was forced to search for other means of support.

Don Paulo's migration highlights another influential theory of migration: network theory. According to this theory, initial migrants bear the highest risk and cost of migration because they do so with limited knowledge and without the benefit of a social safety net (Massey, Arango et al. 1993; Massey 1999). Certainly at the time Don Paulo left, he was venturing into a great unknown. He was likely one of the few Tunkaseños who had left the Yucatán, let alone go to the United States. What is significant though is that Paulo (as discussed in Chapter 2) comes from a family of merchants, and therefore had relatively more disposable income than subsistence farmers whose income was primarily limited to their agricultural production. Even though he was not a farmer, he and his family still suffered from the negative economic consequences of agricultural modernization because farmers in Tunkás would have been primary consumers of his family's merchant goods. Because his family had access to financial resources, he was in a position to be able to make the first, relatively costly migration to the United States. Following Paulo's pioneering journey he possessed significant social capital, in the form of knowledge of the migration process, of the destination country, employment access,

and financial capital. His social capital, and the social capital of the growing Tunkaseño migrant network in the U.S., drove down the cost and risk of each subsequent migration.

The Changing Perception of Need

Since the time Paulo left Tunkás, the necessity of migration for employment has intensified. As discussed in Chapter 2, farming remains central to the local economy, though farmers and their families must also look to labor migration as a means of supplementing their income. Indeed the prospect of migrating for wage labor has become an expectation for young Tunkaseños. In MMFRP's 2009 survey, 73 percent of Tunkaseños reported that one must leave Tunkás in order to progress in life[6]. Thus far I have focused on the role of macro-level forces beyond Tunkás in explaining out-migration. While this is an important part of the picture, these forces alone do not adequately explain the expansion and perpetuation of migration. This section will focus on the social and economic role of migration itself as a powerful force for change within the community.

Diego is a 29-year-old former migrant to the United States. He grew up with his parents and 14 brothers and sisters in a small house made of *paja*. His father farmed on *ejido* land and occasionally migrated to Cancún in search of work in order to support his family. Diego attended elementary school, but had to stop because his family could no

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6 Original survey question: Algunas personas dicen que los jóvenes nacidos en Tunkás pueden progresar en la vida sin salir del pueblo. Otras personas dicen que para superarse, los jóvenes nacidos en Tunkás tienen que salir. ¿Qué diría usted?

longer afford to send him. When he left school he went to help his father and brothers in the family's *milpa*. As he grew into young adulthood he began feeling that he one day he would want to have his own house, and he would need to be able to support his own family.

Diego's reflections about the economic situation in Tunkás and for migrants in the United States revealed a complex understanding of the implications of the modern economic system for rural *campesinos* such as himself. He explained that it is not possible to subsist on agriculture alone, that to survive one must leave Tunkás to find work.

> Aquí si la tierra produjera el fruto del campo como debe ser, yo digo que la gente no saldría a trabajar, si tuviéramos buenas cosechas, buen fríjol, buen elote, buena calabaza, buen fruto de la tierra no va a salir, vende aquí, vende en Mérida, pero si el campo no está dando buen fruto, que va a vender el campesino, pues no hay nada para que venda, no sale a trabajar entonces deja su tierra y sale a trabajar.
>
> Ahorita el campo no está produciendo, hay mucho pecado, mucha rebeldía, mucha desobediencia, que más, no podemos hacer nada, la tierra no está dando la cosecha, hay que ver de que vivir, buscar de que trabajar, no hay, tienes que salir a buscar en que trabajar.

Unable to envision a future for himself working in his father's milpa, Diego left Tunkás in 2000, as a 20-year-old. He asked two of his brothers living in Inglewood if they would pay for his entrace to the United States. They agreed, and within a few days he boarded a plane to Tijuana and crossed the U.S.-Mexico border with the help of a *coyote* (people smuggler).

The reasons he gives for migrating highlight the way that the material need for migration has changed over time. When I asked him about why he decided to migrate he recalled being motivated by a desire:

> para tener algo propio, un terreno propio, una casa propia, algo, para no depender de papá o mamá, y las personas que no tienen un largo estudio pues no es fácil que te den un trabajo suave, siempre es un trabajo pesado, entonces yendo a cualquier parte aunque hagas trabajo pesado te van a pagar poco, pero yendo a EUA haciendo trabajo pesado te pagan poco en dólar pero mandándolo a México aumenta aunque sea poco.

Indeed, contrasting Don Paulo and Diego's reason for migration reveals a shift in perceived need. Whereas Paulo focused on the need to provide for his wife and kids, Diego concentrates on the desire to have something of his own prior to marriage.

This changing attitude about what is a life "need" suggests that migration is largely motivated not by a desire to increase one's wealth in absolute terms, but by an interest in increasing wealth *relative* to the home community (Stark 1984; Stark and Bloom 1985; Massey, Arango et al. 1993). This is a central proposition of both new economics of migration theories and cumulative causation. Oded Stark, one of the main theorists of the new economic model, refers to this phenomenon as *relative deprivation*: the individual's income level relative to the reference community, and notes that, "as particular individuals migrate, the relative deprivation perceived by nonmigrants may change, thereby creating second-round inducements to migrate" (Stark and Bloom 1985). Over time, as the "relative wealth" of particular community members increases, the perception of what is necessary and desired changes to match that heightened level of material wealth. The desire to increase one's relative wealth in the community thus leads to a higher propensity to migrate.

Asking José, an 18-year-old would-be migrant to the United States, about his motivations for migration further illustrated the shifting perception of need and how it propels some individuals into migration. José is the son of a frequent migrant to the United States. His father returned many times over the course of his lifetime, though never staying for extended periods of time. He decided to migrate himself in May 2009. He was ultimately unsuccessful, as discussed below, though his motivation for migration remains important. Intrigued by the central importance of having one's own home, I asked José why this was so important to him. He explained:

> Porque no hay herencia, esta casa es del papá de mi papá, si mi papá hubiera tenido su terreno él lo iba a dividir y nos iba a dejar pero como no fuimos, pues yo quiero hacerlo, no quiero que me lo regalen, quisiera hacerlo yo mismo, para mi familia, porque no todo el tiempo me voy a quedar solito! En EUA mínimo un año ya tendrán su casa, bonita, grande. Es como esa casa aquí en la esquina [pointing to a large house down the street]. Los dueños son de Los Angeles. La casa está grande. Es de dos pisos y acá no hay casas de dos pisos . . . y ellos vienen nada más cuando hay la fiesta del pueblo.

The fact that he never really answers the question is significant. The reason he wants to have a house is because he doesn't have one to inherit. His concentration on the material reality of having a home rather than on the personal or emotional reasons for desiring a home highlight the degree to which having one's own home has become an entrenched expectation. When Don Paulo was a young man it was not an expectation that newly married couples moved into their own home. It was more typical that the newlyweds would live with one or the other's parents in their home. It is precisely because of the homes built by migrants like Paulo that having one's own home is an expectation today. It is also interesting that in his explanation he is compelled to mention the large house

down the street. This imposing two-story house, both levels adorned with ornate columns, is indeed impressive. He points out not only that the house is quite a bit larger than other houses in Tunkás, but also that its owners don't even live in it. The way he talks about it reveals both an admiration of and desire for this kind of status. Narratives like José's about the motivations for migration reveal the way that sustained migration has altered the social context in Tunkás in a way that encourages future migration.

The perception of need evolves not just across generations, but also across one's lifetime. Jesús, a 31-year-old former migrant to the United States left for Minnesota after working in Cancún and Playa del Carmen for eleven years. He explained his reason for leaving as follows:

> Vi que ya había hecho muchos años en Cancún y en Playa y no conseguía mi casa, que es lo que mayormente uno quiere, ya tenia mi niña, le digo a mi esposa, tengo un tío en Los Estados Unidos y el me comentó que había trabajo y me entró las ganas de ir y construir mi casa, porque en Cancún y Playa ya había hecho 11 años y no había conseguido mi casa, me entró las ganas de ir.

Jesús, like Diego and José, decided to migrate to the United States in order to make enough money to build his own home. He had been working toward that goal in Cancún and Playa del Carmen for 11 years but had not yet been able to achieve it. In 2002 he migrated to Minnesota. After a few years of working in the U.S. he was able to build his own home and even start his own business, a bar, upon his return. His bar is extremely profitable, probably one of the most profitable businesses in the town, a fact which he readily acknowledges. But now that he is back in Tunkás, he realizes there are other

things he wants, things that he can't get with the money he makes in his business. When I asked him if the income from his business is adequate to support his family, he explained:

> Si, si, nos dan para vivir, pero le digo hay cosas que uno quisiera hacer. Por ejemplo conseguir un carro, o cosas que le hace falta uno en la casa. Es un poco más difícil. De hecho dos años estoy acá y no he podido hacer algo más en mi casa, sea remodelado algo así. Que le haga falta. [Necesito un carro] por que a veces como mi Papá tiene una tienda, hay cosas que necesita, lo puede uno a comprar en Merída o Izamal o acá igual.

He now has a house, which he is proud of, but now he laments not being able to make improvements on it. Just as he left in 2002 to raise money to build his home, at the time I interviewed him in August 2009 he was planning to migrate once again, after the town's fiesta in February 2010. The goal was to raise money to make improvements on his home and to purchase a car.

Migration as an Economic Strategy

As can be gleaned from the the preceeeding stories, migrating to accumulate the capital necessary to make an investment is a key motivating factor for migration, though there are inherent complexities in this motivation that require further explanation. First, the decision to migrate as an economic strategy is undertaken by families, not by individuals alone. Thus, individual family members migrate, but the economic significance of this decision is not limited to the individual, as money earned will benefit the family as a whole. Second, migration is undertaken as a means to accumulate funds to invest in a desired project in Tunkás. Options for aquiring capital if one stays in Tunkás

are very limited. Loans are availible at the local bank, but with high and variable interest rates that are difficult to pay off based on a Tunkaseño income. So, whereas in a country like the United States citizens look to banks or second jobs as a means of raising large sums of money, residents of small towns like Tunkás lack these options. New economics theories of migration emphasize these points as primary motivating factors for migration (Stark and Bloom 1985; Massey, Arango et al. 1993).

A recurring theme that came up in my conversations with Tunkaseños was that there is always something to eat in Tunkás. One afternoon I found myself in the midst of a conversation on precisely this topic as I sat on Mauricio's couch in Anaheim, California. A group of about eight men reflected on how many expenses they have in the United States, and how inexpensive life is in Tunkás. They agreed that one is never hungry in Tunkás. If you have chickens (which nearly everyone does), then you eat eggs, or the chicken. At the very least you will eat tortillas with a spicy chili-tomato sauce. Reflecting on this conversation a few weeks later, I spoke with Mauricio and his friend Juan about migration and economic need in Tunkás. I asked both of them why, if there is always something to eat in Tunkás, there is a need to migrate. Mauricio explained:

> Por la comida si hay, pero para vestirse, para comprar ropa pues no hay. Pues, es el problema porque uno va a buscar este otro lugar en donde gana un poco más, para comprar ropa, porque solo en el pueblo así no se puede comprar ropa . . . Depende también del trabajo que haga uno. Porque nosotros somos campesinos. Nosotros dedicamos al monte pues y de ahí pos nunca va a salir uno adelante todo el tiempo vamos a estar así pues por eso a veces prueba la suerte de uno . . . El problema también es el problema de las enfermedades. Todo eso, uno como le hace a veces presta uno, así todo el tiempo, así vamos a seguir, ahorita hay un poco de trabajo un poco de dinerito, así se va a aliviar la cosa, así es.

Juan expanded:

> Este lo que pasa, un poquito más de aclarar sobre lo que decía usted, ¿como es que viene a emigrarse a otro lado si hay comida?, lo que pasa pues, como dice él, cuando comienza las enfermedades, la vestidura y esas necesidades, y en el campo no puedes ganar lo suficiente, nada más para comer, pero se trata de pagar estudios nuestros hijos, también ahí uno tiene que invertir dinero y no hay suficiente. Fíjese que de parte mía mis padres no me dieron buen estudio ¿Por qué? Porque ellos nunca quisieron salir adelante con un buen trabajo, todo el tiempo en el campo. Nosotros queríamos seguir estudiando, pero no se puede, entonces a los 16, 17 tuve que salir a trabajar ¿Por qué? Porque esta ropa, la llevo a la escuela, no es justo porque no hay dinero, y estoy mirando realimente no hay dinero. Entonces nos damos cuento y todos tenemos que salir a trabajar, y es por eso que tenemos que emigrar al otro lado.

Both agree that while working in "el campo" allows one to put food on their family's table, it is impossible to generate the disposable income needed for expenses like medical care and education. Significantly, these expenses were not so prominent in their parents' time. Schooling in Tunkás ended with an elementary education, and medical care was neither as advanced nor as available to residents. Furthermore, in their parents' time formal classroom education was not as valuable as a hands-on education in the *milpa* for would-be farmers. Perceived need has changed in Tunkás not only as the result of migration, but also as the result of structural changes resulting from rapid modernization within Mexico. Juan says, "realmente no hay dinero" because while farming yields food, it does not yield the cash necessary for living in contemporary Mexico. Harking back to world systems theory, it seems that labor migration is a feature of the modern global economy and migration allows migrants the opportunity to acquire the capital necessary to afford the expenses characteristic of the modern economy.

As shown in the Chapter 2, families actively diversify their collective income in order to ensure economic survival in the face of uncertainty, and increasingly, migration is an important way for families to accomplish this. Julio pointed precisely to the uncertainty of the harvest as a reason for migrating. He explained that he left Tunkás, "pues buscando un poco de que trabajar, porque esperar el fruto del campo, la cosecha del maíz, a veces no hay mucho o no da a gusto de uno, porque a veces estas esperando la cosecha y no hay, pierdes todo, el tiempo de trabajo." Families in Tunkás utilize family members' migration for this purpose, though what is novel is not the opportunity to diversify, but the need to employ migration as a diversification strategy. Migration merely fits into an existing economic strategy.

Chapter 4: The Effect of the Economic Crisis on Tunkaseños and Migration and Settlement Decisions

"Acá uno está libre, pero allá no. Si tienes papeles pues, si puedes andar libre, pero si no tienes papeles, pues o puedes estar pareando. La migra te deporta. Esa es la única diferencia. Allá hay mucho trabajo, bueno antes, porque ahora no hay trabajo. [Observé los cambios en la economía] desde fines de noviembre de 2008. Porque en ese tiempo no había dinero. Fue cuando la gente empezó a perder sus hogares. Fue cuando empecé a pensar en venir [a Tunkás]." – Francisco, frequent migrant to the United States who returned to Tunkás as a result of the economic crisis.

The global economic crisis has had a major impact on the lives of Tunkaseños throughout their transnational community. In order to cope with economic constraints, they have been forced to make major adjustments to their lives. The way that individuals and families cope depends on a number of factors including their primary place of residence, the location of family members, age, sex, and other personal and emotional concerns. For the most part, U.S.-based Tunkaseños have stayed put, cutting back on expenses and in some cases, finding additional means of making money. For some individuals though, return migration has been their means of coping. While the numbers are small, a few U.S.-based migrants, and many more domestic migrants, have been returning to Tunkás.

The Effect of the Crisis on Tunkaseños Living in the United States

Given their concentration in Southern California, one of the areas hardest hit by the recent economic crisis, Tunkaseños living in the United States have been among the worst affected. The MMFRP's 2009 survey found that 52.8 percent of Tunkaseño

migrants in Anaheim and Inglewood were working fewer hours in 2009 than they had a year prior (Aguilar, Hartman et al. 2009). Qualitative research suggests that many of those who reported working more total hours have been forced to take second jobs because of layoffs, cutbacks, or pay decreases in their primary place of employment.

In winter and spring 2009, the subject of "la crisis" was frequently a centerpiece of conversation among Tunkaseño migrants in California. In May 2009 I asked Mauricio to discuss economic and political issues currently affecting the life of the Tunkaseño migrant community. He replied: "pues, ahorita está un poco difícil, por el trabajo todo, por la economía". Mauricio himself was laid off from the well-paid factory job he had had since he first arrived in the United States twelve years prior. When I first met him in February 2009 he had seen his regular 40 hours per week cut back to 32; when I reinterviewed him in May he had been laid off along, with the majority of his co-workers in that factory, many of them Tunkaseños. After putting in over 50 applications at local businesses over the course of a month and a half, he finally found employment through a fellow Tunkaseño. His friend had grown tired of his work as a busboy at a local restaurant and referred Mauricio to his employers as a replacement. In this new job Mauricio works far more than he did in the factory: 11 hours a day, 6 days a week, for less pay: $850 salary per 2 weeks (as opposed to $10 an hour at the factory).

Mauricio's story is indicative of the economic situation of many in the Tunkaseño migrant community. While some have been able to find new jobs, others have been forced to rely on whatever hours and pay their employers offer them. In Inglewood, where many Tunkaseños work in car washes, employers will offer to allow employees to

keep working for tips alone, with no other form of monetary compensation. Lacking other options for employment, and because of many of them lack legal authorization to be in the United States, many choose to retain these jobs despite poor conditions.

Remaining in the United States: Coping with Economic Crisis

Under pressure from the U.S. economic crisis, Tunkaseño migrants have been forced to make major adjustments to their lives. The majority of migrants remain in the United States, undeterred by what most see as a temporary setback. Facing layoffs and reductions in wages, they have looked to their families and other Tunkaseños for support. In fact, it appears that the strength of migrant social networks makes migrants uniquely well suited to cope with the strains of economic crisis. Still, some single male migrants have chosen to return to Tunkás. While there is no statistical evidence to confirm that this number is more or less than the number of migrants that return regularly, it can be said with certainty that the decision to return for each of these migrants was directly influenced by their experience of job loss as the result of the economic crisis. And for all migrants - those who remain as well as those choosing to return to Mexico –family considerations appear to be the most powerful factor influencing their decision to stay longer.

Those remaining in the United States are coping with economic strain by reducing expenses and by relying on economies of scale made possible by their social networks. Migrants are well-situated to cope with economic crisis because many lead their day-to-

day lives in what amounts to a constant state of economic crisis. Given the motivation to earn large amounts of disposable income in short periods of time, migrants tend to live frugally. According to MMFRP survey data, the average household size for Tunkaseños living in the United States is 5.07 (Aguilar, Hartman et al. 2009). These large households allow for utilization of economies of scale. Single male migrants frequently live five or six people to an apartment, reducing rental and utilities expenses. Carlos, an unaccompanied male migrant living in Inglewood, shared a one-bedroom apartment with five other migrants from other parts of Mexico. Three men slept in beds in the bedroom, three other men slept on three beds and couches in the main living space. The men also pooled their resources by combining meals. Men with the day off were expected to prepare food for everyone else in the home. Families, too, frequently live multiple people and multiple generations in one household. Don Álvaro and his wife, Doña Alba live share a two bedroom apartment with their daughter Ana and her new husband Raul, their son, Armando, his wife Luz, and their three children. Don Álvaro and Doña Alba both work at night, so they are able to sleep in turns with Armando and Luz. It has not always been so crowded in their household. Armando lost his job as a result of the economic crisis. His parents opened up their home to him and his family to help them get through the tough economic times.

Migrant networks also foster a strong sense of community, whereby community members can rely on each other for support in times of need. In March 2009, when Mauricio was laid off from his factory job, he was fortunate enough to have two and a half weeks of vacation time saved up. When that money ran out and he was not receiving

any callbacks from the 50 applications he had submitted businesses around Orange County, he turned to his friends for support. When I asked him what one does to cope with the economic strain caused by the crisis he explained:

> Pues, ayudan entre ambos. Pues aquí en que estaba yo pues, ahorré el poquito dinero que tenía yo…lo que tenia yo conservado, todo compraban comida y lo comía, comemos. Me invitaron para no gastar… Todos los que no trabajan se juntan. Se juntan en casa también. Si, ayudan entre ambos. Nos ayudamos. Unos están solos, como unos que no conozco. Y así el dinámico.

Because of this support Mauricio was able to remain in the United States. He said that he had been planning to return to Tunkás if he was unable to find a job. He was, however able, to find support within the community network. Neighbors invited him to their homes to eat, and it was ultimately a Tunkaseño migrant who referred him to his new job at the restaurant in Anaheim.

Some migrants help maintain their livelihoods by utilizing strategies of economic diversification similar to those employed in Tunkás. Many engage in informal economic activities as a way to earn extra money for themselves and their families. A common informal economic activity is prepared food. Migrants frequently prepare traditional Yucateco dishes such as *panuchos* and tamales for sale at community events such as baseball games and community festivals. Some even make a small income from regularly selling food from their homes. Vicente and his wife, both migrants from Tunkás, supported their family with income generated from the preparation and sale of *panuchos* during his nine months of unemployment following the economic crisis. A permanent legal U.S. resident, Vicente was able to draw on unemployment benefits, though it is

doubtful he would have been able to support his family of five without the extra income generated by his and his wife's informal economic activities.

Choosing to Remain in the United States

Increased border security weighs heavily on migrants' decisions to remain in the United States. Border enforcement has dramatically increased the cost and risk of crossing, as well as the emotional investment of migration. Even under the economic strain caused by the U.S. economic crisis, migrants are reluctant to abandon their investment, for many of them know that their next return to Mexico could be their last.

The monetary cost of crossing the border is roughly $3,000 for a crossing over land, and $6,000 for a crossing through a legal port of entry (POE). Crossing through a POE is costlier because the likelihood of apprehension by Border Patrol is significantly less. Migrants crossing in this way typically cross in cars using false documents, or clandestinely in a car or truck. The high cost of crossing is especially important because of the time it takes to repay the fees charged by the *coyotes*. Migrants are typically sponsored by friends or family who pay the smuggling fee give migrants a place to stay, clothes, food, and help them to find a job upon arrival. Especially if work is not easy to find right away, the overall owed to relatives may be more than the smuggling fee alone. As a result, it typically takes about a year before new migrants are able to pay back their debts and finally begin working toward the monetary goal they set out to accomplish by migrating in the first place.

The considerable physical risks of clandestine crossings are a major factor deterring some migrants from returning to Tunkás. Knowledge of the increasing difficulty of crossing travels fast across the migrant network. Each year, new migrants bring stories of difficult border crossings. For older migrants this news weighs heavily on their thinking, for they fear that their bodies would not be able to handle the physical strain of crossing again after a stay in Mexico. Mauricio explained:

> Para irnos es fácil, para regresar es difícil, y ahorita con problemas de inmigración que hay más vigilancia ahora no puede regresar uno, yo creo. Por que según, como platique de los dos paisanos que quisieron venir, se fastidiaron y no pudieron pasar y se regresaron. Está muy vigilado. Antes quizás no, porque pues, yo pase bien como le digo, yo pase en la línea los dos veces. No era bien difíciles . . . Siempre la dicho a mi esposa, si quieres que yo vaya y que platícalo bien del lo que viniendo ya, no voy a regresar, aunque up quiero regresar, pero no puedo.

He recounts the story of two young Tunkaseños who tried to cross the border in May 2009 but were ultimately unable to. One of these young men was José, mentioned in Chapter 3. While some more experienced migrants dismiss José and Emilio's inability to cross as being a consequence of their relative inexperience, such stories can be a powerful deterrent for both those thinking of crossing and those thinking of leaving.

Mauricio's story is a compelling demonstration of the influence of border security on an individual's decision to remain in the United States. Mauricio has been in the United States for twelve years. He has only seen his wife and kids once in that time. An outside observer may assume that the particularly long duration of his separation from his family would incline him to be one of the first migrants to abandon life in the United States and return to Mexico as the economic crisis intensified. Recall that Mauricio did

lose his job, and was unemployed for a month in a half. In fact, if he had not been able to find a job after a certain period of time he was planning to return to Tunkás. It is significant though that he remained in the U.S. for so long without pay, and that when he did find employment he accepted a job that demanded more for less pay. Even though he has strong personal reasons for returning to Tunkás, he also has strong incentives for staying. In the twelve years he has been in Anaheim he has built a life for himself. He is a highly respected member of the community and is understandably reluctant to give that up.

The decision by an unauthorized migrant to stay or leave the United States carries considerable weight because for many it will mean giving up everything they have in the U.S., perhaps never being able to return. With these high risks, and uncertain economic prospects back in Mexico, many like Mauricio have chosen to remain in the United States despite tough economic conditions. While it is his family remaining in Tunkás that is his primary motivation for leaving California, it is his concern for his family's economic wellbeing that encourages him to stay.

Returning to Tunkás

Under economic pressure caused by the U.S. economic crisis, some migrants *have* decided to return to Tunkás. It is important to note, however, that those who have returned are all single male migrants with wives and children remaining in Mexico. For the older migrants, they know that this most recent return will be their last. For the younger migrants, their latest return trip to Tunkás is an opportunity to visit their families and wait out the economic crisis.

Don Salvador and Carlos are both older migrants, formerly residents of Inglewood, who have returned to Tunkás as the result of the U.S. economic crisis. Don Salvador was forced to take a second job, but when he was not able to pay his bills even working two jobs, he decided it was time to return to Tunkás. Carlos decided to return because the car wash he was working for was set to close in December 2009 due to a lack of business. He had left his partner, Juana in Tunkás when she was three months pregnant. Six years later he had never met his daughter, Alejandra. His only relation with her was through numerous photos lining his wall, and over the phone. When I met Carlos in September 2009 he had plans to return home, though he was visibly reluctant to give up on his personal and economic investment in the United States. At one point during out conversation about his plans to return to Tunkás in December, he looked up at the calendar on the wall commenting "pues, diciembre es muy cerca!" When I spoke to Juana on Christmas Day I learned that Carlos had indeed returned.

Francisco is a migrant in his early thirties whose family also remains in Tunkás. He has worked in the U.S. for the past ten years, traveling back and forth periodically to spend time with his wife and two kids. He has worked hard to obtain a good salary in the construction industry, work that pays considerably more than other sectors. However, in November 2008 he began feeling the crunch of the economic crisis. He reports that it was at this time that work began to dissipate and he started thinking about returning to Mexico. Rather than stay in California and try to find a second job, he decided to return to Tunkás in March 2009. When I asked him why he didn't try to find another job in the service sector he explained that he didn't like work in the service industry, and if he

could not work in a job that he liked, for the pay to which he was accustomed, then it was not worth it for him to stay. For Francisco, like the older migrants, family was his primary motivation for returning, for he very likely would have been able to find a low-paying job in the service industry. The crisis challenged his livelihood, though he was not left without option in the United States. Ultimately he returned to Tunkás not because he was forced to economically, but because he chose to for personal reasons. He also assured me that he has a good relationship with his boss in Inglewood, and that when work picks up again his employer will call him in Tunkás and offer to pay his passage to the U.S. Unlike the older migrants, Jesus sees his return to Mexico as a temporary arrangement.

The Effect of the Crisis on Tunkaseño Migrants to Tourist Destinations in Quintana Roo

The global economic crisis and the localized crisis caused by the outbreak of H1N1 Swine Flu have had a palpable effect on Tunkaseño migrants living in tourist destinations in Quintana Roo. While I did not set out to study the plight of domestic migrants in the context of the crisis, within a few weeks of my arrival in July 2009 it became evident that what was happening in Quintana Roo had important implications for the greater Tunkaseño community. Because my fieldwork was based in Tunkás, I was unable to speak with migrants living in Quintana Roo. I was, however, able to speak with some returning migrants and their family members. Whereas "la crisis" had been the primary topic of conversation during my first visit in February 2009, by the time I returned in July "la influenza" had replaced it.

Much like U.S.-based migrants, domestic migrants in Quintana Roo have been laid off or have had their hours dramatically cut back. Also like U.S.-based migrants, QR-based migrants have also been forced to cut back on the amount of money they remit to family members in Tunkás. However, unlike U.S. migrants, the restrictions on their movement are much different. While life in a city like Cancún is a significant monetary investment, there is no similar cost and risk of initial migration. Movement back and forth is regulated by the amount of money an individual or family has to spend, and by time off, not by government policy. While monetary restrictions like rent and employment, and familial obligations like children in school restrict movement back and forth from Cancún and the Mayan Riviera, they are not hazardous obstacles in the same way as the militarized of the U.S. border.

José is a returned migrant from Cancún. When I asked him why he returned to Tunkás he explained, "Porque está muy bajo el trabajo, por la influenza corrieron a mucha gente. Cerraron restaurante y como yo soy Nuevo me corrieron, dejan a los que tienen más tiempo. Para que me quedo allá? Si no tengo dinero, no tengo trabajo, no tengo nada mejor regrese a acá". With no job to support himself, José made the decision to return to live with his family in Tunkás. He assured me though that he would return to Cancún once the economy improved. Returning to Tunkás - where housing is free and one can rely on one's family for food and support – is a plausible and low-risk economic option for domestic migrants. In this way, the effect of the crisis on the movement of Tunkaseño migrants within Yucatán serves as a kind of control for the variable of U.S.

border enforcement. Lacking such a significant impediment, it seems that return is a viable option.

The Effect of the Crisis on Tunkaseños in Tunkás

In recent years Tunkás has suffered both internal and external economic shocks. In 2008 a major drought wiped out the local harvest. The drought along with an unseasonably cold winter also caused the devastation of the local honey harvest[7] (Cornelius, Fitzgerald et al. 2009). The global economic crisis dealt Tunkás a further blow, as family members in the United States and in urban centers in the Yucatán began to experience economic strain. Faced with layoffs, cutbacks in hours, and reductions in pay, migrant family members cut back on the amount of money they were able to remit to family members in Tunkás. At the time of field research in February 2009, 37 percent of Tunkaseños interviewed reported receiving fewer remittances than they had a year prior. Based on qualitative interviews conducted in the summer of 2009, it is clear that Tunkaseños were experiencing a further reduction in remittances from family members working in Quintana Roo, following the outbreak of H1N1 in April and May 2009. This reduction in income forced Tunkaseños to adjust their budgets, causing them to spend less money in town and thus negatively affecting local businesses.

[7] The drought, coupled with an unseasonably cold winter prevented the blossoming of the *xuxul* flower. These small yellow flowers are the primary source of pollen for Tunkaseño honeybees.

The Effect of the Crisis on the Decision to Migrate to the United States

MMFRP field research conducted in February 2009 found that plans for new migration were down significantly. Compared to data from MMFRP's research in Tunkás in 2006, the proportion of residents planning migration to the U.S. in the next twelve months dropped from 24 to 8 percent in 2009 (Aguilar, Hartman et al. 2009). During qualitative field research in July and August of 2009, I found that few people intended to migrate to the U.S. in the coming year, though plans for new migration had not halted altogether. On May 2, 2009 Emilio and José, two 18-year-old Tunkaseños, boarded a plane to Aguaprieta. They left with the hopes of making it to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they had a house and jobs in a Chinese restaurant waiting for them.

The Tunkaseño migrant community in Minnesota is relatively small, though it is growing. The network and process of migration to Minnesota is different from migration to Los Angeles in important ways. Migrants to Los Angeles are typically sponsored by friends or family members already in the United States. The sponsor takes on the responsibility of providing the migrant with a place to stay and helps them to find a job upon their arrival. There is no guarantee of what type of employment will be provided, or how long it will take to find a job. The majority of Tunkaseños in Minnesota work in Chinese restaurants, and it is their employers who recruit new migrants to work. Employers ask their employees if they have friends or family in their hometowns who would like to come and work in the restaurant. The employer then loans their employee money to pay their friend's passage to the United States. Immediately upon arrival in Minnesota, the employer gives them a job in the restaurant and a place to stay. The

employer rents a house for their employees, pays all the bills and groceries, and pays the employee a fixed amount of about $350 every two weeks.

Tunkaseños are well aware of the crisis in the United States. They have heard from relatives how difficult it is to find a job in California. José explained that in Los Angeles, "se está acabando el trabajo. Todos ya tienen base entonces si intento ir, no rápido voy a encontrar trabajo, porque casi no hay." José's decision to go to Minnesota instead of Los Angeles is particularly noteworthy because he has significant familial connections in California. His father was a long-time migrant to the United States, returning every few years to Tunkás while he was growing up. His aunt and uncle, both legal permanent U.S. residents, are prominent members of the Tunkaseño community in Anaheim. All of their children, José's cousins, and many more of their brothers (José's uncles) live there as well. He would have had a safe place to stay and a formidable support network upon his arrival, but he chose instead to go to Minnesota. When I asked him why, he told me: "Porque en Minnesota dice que se gana más que en Los Angeles, Antonio [young, returned migrant from Minnesota] nos dijo."

Ultimately, José and Emilio were unable to make it across the border. They made three attempts before they gave up and turned back to Yucatán. Before they even made it to the border they were stopped by Mexican immigration officers in the Mexico City airport. Recognizing that their group was intending to cross the U.S. border, the official demanded a bribe of U.S. $2,000 to allow them to board their plane to Aguaprieta (which they paid). On their first attempt they were captured by the U.S. Border Patrol and sent to a detention facility before being expelled back to Mexico. On their second attempt they

encountered Mexican gangsters who demanded that they pay U.S. $500 each to pass. Lacking the money, they declined and turned back. At that point they were tired and ready to give up, but their coyote, determined to get them across (and to be paid for doing so), encouraged them to try one more time. On this, their final attempt, the coyote gave them a cell phone and a map. He remained on the Mexico side of the border wall and instructed them via cell phone how to proceed. They were directed to a factory where they were to be picked up. They made it to the factory, but fearful of Border Patrol agents approaching on the surrounding hills, they gave up and ran back to Mexico. Suffering insults from the coyote, they decided to turn back to Yucatán.

Emilio and José are young, with no previous experience crossing the border. While José reports that the trip discouraged him sufficiently that he will not try to migrate to the U.S. again, Emilio was of a different mind. When I spoke to him in August 2009 he told me that he planned to make another attempt in March 2010 after the Tunkás fiesta. This time he planned to cross with his older brother, Jesús who has experience both crossing the border and living and working in Minnesota.

It is significant that while plans for migration to the U.S. have diminished, new migration has not completely halted. As the U.S. economy has contracted, so too has the need for low-paying, low-skilled labor, though it has not been eliminated. While the economy of Southern California has been among the worst affected by the crisis, newer migrant destinations like Minnesota have weathered the storm relatively well; in fact, there are not enough low-paying workers to fill available positions in such potential destinations.

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Conclusion

"Nos entró la nostalgia y quisimos regresar a México, se regresa la gente, regresas y ves la crisis y sientes la crisis económica en la vida, con la familia, sientes la necesidad de regresara a EUA para trabajar y mandar dinero para mantenerlos aquí." – Ricardo, 52 year-old returned migrant from the United States

The U.S. economic crisis presents a unique opportunity to study the complexity of migration and settlement decisions in the context of considerable economic pressure. Early on in the crisis, the U.S. media was quick to declare that Mexican migrants were "giving up [and] going home". Their eagerness to report a mass return migration is unsurprising. Popular media and popular discourse rely on neoclassical theories of migration that cast migrants as rational economic actors making their decisions on migration based on a cost-benefit analysis. In this thesis I have tried to show that while economic considerations are important to the migration process, the decision to migrate and/or settle is not motivated by economic alone. Rather, the forces that drive migration involve the intermingling of social, political, personal, and economic considerations.

In this paper I have used ethnographic inquiry to explore the underlying causes of migration. I found that structural changes within Mexico and in the world economy as a whole have upset traditional livelihoods, forcing campesinos to search for other means of providing for themselves and their families. Modernization has also had a hand in increasing the cost of living and altering the expectation of need. While short-term labor migration has long been employed by Tunkaseño *campesinos* as a means of supplementing agricultural income, Mexico's push for an industrialized economy

intensified the need for supplemental income and simultaneously focused opportunities for wage labor in urban centers. While agriculture may provide food for the family, in present day it is insufficient to provide for a family's material needs such as medicine, clothing, schooling, and modern expectations like electricity, television, etc. In order to cope with the economic demands of life, individuals are increasingly turning to long-term labor migration. Today, Tunkseños migrate to urban centers in Mexico and the United States as a means of supporting themselves and their families. Over time, this sustained migration has in turn had major social and economic effects that have served to encourage further migration.

Migration from Tunkás to the United States began with a few pioneering migrants, but has expanded considerably over the course of the past 50 years. Pioneering migrants established the roots of a strong migrant network that promoted future migration by driving down the cost and risk of each successive migration. Each successive migration also changed the economic and social context of Tunkás. Returning migrants built and continue to build large concrete homes, purchase land, open businesses, and display wealth otherwise unattainable in Tunkás. This injection of material wealth into the community has altered the sense of *relative deprivation*, increasing the perception of what was necessary and desired by the community at large. Migration has become a strategy for economic survival and advancement, with families diversifying members across locations to ensure the survival of the family unit. Migration is indeed a social and economic expectation. Young Tunkaseños strive to be able to build a house of their own, and to have the ability to purchase material goods for themselves.

It is evident that the decision to migrate and/or settle in the United States is driven by more than economics alone. Migrants become invested in their lives in the United States, forming communities, and in many cases starting families there. Immigration policies designed to keep migrants out actually serve to keep migrants in the United States for longer periods of time. Longer stays increase emotional investment and thus increase the likelihood of staying longer.

Turning to the impact of the economic crisis on migration decisions, it seems that returning to Mexico may not be the best option financially. Migrants have made a significant economic investment in their lives in the United States. It takes about a year to repay the debt incurred in an unauthorized crossing. Abandoning their economic lives in the United States would mean that even if they did return, they would have to work another full year to repay a new debt. For older migrants, the physical demands of a return to the U.S. are prohibitive. Knowing that this stay in the United States is likely their last, migrants are reluctant to give up on their current potential to make large sums of money relative to what they could make in Mexico. Even with crisis in the United States, the possibility for adequately remunerated work in Mexico is even slimmer. Manuel sums it up well in his quote at the beginning of this chapter when he says, "regresas y ves la crisis y sientes la crisis económica en la vida, con la familia, sientes la necesidad de regresara a EUA para trabajar y mandar dinero para mantenerlos aquí." Ricardo returned to Mexico after living in the United States for ten years with his wife and two American-born children. After experiencing a cutback in hours at the factory where he worked, being assigned to the graveyard shift, and longing to be with his aging

parents before they die, he returned to Tunkás to be with his family. When he returned however, he came to the realization that when living in Mexico one is in a constant state of economic crisis. Even considering the economic strain he felt in his last days in the United States, he felt the impetus to return, as it seemed like the most plausible option to support his family. To date Manuel still lives in Tunkás with his two young sons, who continue to struggle adjusting to life in Yucatán.

It is significant that migrants seem to be uniquely situated to cope with economic crisis. Because migrants live their continually managing economic advertising and are forced to rely on the strength of their community networks on a day-to-day basis, they have weathered the crisis relatively well.

Finally, we see that despite a floundering U.S. economy, the hiring of migrant workers has not halted. Despite setbacks, migrants in California have been able to find work, albeit for less pay and in less desired positions. In Minnesota, where the economy has faired relatively well compared to Southern California, it appears that the demand for migrant labor is such that some employers actively seek out migrant laborers, going so far as to fund their passage across the border.

Directions for Future Research

Anyone who has been in the field will readily agree that only after returning from the field does one feel that they are truly ready to start a proper field research project. I am no exception. The help of modern technology like Skype has allowed me to keep up

with friends in Tunkás, even as I sit perched behind my desk in San Diego, though even such technology cannot replace the value of engaged experience in a particular location. Where my work with MMFRP served as a jumping off point to my thesis, I anticipate this thesis project to be the jumping off point to future research at the doctoral level.

I regret not dedicating more attention to the growing culture of migration among the youth of Tunkás. Exploring this social component of the impetus for migration is essential to a complex understanding of the underlying causes of migration. Further, I recognize that I have paid limited attention to the gendered aspect of migration. Certainly the act of migration exerts pressure on men and women in very different ways. Their motivations for migrating or not migrating are affected by gendered social expectations. In future research it will be essential to consider gender as an important aspect of the migration process.

In future research I seek not only to fill in the holes left open by this limited project, I would also like to explore new questions. For one, I would like to focus on the interplay of domestic and international migration in a connected system of migration. Heretofore terrified of economics, I have been wooed by new economics theories of migration and am intrigued to learn more about the economic lives of Tunkaseños in Tunkás and Tunkaseño migrants in the United States.

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