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### Going to School, Going to the U.S.A.: Migration and Schooling in a Southern Mexican Migrant-Sending Community



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### Presentation Overview

1. Introductions
2. San Miguel Tlacotepec Presentation
3. Question and Answer Session



### Key Questions

- 1) What challenges do youth in rural Mexican migrant-sending communities face for staying in school and achieving at high levels (in Mexico)? What types of resources do they and their families sometimes have at their disposal for schooling?
- 2) How does documentation status effect the chances that Mexican youth migrants will continue their schooling and go on to finish high school upon migration to the United States?



### San Miguel Tlacotepec, Oaxaca





## San Miguel Tlacotepec, Oaxaca



## Economic Context



San Miguel has **very few employment opportunities**

- 62% of families work in **agriculture** and/or **tending to animals**
- 20% make **palm products**
- 13% work in some type of **business**



## Economic Context



**72%** of Tlacotepense migrants sent money to relatives in SMT during their most recent stay in the U.S.

**47%** of all adults in San Miguel Tlacotepec receive cash remittances from relatives in U.S.

### Used for

- Food and other household expenses (79%)
- Children's education (33%)
- Buying clothes (28%)
- Building/improving houses (18%)
- Medicines & medical care (11%)
- Paying debts (5%)



## A Mature Emigration Community



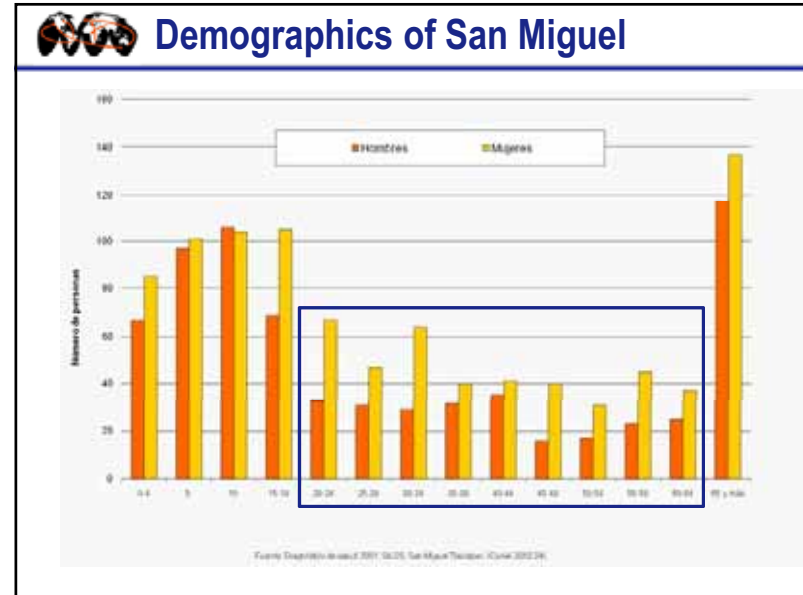
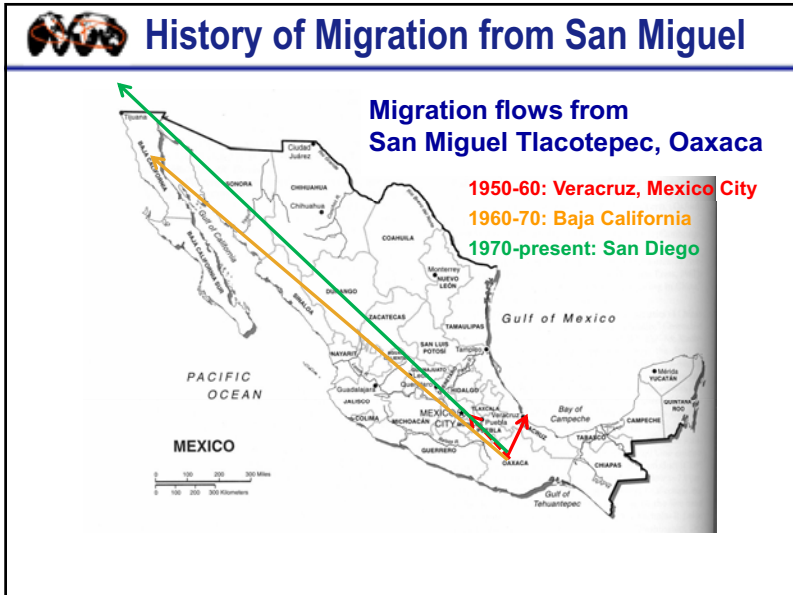
Whole families increasingly migrate together, **leaving houses in SMT vacant**

Houses found abandoned in December 2007: 217 out of 698 houses -- **31% of total housing stock**

**Lost 353 people** due to emigration, 1995-1999

**Lost 712 people** due to emigration, 2000-2004

**Remaining population** in 2005: 1,696



### Schooling Infrastructure

- ✓ 1 Pre-School
- ✓ 2 "Primarias" (1-6)
- ✓ 1 "Secundaria" (7-9)
- ✓ 1 "Preparatoria" (10-12)

*Centro de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos (CECYTE), San Miguel Tlacotepec, Oaxaca*



## San Miguel Educational Context

Selection of Educational Indicators, Population 15 years and Older (2005)

Indicator	Mexico	Federal District	Oaxaca	San Miguel Tlatotepec
Literacy Rate	90.5	97	80.6	68.2
% Without Instruction	8.4	3.0	6.4	13.1
% Incomplete Primary	14.3	6.5	20.6	57.04
Avg. Years of Schooling Attainment	8.1	10.5	6.4	6.7

Sources: INEGI, MMFRP 2007-2008 Survey



## Average Educational Attainment by Age and Gender in SMT

AGE	Female	Male	Total
15-19	9.7	9.6	9.65
20-29	8.2	9.2	8.6
30-39	5.3	7.6	6.0
40-49	4.3	6.3	5.0
50-59	2.8	4.3	3.3
60+	1.5	3.8	2.4



## Historical Perspective



*It was for our own good because our parents didn't have money to buy shoes and give us paper, to give us pencils, they didn't have money. That's why they said, "Go, hide, kids. Go hide." ... They shooed us away and we hid in the house, wherever there was space. We would hide wherever we could fit until my mom said "come out" because the men were gone.*

84 year-old resident describing her parents' attitude toward education



## Educational Aspirations Today

- 73% of SMT students aspire to finish at least high school
- 50% aspire to go to college
- 90% of SMT parents want their children to finish at least high school
- 70% of SMT parents want their children to go to college



## Educational Outcomes Today

- **65%** of Tlacotepenses 15 and older have completed lower secondary schooling. (**90% in U.S.**)
- **13%** of Tlacotepenses 18 and older have completed high school (**32% in U.S.**)
- **7%** of Tlacotepenses have completed some college (**10% in U.S.**)



## Cost of Education in SMT



Advertisement for Education Loan

**Education is a significant expense for many Tlacotepenses**

Average Educational Spending per Month: \$21 (**8% of average monthly income**)

U.S. Based Sample Spends **Only 2% of Average Monthly Income** on Education

33% of families use remittances to pay for educational expenses



## Research Questions



## Central Research Question

What is the impact of outmigration on the educational persistence and attainment of youth in San Miguel Tlacotepec?



## Previous Research

- Positive Effects: Hanson, 2002; Hanson and Woodruff, 2003
- Negative Effects: Kandell and Massey, 2002; MacKenzie and Rapoport, 2002; Miranda, 2007
- Mixed Effects: Kandell and Kao, 2001



## Conceptual Model



Remittances → Help families meet costs of schooling; decrease opportunity cost of forgone labor = Increase of educational attainment



“Culture of Migration” and Family Separation → Lures young people to the United States at the expense of pursuing more education. Psychological costs of separation are often high.



## Data Collection



821 closed-response surveys



49 open-ended qualitative interviews



## Data Analysis and Findings





## Findings

1. Being from a migrant-household is associated with lower levels of schooling attainment in Tlacotepec
2. Remittance income is associated with a higher likelihood of high school completion for youth with more educated mothers
3. Remittances income is related to higher educational aspirations for youth with less educated mothers
4. Separation is necessary for families to receive remittances but it comes at a high psychological price



## Double-Edged Sword

*The strengths of the community are that, fortunately, these kids have resources to be able to study. Most of their parents are in the north, in the United States, and they have the resources to study, that's one of the strengths. ... The weakness is that [the kids see] those in the north living better. The students don't want to try hard in their studies because at the end of the day, those who leave for the north can take care of themselves economically. Perhaps they don't improve themselves socially, but they do economically, and that is their goal: money.*

High school principal



## Double-Edged Sword

*He sends money, not that much, but he knows what the kids need for school. [Remittances] are the base, he supports us economically with money and I'm here with the kids, supporting them, talking with them so they get a good education. What I most want is for my kids to be educated.*

39 year-old mother of five

*I hope to go the United States. ... I don't want to stay because there aren't many jobs.*

11th grade student in San Miguel



## Messages from Parents



*[My father] asks me if I want to go work with him. I say no and he tells me to try hard in school so I don't end up working, so I can have a career, so I'm not working all day in the heat.*

4th grade student in San Miguel whose father is in the United States



## Culture of Migration

*Parents have the mentality in San Miguel that if their kid does badly in school, the solution is to go work in the United States. And because they have family members there, it makes it even easier.*

Middle school teacher

*In the end, that's the problem we have, the students don't care if they take advantage or don't take advantage of their education. Those who are tempted to go [to the U.S.], they just come to school and mess around. When the time comes, they leave. That's the reason they don't try in school.*

High school principal



## Sueño Americano



*The sueño americano is to go to the United States, work, and come back with money to build a house, a car, all that.*

15 year-old high school student

*Parents begin putting the idea of going to the United States into kids' minds from elementary, middle school. That makes them leave at the first opportunity. It's the sueño americano, the classic sueño americano.*

Middle school assistant principal



## Family Separation and Unification

*The cases we have in which parents are in the United States and the kids are here, many kids turn to alcohol because they don't have any direction, any authority. They don't know what to spend their money on other than alcohol. They're not interested in studying, they don't have anyone who asks how they're doing. Last semester we had a case of a kid who was a good student, but when his parents and brothers left, his grades went down. He started drinking and got into trouble.*

High school principal



## Family Separation and Unification

### Poem by 4th Grade Teacher in San Miguel

When will I see my father?  
I'm a child and I have questions  
I see my mom, alone everyday  
Will our family never be together?

Dad, I want you here with me.  
You send money  
to buy salt, tortillas and shelter.  
But it's you, it's you I want.



## Family Separation and Unification

Q: *Would you like to go to the United States?*  
 A: Yes.  
 Q: *Why?*  
 A: *Because I don't want to be alone.*

5th grade student in SMT  
 whose family is in the United States

## San Miguel del Norte: Vista

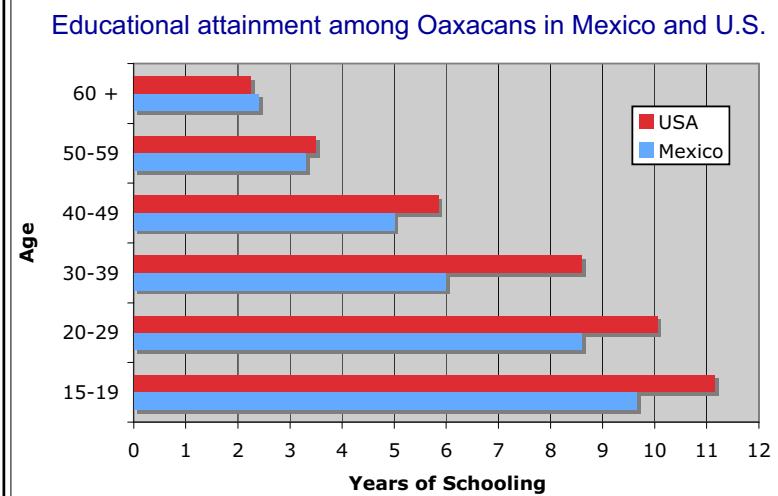


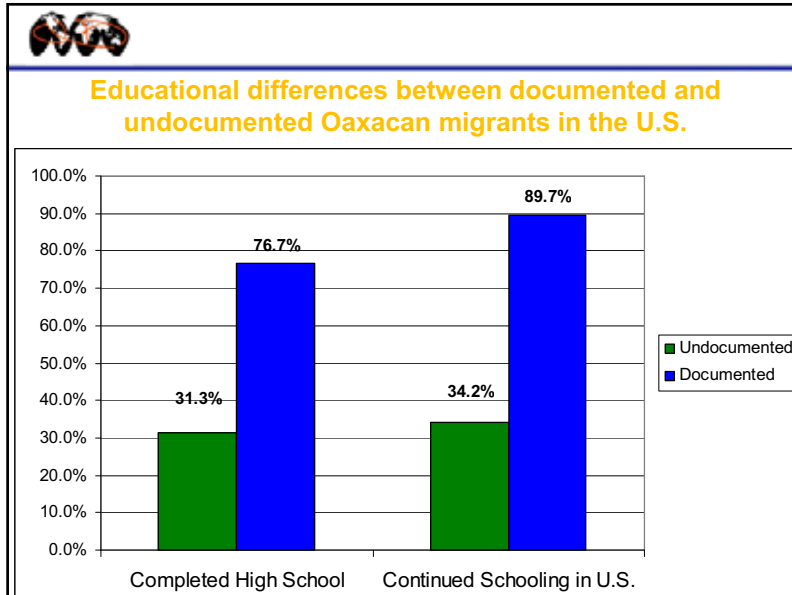
March 2008 Fund-raiser in Vista for annual fiesta of St. Michael the Archangel.  
 September 2007 fiesta in Vista attracted over 600 Tlaxotecapenses.

## Oaxacans in San Diego County



## Educational attainment among Oaxacans in Mexico and U.S.





### Possible Effects of Undocumented Status

- Economic Disincentive for Continued Investment in Schooling
- Fear Factor
- Focus on Migrant Labor Market
- Related to Greater Overall Family Economic and Social Vulnerability—Less Resources and Social/Cultural Capital for Schooling

### A Final Thought



*Living here alone as a mother with my kids, it's hard, but one does whatever possible to help the kids move forward. [My husband] can't be here because he has to go work, to earn money so that the kids have, not even a good life, but a decent life. Because if he were here, we would all be happy because we'd be together, but we'd be in a bad situation economically.*

39 year-old mother of five

### El Fin (The End)

