

# **Coping with the Economic Crisis: Migration and Settlement Decisions of Yucatecan Migrants to the United States**

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The current economic crisis, coupled with a buildup in border security have sparked intense debate in the media and academic circles about their effects on the migration and settlement decisions of Mexican migrants to the United States (O'Boyle 2008, Preston 2009, Roig-Franzia 2008, Spagat 2008). This current discussion is reflective of a long-running debate about how to control "unwanted" immigration to the United States. Government bodies such as the Department of Homeland Security and conservative think tanks are quick to conclude that the best way to control immigration is through tougher enforcement policies. Others contend that as long as there is an economic demand for migrant labor, immigrants will always find ways to enter the country (Massey 1993). From both these perspectives, in the context of the current crisis and security buildup, migration from Mexico to the United States should be declining dramatically, and migrants currently living in the U.S. without legal status should be departing the country for fear of apprehension and loss of economic livelihood. While there is evidence that the flow of new migration to the U.S. has slowed, there is little evidence that Mexican migrants already residing in the U.S. are returning to their hometowns (Passel et. al. 2009; Fix et. al. 2009).

This current state of affairs has provided a unique opportunity to study the complexities of migration and settlement decisions among Mexican migrants to the United States. If despite high unemployment migrants are not returning to Mexico, what are they doing to cope with the economic crisis, and what are their families in Mexico doing to cope with a drop in remittances?

Through field research in Tunkás, Yucatán and in the Tunkaseño community in Inglewood and Anaheim, California I have found that the way individuals cope with the economic crisis depends on a number of factors including their location, the location of family members, age, sex, and personal and emotional concerns.

### **A Note about the Tunkás and Research Design**

Tunkás is a small pueblo of about 2,600 residents located in the middle of Yucatán state. The majority of the town's residents are bilingual Yucatec Maya and Spanish speakers. The local economy is traditionally based on the cultivation of corn and other small food crops for subsistence. Farming is not mechanized, and crops are not mechanized, making the harvest vulnerable to fluctuating environmental conditions such as drought. Many residents engage in the production of honey, selling their product for a profit through the town's cooperative (Cornelius, et. al. 2007). There is a very small labor market in small local businesses, though increasingly, Tunkaseños rely on either international or domestic migration for economic support.

Today Tunkaseños are spread across the United States and the Yucatán Peninsula, and the remittance money sent home by its migrants is an important part of the town's economy. The first international migrant left Tunkás in 1960 as a participant in the U.S. government's contract labor program known as the Bracero Program. Over the years the migrant network in the United States has grown. Today there is an established community of Tunkaseños living in Inglewood and Anaheim, California, and a newer, expanding community residing in Minnesota.

The largest Tunkaseño migrant community resides in various destinations across the Yucatán Peninsula, including Mérida, and major tourist centers in the state of Quintana Roo such

as Cancún, Playa del Carmen, and the Mayan Riviera. In the 1970s and 80s the Mexican government began developing the Yucatán Peninsula as a major tourist destination. Tunkaseños were among the first to engage in wage labor supporting its development. Many worked to clear ancient Mayan ruins such as Chichen Itza, others worked building the first resort hotels in Cancún. Today young Tunkaseños largely expect to migrate to Quintana Roo, Mérida, or the United States (Silva, et. al. 2009).

I chose to conduct research in Tunkás in large part because of prior experience in the town and with the Tunkaseño community in Southern California as a participant in the Mexican Migration Field Research Program (MMFRP) at UC San Diego. Initial research with MMFRP in Tunkás was conducted in February 2009. Research in California lasted from February until May 2009, with day trips to Inglewood and Anaheim. I returned to Tunkás to conduct research for my M.A. thesis in July 2009, and I remained there through the end of August. Research with the migrant community in California begun upon my return in September and continues to this day.

The two parts of my research project in Tunkás represent two different methodological approaches. The research design of the MMFRP study was based on both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The group's nearly 30 student participants traveled to Tunkás for two weeks during the town's annual fiesta and collected survey data based on a snowball sample. Over the course of these two weeks participants spent the day in Tunkás gathering conducting surveys and returned to a hotel in neighboring Izamal each night. Upon return to California, the group worked to collect a snowball sample of survey data during day trips Anaheim and Inglewood. Life history interviews were gathered periodically throughout the project. The research compiled in this paper draws from quantitative and qualitative data gathered as a participant in MMFRP.

Independent research conducted during summer and fall 2009 has been entirely ethnographic. Upon arrival in Tunkás I made contact with individuals with whom I had met during my first trip in February. I stayed with Estafani Lopez, a retired housekeeper from Orange County, California, and a permanent resident of the United States. Over the course of the next two months I conducted over 30 interviews with migrants and non-migrants, and established relationships with individuals across town. Research in Anaheim and Inglewood has been, and continues to be carried out during day trips to spend time with individuals and to participate in community events. This leg of research was, and continues to be entirely qualitative, based on participant observation, field notes, and life history interviews.

### **A Brief History of the Economic Crisis**

In December 2007, the National Bureau of Economic Research declared the economy of the United States to officially be in a state of recession. While the plunge of the U.S. economy has been central to the current crisis, it has not been bound to the United States. With an economy inextricably linked to the United States through trade, tourism, and remittances from migrants living in the U.S., Mexico has been among the countries most affected. Tunkaseños in Tunkás, the United States, and destination cities throughout the Yucatán Peninsula have felt the effects of this global crisis. Nearly all members of the community been forced to adjust their lives in order to cope with the negative economic climate.

In the United States, Latino workers have been among those hardest hit by the downturn in the economy (Camarota & Jensenius 2009; Lopez, et. al. 2009; Kochhar 2008; 2009; Fix et. al. 2009). Between July 2007 and July 2009, the unemployment rate for Mexican and Central American workers rose from 4.7 percent to 11.1 percent, a rate significantly higher than any

other sector of the population (Fix, et. al 2009). One of the primary reasons for this is the high concentration of native and foreign-born Latinos in construction, one of the industries most affected by the crisis. The Pew Hispanic Center reported that in 2006 two in every three new construction jobs went to a Latino worker (Pew Hispanic Center 2007). In 2007, the construction sector accounted for 54.2% of the total jobs lost by Latinos (Kochhar 2008). Fix, et. al. hypothesizes that immigrants are among those most affected because of their frequently poor labor skills, concentration in boom-bust sectors of the economy, and especially in the case of unauthorized migrants, because of the precarious nature of their work contracts (Fix, et. al. 2009).

Available data suggests that one of the major effects of high unemployment has been a significant drop in the amount of money remitted by U.S.-based migrants to Mexico. From 2007-2008 Mexico saw a 4 percent drop in the total volume of remittances. From 2008-2009 the number increased dramatically to a 12 percent drop in the total volume of remittances (Fix, et. al. 2009). This is hugely significant for many Mexican people who rely on this money for economic survival. It has further had a significant impact on the Mexican economy as a whole, as remittances sent from Mexicans living abroad represent the second largest source of revenue for the Mexican economy (Banco de Mexico). Many small towns such as Tunkás rely on remitted money to fuel the local economy. Families use the money sent by relatives to purchase goods from local businesses, thus investing in the local economy. The result has been that even those without family in the U.S. have been affected, especially owners of small business. Some of the negative effects of the drop in remittances have been offset by the devaluation of the peso against the dollar, allowing fewer dollars to go farther in Mexico, though while the increased value of the dollar may have offset the effects of the crisis, it cannot compensate for a drop in the

frequency of remittances received or rising food costs throughout the country (Aguilar, et. al. 2009).

The Yucatán Peninsula has been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. Home to some of the biggest tourist destinations in Mexico, including Cancún, Playa del Carmen, and the Mayan Riviera, the Peninsula's economy, especially the state of Quintana Roo was dealt a serious major blow following the downturn in the U.S. economy. Tough economic times for Americans meant fewer tourists, whose travel dollars forms the backbone of this region's economy. To add insult to injury, the region's economy took a nosedive in May 2009 after fears of the H1N1 swine flu brought tourism to a standstill. Major resort hotels closed, laying off huge numbers of employees. As a result, the effects of "la influenza" quickly spread throughout the Peninsula, as many pueblos such as Tunkás rely heavily on remittances from family members in these cities.

### **Social and Historical Factors of Migrant Settlement in the United States**

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

Historically, Mexican migrants have worked primarily in the agricultural sector. In part, this has been a byproduct of the Bracero Program in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s to bring contracted migrant labor from Mexico to work harvesting crops in the American Southwest (Cornelius 1992). Migrants provided an ideal source of labor for the industry because of its seasonal need for labor. A large workforce is required at certain times of year according to the harvest season.

Having little connection to a specific location in the receiving country, migrants are a mobile population, and thus are able to travel according to the harvesting season. When there is no work available, migrants are able to return to their hometowns until their labor is required for the next harvest season (Massey 1993, 1999).

Over the years, many migrants have transitioned to other, less mobile sectors of the economy such as the service industry. Most migrants have a strong desire to move out of the low-paying, physically strenuous conditions of work in the agricultural sector (Cornelius 1993). Employers in the service industry require migrants to be present year-round. Vacation time must be negotiated with the employer, may not be significant (from a few weeks to a month), and may not be paid. Whereas in the past migrants might stay at camps near the fields they were harvesting, migrants in year-round employment must rent or purchase a home in the United States. Limited vacation time prevents them from traveling back to their hometowns for significant periods of time. With fewer trips to their hometowns, and a greater investment of time and money in their lives in the United States, this shift from seasonal to year round employment has caused many migrants to shift their lives and their focus to the U.S. side of the border.

This shift was exacerbated by the 1981-82 economic crisis in Mexico. The massive reduction in real wages in Mexico by 40 to 50 percent further expanded the migratory base of Mexicans in the United States beyond families and communities with a long history of migration. With few options for economic survival, a larger population without migration experience began migrating to support themselves and their families (Cornelius 1992). With little to return to, and little to invest in, migrants already living in the U.S. were discouraged from keeping an economic foothold in Mexico (Cornelius, et. al. 2008).

The passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986 further crystallized Mexican settlement in the United States. By granting legal status to millions of formerly undocumented migrants, IRCA had the effect of rooting and consolidating migrant networks on the U.S. side of the border (Cornelius 1992, Cornelius 2001, Cornelius, et. al. 2008). Prior to IRCA, the lives of undocumented migrants in the United States were uncertain. Then (as with undocumented migrants now), these individuals lived with the constant fear of apprehension and deportation. IRCA allowed previously unauthorized migrants to put down meaningful roots and enabled these individuals to become fully engaged members of American society. With legal status, millions of solitary male migrants were able to apply for the legal migration of their families join them in the United States. As a result, families who were formerly split along both sides of the border were able to reunite permanently in the United States.

The implementation of border enforcement operations in the 1990s designed to keep migrants from entering the United States had the effect of “bottling up” migrants on the U.S. side of the border (Cornelius 2001). Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, and Operation Safeguard in Nogales intensified border security in traditionally high-traffic border-crossing areas. Fences were erected, and manpower was dramatically increased. These operations were successful in deterring migrants from attempting to cross in these locations, however, they failed to cease unauthorized migration across the border. Migrants wishing to cross were funneled into the mountains along the southern border of California, and the deserts of southern Arizona and Texas. Parallel to the buildup in border security was the growth of the people smuggling industry. The increased risk associated with crossing necessitated the aid of knowledgeable guides in crossing the border, a journey that involves three



days walking through the desert and/or mountains of the Southwest. Whereas in the 1980's the average price for hiring a people smuggler (also known as a *coyote* or *pollero*) was a few hundred dollars, today the average price is \$2,858 (Cornelius, et. al. 2009). The increased cost and risk has caused many unauthorized migrants to remain in the United States for longer periods of time (Cornelius 1992; Cornelius 2001).

The establishment of migrant communities in the United States, and increased border enforcement are two major factors determining the effect of the economic crisis on the migration and settlement decisions of Mexican migrants. The question of whether or not Mexican migrants will return “home” is complicated by the fact that for many the United States *is* home.

### **The Tunkaseño Experience of the Crisis**

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

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

Given their concentration in Southern California, one of the areas hardest hit by the economic crisis, Tunkaseños living in the United States have been among those worst affected. Research from the Mexican Migration Field Research Program found that 52.8 percent of

Tunkaseño migrants in Anaheim and Inglewood reported working fewer hours in 2009 than they had a year prior (Aguilar, et. al. 2009). Many have been laid off; others have had their working hours significantly reduced. Faced with economic hardship, many have sought out second jobs or have been forced to settle for jobs where they are required to work more for less pay. Families and single migrants are combining meals, eating out less, and cutting back on expenses where they can (Aguilar et. al. 2009). In fact, because of the strength of community networks, migrants are particularly well suited to cope with economic hardship. Pablo, a single male migrant living in Inglewood shares a one-bedroom apartment with 5 other migrants from various parts of Mexico. Three men sleep in the bedroom, the other three sleep in the living room. They combine all their meals. For individuals with the day off of work, it is their responsibility to cook for the group. In this way, under normal economic circumstances they are able to cut back on their expenses and maximize the money they send home to their families in Mexico. With their hours cut back and with less money coming in, they are able to sustain their lives in the U.S. because their basic living expenses are so low.

U.S.-based migrants have been less inclined to return to Mexico because the cost and risk of migrating is extremely high, and all believe that the economy will eventually improve. Returning to Mexico would actually be more expensive since it would mean abandoning their investment in their established life in the United States. Migrants and non-migrants are quick to relay that the cost of migrating to the U.S. across land is roughly \$3000, while crossing through a legal port of entry (POE) clandestinely or with false documents is about \$6000<sup>1</sup>. Potential

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<sup>1</sup> Most male migrants prefer to cross over land as the expense is much less than crossing through a POE. However, the likelihood of apprehension through a POE is significantly less and is usually far safer. For this reason most female migrants cross through a POE using fake or borrowed documents. Recently though, a male Tunkaseño migrant died attempting to cross the border clandestinely in an empty chemical tanker. He had been in the United States since he was a small boy and did not have any family left in Tunkás. Since he was legally deported, and

migrants rely on social networks to find a friend or family member willing to sponsor their trip. For the sponsor this means paying the smuggling fee, providing the new migrant with a place to stay upon arrival, giving him cloths to wear, helping him to find a job, and feeding him until he is able to bring in his own income. The amount of money to be repaid is higher because of these additional expenses, and frequently takes a year to fully repay their debt. Until this time, all the money they earn goes to repaying their sponsor, delaying their ability to save and send money home.

Another side of the investment in migration is the unprecedented physical strain involved in the journey. The crossing is challenging for migrants of all ages. Most men cross by land, a journey that entails 3 days walking through the mountains and/or desert with little rest. For older migrants, they know that their bodies will not be able to make the passage again. Juan, a Tunkaseño living in Inglewood recalled that when he finally made it across his legs were swollen to twice their normal size. The journey was the hardest thing he had ever done in his life, and he feels very lucky to crossed without getting caught once by U.S. Border Patrol (a circumstance that would have extended the length of time it took him to cross, though would not have likely prevented his eventual passage). After his brother-in-law paid his coyote fee and claimed him from the hands of his smugglers, he was so disoriented he did not know whether to eat or sleep. He returned to his brother-in-law's house where he slept for 2 days straight. After 5 years he recalled this grueling experience as though it happened yesterday, though with the benefit of retrospect, he did so with a smile on his face. Juan left Tunkás when his wife was 2 months pregnant. Today his daughter is 5 years old and he has never met her. His wall is covered with

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reentry following deportation carries with it a prison sentence of 10 years, he opted to cross through a POE. Upon arrival though he had suffered from hours of exposure to deadly fumes remaining in the tanker. Following payment of his *coyote*, he was taken, barely breathing to a local hospital. Within a few hours he was pronounced dead.

photos of her, and he speaks to his wife nearly everyday. He is bored with life in the United States and misses his family in Mexico, though at 50-years-old he knows that he will never return to the U.S. and is therefore reluctant to abandon the life he has built in Southern California. The car wash he works for will be closing at the end of December 2009 because it is no longer profitable for the owner. Juan and his family in Tunkás have been planning for his return, but as I sat with him in October discussing his plans, he looked up at the calendar above his bed with mixed anticipation and dread. As he slowly shook his head he mumbled, “Wow, only 2 months away”.

In July and August 2009 I met three migrants who had recently returned from the U.S. as the direct result of the economic crisis. Because my research was qualitative, and therefore lacking a detailed census of each community member’s migration history, I am unable to say if these three were the only migrants to return in 2009. I had multiple conversations with each of these individuals and so I can confidently say that their return was prompted by their personal experience of the economic crisis. I cannot say however whether the amount of individuals returning to Tunkás in 2009 was any greater than the normal flow of returning migrants for a given year. While I can confidently say that these individuals returned as the direct result of the crisis, there are other contributing factors to their decision that ultimately prompted their return, namely family. Each one is a single male migrant with family remaining in Tunkás

Jesús was working in construction in Inglewood, California until the economic crisis took its toll on the construction industry and ultimately eliminated his job. He has worked in the U.S. for the past 10 years, traveling back and forth periodically to spend time with his wife and two kids who remain in Tunkás. Jesús has worked hard to obtain a good salary in the construction industry, work which pays considerably more than other sectors such as service. When I asked

him why he returned to Tunkás instead of staying in the U.S. his first response was because of his family. It had been a few years since he had last seen them and losing his job seemed to be a good reason to return. He acknowledged that he could have sought out other employment in a restaurant or a car wash, but he was used to making considerably more money and he likes construction work. The combination of circumstances: having family in Tunkás, and losing his job ultimately prompted his return. Jesús is also young and plans to return to Inglewood when the economy improves. He is a valued employee, and his boss has offered to pay his smuggling fee when he returns.

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

The effect of the global economic crisis and the localized crisis caused by the outbreak of H1N1 has had a palpable effect on Tunkaseño migrants living in tourist destinations in Quintana Roo. While I did not set out to study the plight of domestic migrants in the context of the crisis, within a few weeks of my arrival in July it became evident that what was happening in Quintana Roo had important implications for the greater Tunkaseño community. Because my fieldwork was concentrated in Tunkás proper, I was unable to speak with migrants living in Quintana Roo. I was however able to speak with returning migrants and their family members. Whereas “la crisis” had been the primary topic of conversation during my first trip in February, by the time I returned in July “la influenza” had replaced it as the major concern of Tunkaseños. Much like U.S.-based migrants, domestic migrants in Quintana Roo have been laid off or have had their hours dramatically cut back. Also like U.S.-based migrants, QR-based migrants have also been forced to cut back on the amount of money they send home. Unlike U.S. migrants though, the restrictions on their movement are much different. While life in a city like Cancún is a significant monetary investment, there is no similar cost and risk of initial migration. Movement

back and forth is regulated by the amount of money an individual or family has to spend, and by time off, not by government policy. While monetary restrictions like rent and employment, and familial obligations like children in school restrict movement back and forth from Cancún and the Mayan Riviera, they do not prevent it. Domestic migrants it seemed were either cutting back on the number of trips they made home to Tunkás, or returning to Tunkás altogether to wait out the crisis. Because of the lack of an expensive and arduous passage, returning to Tunkás where housing is free, and one can rely on their family for food and support makes economic sense.

### *The Effect of the Crisis on Tunkaseños in Tunkás*

Tunkás has suffered both independently and as a consequence of the impact of the global economic crisis on Tunkaseño migrant communities in the United States and Quintana Roo. In winter 2009, the town was experiencing a localized crisis of its own. Drought had caused the decimation of the corn harvest and abnormal fluctuations in temperature caused a poor honey harvest (Cornelius et. al 2009). Poor economic conditions in the U.S. and Quintana Roo meant that family members in these locations sent less money, less frequently to family in Tunkás. At the time of field research in February 2009, 37 percent of Tunkaseños interviewed reported receiving fewer remittances than they had a year prior. While I do not have quantitative data for July and August 2009, based on interviews and time spent in the community, it is clear that Tunkaseños were experiencing a further reduction in remittances from family living in Quintana Roo following the outbreak of H1N1 in April and May 2009. This reduction in income forced Tunkaseños to adjust their budgets, causing them to spend less money in town and thus negatively affecting local businesses.

Plans for new migration to the United States were significantly down as the result of the economic crisis, though not eliminated. With no great job prospects in Southern California, and with U.S.-based migrants unable to provide monetary sponsorship, potential migrants were instead choosing remaining in Tunkás. Though I did two 18-year-old boys who had attempted to migrate to Minnesota in May, one of whom was planning to try again with his brother after the town fiesta in February. Carlos, his friend with whom he had attempted to cross in May told me that Minnesota has not been as affected by the crisis, and that there is plenty of work in Chinese restaurants there. In fact, in his case, as in the cases of all Minnesota migrants I spoke to, the owners of the restaurants ask their employees to recruit friends and family from their hometowns in Mexico. The employer then sponsors the new migrants, even setting them up in a shared house, paying all their bills, even their groceries. One migrant estimated that their net pay after 2 weeks was just \$350. Significantly, most of Carlos' aunts and uncles live in Anaheim. His father spent most of his adult life there, yet even with the strength of his network, Carlos decided to migrate to Minnesota. In May however he was unsuccessful. After 3 attempts he and his friend decided instead to turn back to Tunkás rather than risking his life once again.

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

### **Conclusion**

The way Tunkaseños across the community are coping with the economic crisis depends

on particular circumstances determined by location, age, sex, and the constraints of U.S. immigration policy. The decision to migrate and/or settle in a destination is driven by more than economics alone.

I found that while the crisis has caused many individuals to stay put, it has in fact lead to the migration of some single male migrants from Southern California, and many more domestic migrants from Quintana Roo. The individuals who did decide to return to Tunkás from the United States cited family as a major factor in their decision. In the case of Jesús, he could have very likely found employment outside of the construction sector, though he preferred to go home to be with his family instead of switching to work he did not enjoy for less pay. For migrants with families in the United States, this impetus for return is simply not there. All migrants, including those who remain and those who have returned all share the belief that the U.S. economy will improve. Whatever their location, assuming they are physically able, migrants are biding their time until they are able to find good paying full-time jobs once again.

Return migration from the suffering state of Quintana Roo is significant because these domestic migrants act as a sort of control for the impact of U.S. immigration policy on the decision to migrate. While economic and social investments in place (such as rent, children in school, etc.), it is clear that absent of a major impediment such as U.S. border enforcement return migration is more likely.

I also found that while plans for migration to the United States are few, they are not nonexistent. This appears to be a product of the way the migrant network and migration process differs for Tunkaseños in Southern California and Minnesota. Southern California has been among the regions worst affected by the economic crisis, while Minnesota has weathered the



storm comparatively well. Migrants to California are typically sponsored by friends or family members who must pay the smuggling fee and help the new migrant find a job upon arrival. With their own income suffering, and in light of poor job prospects even for those already there, the ability of U.S.-based migrants to sponsor new migrants is significantly diminished. This differs from Minnesota where a relatively good economy has sustained the need for low-skilled, low-paid labor, something that even in the context of the current crisis appears to be in short supply. Employers eager for good employees pay the smuggling fee for new migrants and have a job lined up for them upon arrival. Without concrete data on the amount of money Minnesota employers pay migrants it is difficult to say for sure, though it seems on the surface that they are being paid less than minimum wage. While the employer pays their employees' rent (they all live in one house), bills, and groceries, \$350 every two weeks still seems like an unfair wage. It is possible that recruiting migrant labor is an adaptation to economic hard times since it appears that employers are able to pay unauthorized migrant laborers less than would be demanded by legal residents.

It is clear that the U.S. economic crisis has had a significant effect on the movement of migrants and potential migrants between destinations, though it has not eliminated movement. This study shows that there is more to the decision to migrate than economics alone, and thus a purely economic crisis is unlikely to be a vehicle capable of halting migration altogether. Individuals are motivated by personal and emotional factors (such a family) that are impossible to quantify. In terms of economics though, while the job market for low-skilled migrant labor has contracted, it has not disappeared. While their hours have been cut back, Tunkaseños in the United States remain employed, and while the economic strain of this crisis is substantial, it is also most likely temporary. As the U.S. economy grows once again the need for low-skilled

labor will no doubt expand as well, leading to renewed migration streams across the border.

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