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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

Adventure Capitalists in “Maya Town”:
Ethnographic insights on transnational social networks and migration from the
de-territorialized state of Yucatán to San Francisco, California

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Masters of Arts

in

World Cultures and History with an emphasis in Social/Cultural Anthropology

by

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2009

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2009

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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This study is about the migration of young men from the town of Oxkutzcab in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico who against historical and contemporary structural conditions (Maya versus nation-state, globalizing of local economy, world system and free trade agreements) have chosen international migration as a strategy for survival and success. The purpose of this research is to illustrate the fundamental role of circular migration to and from San Francisco, California and Oxkutzcab, Yucatan, and dependence on transnational social ties. Field work was conducted in San Francisco, California, in 2004, followed by field work in Oxkutzcab, Yucatan, in 2005. Historically, migration within the state of Yucatan is not new. I will provide a brief historical background to underline the point that interstate migration as a result of wars, and later economic restructuring, can be regarded as a step-side to international migration. In addition, I will examine migration theory to understand the dynamics of contemporary international migration. First, a brief vignette and some general observations about migrants from Oxkutzcab derived from ethnographic fieldwork.

Two hours into his ten-hour shift and Juan's apron is completely drenched in soapy water and food smudges. Juan is a dishwasher in an upscale San Francisco restaurant. A mountain of dirty plates surrounds him and he never stops shuffling plates on either side. The left-over food makes a considerable mound on the industrial-sized metal sink. The fast pace and loud atmosphere are mind-numbing. He got this job after just arriving in San Francisco from Yucatan. He traversed deserts in the border region for two days and nights risking life for adventure and capital.

Juan and nearly all newly arrived Oxkutzcabenses, start at the entry-level ranks washing dishes or as day laborers. Juan at least speaks Spanish, but other new arrivals speak only Maya

Yucatec. Juan is surprised to have migrated all the way to San Francisco to be surrounded by Maya speakers. “There has been more younger guys migrating from the commissaries of Oxkutzcab and those guys speak only Maya,” Juan explains.ⁱ Being far from home made him nostalgic to learn his language and culture because as he says, “I thought, one day if I have kids I’d like to teach them the Maya language.”ⁱⁱ He learned Maya in the kitchen and he took night classes to learn English. He explains, “Bosses withhold pay when you cannot defend yourself.”ⁱⁱⁱ

After learning English, Juan interned as a chef. Eventually he got hired at a premier restaurant in San Francisco and ran the food and beverage service at a hotel working double-shifts. He admits drugs and binge drinking helped him cope with the fatigue of working two shifts. He proclaims he never missed a day of work. “There’s a lot of guys that have lost their lives or lost their goals as a result of drugs and alcoholism.”^{iv}

Juan’s story is the classic profile of an increasing amount of young males who in the last fifteen years have opted to emigrate from Oxkutzcab to the US, predominantly arriving in the states of California and Oregon. In California, the main cities that Oxkutzcabenses choose to live in are San Francisco and Los Angeles, with San Francisco numbering around eight thousand Oxkutzcabenses—The community of Oxkutzcabenses in Los Angeles is no more than about five thousand. Portland, Oregon is the other satellite community and their population is roughly three thousand. These estimated population figures are provided by Asociación Maya Yucateca del Área de la Bahía (herein MAYAB), a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California.

Like Juan explained, younger-aged males are emigrating from strictly Maya speaking families. He was eighteen when he migrated in 1995. Teenagers are more commonly migrating according to Juanita Quintero of MAYAB. Migration is seen as a rite of passage for young adult males. And like Juan it is seen as an alternative to studying a career. According to Quintero these

younger males come to San Francisco and are too young and inexperienced in coping with life in a big city. Too often they are lured into a life of drugs, gangs and alcoholism. Their living conditions are usually crowded, and it is common for eight people to share a one-bedroom apartment. This increases the propensity to drink, use drugs and solicit sex workers among roommates according to Quintero of MAYAB.

People from Oxnutzcab typically cross the U.S.-Mexico border via the Arizona desert. For Juan it was two days of walking through blistering desert conditions. The cost ranges from \$1,000 – 1,500 and is usually sponsored by a relative or friend. After arriving, friends usually help migrants find a place to stay and locate a job. In general, Oxnutzcabenses do not wish to settle in the U.S. One of the main goals for migrants from Oxnutzcab is to work and send money home to build a house. In addition, and after several circular migration stints in the US, a house usually precedes the start up of a business venture to sustain them when they return. Migrants from Oxnutzcab abroad collectively send an average of one million dollars in remittances according to INDEMAYA, a state-run organization in Oxnutzcab that studies migration. That infusion of money has changed the facade of Oxnutzcab—streets once lined with traditional thatch-roof huts now have modern and lavish looking homes. It also has constrained social relations between return migrants and certain community members.

The broader Yucatec Maya community grew in the last fifteen years, numbering 25 thousand throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area according to the Mexican Consulate of San Francisco. In the city of San Francisco there are approximately eight thousand Yucatec Maya from the town of Oxnutzcab alone.

The satellite communities in the US (such as San Francisco) that Oxnutzcabenses emigrate to have become transnational barrios or districts, meaning that social worlds of

migrants and their families today are intertwined across national borders. Using Yucatecan migrants as a case study helps us to understand how an international emigrant community abroad becomes an extension of a particular hometown community, in this case Oxtutzcab while influencing the lives of migrants and non-migrants alike. The important research question I am concerned with is how social networks influence the decision to migrate. Social networks are the friends, relatives, associates and organizations that fill the needs of each individual's agenda. I will use specific subjects' stories, protecting them with pseudonyms, to show how social networks help migrants cope with the hardships of migration. The migration process can be characterized in five phases: the decision, the journey to the border region, the crossing, settling, and finding a job.

Through the exploration of social networks, I will use informant's stories to highlight the discourse on capitalist endeavors, or immigrant agendas and I will juxtapose those agendas with the agendas the Yucatecan/Mexican state tries to impose on migrants once abroad. The attempt by the state to recruit migrants into partnership is a characteristic of a state that has extended its reach across national borders by including its citizens who have ironically opted to leave the state. In this context, Yucatan, as a state, reaches out to migrants abroad by proposing partnerships along with the federal government for public works projects. My concern here is what is the discourse among migrants' social networks regarding the projects that are specifically designed for their participation. Another discourse I will highlight is the paradox that a return migrant faces. On the one hand migrants abroad have generated a tremendous economic boost to the local economy, and as a national discourse they have been hailed as national heroes. On the other hand, migrants get blamed for bringing the gangs, drugs and violent lifestyle associated with life in the U.S. back to Yucatan. Finally, what was evident from informant responses was

that as a result of migrants' capitalist endeavors, they must continue to migrate in order to maintain the lifestyle that they acquired with successful migration(s). Whether it is to build their house, furnish it, and then initiate a business in order to be self-sustaining. Many migrants are condemned to a life of cyclical migration to sustain their newly acquired lifestyles.

OVERVIEW

Section one provides a brief historical background of the state of Yucatan. To underscore the historical migration within the state I start with the history of feudal times when Yucatan was ruled by three families followed by the arrival of the Spanish explorers. Subsequently I include Indigenous Mexican migration and Yucatec Maya migration to the U.S. I will discuss the recent theoretical concepts that help explain the dynamics of transnational migration. Special attention will be given to the specific structural changes such as the processes and effects of free trade, especially as it relates to towns such as Oxkutzcab that rely heavily on agriculture. Specific attention will be placed on Indigenous migration from Mexico to the U.S. in order to show how a historically new sending community such as Oxkutzcab, whose population is primarily Yucatec Maya, has adopted the common practice of sending migrants to the US to find work.

Section two addresses the literature review along with the methodology of the study. I will describe the process of recruitment and interviewing subjects in Oxkutzcab and in San Francisco.

Section three is about "Maya Town (San Francisco, California)," how it emerged in terms of specific historical emigration, and how social ties developed in the mid to late 20th century fostered the international roots of a transnational community. I will also discuss the booming

tourism of the Yucatan's coast that fostered intra-state migration that prepared migrants for the service industry jobs of San Francisco, California.

Section four will provide the findings of the ethnographic research. I will discuss how return migration for young males from Oxkutzcab is a strategy for economic survival. I will address the paradox or stigma that return migrants face. In addition, ethnographic anecdotes will help to comment on the labor niche that Yucatec Maya fulfill in San Francisco. Also I will discuss the way social ties plays a role in the lives of migrants.

SECTION 1:

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CORNUCOPIA OF THE STATE

The purpose of this brief history of Oxkutzcab is to underline that migration in the region is not a recent phenomenon. Although international migration may be relatively recent, the region has had numerous historical circumstances where people have opted to migrate.

Oxkutzcab is the name of a city as well as a head municipality with outlying rancherías that are politically and economically connected. It is located approximately 60 miles south of the state capitol, Merida. Its population is estimated at 27 thousand, of which (as mentioned before) it is estimated that half are living in California and Oregon. More than half of the population is bilingual meaning Yucatec Maya and Spanish. This is the most agriculturally diversified and productive area of the state. It is known as the *huerta del estado* or cornucopia of the state. Oxkutzcab is also the entrance to an archeological region known as the Puuc region. Nearly twenty minutes away are the famous caverns of Lol Tun, home to perhaps the oldest known archeological evidence of settlement dating 1000 Before the Common Era (BCE) (Hervik 1999:214). Other sites along the Puuc trail include Labna, Kabah, Xlalk, Sayil, Kiuic,

Sabacche, Kom and Chacmultun. The Puuc trail ends at one of the most visited pyramids of the region, Uxmal. These urban centers were populated between 300 and 900, Common Era (CE) (Hervik 1999:214). Not much consensus has been made on the reasons of the collapse of the social orders of these particular regional city-states. However, it is accepted that urban centers were not isolated cities nor part of a unified empire (Hervik 1999; Farriss 1992). The cities formed part of vast networks of rivaling elites that traded from central Mexico to southern Honduras (Hervik 1999:214). This model of social and political formation, an absent central empire, ruling elite families in local areas and scattered independent city-states, was a system that the Spanish had to integrate rather than try to conquer. Farriss suggests that it was not so much a Spanish conquest as it was the Spanish assimilating into Maya society and systematically occupying the elite strata in order to later place the clergy in the power structure and allowing elite Maya to control and administer it (Farriss 1992:285).

The Post Classic era of the ancient Yucatec Maya is dated from 900—1519 CE. Before the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, the royal lineages of the Xiu and the Cocomes were battling for the dominant positions of their respective regional city-states (Hervik 2005:247). When the Spaniards arrived, a contingent of the Xui lineage made a pilgrimage to the ancient city of Chichen Itza. The pilgrimage took a trajectory straight through Cocome territory (Hervik 1999:214). The Cocomes allowed the Xiu to enter and pass through their region only to ambush and kill them at their most vulnerable position along the way (Hervik 1999:214). After the Spanish arrived, the Xiu nobility made an alliance with the Spaniards (Harvey 2005:247). The intense relations between the Xiu and the Cocomes played an essential role in the developing political conditions and administrative institutions that the Spanish colonizers used to their

advantage (Farriss 1992; Hervik 1999). These changing of alliances produced political and social unrest as well as skirmishes and wars and with such duress, people migrated.

Under the Xiu protectorate the Franciscans were able to establish the first Franciscan church outside of Merida in 1547 in Oxkutzcab (Hervik 1999:214). However, their relation and interaction was not always pleasant. On one occasion Franciscans tried to convince the Xiu not to use slaves and the elites felt undermined and tried to kill the Franciscans (Hervik 1999:214). The Xiu offenders were taken to Merida for execution but the Spanish authorities in Merida feared that killing members of the Xui lineage would endanger the consolidation of the newly acquired colonized region of Yucatan (Hervik 1999:214). Hence, there was a good relation between the Franciscan Church and the Xiu nobility in Oxkutzcab during this early colonial period (Hervik 1999:214).

The Franciscan Friar Diego de Landa is credited as the founder of Oxkutzcab, even though there were earlier Maya settlements (Hervik 1999:214). De Landa committed one of the most atrociously known acts of the Maya region—the burning of the ancient books of the Maya or *auto-da-fé*. In 1562, in the nearby town of Mani, de Landa collected ancient scriptures and threw them in a cavernous hole to burn (Hervik 1999:214). In addition, he destroyed 5000 idols and burned 27 hieroglyphic tablets (Hervik 1999:214). In that one act he literally destroyed thousands of years of astronomical and mathematical knowledge. The local residents and scholars of the time were furious and had it not been for the Spanish troops that saved de Landa, he would have been burned along with the books. De Landa eventually moved east and settled what is now the state capital, Merida. It is ironic that De Landa is also one of the main sources we have of historic literature of the region during the late 16th century. His written accounts of the evangelization and invasion of the Yucatan Peninsula, *Relaciones de las cosas de Yucatan*

(de Landa 1985:201), is an early form of ethnography wherein he describes the Maya customs, history, ceremonial traditions and festivities, their social organizations and political structures as well as their daily activities.

Throughout the Colonial period, the Spanish, the Mayan nobility and its priesthood cooperated to keep the stability of the agricultural production and social stratified society under the *encomienda* system (Farriss 1992:47). This system was created to reward soldiers in the conquered lands along with the Mayan nobility and their descendants for cooperating with the Spanish Crown (Hervik 1999:214). As a result, they were obligated by the Crown to keep their lands productive and to actively Christianize and educate the Mayan population (Hervik 1999:214). Oxkutzcab and nearby Tekax were the two largest villages in Yucatan in that period. The villages were already heavily populated and had rich cultivatable soil and therefore had great agricultural production (Hervik 1999:214).

Throughout the end of the 17th century the *encomienda* gradually shifted to the *hacienda* system (Farriss 1992:33–36). Haciendas used the same large landholdings as the previous *encomienda* system but divided the land into smaller ranches that were worked by the peasantry to produce for the owners as a way of paying rent (Farriss 1992:33–36). Because of the crop diversity in Oxkutzcab, these small landholders and some free Mayans were able to participate in commercial agriculture (Hervik 1999:214). Still, the tremendous inequality of land tenure and control of the means of production spread throughout the region such that the Crown ventured in commercial agriculture (Hervik 1999:214).

After independence in roughly 1810—1821, the carry over of inequality towards the lower class of free Mayans created a caste system that would eventually erupt into a nearly 50 year war, called *The Caste War* (1847 – 1901) (Hervik 1999; Reed 1997). During this time the

central Mexican government was entangled in war to the north with the U.S. over the lands of Texas. Yucatec Maya people took this opportunity to stage collective armed resistance with the ultimate goal of annexing from the newly independent nation-state (Reed 1997:497-523). Fierce battles in the town of Xul, 25 km south of Oxkutzcab were fought against Mexican national troops (Hervik 1999:214). The Yucatecan state elites did not want to extend political allegiance and taxes to the central power structure administered in Mexico City (Farriss 1992:585). Today, Xul still bears the partly destroyed façade of the old Franciscan church that provided the backdrop during the fighting in the early 1800s. It remains a relic of a past that symbolizes the collective spirit of resistance of the people of Xul.

After the Caste War (post 1901), the state of Yucatan was left in a disastrous economic condition so the state responded by developing an export agricultural market (Fallaw 1997:554). The corporate growth of the production and export of the henequen fiber for binding was produced under a system of debt servitude that labored in capitalist production of agriculture (Fallaw 1997:554). It also created tremendous migration and breakdowns in kinship and social structure. As post-colonial peons (rural estate workers), the population continued to speak Maya and celebrate folk religious festivals on the haciendas (Fallaw 1997:553). The pacification in the post years had a lot to do with the *compadrazgo*^v system that the Spanish introduced (Farriss 1992:257), and estate owners would extend their control over workers through practices traditionally a part of patron-client relationships such as loans for individual survival and enterprise (Fallaw 1997:554).

In many ways the regional success of the henequen fiber export in Yucatan was a characteristic of the national economic model of foreign investment that President Porfirio Diaz implemented during his nearly thirty years in power (Fallaw 1997:552). In the 1930s, President

of Mexico, Lazaro Cardenas instituted a national program to integrate the indigenous population into society (Fallaw 1997:552). They did this through campaigns that fed the masses a constructed sense of a national identity through a grand narrative through the educational system that also incorporated monuments for public spectacle and sport (Fallaw 1997:556).

Regarding land management, communal lands that people fought for during the revolution of the early 1900s were essentially taken over by corporate interests in the late 20th century. The changes made in 1994 to Article 27 of the Mexican constitution transferred communal land to foreign and corporate interests, and especially during president Salinas' term, peasants who had no land lost hope of ever acquiring any (Portes 2006:460). Increasingly, the Mexican government implemented economic models that, as in the case of Oxkutzcab, results in the rural sector harvesting poverty instead of subsistence. The North American Free Trade Agreement, for example, allowed large agricultural firms into Mexico's rural sector, increased privatization of lands, and created even more corporatization of cash crops. In effect, towns such as Oxkutzcab that relied on agriculture became undermined by corporate interests by the competition between subsistence farmers against the political and economic power of large firms on the local agricultural market.

CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN INDIGENOUS MIGRATION

Immigrants to the U.S. from Mexico in so far as people were recruited by the U.S. specifically for cheap and dispensable labor, has precedents going back to the 1930s, and later during what is known as the Bracero Era: 1942 to 1964 (Massey 2002:34). Massey and Durand point to 1924 as the peak of legal immigration or contact laborers from Mexico during the 1920s (Massey, Douglas S 2002:32). Prominent Mexican anthropologist and nationally recognized

expert on Indian affairs, Manuel Gamio, researched two books about Mexican migration of the era while doing work for the Social Science Research Council in Washington, D.C. Gamio published *Mexican immigration to the United States* (1930) and *The Mexican immigrant: His Life Story* (1931). He makes note of the inequalities in living conditions and social relations among Whites, Native Americans and African Americans (Gamio, Manuel 1930). He makes similar observations of the two social classes that had emigrated from Mexico: Mexicans and Indigenous Mexicans (Gamio, Manuel 1930:7). Gamio's work is noteworthy for its sensitivity to the distinctions between social classes even among Mexican migrants in the U.S. In addition, it is perhaps one of the first major works that transcribes the voice of the migrant on paper.^{vi} For the purposes of situating Yucatec migration, I will focus more on the migration activity of the last twenty-five years. I will show how despite this region's relatively recent migration activity, it has reached similar migrant population percentages (and in some communities higher percentages) than some of the communities from the traditional sending region of the central-western states of Mexico (Zacatecas, Michoacan, Jalisco, and Mexico City).

There has been a growing presence of Indigenous Mexican migrants to the U.S. in the last twenty-five years such that in California American Indians overtook Oklahoma as the state with the highest population of Indians (Murillo and Cerda 2004). The 2000 U.S. census data indicates that the Native American population grew by 21 percent nationwide and in California the population of Indians of Hispanic origin grew by 146 percent since the 1990s (Murillo and Cerda 2004:279). The authors conclude that the increase has to do with a growing presence of Mexican Indians in the U.S. that coincides with a growing trend of self-identification among Spanish-speaking Indians as well as a move by the census to advance improvements in data collection by including a 'Hispanic American Indian' category (2004:287).

The recent increase in the out-migration from Mexico has been primarily from the South/Southeast region of which the Yucatan peninsula is included (Lewin Fischer 2007:4). Also included in the South/Southeast region are the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Tabasco, and Veracruz, Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo. This region accounts for the highest total population of indigenous people in Mexico (see Figure 1.1) In fact, 54.7 percent of Mexico's Indigenous population comes from the South/Southeast region (Lewin Fischer 2007:4-5). It would follow then that these states have the highest proportion of indigenous population with Yucatan having the highest at 65.5 percent within the state (see table 1.1). However, historically speaking, the concentration of out-migration from Mexico to the U.S. has come from regions other than the South/Southeast (Cornelius 2007; Durand 2004; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Levine 2006; Massey 2002). What is noteworthy of the South/Southeast region is that it has had the largest indigenous component in its migrating population (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004:). Interestingly enough, from 1993 to 2004 the South/Southeast region has had the most returning migrants from U.S. to Mexico (Lewin Fischer 2007:6-7).

Table 1.1 Indigenous Population of South/Southeastern States, 2000

| State ^a | Population | | Share of Indigenous Population within: | |
|--------------------|------------|------------|--|------------|
| | Total | Indigenous | State (%) | Nation (%) |
| Oaxaca | 3,429,409 | 1,911,338 | 55.7 | 16.1 |
| Chiapas | 3,785,292 | 1,170,132 | 30.9 | 9.8 |
| Veracruz | 6,877,295 | 1,163,363 | 16.9 | 9.8 |
| Yucatán | 1,650,438 | 1,080,733 | 65.5 | 9.1 |
| Guerrero | 3,054,917 | 569,639 | 18.6 | 4.8 |
| Quintana Roo | 863,651 | 393,562 | 45.6 | 3.3 |
| Campeche | 687,157 | 212,245 | 30.9 | 1.8 |
| Other | 75,405,237 | 5,395,998 | | 45.3 |
| Total | 95,753,396 | 11,897,010 | | 100.00 |

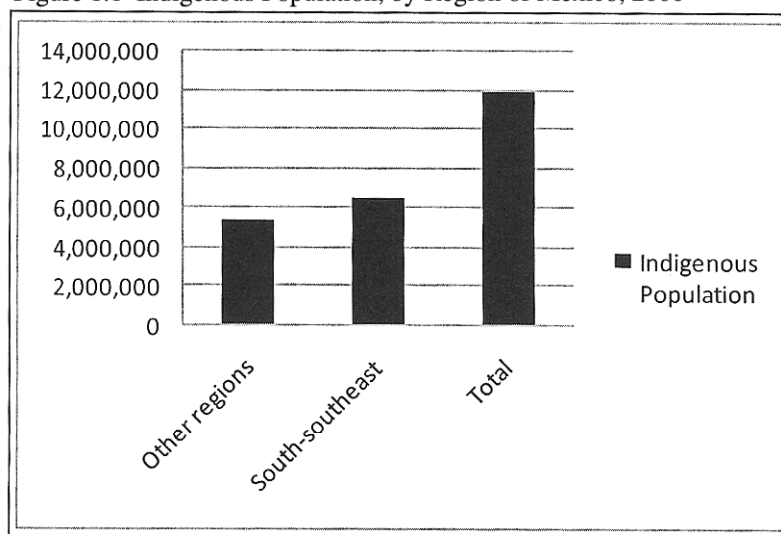
Source: Lewin Fischer 2007 (CONAPO 2005)

^a Tabasco is included in the "Other" category because of the small size of its indigenous population.

YUCATEC MAYA MIGRATION TO THE U.S.

Transnational migration of the people from Oxkutzcab, Yucatan developed as a result of a historical process where migration took different forms and adapted to both internal state and external national and global phenomena. The forms of migration include *intermunicipal* migration in which migrants remained in their state. This sort of migration occurred, for example, as a result of war (Caste War, 1847-1901) and as a result of a regional tourism development. Another form of migration is *interstate* and tends to lend itself to a temporary or seasonal form of migration in which migrants are seen as *jornaleros agrícolas* (agricultural workers), searching for seasonal agricultural work in other states of Mexico. Yet another form is *international* migration that takes the forms of permanent settlement, return migration, transnational migration, or cyclical migration. An important question to consider is whether internal migration promotes international migration.

Figure 1.1 Indigenous Population, by Region of Mexico, 2000



Lewin Fischer 2007 (CONAPO 2005)

The southern Mexican states have high rates of temporary migrants who search for employment in the agricultural sector, away from the home state but within Mexico (Wodon et al. 2003:6). According to Wodon et al., there are between 2.7 and 3.7 million agricultural migrants in Mexico that consist of 50 percent women, 40 percent children. A large majority are indigenous according to SEDESOL (2000). *Jornaleros* (workers) can be characterized into three subgroups according to the length of time of their migration and the distance they cover (SEDESOL 2000). *Jornaleros pendulares* (pendular or swinging workers) leave their place of origin for periods of four to six months and return, *jornaleros golondrinos* (vagabond workers) move constantly all year from one place to the next, and *jornaleros locales* (local workers), are employed in relatively close to their place to their place of origin and do not need to migrate a long distance (2003:6).

The recent literature on intrastate migration in Yucatan has focused on urbanization processes by looking at the patterns of economic incorporation and the ways migrants are connected with their place of origin (Lewin Fischer 2003:20). After the 1970s, tremendous development transpired in the state's capital city of Merida in addition to the tourist zones of the coast. Anthropological research has focused on tourism and the changes in cultural landscape (Brown 1999; Rodriguez, Wittlinger, and Manzanero Rodriguez 2003). Re Cruz focuses on social fragmentation as a result of out-migration to the tourism center of Cancún (2003:489). The author examines the cultural intersection between the rules and modes of production between the Maya community of Chan Kom and of Cancún (2003:491). In essence, production systems coincide with ideological systems in community based on traditional subsistence agriculture. Those who leave the village adopt a capitalist-tourist mode of production and therefore integrate differently into the political and economic power of the town when they return. The ones who

stay behind and remain loyal to the traditional *milpa* mode of production use the fact that migrants have abandoned their tradition as a weapon to counteract the new political and economic power in the community and to question the migrants' Maya identity (Re Cruz 2003:494). This is an important observation because as we will see in Section 3, where I examine the relationship between return migrants and power dynamics in the place of origin, return migrants in Oxkutzcab are branded with a similar stigma.

Employment in agriculture and recently tourism have been two “pull” factors motivating internal migration in Yucatan. When looking at international migration, however, it is pertinent to consider the associations between internal and international migration to question whether the former promotes the latter especially in areas such as Yucatan that have experienced an extensive internal migration and a relatively recent international migration. Andrea Rodríguez et al., studied the migration of people from the town of Tunká to the United States looking at the relationship to the earlier migration “pull” that domestic tourist destinations three hours away exerted. They looked at how the labor contractors made employment in tourist zones attractive during the construction phase by bussing Tukaseños to what is known as the tourist belt (Rodríguez and Wittlinger et al 2003:75) Eventually employment opportunities increased in the service sector as tourist facilities opened. The authors conclude that it was social networks that maintained migration to the tourist centers on the coast of Yucatan (75). By the 1980s, Rodríguez et al., point out, the tourist belt became known throughout the peninsula and indeed throughout Mexico as a place with abundant work opportunities (Castellanos 2003:128). Internal migration exposes migrants to environments that parallel the international migration experience. Rodríguez et al., use the term *stepwise* migration to describe how internal migration

acts as a “trampoline to the U.S. and supports the hypothesis that migration within Mexico positively affects a person’s propensity to migrate across the border” (77).

The counter reasoning is that internal migration thwarts international migration because why would people leave if they have closer access to prosperous opportunities? The jobs offered in the tourist belt are typically in the hotel and restaurant industry of the service sector. Using the a cost, benefit and risk analysis, a potential international migrant may prefer those nearby jobs as compared with being a dishwasher or car washer in the U.S. and may opt not to risk the uncertainties of crossing to the U.S. Still, Rodriquez et al. contend that 64 percent of people with migratory experience in both the United States and Mexico first migrated to locations within Mexico (2003:77). When examining the case of Oxnard, which is a major sending community for migrants who work in San Francisco, the tourist belt can be seen as “migration schools” because the common niche that exists there and in San Francisco is exactly the restaurant and hotel service industry. Hence internal migration can be seen as a training ground for international and transnational movements of people.

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION FROM YUCATAN TO THE U.S.

Anthropologists have used the term transnational migrants to describe those who maintain ties with their place of origin while working abroad and often going back and forth throughout their lives (Adler 2000; Appadurai 1991; Basch 1994; Brettell 2003; Kearney 1995; Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995.) In particular, transnational migrants are not seen as uprooting and settling but rather staying for a period of time to work and return (Kearney 2004; Brettell 2003; Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc 2000 [1994]; Fortuny Loret de Mola 2004). According to Rachel Adler the transcendence of national borders by people, organizations,

and/or ideological movements are the global conditions that has produced transnationalism (2000:167). Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc, apply the idea of transnationalism to the fluidity with which ideas, objects, capital, and people move across borders and boundaries (1994:27). The idea of “transnational” in the modern sense, also developed out of a changing paradigm in the corporate world in which companies increasingly moved their productions overseas to look for cheaper labor costs meanwhile the corporate office remained in centers of western capital. In such cases, companies became structured as transnational corporations because their activities spanned across international borders. Parallels have been drawn between emigrant sending nation-states acting as a corporation and its migrants abroad its subsidiaries (Basch et al 2000: 30). Similarly, the term transnational helps us to understand the multi faceted ways international migrants engage with the sending and receiving government and communities. Taking it a step beyond, Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron, employ the term *transmigrant* because the concept speaks to how immigrants live across borders settling in their new country while sending money, gifts, buying property, building homes, and participating in activities back home (2001:3). Transmigrants are defined as migrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships that span borders (Basch 1994:7). The glue that keeps transmigrants connected is referred to as “transnational social space” because it refers to the networks of social relationships they maintain that link the homeland with those abroad by way of kinship, friendship, business, religion or politics (Schiller, Nina Glick 2001:4). Schiller and Fouron contend that by keeping their social, economic, and other ties, *transmigrants* are defying the widespread assumption that settling in the receiving community requires abandoning ties with original homelands (2001:3). Yucatec Maya are similar to Schiller and Fouron’s Haitian example in that they have motivated the state government to extend their attention to citizens

living and working outside of the nation-state boundaries, and as a result stretching the terms by which someone is considered a state citizen. Transnational social spaces is an important concept because it takes into account the ways people abroad affect the lives of those who remain at home and vice versa. It also helps to explain the ways that people are engaging in a form of transnational citizenship and therefore creating an extended or satellite of the home community abroad. Ethnographic data strongly suggests that the activities of transmigrants particularly in the form of remittances have dramatically changed the landscape of their home communities. The extent to which transnational migration is reproduced implies that the activity is broadly social not just familial (Adler 2000: 30).

FREE TRADE AND MIGRATION FLOWS

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed and implemented January 1994. It integrated economic and market processes between Canada, U.S., and Mexico. The debate about whether NAFTA was good for curbing migration had two sides: one is that NAFTA would lead to a reduction in the flow of migrants because it was thought to modernize the industrial base in Mexico and therefore changed the conditions that caused migration in the first place. The counter argument was that NAFTA would be successful by taking advantage and exploiting the structural inequalities between the two countries, and therefore trade integration would put pressure on Mexicans to migrate (Canales 2000). The U.S. is a core nation and Mexico its periphery nation. This means that the U.S. uses Mexico as a source of cheap labor and resources. Furthermore, the first argument assumes that foreign investment in Mexico from the U.S. would increase jobs and lead to higher wage levels. In essence, however, NAFTA integrated the production processes and labor markets of the U.S. and Mexico calling it free trade

as evidenced by the extent Mexico was transformed into an export-processing economy of cheaply paid labor, otherwise known as the *maquilladora* industry. NAFTA did not reduce the flow of migration to the U.S.

SECTION 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

MIGRATION THEORY

This study is about the movement of a people from their place of birth to another country for work. Particularly, it is about indigenous people, Yucatec Maya, that are leaving a their community to find work in the U.S. The theoretical underpinnings of international migration have gotten considerable attention in recent years (Adams 2001; Adler 2000; Appadurai 1991; Basch 1994; Brettel 2003; Cohen 2001; Fetcher 2007; Guano 2002; Kearney 1995, 2004; Massey 2002, Massey, Durand and Malone 2005; Schiller 2001; Wilding 2007). In *Changing fields of anthropology*, Michael Kearney states that much of the anthropological literature on migration has taken the form of migration and *insert topic here* (2004:97, emphasis added). For example topics such as migration and economy (Trager et al2005), migration and remittances (e.g., Conway 1998), migration and dependency (e.g., Cohen 2001) and Kearney's focus on migration and development (2004:97). Typically the pairing of migration and different topics takes the macro level of analysis by focusing on national statistics (Kearney 2004:97). Explanations by other social scientists have used analytic lenses that draw from both the micro or macro level (Barkan 1992:259; Kearney 2004:365; Massey 2002:199; Portes 2006:460).

According to Caroline Brettel, anthropological literature has recently concerned itself with looking at the sending and receiving communities by taking advantage of ethnographic data, that beginning in the country of origin and asking what influences individuals to leave their

communities and then what happens to them in their place of destination, including if and how they remain connected to their place of origin (2003:1). In addition, Brettel points out an important challenge within the anthropological approach and the social sciences, in general, to merge the micro and the macro (2003:x). With this challenge in mind, my concern here is not to conclude with causal relationships that explain the phenomena of migration because those differ for each individual migrant but rather to highlight some of the theoretical perspectives of recent years that help explain the dynamics at work.

The macro analytical lens helps to explain the exogenous factors for international migration that describe structural systems that have grown increasingly global and interconnected. In *Global trends in migration*(1983), Mary M. Kritz, Charles B. Keely and Silvano M. Tomasi et. al., point out a complex set of interdependencies. I will highlight their references to the expansion of the international economic system; large and growing populations; increasing economic disparities within and between countries; improved communication and transportation systems that permit information, people and goods to flow rapidly between distant territories' transnational support systems; and institutions such as corporations, churches and social networks (1983: xiv-xv).

Emmanuel Wallerstein offered the idea of a *world systems theory* to help explain the differentiation in the economic relationship between nations in terms of core, semi periphery and periphery (Wallerstein, 1974). According to Aristide R. Zolberg, and as I briefly mentioned above, the core refers to the super-power nations and the peripheries are nations that are dependent on the actions and decisions of the core nations (1983:9). These outside forces influence individuals because changing global markets penetrate periphery societies and create mobile populations by imposing new markets, new industries, lower wages and so on. In this

case, the decision to migrate is understood to be less on the individual and more as a result of outside economic conditions that have penetrated the local realm and caused a disparity to such an extent as to force people to find economic means elsewhere. Elaborating on that scheme, Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone in their chapter, *Principles of Operation: Theories of International Migration*, examine a direct link between international immigration and the global penetration and expansion of market forces or systems into peripheral nations that were pre-market or non-market societies. The authors contend:

Driven by a desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of large firms in developed nations enter poor countries on the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw materials, labor, and markets. Migration is a natural outgrowth of the disruptions and dislocations that occur in this process of market expansion and penetration. As land, raw materials, and labor come under the control of markets, flows of migrants are generated. [2005:21]

They refer to this specifically as the apparatus of *neoclassical economics* in which the results of international differences cause workers from low-wage countries to move to high-wage countries (Massey, Durand and Malone 2005:22-25). Another aspect of neoclassical economics is the demand for labor often specific to geographic or to a particular industry that migrants tap into. In addition there are other factors that migrants negotiate such as the material costs of traveling, the costs of living while looking for work, the effort of assimilating into a new labor market, language, and creating new social networks after cutting old ties such as family (Massey, Durand and Malone 2005:23). In essence these factors can be considered to be a series of cost-benefit calculations that migrants consider early in the process of migration. However Massey, Durand and Malone point out that exogenous factors alone do not explain how despite the ever-present

wage gaps between original homelands and destinations of migration, certain migrants, especially in the case of Yucatec migrants reported in this study, tend to return. Hence a strict neoclassical theory does not adequately explain why or how circular migration exists (2005, 23).

One theory that helps to understand the bifurcation of labor markets in global cities is that of the *segmented labor market theory* (Massey, Durand and Malone 2005:26). The theory explains that international migration, particularly to core nations, stems from a permanent demand for unskilled labor in developed nations. It can be understood as a “pull” factor. While there may exist dire conditions at home and, migrants may go through a series of cost-benefit analysis, overwhelmingly what they are considering is knowledge that there is a need for labor abroad and hence a certainty that employment awaits them in the receiving community. This chronic need for low-wage workers is a result, according to Massey, Durand and Malone, of three fundamental problems faced by advanced industrial economies: structural inflation, social constraints on motivation and duality of labor and capital (2005:25-27). The first concept, structural inflation, contends that formal institutions and informal mechanisms determine the wage of a job based on hierarchies of prestige and perceived status. Social constraints on motivation are when a worker senses no ability of upward mobility and status with a particular job. It further posits that employers are looking for workers that seek a job as a means of earning an income and not necessarily as a means of establishing status and a higher level of hierarchical positioning in society. In that sense, im/migrant workers fit into employment niches because in the case of Yucatec Maya, newly arrived immigrants take the lower-rung jobs for which they work for an intended initial goal of returning monies earned back home. The duality of labor and capital posits two scenarios for demand to which industrialists respond. The first is a permanent demand where industrialists invest capital in labor. It is a fixed factor of production. When

production is idled by lower demand, capitalists bear the cost of its unemployment. The second scenario is a variable demand that workers are either added or subtracted to when needed. As a result, low-skilled workers pay for their own unemployment that leads to segmentation of the labor force (Massey, Durand and Malone, 2005:27). In other words segmentation is when a different group, in this case undocumented immigrants, gets paid a different wage than other groups (citizens for example) for the same work. An example is the newly-arrived dishwasher who gets paid less (with occasional non-paid weeks) than a worker who can advocate for themselves and knows that he/she should be paid minimum wage.

Another theory that tries to explain migration flow is migration from an undeveloped society to a developed society. The ideas of developed and underdeveloped have also been synonymous with terms such as “civilized” versus “barbaric” and became the cornerstone by which the noted anthropologist Robert Redfield elaborated the *folk-urban continuum* (Kearney 2004:99). Redfield’s work attempted to explain the massive flow of Indians, dubbed peasants, from provincial towns into cities after World War II. According to Kearney, Redfield theorized that individuals who migrated were seen as progressives who introduced ideas of development to their respective communities and this was a force that inevitably broke down traditionalism (Kearney 2004:99). The *urban-folk continuum* tends to view those who migrate to the city as changing from traditional to modern or from barbaric to civilized. It is the very assumption of a linear progression that also influence ideas of nation-building and the relationship between indigenous people and the nation-state. Unfortunately it was a model that did not always value indigenous culture and practices against visions of modernity and progress. Nor did it allow for the nuances and complexities of culture, history, memory and identity.

METHODOLOGY: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

This ethnographic field study was based on participant observation. The approach had several methodological dimensions. It is hermeneutical in that it was important to understand the meaning and purpose of a social phenomenon as the participants expressed and explained those understandings and meanings. As a result it was necessary to interact with and/or observe informants in order to comment on their lived experience. Qualitative data was collected in the field first-hand from informants and used to interpret those meanings. By exploring the ethnographic information we can begin to understand how migrants create meaning of the social phenomenon they are participating in and of the world-view from which it originates. Interviews were collected and used as documents to be analyzed and interpreted. Participant observation is a hallmark technique used by anthropologists to gather in-depth understanding of human behavior (Boas 1966; Malinowski 1922; Mead 1928). Furthermore when we ask why and how people make decisions the ethnographic data offers a holistic viewpoint of the social and cultural experience.

The other dimension to the methodology was its bi-national scope. A bi-national design provides more holistic understanding of contemporary migration. It requires research be conducted at the sending and receiving communities. In the sending community, Oxkutzcab, I interviewed about sixty people in the course of two visits. The first visit in February 2005, for nearly 20 days and the second visit later that year in June for two weeks. I started out with an initial contact, a person who owned and operated a hotdog stand in front of the central market on the busiest street in Oxkutzcab. Eventually I was either introduced or recommended to people in the municipal government offices, teachers, medical staff, agricultural workers, tricycle taxi drivers, business owners, sacred-sites caretakers, return migrants and non-migrants.

In San Francisco, nearly seventy people were interviewed for the study from December 2004 to July 2005. Similar to research in Oxnard, interviewees included health service workers, officials at the Mexican Consulate, owners of restaurants where migrants were employed and (of course) migrants employed in various capacities.

Informants were asked similar questions. For example why they decided to migrate, who helped them pay for the journey, what job they worked while abroad as well as how long and how they acquired the job. I also asked how long and how many times they migrated to the U.S., in addition to where they lived and how many people lived with them. Questions reflected the steps in migration: the decision, the journey, the crossing, arriving at the destination, housing, acquiring a job and finally the return migration.

In most cases, interviews were an hour long. They took place either at informants' homes or job sites. Interviewees were recorded with audio and video equipment. Participants signed human subjects^{vii} forms and were informed that the study intended to understand the dynamics of migration and health with a bi-national approach. The fieldwork was funded by the California-Mexico Health Initiative (under the UC Office of the President). The fieldwork took place from December 2004 to August 2005.

RECRUITMENT AND RAPPORT

When the study began in the Fall of 2004, the Mexican Consulate of San Francisco had already been working with MAYAB and identified possible key informants. One in particular, Pedro Tuyub, agreed to meet at a busy café in the Mission District. Tuyub has been in the U.S. for over twelve years and co-founded the non-profit, MAYAB. He speaks Maya Yucatec, he's married to a Mexican American, has children, and therefore has settled in San Francisco and

returned briefly to Oxkutzcab only three times in the course of his nearly fifteen years in the United States. He is former editor of *El Tecolote*, a bilingual San Francisco Bay Area community newspaper. He also co-owns two community newspapers, *The Castro Star* and *The Western Addition*.

Tuyub mentioned a study that he and members of MAYAB conducted with the help of a City College of San Francisco (CCSF)-English professor, Anne Whiteside. There were several Yucatec Maya migrants attending the community college and after establishing the student group, El Pueblo Maya de CCSF, Whiteside facilitated the design and implementation of a survey working with members of El Pueblo Maya de CCSF. It was a fact finding mission to understand the demographics of the San Francisco Yucatec community. Tuyub pointed out that their study found 96 percent of those who participated in the survey spoke Maya Yucatec and about four percent spoke limited Spanish or none at all. Yucatecans, the study concluded, have found a niche in the service sector, in particular by working in restaurants. In the last several years MAYAB has partnered with the Presbyterian Church and run an office from the church. The church also provides space to have meetings and community events. Incidentally, the church has a sister church in Oxkutzcab, Yucatan. Tuyub said that although MAYAB is not affiliated with the church, they recognize that it provides a point of entry into the community because migrants involved with the church have developed their own transnational social networks.

Tuyub settled in San Francisco after having married a Mexican woman with American citizenship status. He met her after arriving in the late 1980s when there were few Yucatecans. He had made it a point to learn English while studying law in Yucatan. He made a point to socialize with people of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds in San Francisco to hone his English conversation skills. Over the years as he witnessed the Yucatecan community develop in

San Francisco and elsewhere in the U.S., he dedicated more of his time to servicing the social and cultural needs of the Yucatec community through his work in journalism and court interpreting. Incidentally, he had just returned from Portland, Oregon, interpreting for a Yucatec Maya speaker that was on trial for murder.

I asked Tuyub if he had any contacts in Oxkutzcab willing to participate in the study. He did not offer any. He also warned that people from Oxkutzcab or Maya in general, are reserved and not open to strangers or university researchers.

A week later, in February, 2005, I flew to Merida, Yucatan. I met with Dr. Patricia Fortuny, professor in Anthropology at CIESAS (Centro de Investigaciones Superiores en Antropología Social, or, Center for Superior Investigations in Social Anthropology). She introduced me to Pedro Chalé, a native of Yucatan and a graduate student in CIESAS, and suggested he accompany me to Oxkutzcab. Chalé and I took a two-hour van ride from Merida to Oxkutzcab. He gave me a brief walking tour of the town and introduced me to contacts he knew from previous fieldwork he conducted under Fortuny. Chalé told me about his research interests in religious affiliation and migration and how he focused on members of the Presbyterian Church in Oxkutzcab. As mentioned above, the church in Oxkutzcab has a sister church in the Mission District of San Francisco. Those who migrate, he added, and are affiliated with the church at home and then abroad tend to have an easier time adjusting to life in San Francisco.

One of the first contacts Chalé introduced me to in Oxkutzcab was Juan, the dishwasher I described in the outset of this paper. Juan later introduced me to his peers, all of which were return migrants in their late twenties or early thirties. In addition, I visited institutions and conducted interviews with teachers, doctors, elected officials, health promoters, state employees, shop owners, farmers, merchants, and generally anyone willing to offer their migration

experience. On the first trip to Oxnard, I interviewed roughly sixty people in the course of twenty days from February, 2005 to March, 2005.

Juan introduced me to Chiquis, El Cejas, Papuch, Berta and Chepis. They are a close-knit group of friends. Berta and Papuch are brothers. Papuch and Chepis are *compadres* (godparents) to their respective children. All of them were interviewed in Oxnard except Chepis who I met when I returned to San Francisco. What they all have in common is that they have a shared return migration experience, and after several trips have successfully built their house, their parents' houses, and for all of them except El Cejas and Chepis, have a wife and children and have established entrepreneurial endeavors in Oxnard.

The warning from Yuyub that people in Oxnard would have reservation about participating in this study was a reaction I did not experience while doing fieldwork in Oxnard. To the contrary, the aforementioned group of migrants and, in fact, the random townspeople I interviewed, were eager to share their experience. For example, when I mentioned to Juan and Berta that I worked in the Mission District as a Mariachi musician, and when I named specific restaurants and street names, they got nostalgic and interjected with stories of their own adventures. Berta in particular worked in the same restaurant on Lombard Street in San Francisco where I had played music with my Mariachi band. El Cejas, for example, I met in Oxnard while he was on a brief return from San Francisco. He had been working in San Francisco for two years. He planned to migrate there again after a few months in Oxnard. Meanwhile, everyday he offered to help as a translator and tour guide. He also helped recruit informants for the research project.

For the most part, informants in Oxnard were eager to speak about their migration experiences. Also they saw me as someone who could commiserate with them about the stigma

associated with being a return migrant. This stigma is discussed later in this study. It is an interesting dimension of the migration experience. It is easier to understand discrimination that new migrants face in new homelands, but perhaps not as easy to understand why return migrants are discriminated against at home, especially when the government heralds them as “national heroes”.

SECTION 3: “MAYA TOWN” IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION

In September 2002, Isidoro, a slow moving tropical cyclone meandered the peninsula of Yucatan for more nearly 30 hours. It started as a tropical wave off the coast of Africa and with the help of a large thunderstorm it reached the beaches of Cuba as a category one and by the time it reached Yucatan it grew to category three (URL: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2002isidore.shtml>). It was characterized as the most disastrous event of its kind in Yucatan’s history particularly because it meandered so long over the peninsula with such destructive force. It can be safely said that no industry was left unaffected by the tremendous force of nature. In a political communiqué, the president of the Yucatan state congress, Beatriz Zavala Peniche, declared an estimated loss of US\$1 billion (www.yucatan.gob.mx/gobierno/informes/2informe/2informe_mensaje.htm). In terms storm’s impact on land use, 72 percent of land cultivated for the production of corn was destroyed and 71 percent of land cultivated to produce other vegetables and fruits was also severely destroyed (www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/12/04/009n1pol.php). The president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, visited Yucatan three times after the incident and while asking the people for “patience” during the recovery stages, allocated only US\$12 million from the federal natural disaster fund or

FONDEN (<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/12/04/009n1pol.php>). Other local reports suggested an abandonment of the rural sector and administrative mismanagement by FODEN, specifically using its relief funds to garnish votes during election time (Becerrill, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/12/04/009n1pol.php>). For example, the marketplace in Oxkutzcab spans an entire city block. This marketplace is the receiving station of many subsistence and commercial farmers from the numerous outlying communities. Situated about two hours south of Merida, Oxkutzcab was relatively far away from the trajectory of Hurricane Isidoro. Therefore, when the state government implemented relief efforts immediately following the storms, Oxkutzcab was placed last on the list of towns receiving emergency relief (www.yucatan.gob.mx/gobierno/programas/fonden/isidoro/texto.htm). Yet the storm literally destroyed its harvests and inundated the town marketplace. The devastation sent ripples across land boundaries to spark hometown relief efforts as far as Los Angeles and San Francisco, California where enclaves of *Yucatecos* lived and worked as migrants. Collective grassroots efforts abroad responded in time of disaster and government mismanagement and spawned organizations that worked beyond the time frame of disaster relief to address the needs associated with their community members' migration experience. Because Yucatecos have made a niche in the service sector industry of San Francisco, their worksites in San Francisco became hubs for aid bins that were placed in coffee shops, restaurants, and local bars where Yucatecos occupied the workforce, according to Pedro Tuyub of MAYAB. It was the first time Yucatecos felt solidarity, organizing around one cause, and in large numbers. Migrants abroad who organized in response to the devastation left by the hurricane in their home state of Yucatan reflect the transnational nature of the social networks that they have established.

Moreover as a grassroots response to the inadequacies of federal and state agencies to provide for its people in times of natural disasters, *Yucatecos* organizing abroad can be theorized to have characteristics of a transnational community engaging in a social movement. Certainly, Yucatecans organizing abroad must be distinguished from those transnational social movements that have specifically targeted global actors and global institutions of finance and trade whose primary tactic is for the most part disruption and protest (Johnston and Almeida 2006:270; Smith and Johnston 2002:257). But when compared to national social movements that organize to critique government, economy and to influence change, I would argue they function similarly by mobilizing to address common goals.

What's more, the fact that *Yucatecos* abroad have attracted the attention of the governor of their state to the extent he would migrate to the U.S. to engage in partnerships with migrants is itself testimony to how much they have generated in remittances. Oxkutzcab, Yucatan with its population of 27,000 alone generates US1 million dollars in remittances per month with its nearly 12,000 sojourners residing in the area of San Francisco, California. Many of the remittance senders complain that before migrating they were ignored by the state and government officials and only after they emigrated and generated large sums of remittance monies were they taken seriously. In this respect, transmigrants have harvested a sense of democracy through their individual and collective migration experience in which they intersect with claims that open the political opportunities as a challenged group in addition to opening the networks of advocacy and support organized on a transnational scale (Johnston and Almeida 2006:270).

In the aftermath of hurricane Isidoro and after relief efforts abroad had been realized, *Yucatecos* amplified their framework to organize hometown clubs and associations centered on

Yucatecan migrant issues such as cultural education, language acquisition, dance and folklore, immigration and citizenship. According to Gaspar Rivera-Salgado in his article, *Cross-Border Grassroots Organizations and the Indigenous Migrant Experience*, hometown associations are informal organizations formed to provide financial assistance to civic, religious and public works projects around social and sporting events in the home community (2002). Though Rivera-Salgado characterizes associations as informal, the Club de Yucatecos in Los Angeles achieved, non-profit status in California only a month after the hurricane Isidoro relief efforts of October 2002 (URL:www.yucatecos.org/historia.html). Subsequently in March of 2004 they became the first Yucatecan Federation of Clubs (with their official name being Federación de Clubs Yucatecos) in California (URL:www.yucatecos.org/historia.html). Consequently, associations become formalized through state recognition on both sides of the border. For example, today associations acquire non-profit status in the state of California as well as work with regional Mexican consulate offices and the Yucatecan state programs such as INDEMAYA. In California their non-profit status helps them work with other organizations, generate funding sources and networks, as well as grant them a sense of belonging especially for those involved who may have non-citizenship status in the U.S.

One of the first concerns of an organization is to have an idea of their community's population abroad as they often find strength in knowing their numbers. This began to happen with the Yucatec Maya community in San Francisco after the hurricane relief efforts. As Santos Nic, member of the non-profit MAYAB recalls, in 1988 when he arrived to San Francisco there were very few from Yucatan, at most there were 20 who spoke Yucatec Maya (Burke 2004). Shortly after arriving, Nic began to notice more young men from Oxkutzcab. By 2002, the *San Francisco Chronicle* (2002) estimated the population of Yucatec Maya from Oxkutzcab in San

Francisco around 5,000. A year later, the population doubled to 10,000 (Tyche Hendricks 2004). In the greater Bay Area the estimate of Yucatecos from other parts of the state is around 25,000 (Fortuny 2004). This figure includes the several thousand residents of the Canal region in San Rafael that are originally from Peto, a town near Oxkutzcab.

In terms of organizational strength, the *Yucatecos* from Peto in the Canal region of San Rafael are fortunate to have a cultural center to congregate, The Canal Welcome Center. As a result of the already established cultural center they have been able to foster support from the Mayor's office of San Rafael. This alignment with an existing and flourishing cultural center as well as politicians has increased their access to technology, a space for cultural events, sports, radio station, and access to health services through the Welcome Center's sponsored programs.

However, Yucatecos from Oxkutzcab living in San Francisco have had a harder time obtaining such success. According to Pedro Tuyub, Although larger in population numbers, the relative urban sprawl, lack of a central location such as the Canal Welcome Center, and the individualistic lifestyle have been factors that have stifled the organizing efforts of MAYAB. During fieldwork for this study in 2005, MAYAB had just acquired an office inside the Presbyterian church of the Mission District. Church leader, Mauricio Chacon had visited the sister church in Oxkutzcab on numerous occasions. In fact, I observed a sermon by Chacon where the Yucatec Maya translation was projected on a screen. Chacon has also facilitated the use of the gymnasium so that MAYAB organize volleyball tournaments. Aligning with Chacon and the Presbyterian church has given MAYAB a central location more suitable for gatherings because before they would hold cultural events in small restaurant called Mi Lindo Yucatan.

In 2004, MAYAB co-organized the annual Health Awareness Week with the Presbyterian church. Juanita Quintero, member of MAYAB, arrived thirty years ago, and since

her arrival has seen a sharp rise in drug and alcoholism among migrants. She has also noticed migrants arriving at much younger ages than before. Quintero has been working with hospitals in Oakland and San Francisco in the realm of women's preventative health and public health, particularly in breast cancer, and more recently in the prevention of venereal conditions and AIDS. For Quintero, promoting health awareness is one of the ways she thinks MAYAB can best serve the Yucatecan community in San Francisco referring of course to the undocumented status and hence the lack of health insurance of migrant workers. Through Quintero's contacts, MAYAB has also worked with other community health clinics such as the Native American Health Center of San Francisco, but she admits it has been a slow process of simply getting her own community organized and educated about how to live and survive in an urban landscape like San Francisco.

YUCATECAN INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT PIONEERS

To understand contemporary immigration from Oxnard to San Francisco, it is useful to understand the historical trajectory that brought *Yucatecos* to California. Yucatecan migration to California first began in the 1940s and 1950s. The U.S. government implemented guest worker programs targeting particular states in the Mexican Republic. The states that stood out were Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacan, Zacatecas and Oaxaca, and they have historically been the principal migrant-sending Mexican states (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Burke 2004; Portes 2006). Until recently, Yucatan has not sent many migrants abroad. It is a state with the historically least amount of migrants to the US.

As mentioned above, within Yucatan, people have migrated to work in the various production industries of the state of Yucatan: the henequen production of the northern half of the

state, the corn production throughout, horticulture and, cattle in select zones of the interior, and fishing and tourism along the coast. Especially during the 1980s when tourism began to take off, migration took an intrastate characteristic in which many migrated from rural, to coastal, to tourist zones for work (Brown 1999:295). The types of jobs that tourist zones offered were mainly in the service industry: restaurant, cleaning, customer service and so on as mentioned before. The experience and international exposure to foreign nationals one could argue, made it easier for an already mobile population to migrate internationally.

International migration in Yucatan started with the Bracero Program of the 1940s and 1960s (Burke 2004). Even though international migrating was not as widespread in Yucatan as it had been in other regions of Mexico, the Bracero Program created the bonds that would later prove to facilitate the massive influx of *Yucatecos* in the 1990s. The Bracero Program brought to the U.S. approximately 5 million workers from all over the Mexican territory (Portes 2006:460). One of those *Yucatecos* to first arrive in San Francisco, California in 1965 as a Bracero was Tomás Bermejo (Burke 2004:350). Bermejo later opened a Yucatecan-style restaurant on San Francisco's Geary Boulevard. Stories of his success circulated to Oxkutzcab and people began looking to San Francisco as a destination. A contemporary of Bermejo, Cristobal Parra, emigrated as a Bracero to work in the agricultural fields in Santa Rosa, California. When the work program ended he went back to Oxkutzcab, but he kept his contacts and made frequent work trips to Santa Rosa and found work in San Francisco's service industry. He was able to provide some comfort to his family in Oxkutzcab such as build them a house and send his sons to school in Merida.

Bermejo and Parra paved the way for future migrants from Oxkutzcab as they established some of the first transnational networks with San Francisco. Bermejo used his restaurant to

employ newly arrived migrants. He would pay for their coyote fees and they would work off the debt in his restaurant. Parra, on the other hand, would do an employee rotation where a newly arrived migrant would take his place at a job site while Parra returned home to Oxkutzcab for a period of time. Eventually Parra's sons Berta and younger brother Papuch would migrate to San Francisco. I will discuss their stories in section four.

Migrants such as Santos Nic arrived in San Francisco in 1978 with a work permit. He worked in the agricultural fields of Soledad, California picking peppers, lettuce, and asparagus. In Mexico he was an educator and certified Mayan scholar known as a *Mayero*. A *Mayero* is a person who is well versed in Mayan language, culture and history. He worked as a teacher of Mayan and Indian studies for three years in various posts in Mexico including Yucatan and Mexico City. Unfortunately an accident left him with a health debt he could not pay with his meager salary. He opted to migrate north. He obtained his work permit initially to perform agricultural labor and when his permit expired, he successfully renewed the permit and moved to San Francisco where he knew of others from Oxkutzcab. He has become the respected *Mayero* in MAYAB among members and non-members alike. He continues to work, though employers hesitate to hire him since he is near retirement age. The money he earns allows him to continue to support his family in Oxkutzcab. He feels economically trapped and emotionally torn. On the one hand, if he returns to Oxkutzcab he knows that a job as a *Mayero* would be hard to obtain and would not pay enough. As a member of MAYAB, he finds that the younger generations of recent Yucatec migrants look to him for cultural knowledge. Working odd jobs in San Francisco with occasional stints as a visiting scholar of Mayan studies earns him enough to send money home to pay his debt and health bills for his brother and his mother in Oxkutzcab.

Thus the Yucatecan population has been using the San Francisco Bay Area as a destination for more than three decades now. The Mission District is the place they usually arrive. However, informants have indicated that because of immigration raids the Mission has become vulnerable and some opt to live in surrounding neighborhoods. Still “Maya Town” refers to the Mission District because of its large number of Yucatecan migrants.

In general, scholars note that migration strategies have evolved in response to the toughening of the immigration policies and the implementation of operations on the border region. For a deeper discussion of those strategies see Durand and Massey (2004: 281—298). Though the U.S. government is implementing more and more resources to secure its border, it has not diminished the flow of undocumented workers to the U.S. (Levine 2006; Massey 2002). In fact these efforts have helped communities, such as the Yucatec Maya, strengthen its own ties as a reaction to the increasing difficulties they face. The collaboration and the social networks created through this transnational context have created a constant flow of communication between these two distant areas.

TRANSMIGRANT AND TRANSNATIONALISM

In the wake of hurricane *Isidoro* in 2001, the Mexican government only offered one percent of the estimated need that Yucatan needed. Aid, if at all, would have to come from another source. Federal relief became an indication of the inequality with respect to the allocation of resources between the tourist and corporate sectors and the rural sectors. The tourist sector for example was able to recover much faster than the agricultural zones. For Oxkutzcab, relief came from their families residing abroad. Working migrants abroad responded collectively raising funds, and with an organized effort, they provided the relief that the federal and state

government failed to provide. Exactly how much money Yucatecos raised abroad is unclear based on the ethnographic data. Also the mobilization served to empower *Yucatecos* abroad as they were finally aware of the power of their numbers to mobilize efforts. Later that experience developed into other clubs and associations to ameliorate their migrant experience.

Yucateco hometown associations and clubs reflect a connection that transcends national and state borders. By incorporating previously established social systems from home and applying those social systems to their community abroad *Yucatecos* rework those social systems to include new ways of interpreting their experience through collective action. Migrants are actors in creating social networks, and for that matter engaged in practices that reflect a reworking of social status as they navigate both at home and abroad (Basch 1994; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995). As mentioned before, the term ‘transmigrant’ describes migrants who live “their lives across borders” (Schiller 2001:324). According to Schiller and Fouron, “They settle in their new country while sending money and gifts back to family, and buying property, building houses, and participating in the activities of a land they still call home” (Schiller 2001:324). After all, transnationalism is a process in which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (Basch 1994:344). And in terms of buying and building on land, transmigrants from Oxkutzcab have also changed the facade of their town from that of thatch roof homes to masonry style buildings. In many ways their migration has facilitated their net wealth creation since the overwhelming majority of informants expressed having familial development projects to build a home and acquire land.

Transnationalism has forced researchers in social sciences to rethink the paradigms that emerge in such mobile and cross-border situations. For one it begs the question of how the world

has become so integrated? Charles Chatfield appropriately points out, “The classic image of world government was a federation or union of nation-states under some universal authority. Now, however, literature has particularly emphasized ways in which nation-states have been continuously evolving as an integrated economic system” (1997:10). Other scholars have pointed to the integration of a global system (Kearney 1995; Robinson 1998; Schiller 2001; Wallerstein 2000). William Robinson in his article, *Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology and the study of Transnational Studies*, defines globalization as two interwoven processes: the first is “modernization” which he refers to the spread of capitalist production and the second, is the globalization of the process of production itself (Robinson 1998:561-594).

Hank Johnston and Jackie Smith in *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, refer to the recent acceleration of global integration that altered our conceptualizations of the state and its capacity to influence both domestic and global processes (2002:1). Smith and Johnston also refer to a global framework in which nations are entangled in a web of interests and obligations (2002:7). These obligations not only hinder nations from providing services to its citizens but also according to Johnston and Smith present opportunities for transnational social movements to occur (2002:7).

The idea of nation-states got its apogee after several key global events took place. After the First World War the treaty of Versailles dissolved the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and granted peoples the right to a state of their own and then the break up of European colonial empires in the twentieth century beginning after the Second World War when India declared independence followed by the African countries in the 1960s (Richter, Berking, and Muller-Schmid 2006:4). Even earlier, the idea of states in its initial stages without the “nation” prefix,

developed in the years following the Thirty Years' War in Central Europe in which the Treaty of Westphalia grounded peace between Protestants and Catholics through a designation of states according to territories (Richter, Berking, and Muller-Schmid 2006:3). Perhaps the most compelling implication of the development of nation-states is that just as they are based on territoriality, sovereignty and cultural identity, they are showing signs of disintegration according to Richter and Ingo (2006:6). The idea of disintegration has made its way into the case of migrants from Yucatan as the state extends its hand to transmigrants abroad to engage in state-sponsored development projects. In this sense, the state has expanded its borders to include *Yucatecos* abroad and hence illustrates the idea of a deterritorialized state (Basch 1994:344).

SECTION 4: FINDINGS: YUCATECANS IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

ADVENTURE CAPITALISTS

The young males that migrate from Oxkutzcab to San Francisco are taking on an adventure to gain a living. The journey is an adventure and the lure is capital. With the capital they are able to construct literally and figuratively new homes and new lives. In addition, return migrants bring home entrepreneurial endeavors. The experience of migration gives return migrants new information and beliefs that translates into new opportunities and services (Shane and Cable 2002:365). The young migrants that I interviewed used migration to remedy their economic situation. Wage differentiation is certainly an attractive lure because in Oxkutzcab a worker earns the equivalent of US\$10 a day and in San Francisco a worker could earn up to \$100 a day. Prospective migrants are not necessarily doing the math in their heads when they decide to migrate, however, they are negotiating their situation at home and seeing the results of others' endeavors on the changing landscape of Oxkutzcab. The teenagers and early twenty-year-olds

that I interviewed had reasons ranging from not wanting to study, not being able to pay for studying, not being accepted into the school to study, not having a decent paying job, to having a depressing home life. In essence some sought an escape and an opportunity to better their lives.

Migrants I interviewed see the whole process of crossing the border, working and sending money back as a rite of passage into manhood. The stories of defeat and triumph intrigue prospective migrants to make the decision to migrate. Another lure is there in Oxnard as remittance dollars continue to urbanize the landscape of Oxnard. Thatch roof homes are now the exception and modern constructed homes are the rule. Making a modern house for the family has become a marker of manhood in Oxnard not just social status.

Young kids walk the streets in Oxnard with clothes from the U.S.—the fancy sneakers and swagger that baggy pants create—raise the curiosity and interest of prospective, young migrants. However, it is not simply a matter of being able to purchase consumer goods, a nice house, or a car, but rather being able to maintain a lifestyle. This is what keeps migrants migrating back to the United States. Successful migrants have attained a lifestyle in terms of social and material markers that compare to having a formal career in Oxnard and they have achieved it in a relatively shorter period of time.

Matona told his mother he did not want to study at the university. She told him that if he did not study he had to leave the house referring to migrating to the U.S. Later that day Matona met up with a friend who told him that on the following Wednesday he was leaving for the states and that he had an extra ticket. After returning home that evening Matona's mother told him she had bought the ticket from his friend and that he was leaving for the U.S. that following Wednesday with his friend and a *pollero*.

Oxkutzcab is known in the region for having a pool of *polleros*, guides that start here in Oxkutzcab and lead groups clandestinely across the U.S.-Mexican border. Nineteen-year old Angel has been waiting for a phone call from a *pollero* to signal the right time to make the journey north. In some cases, *polleros* get migrants a job. Angel had the entire process mapped out in his head and he narrated the steps it contained to the very restaurant in California he would where he would work. Angel is to replace a restaurant worker in Oxnard who is from Oxkutzcab. The worker in Oxnard knows the *pollero*. The restaurant worker wanted to make enough money to buy a truck and drive it to Oxkutzcab. When he meets this goal, he will contact the *pollero*. Once Angel receives a phone call from the *pollero*, he will pack a little sack and a jacket, and join a group that could number anywhere from as small as five to as large as a dozen people. Typically the group will drive from Oxkutzcab to Merida and take a plane to a border town like Mexicali or Agua Prieta. Taxis will drive them to a nearby crossing point, usually somewhere in the desert borderlands that Arizona shares with northern Mexico. At this junction, *polleros* will go across the border with the group or outsource the crossing to a *coyote*. A *coyote* will lead the group by foot across the desert for time spans that range from several hours up to three days depending on the availability of routes and the presence of border enforcement. They will reach a meeting point where a awaits and will pack everyone inside, sometimes on top of each other, until they reach the “waiting house”. The job is outsourced again to a *chofer* or chauffeur who drives clients to a major city like Los Angeles, collects the money from a sponsoring relative or friend, and then reports back to the *coyote*.

This will be Angel’s second time attempting to cross. He said his first attempt was at the age of fourteen. We were sitting down in his makeshift living quarters that doubled as the storage room. The property is owned by a migrant who is currently working in the U.S. The house is

elaborate, with marble floors, terra cotta roof, large landscaped yard, and a stucco finish. It's literally one of the last houses toward the edge of town that connects Oxkutzcab to a main highway that eventually leads to the coast. It has a large swimming pool that I had to pass to get to Angel's storage room toward the



Photo 1: Angel and his pit bull

back of the property. He had to hold back his pit bull from biting me as I reached his doorway. After tying up his dog to a stake in the ground, I noticed his tattoos and graffiti on the walls. For as long as he can remember he has been interested in living the “crazy life” as he put it and understands the gang culture of the U.S. without having migrated. “There’s always been bands or clicks here in Oxkutzcab. A lot [of the culture] is brought over by people who return, but you don’t have to bring the crazy life from the United States. We’ve always had drugs too. Those come from all over the place around here,” he declares.^{viii} The tattoo across his chest translates from Spanish to English as, *forgive me mother, this is how I am*. He is, however, quick to admit, “I won't hang out with any *sureños*^{ix} or be part of any gang while I'm in the other side. Over there people will kill you for wearing a red shirt or for no apparent reason.”^x He spoke with conviction

about working hard and earning money. He plans to buy property, build a home, and eventually find a wife in Mexico and get married. "I've worked on my own since I was twelve. I don't see our wages going up with the price of everything else. It isn't possible to earn a decent living to make a house and have a family. I have to go north because I need to."^{xi} Angel has no parents. He hesitated to tell me about the tragedy, but simply hinted at their passing earlier in his life. His circle of friends in the neighborhood is his family. Among them are several *polleros* which he estimated could total around twenty or so in Oxnard.

The first time Papuch left Oxnard for the U.S. was in 1990, and it was not because of economic problems per se. He worked in a family business. His father was one of the pioneering immigrants in San Francisco, Cristobal Parra. As a result, Papuch grew up in a modern house, and after several tenures in San Francisco he constructed a house for his own family in Oxnard. He also established a restaurant a block from the central marketplace in Oxnard. In fact, we sat in front of his restaurant for an interview. Juan recommended I interview Papuch. Juan and Papuch grew up together and were roommates in San Francisco.

Papuch married at the young age of nineteen. His wife moved in with Papuch and his family. Shortly thereafter, his brother Berta's girlfriend became pregnant and Berta also brought her to live with the family. So there were two young couples living under one roof. "I left Oxnard because living like that depressed me. I needed to get out of that situation, and for me paying for a coyote and going north seemed like the best option at the time. I was adventurous, and so my answer was to migrate north," admits Papuch.^{xiii} He eventually constructed the house he currently lives in so his family could have a space of their own versus the crowded living conditions that created his depression and urgency to migrate.

He remembers having to cross into the U.S. via Tijuana where a taxicab left him near a fence and he climbed over to the other side. A sister-in-law paid his coyote fee when he arrived in San Francisco via Los Angeles. He recalls that in the mid 1990s it was much easier and less expensive to cross. In the span of ten years he has migrated five times and knows first-hand how much more expensive and dangerous it is to migrate.

Chiquis was just matriculating in high school in Oxnard when he first decided to migrate to the U.S. in 1994. He left because he longed to have a car or at least a bike. His parents were poor and he recalls never owning a bike as a kid. So he called his brother who was already in the U.S. and he left. Arriving in San Francisco, he started washing dishes, while living with eight other guys in a cramped two-bedroom apartment. After his first shift he lamented ever leaving Oxnard but after struggling Chiquis now owns a food stand right next to Juan's hot dog stand. He overheard Juan and I talking about why young men migrate to the U.S. and he interjected with his views, "People leave because they see others driving cars and they dream of having a car."^{xiii} He continued quite passionately about how the minimum wage in Oxnard is not enough to buy meat, eggs, or basic staples in the marketplace. He pointed out minimum wage was 42 pesos. I assumed he meant per day.

Returning to San Francisco later that month, I had a list of contacts that I was recommended to interview. One of the contacts I was eager to see was wife and husband, Maria Estrella and Antonio May, who emigrated from Oxnard in 1991. Maria is the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's Café Manager, and her husband is the Head Chef of the kitchen that services the café's menu. They have been working there for a little over ten years.

Antonio remembers paying \$250 to cross. "At that time it was much easier to cross. You would leave Oxnard at 4 AM in the morning, cross via Tijuana and from San Diego you

would fly directly to San Francisco and arrive by 9 PM that night. Now you literally die in the desert crossing,”^{xiv} says Antonio May. Maria interjects saying, “For us it was an adventure. I worked in a government post in Quintana Roo. We lived there for some time and because of our friends we decided to emigrate.” They both studied English before emigrating and Maria sees that studying helped their chances of finding decent paying jobs in the U.S. When they arrived, Maria started working as a bilingual secretary in the Mission District. Maria retells, “I had already studied English back home and when I arrived I enrolled in English classes and in three months I spoke English. I went to school for four years after that and received my degree of ‘English as a Second Language’.”



Photo 2: Maria Estrella and Antonio May in front of Café Museo

Maria admits that they really had no economic reason to emigrate. They were pretty well off working administrative jobs in Yucatan. Antonio also attended school after he arrived, but admits he never finished. He started working in a Thai restaurant and then in an Italian

restaurant. He learned to cook all types of cuisine. Eventually he was hired as head chef at Café MOMA. It was hard at first because they didn't have any help from anyone. They were very few Yucatecos at that time. They explained that their experience may be different than most because they understand many young migrants today arrive and live in rooms of eight to ten people in a cramped apartment. Most of these young males migrate before they get a chance to study, and hence Maria estimates they are unprepared for the life in San Francisco.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Ironically, Papuch left Oxkutzcab because he felt depressed by the cramped family living situation, but the living quarters when he arrived in San Francisco were more crowded and more depressing than the ones he left in Oxkutzcab. When he arrived he was told that he was renting a bed in a one-bedroom apartment with five other guys from Oxkutzcab. He recalled the use of the bed was on a rotation because while he worked a night shift, his roommate, who also rented the bed, rested; and when Papuch rested the roommate was away working. "I had days when I would not sleep because with that many people living under the same roof there was always movement in and out. Someone was always drinking on their day off,"^{xv} admits Papuch.

Oxkutzcab may have drugs, but informants point out that in San Francisco the easy access to hard drugs and large amounts of them is a risk for addiction. Particularly in the context of working double shifts, the drugs are not only a way to cope with the social aspects of loneliness and depression but also to cope with working long hours. Juan, for example worked a morning shift as a cook during his second time back to San Francisco. He lived with four roommates in a one-bedroom apartment. He admits that using cocaine helped him to cope with the long hours. After his morning shift he worked at a high-rise hotel near downtown until the late hours. It did not help that most of his friends also drank and used hard drugs. Unfortunately,

these friends are almost always roommates or co-workers as well. In fact on occasion he says his supervisor encouraged them to drink while on the job. Juan recalls working at a restaurant where workers knew that one hour before clean up time and around the time the last customers came in to be served, they could start drinking. Clean-up time seemed to move faster and done more efficiently according to Juan. The draw back was that once intoxicated, he would continue drinking when he got home. “It was common to start drinking by the end of the work day and finish the night drinking and doing drugs at home with roommates,”^{xvi} says Juan.

The lifestyle that migrants are subject to when they first arrive increases the likelihood of other uninhibited behavior once alcohol is ingested. For example, several informants shared stories of sexual servants making house calls and no one would bother to use protection. Cases of AIDS and other sexually transmitted conditions are the risks that migrants expose themselves to. Particularly migrants who come from the outlying communities of Oxnard where public health campaigns have not reached and where many young migrants are increasingly coming from, orientation is lacking.

Immigration raids are also common especially in the Mission District of San Francisco. Chiquis recalls experiencing a raid in the mid 1990s when he lived on 19th Street in San Francisco. “The raids came three times. One times [my friend] Farfan climbed the roof to escape. He fell to the floor trying to escape the officials. I got away because I put my backpack on and walked down the stairs. When I passed the immigration officers they thought I was student.”^{xvii} Chiquis says the Mission District is a hot spot for raids. One of his roommates was detained and deported. A month later he returned and again was detained and deported. He could name specific individuals who were deported several times and still they returned. As a result migrants have moved to other areas of the city that are not prone to raids.

The experience of social inequalities especially in the work place is particularly common. Employers take advantage of migrant workers' status and play off fears of deportation, particularly of new arrivals who do not have a grasp of the language and cannot advocate for themselves. Chiquis worked as a cook and earned \$9 an hour. However, a new manager entered and his wage dropped to \$8 an hour. Chiquis said the manager was discriminating against him because of his illegal paperwork that stated he was twenty-one for his then eighteen years of age. When he brought up his pay decrease to the manager he was told, 'If you want I can call immigration.' Worse still are the cases where checks are held back. Chiquis remembers first arriving and working as a dishwasher. "Dishwasher is the worst because beside the working conditions sometimes the bosses will hold your pay knowing you can't do anything about it," he remembers.^{xviii} Migrants arrive to fill a certain niche in a growing service sector economy typically taking the lowest-paying jobs. As a result, they inherit the inequalities that come with that type of job.

LABOR NICHES

The changing global economy has interlinked urban centers with information, transportation and markets that have transformed cities such as San Francisco from to service sector and information technology producing economies. Manufacturing jobs have been moving overseas as corporations seek to find cheaper labor and unrestricted labor practices in periphery countries. San Francisco's economy has shifted from manufacturing to business service industry and has grown in relation to a focus on information technology and finance. Finance is San Francisco's highest grossing activity. It is home to major U.S. commercial banks including the Pacific Stock Exchange as well as the Federal Reserve Bank. San Francisco's economy is also

organized around business services, government, finance, insurance and real estate. What results is a depletion of middle-income manufacturing jobs that either move to the suburbs, as in Silicon Valley, or literally move overseas. Remaining are highly skilled, information-technology-based jobs that are accompanied by lower paid jobs in janitorial, hotel, and restaurant services.

One of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. is the service sector. San Francisco in particular will experience an increase of 64% new jobs in the service sector from 1995 to 2015 (<http://www.abag.org/planning/interdependence/interdependenced.html>). Historically, Yucatecan migrants worked service sector jobs in the tourist zones of the coast of the Peninsula as mentioned in the section on Yucatecan intrastate migration. Several informants had specific experience working in the tourist areas of Yucatan before migrating to the U.S. Papuch's older brother, for example, worked in Cancun before migrating. Maria Estrella and her husband Antonio May also worked in Quintana Roo beforehand. Similarly tourism is the economic mainstay for the local San Francisco economy and the service industry supports those visitors. The main jobs that migrants work in San Francisco are in the service sector and in construction. Immigrants usually fill the work force of lower-rung jobs. In the case of San Francisco, dishwashing and day laborer are among the initial jobs found by newly-arrived migrants. To the extent migrants learn English, and create a social network, many will move up to higher paying jobs.

One implications of global economic restructuring is a drastic bifurcation of social classes. For example, immigrants in San Francisco occupy the fastest growing segment of the work-force, yet take the lower-paying and less stable jobs. Without options for economic mobility, a middle class is virtually eliminated. While San Francisco has a history of immigrant neighborhoods, the structure of the economy that once allowed other immigrants (from Ireland,

Italy, Japan, etc) to achieve middle class status, is no longer available to most migrants from Yucatan.

SOCIAL TIES

Rachel Adler explains that social ties across borders exist because migrants have agendas (2000: 42). The social ties are created and maintained by migrants because they have a personal or familial investment in participating in an activity that will eventually lead to them reaching a goal. When we refer to social networks we are talking about the relatives, friends and associations that have a role in the migrant experience. Adler uses the term “migrant agency” to refer to migrants’ creating a structure that enables them to pursue their goals and in the process contest the hegemony of two or more nation-states (Adler 2000: 42).

Granovetter explores the strength of ties in friendship networks and the influence that has on mobility opportunity and community organization (1973:1362). The author offers a definition of the “strength” of an interpersonal tie as a combination of amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy, and the reciprocity of services (1973:1361). He argues that it is through networks that small-scale interactions become translated into large-scale patterns that bridge the micro and macro processes (1973:1362). Granovetter uses the term “embeddedness” to explain that behavior and institutions are constrained by ongoing social relations (1985:481-482). In premarket societies economic behavior was heavily embedded in social relations and, he points out, scholars understood this behavior as becoming more autonomous with modernization such that economic transactions were calculated and rationalized by one’s individual gain (1985:482). “Embeddedness” helps to put social ties, as it relates to Yucatec migrants, in perspective because it emphasizes the importance of social and kinship obligations.

In his first stint in San Francisco, Papuch worked at a café that will be referred to as Central Café. Papuch's brother Sergio was the first to establish a good relationship with the owner. The owner was impressed by Sergio's work ethic. Sergio eventually returned to Yucatan and recommended his brother Papuch work at the café. The manager respected Sergio and accepted Papuch's recommendation. Soon after arriving and working at Central Café, Papuch started learning English. Eventually he moved up in ranks to cashier. By then, learned to make the myriad of coffee drinks and everything on their menu. The Central Café eventually became a hub for others like Chepis and Berta to work in when they arrived. For example, on Papuch's return he was replaced by his brother Berta. "The owner of Central Café in San Francisco has visited Oxkutzcab. We showed him the town and he stayed here for a week. He wanted to visit our landscape and learn about our culture,"^{xix} says Papuch. The owner fostered a certain respect for Oxkutzcab immigrant workers seeing how hard they worked and what loyal workers they were. He preferred them to any other employees. After several tenures in San Francisco, Papuch saved money to establish a business of his own in Oxkutzcab. Once he built a house, he decided to open a business with the same name as Central Café in San Francisco. "I chose the name because it was there that I learned a lot about our conditions here in Oxkutzcab. I wanted to offer something for the young people that are thinking of migrating. I employ five young guys from Oxkutzcab."^{xx} Of the five prospective migrants, three have contemplated migrating to the U.S. and Papuch talks to them about his experience. One of the three decided to stay after Papuch told him the story of one of his crossings.

Papuch's story is an example of the ill-treatment Mexican, federal troops give migrants on their way to the border. Papuch exclaimed that migrants are safer in the hands of the U.S. border patrol than any law enforcement official on the Mexican side. He retold a story of his

second attempt crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. It happened in 1993, as he and a dozen migrants from Oxkutzcab were being driven to the border near Nogales. The Mexican police stopped the two taxis. The police made everyone exit the taxis. They directed the males in the group to a nearby bathroom for interrogation. The police made the eight males strip naked. Papuch kept asking them why they were being detained if they did nothing wrong. The officers grew impatient with Papuch and smacked him around. Papuch managed to negotiate the officer's demand to pay a on-the-spot fee of 500 to 200 pesos per person. They had no choice but to pay and were eventually given their clothes back and freed to leave. Papuch compared that interaction with the time that he got caught by U.S. Border Patrol and he felt disdain as he admitted that Mexican officials treat immigrants like second class citizens whether you are going or coming back.

Papuch's café is located a block away from the main plaza and a block away from the town market place. He says that his experience in the U.S. helped him to form this business model of serving a variety of dinner options that range from Italian food to Chinese food. I ordered a plate of chow mein and he shouted from the kitchen, "Crazy isn't it? A Yucateco cooking Chinese food?"^{xxi} It is a different palette and he admits that at first the townspeople were hesitant to try something new, but he now seems to have a loyal clientele.

YUCATECANS IN OXKUTZCAB

THE PARADOX OF THE RETURN MIGRANT

Life in Oxkutzcab on the surface may seem tranquil. In the mid to late 1990s, however, the town suffered from a string of crime and violence. Subsequently, an authoritarian administration focused on eradicating crime in town. The crime was linked to a battle for drug territory among the local gangs. Oxkutzcab has historically been a hub station for drugs from South America that enter the peninsula via the coast in Quintana Roo and by roads connects to the interior, stopping in Oxkutzcab. Papuch, Chiquis and Berta in separate interviews commented on the discriminatory treatment that return migrants received from Oxkutzcab police. Anyone that the police determined was a migrant was detained and questioned. A stigma grew that made migrants synonymous with the importers of drugs, gangs and violence.

Despite the fact that drugs enter Oxkutzcab via trade routes that originate in South America, return migrants are stigmatized as scapegoats. The contradiction is that migrants are seen as saviors to a shaky Mexican economy. President Vicente Fox has publicly called them heroes of the nation for sacrificing themselves abroad while sending remittances to their families and keeping local economies afloat in Mexico. Yet migrants are harassed and become vulnerable to robbery and exploitation by Mexican officials at every level of law enforcement and at every step of the migration process.

When Matona returned the first time, his uncle was treasurer of Oxkutzcab. I met Matona in Oxkutzcab after being referred to him by El Cejas who mentioned he worked with young men in the town. Matona wanted to open a youth center to orient young, prospective migrants. He was tired of hearing the talk around town about how migrants who return are all *marijuanos*, marijuana smokers. “Unfortunately in Oxkutzcab people generalize everyone,”^{xxii} he declares. Matona works with young students from ages four to sixteen. He teaches sports, mainly soccer

and mentors them. Through his contribution to Oxkutzcab he tries to alter negative attitudes about migrants and return migrants.

Matona, for example, pointed out that he has friends who attained educational degrees and who now work in their profession. He pointed out it usually takes a school teacher nearly ten years to construct a house on their salary. Meanwhile, Matona started constructing his house in three years, and by five years of working and saving money while in the San Francisco it was finished. The trade off Matona made was that he was already thinking of returning to the U.S. to work again, while his friends stay in their Oxkutzcab working salary jobs and their secure posts. He says a lot of those who choose not to migrate resent return migrants for their relatively fast upward mobility. However, migrants are often condemned to a life of cyclical migration, as Matona pointed out, he was already thinking of returning.

Matona admits that migration has changed the socioeconomic divisions in Oxkutzcab. “Before you could distinguish social classes. When my group hangs out in the atrium of the church you see where the sons of the teachers, engineers and basically the rich kids hang out. They drive nice cars their dads bought them. We earned ours with hard work.”^{xxiii} He seems to refer to a difference in what can be considered the old money and the new money. The old money represented by the middle to upper class that have always been economically well off whether anyone in the family migrates or not. The new money is represented by migrants who have attained a house, a car and for most a business venture. Matona further points out a general resentment and discrimination on the part of the municipal officials to halt migrants’ grass roots or entrepreneurial projects.

One example of such resentment is Berta’s attempt to open a pharmacy in Oxkutzcab. Berta studied pharmaceuticals at the university and after not being accepted into a specialized

program, he decided to try his luck at the journey north. After several tenures in San Francisco he returned to open a pharmacy. He explained that in order to stock certain items, permissions had to be granted by the municipality. He followed proper protocols and was granted what he understood to be the necessary permits. However, after several months of opening the pharmacy he got a visit from a municipal inspector and was ordered to close his pharmacy, on account of not having the proper permits. He raced to the municipality and demanded an explanation. He was told that he needed to get particular papers signed by a particular person who happened to be stationed in another municipal office in another town several hours away. He went to that office but never found the person who was supposed to sign his permits. He returned to the municipal office in Oxkutzcab and he was informed they could not help him unless he got those papers signed. “What they really wanted was for me to pay them under the table fees. Even the standard permits that I paid were inflated. I felt discriminated against because I was a migrant.”^{xxiv}

TRICICYCLE TAXIS AND THE STUBBORN FARMERS

At six in the morning I set out with Cejas on mountain bikes to ride the Puuc route starting at the top at the caverns of Lol Tun. We started by getting a ride to the top of the hill on the back of a pick up truck that left in front of the marketplace. We set out to ride the forty-six kilometer route from Lol Tun and continuing on to Uxmal. About nine kilometers into our ride we reached Labna. Cejas told me his uncle was the caretaker of the archeological site. He said I would be very interested in his point of view about local economics and its relationship to migration.

My first impression of Manuel Cepeda Perasa was of his wood carvings that lined a wall near the entrance.



Photo 3: An example of Manuel Cepeda Perasa's detailed wood carvings

The cobble stone entrance leads to the thatch roof hut that Perasa uses as his carving studio and kitchen. Perasa is employed by INAH, the National Institute of Anthropology and History. His job is to care take Labna. He is not technically a tour guide and he explained the distinction. Perasa has a salary job. Tour guides in this region are part of an independent union separate from INAH. That explained why days earlier when I visited another site, Lol Tun, I was told by the cashier at the entrance to tip the tour guide because the entrance fee does not pay them.

That day there were few, if any, tourists. Usually, visitors are driven to the Puuc region on bus tours starting in Merida and continue on the Puuc route that we intended to ride on bikes. Our visit was also during the week, so that gave Perasa time to express his thoughts on what happens to farmers who sell on the market in Oxkutzcab. "What is happening in Oxkutzcab is that farmers are being price-gouged for their agricultural products. [Buyers] have a little more education and own trucks. They know people are not organized and they get cheaper prices by

making neighbors compete with each other,^{xxv} he points out. The buyers he referred to come from as far as Merida. Typically they return to sell in markets in Merida or service produce to outlying communities via delivery trucks. “If a farmer has sons then paying for an education is impossible. After paying for the production costs of their harvests, the returns do not leave much profit. A savings is not feasible, much less money for college. The son will decide to migrate instead,^{xxvi} says Perasa. And what about the ones who stay?, I asked Perasa. “Anyone you see driving a tricycle taxi used to be a farmer. Otherwise if you are still a farmer then you have to be stubborn.”^{xxvii} he responded.



Photo 4: Tricycle Taxis on a major intersection near the market place

Perasa estimated that there are several hundred tricycle taxi drivers in Oxkutzcab. They earn approximately one hundred pesos a day. The work entails pedaling people to their destination and charging anywhere from five to twenty pesos.

Upon returning to Oxkutzcab I was interested in finding what Perasa meant by referring to farmers as being stubborn for remaining.

I met with Juan that evening as he was working at his hot dog stand in front of the marketplace, and I asked him if he knew anyone who still worked the land. “Wait right here a few minutes. My friend Jose usually comes to buy hot dogs. He’s a campesino who has not migrated,” replied Juan.^{xxviii}



Photo 5: Juan selling hot dogs in front of the market place, *20 de noviembre*

Sure enough, Jose Luis Gongora ordered a few hot dogs and Juan asked if he didn’t mind answering a few questions for a study on migration. He obliged, and wondered why anyone would ask him questions regarding migration if he, in fact, never migrated to the U.S. in his 39 years of life. He admitted that he might have thought about migrating, but that his father always instilled in him the ethics of hard work and initiative to provide for the household by working the land. He pointed out that his return-migrant friends had to migrate to learn those important values. Gongora pointed out that it helped that his father owned their parcel of land and to cultivate two or three different crops not just one. He credited his father who taught him to stay current on the prices of crops and to have a variety that returns higher yields for the season. He

gave the example that in August you may cultivate two strands of avocado: the Suarez and the lagunero, and by January you can have two other different varieties of avocado. “I’ve been stable, and thanks to my dad’s ingenuity I have not had to migrate,”^{xxxix} he said. In the dry season they fumigate so they don’t have to physically clean the weeds. They also use insecticide. He pointed out that in order to stay efficient and ahead of the trends his dad has always tried to be creative and study the prices. “We tend to stay with lemon and varieties of avocado that have a strong return,”^{xxx} said Gongora. “So why is it said that the marketplace no longer gives returns on produce that is sold here?” I asked him. “Above all, the lack of stability in the sale of fruit. For example, if I harvest fifty boxes of oranges and they are priced at eight pesos a box. I make three pesos a box in profit after production costs,”^{xxxi} he explained.



Photo 6: The central market, *20 de noviembre* (on the right) and the main church

He pointed out that a box of avocados would sell from thirty to fifty pesos, and a tree usually offers five or six boxes. On the other hand, an orange tree yields about eight to ten boxes with very little return for the labor and production costs at three pesos of profit per box. He said the oranges they do harvest they mainly sell to the juice company in town because it simply is not profitable in the town market-place. I asked him who owns the juice company and he said that a group from Germany constructed and operated the juice factory in town. Oxkutzcab is known for citric produce. Every year in November they celebrate the annual orange festival. The juice company took advantage of the low fruit prices, and now bottles and ships organic juice straight from Oxkutzcab to Europe. “We mainly bring vegetables like squash and we are stubborn to produce certain crops during the cold season when normally they’re not offered. This way we get 120 or 130 pesos per box on squash.”^{xxxii}

I was starting to understand what Perasa meant by farmers having to be stubborn in order to make a living. Farmers like Gongora and his father plant variety instead of mono cropping. They prepare ahead of time and follow price trends to determine what they will plant. And they cultivate produce that is virtually out of season to offer novel items on the market.

In 2002, in the aftermath of hurricane Isidoro, Gongora remembers losing two hectares of papaya. One hectare of lemon that was spared and two hectares of avocado almost newly planted were flooded. After the flood he began shoveling the land and the government came with a mere six bags of fertilizer as relief. “What help is that? Just like the government charges taxes they should at least try to resolve five percent of what we produce in the land,”^{xxxiii} he exclaimed.

Gongora pointed out that in the state of Campeche he visited a town that approached agriculture more collectively. He saw how with the little help of the local government, a town with a population of three thousand was able to cultivate a significantly large section of land.

“They have equipment. They spray with airplanes. The government helps them cultivate the land and they experience more return,” he explains.^{xxxiv} This contrasts with Oxkutzcab where he said they spray with a little hand-held motor. With respect to the plague problem that contaminates trees he said, “If my neighbor fumigates and I don’t, the trees get contaminated by the plague and sometimes become resistant to the chemicals.”^{xxxv} He acknowledges there are trade offs. Too much pesticides has other affects on trees. He refers to Canadian and German buyers who scrutinize items for their organic integrity. Gongora says they pay well for organic produce, but they test for chemicals. “It doesn’t matter if your oranges are well presented. If you used pesticides, organic buyers will not purchase them. Neighbors that spray next to organically grown parcels is a problem,” he points out.^{xxxvi} That example led him back to the bigger issue of farmers not being collective or organized about how they execute agricultural processes. Again, he pointed out similar issues raised by Perasa such as farmers in Oxkutzcab needing to agree on prices as a collective and be supported by the municipality. He concluded by saying that some farmers are supplemented by remittance dollars and that helps them resolve the inadequacies of the market. But otherwise, he noted, people are leaving the farms behind and migrating or they are resorting to driving tricycle taxis.

INDEMAYA AND 3X1

Social ties work hand in glove with migrant agendas. Migrant agendas can be defined as the goals that migrants set out to accomplish either individually or for their family. Migrant agendas are also juxtaposed with the agendas of the state. As migrants increase their numbers abroad and send a significant amount of remittance dollars, the state incorporates migrant communities abroad into its extended territory. For migrants from Yucatan, the agendas of the

state have been institutionalized in a program that INDEMAYA promotes named *3X1*, and pronounced “three for one” in English. INDEMAYA is a state-run program of migrant affairs with offices in towns across the state including the town of Oxkutzcab. The idea is that for every one dollar that migrants raise the government will invest three (one each from the federal, state and municipal levels). While abroad, migrants from Oxkutzcab have been approached by the state’s governor to participate in the program in an effort to construct public works projects back home. It sounds like a patriotic cause that migrants abroad will contribute their hard earned dollars especially in light of already sending an excess of one million dollars in remittances per month to Oxkutzcab, not to mention the general mistrust of government that underlies the very reason that many migrants leave Oxkutzcab in the first place.

MIGRANT AGENDAS VS. STATE AGENDAS

In a two-bedroom apartment in the Mission District of San Francisco, Chepis, Berta, and a few other young migrants from Oxkutzcab were discussing the *3X1* program. One of the migrants, Lenin, made the announcement that Maria Pech Tzul of INDEMAYA in Oxkutzcab called him personally and told him he was appointed the representative of INDEMAYA in San Francisco and was now in charge of collecting money for the *3X1* program. He was told the program was collecting money for a seven-story hospital to be constructed in Oxkutzcab. He pitched the idea to Berta and Chepis in hope that they would share his enthusiasm, but Berta had previous negative interactions with INDEMAYA in Oxkutzcab particularly when he tried to set up his pharmacy. He had asked INDEMAYA to help him, but they did nothing for him. Berta admonished Lenin to be careful of accepting the position or promoting such a collection. He explained, “You will end up burning your reputation collecting money for a project that may

never get done. Then people will look for you to get their money back.”^{xxxvii} He went on to argue with Lenin about how as students and residents in Oxnard the government did nothing to help them and as a result they are in San Francisco trying to help their families economically. “Why are they now paying attention to us? Because they want our money, ” exclaimed Berta.^{xxxviii}

Lenin began to see Berta’s point. He reiterated that the reason they were all living in a cramped apartment is not because they liked to do so, but because they were trying to save up money to help their families. He referred specifically to individual agendas and to family responsibilities. Lenin has a wife and two kids in Oxnard. Berta also has a wife and kids. He concluded that, “The state needs to figure out how to do their job with the money we circulate via remittances”.

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The interaction between Berta and Lenin is a discussion that highlights the clash between state agendas and migrant agendas. It also highlights the general mistrust that these particular migrants have of government programs aimed at servicing migrants abroad. Lenin on the one hand would like to have faith in the 3X1 program, but Berta reminds Lenin that if he did not trust them in Oxnard, he should not trust them in San Francisco. In addition, Berta drove the point by highlighting the successes they both have made in raising their families from adverse poverty to building modern homes and paying their family members hospital bills. Berta later made the observation that the programs should focus some attention to the less successful segment of migrants from Oxnard.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL MIGRANTS

This study has looked at the experience of successful migrants who have risked their lives to construct a house and establish businesses in Oxnard. It has not focused great attention on the unsuccessful migrants. Success can be defined in many ways, however, unsuccessful migrants can be understood as those who end up in jail, addicted to drugs, alcohol, dead, or in less severe cases return to Oxnard empty handed. By empty handed I mean with no money, no investment established, no property purchases, or no remittance money on record. Some immigrants first experienced drugs and alcohol addiction in Oxnard, and after migrating to San Francisco their addiction gets exacerbated by factors such as: the lack of social pressure, community structure to stay sober, the ability to make a higher wage which enables them to purchase more and expensive drugs, loneliness, and peer pressure. As one contact explained, alcoholism is directly related to other problems that arise when someone is drunk such as unsafe sexual activity, domestic violence and drug overdose. In 2004, for example, there were 17 deaths in San Francisco of people from Oxnard according to INDEMAYA.^{x1} In January 2005 alone, there were five deaths in San Francisco: 4 murdered, 2 drug-related, 1 assault and the victim's ages averaged from 18-25 yrs old according to INDEMAYA.

There are other health concerns associated with living in cramped apartment spaces and sharing a sexual servant without protection. HIV/AIDS and STDs are a major concern and needs to be studied further because there is a social stigma among Yucatecos in San Francisco and Oxnard related to sexually transmitted conditions. Subjects we interviewed knew men who tested positive, but they would not agree to be interviewed. Cesar Monroy from Grupo Luna Sol in the Mission Neighborhood Health Center, a program that outreaches to gay, transsexual and

HIV positive Latinos, informed me that he knew several Yucatecos that were HIV positive. He predicts the stigma is so great that no one would be willing to talk out of fear of community denigration. In Oxkutzcab, in February 2005, doctor Valentine Castro of Instituto Medico de Seguro Social (IMSS), a state operated general hospital, pointed out there were eight cases of HIV: four cases in Oxkutzcab and four cases in nearby Hunto Chak (two cases were women). The first case was identified in 1998. Since then Dr. Castro has worked in *Vigilancia Preventiva*, which administers HIV tests and promotes HIV/AIDS prevention education to the nearby schools. In San Francisco, the rate of sexually transmitted diseases among migrants from Oxkutzcab is difficult to estimate because agencies do not carry data on specific immigrant groups.

The question of exactly how many migrants from Oxkutzcab have HIV/AIDS in San Francisco is a difficult one. Of the people interviewed in San Francisco, four mentioned specific people (without names) who were HIV positive. One example was a man who migrated to San Francisco, became HIV positive, and returned to Oxkutzcab where he infected his wife. The lack of services and the social shame forced them to migrate back to San Francisco to seek treatment in Clinica Esperanza, in the Mission Neighborhood Health Center. They have lived two years under treatment in San Francisco. In addition I learned about migrants from nearby, marginal communities in Oxkutzcab that primarily speak Maya and have never heard of HIV/AIDS or received information about preventing sexual transmitted conditions. Therefore in addition to the challenging economic and social conditions connected to migration to San Francisco, there are also health risks that include alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, and sexually transmitted conditions. These factors contribute to many unsuccessful migration experiences.

CONCLUSION

Yucatan has been among the states in Mexico that typically has not sent migrants to the U.S. in vast numbers, but in the last 15 years residents from a town called Oxkutzcab have opted to migrate because of historical, structural conditions that have challenged their economic survival and mobility. The young migrant men I used in this study have shown that social ties have influenced their decisions to migrate and their ability to achieve respective economic goals especially taking into account the role of return or cyclical migration. Although international migration has been a relatively recent phenomenon as noted earlier, migration within the state of Yucatan has had historical precedents. Before making the leap, a person negotiates the risks associated with the journey and the crossing and decides if the risks are worth the cost-benefit (Massey, Durand and Malone 2005). To the extent that friends or relatives have experienced the process and they can be relied upon to find a job and a place to live then a prospective migrant is more likely to affirm the migration decision as evidenced by the story of Angel.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further ethnographic research is needed on the topic of Maya migration to San Francisco. Particularly as related to health, additional research could figure out how many cases of HIV positive Yucatecos there are in San Francisco. In order to reach this population native speakers will be needed to promote intervention strategies and provide educational outreach specific to indigenous immigrant groups like those who speak Maya Yucatec. Similarly there is virtually no information about the health of women from Yucatan, or about those who remain behind and who experience problems related to the disintegration of families associated with migration. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in Oxkutzcab there is an increase in domestic violence and

mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. This is also true among migrants in San Francisco. Exploratory research would help identify gender-specific issues and the need for intervention and educational outreach for this population as well. Future research focused on health issues would compliment this study.

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Endnotes

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- ⁱ “Mas y mas chavos estan migrando de las comisarias y ellos hablan sólo Maya.” February 10, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan. Juan shared this story in Oxxkutzcab.
- ⁱⁱ “Pensé un día si tengo niños, quisiera enseñarles Maya.” February 10, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Mayordomos detienen tu chequé si no te puedes defender.” February 10, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{iv} “Hay muchos chavos que han perdido sus metas o sus vidas por las drogas y el pisto.” February 10, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^v *Compadrazgo* is a standard Catholic concept of godparenthood where a man and a woman other than the natural parents are chosen to sponsor a child at baptism and take on the responsibility (along with the parents) of the child’s Christian education (Farris 1992:257),
- ^{vi} For more reading on the distinction of social classes among Mexicans see Bonfil Batalla’s, *México profundo: reclaiming a civilization* (1966:19-60).
- ^{vii} This project has gone through Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at UC Santa Cruz IRB and assigned the IRB #999.
- ^{viii} “Siempre hábido bandas y klikas en Oxxkutzcab. Mucha la traen de los estados unidos. Siempre hemos tenido drogas también. Drogas vienen de donde quiera aquí.” February 15, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{ix} *Sureño* literally translates as “southerner” and refers to a gang whose rival is a *norteño*, or northerner. Both gangs have direct ties to prison gangs.
- ^x “En el otro lado no me voy a juntar con sureños o estar con pandillas. Aya te matan por tener una camisa roja or por cualquier cosa.” February 15, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xi} “He trabajado desde que tenia doce anos. No he visto que suban los sueldos con lo demas. No es posible gana la vida y hacer una casa y tener una familia. Tengo que ir al norte porque necesito.” February 15, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xii} “Me fuí de Oxxkutzcab porque estaba deprimido vivir asi. necesitaba salir de esa situación y para mi, pagar un coyote y irme al norte se me hiso en ese tiempo como la major opción. Era aventurero y para mi irme al norte fue mi respuesta.” February 12, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xiii} “Llegan otros con vehiculos y ya quieren tener su carro pero no hay dinero aqui.” February 12, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xiv} “En ese tiempo de quitabas de Oxxkutzcab a las 4 de la mañana y cruzabas Tijuana y de San Diego tomabas un vuelo directo a San Francisco y llegabas a las 9 esa noche.” May 10, 2005, San Francisco, California.
- ^{xv} “Tenia dias cuando no dormia porque con tanta gente en un techo siempre había movimiento. Habia alguien siempre tomando en su dia libre.” February 12, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xvi} “Empesabamos tomando antes de cerrar y cuando llegabamos a la casa seguiamos tomando con los compañeros.”
- ^{xvii} “Las redadas vinieron tres veces. Una vez el Farfán se subio al techo para escapar. Se cayo al suelo tratando de escapar la migra. Yo me libre porque me puse una mochila. Cuando los vi bajando los escalones pensaron que era un estudiante.” February 12, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.
- ^{xviii} “Lavaplatos es lo peor porque aparte de la chinga del trabajo, los mayordomos embeces no te pagan y saben que no puedes defenderte.” February 12, 2005, Oxxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xix} “El dueño de Café Centro en San Francisco ha venido a Oxkutzcab. Le enseñamos nuestro pueblo y estuvo una semana. El quiso visitar nuestro medio y conocer la cultura.” February 12, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xx} “Escojí el nombre porque era ahí donde aprendí de nuestra condición en Oxkutzcab. Quise ofrecer algo diferente en nuestro medio para los jóvenes que piensan migrar. Yo le doy empleo a 5 jóvenes de aquí.” February 12, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxi} “Que loco verdad, un Yucateco cocinando comida China?” February 12, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxii} “Desafortunadamente en Oxkutzcab la gente generaliza a todos.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxiii} “Antes se distinguían las clases sociales. Cuando mi grupo se juntaba en el atrio de la iglesia se veían los hijos de papi, de maestros, ingenieros y básicamente los niños ricos que manejan sus carros del año que les compro su papa. Nosotros también tenemos carros pero lo ganamos con nuestro esfuerzo.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxiv} “Lo que querían era que les de mordidas. Hasta los permisos necesarios me los subieron. Me sentí discriminado por ser migrante.”

^{xxv} “Lo que pasa es que al campesino le regatean el precio a su producto. Tienen más educación y trocas. Ellos saben que la gente no está organizada y consiguen precios bajos haciéndolos competir uno al otro.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxvi} “Si un campesino tiene hijos entonces pagar su educación es imposible. Después de pagar por producir su cosecha no es redituable. No es posible tener un ahorro, mucho menos dinero para el colegio. El hijo decide migrar.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxvii} “Cualquiera que ves manejando un triciclo antes era un campesino. Porque solo los que son tercios son campesinos.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxviii} “Espera aquí un ratito. Luego viene mi amigo José que es campesino. El no ha migrado” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxix} “He estado estable. Gracias a la estucia de mi padre no he tenido que migrar.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxx} “Tendemos a quedarnos con el limón y varios aguacates que son redituables.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxi} “Sobre todo, la falta de estabilidad en la venta de fruta. Por ejemplo, si yo cosecho 50 cajas de naranjas y tienen un precio de ocho pesos por caja, yo hago tres pesos por caja en ganancia después de calcular el costo de producirlas.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxii} “Nosotros traemos vegetales como calabaza y somos tercios para producir productos durante el invierno cuando normalmente no se ofrecen. De esa manera pedimos 120 o 130 pesos por caja en la calabaza.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxiii} “Que ayuda es esa? Así como el gobierno cobra taxes deberían por lo menos resolver cinco por ciento de lo que producimos en la tierra.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxiv} “Tienen equipo. Fumigan con avioneta. El gobierno les ayuda cultivar la tierra y tienen mejor resultado.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxv} “Si mi vecino fumiga y yo no, los árboles se contaminan con la plaga y embece resisten las químicas.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxvi} “No importa si tus naranjas están bien presentadas. Si usas pesticidas, los compradores de productos orgánicos no van a comprar. Los vecinos que fumigan al lado de los orgánicos es un problema.” February 15, 2005, Oxkutzcab, Yucatan.

^{xxxvii} “Vas a quemar tu reputacion colectando dinero para proyectos que no hacen nada. La gente te va buscar a ti para que les des su dinero.” March 12, 2005, San Francisco, California.

^{xxxviii} “Porque ahora nos estan poniendo atencion? Porque quieren nuestro dinero.” March 12, 2005, San Francisco, California.

^{xxxix} “El estado necesita averiguar su trabajo con las remesas que mandamus.”

^{xl} In an interview I conducted with Maria Pech Dzul of INDEMAYA in Oxkutzcab, February, 2005.