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*Campesino* Food Consumption in the Context of Migration and Remittances

by

Esperanza Sánchez

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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Kurt C. Organista, Chair

Professor Julian C. Chow

Professor Miguel Altieri

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## Abstract

### *Campesino* Food Consumption in the Context of Migration and Remittances

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Berkeley

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This community-based participatory study examines how *campesinos* (rural small landholders) understand and act upon their understandings regarding their food pattern change in the context of a transnational family and community life and fiscal remittances. It examines food pattern negotiation using in-depth interviews, focus groups, filmic ethnography, participant observation and Food Pattern Analysis with rural small landholders from two communities in northern Guanajuato, México. Findings show that irrespective of their migration history, *campesino* households currently have increased access to fluid income and commercial foods which may be explained by newer livelihood strategies relative to approximately three decades ago; the use of newer fluid income-based livelihoods, including remittances, coincide with an increased access to and interaction with the commercial food system. In terms of food related particularities between pre-migration and current times, food pattern changes are observed through consumption frequency of key foods, the manner in which dishes are served and eaten, the freshness of the staple ingredient/s used, and the resulting food pattern diversity. These food shifts are shown to ebb and flow through time and are neither linear nor rigid in their direction of change. In regard to the question of how *campesinos* negotiate their food patterns in rural spaces, *campesino's* explanations of their consumption commonly refer to three motivating factors; these include taste preference, social returns motivation, and newer notions of time and convenience. These mechanisms taken together inform the notion that fluid income through remittances, implies benefits among the rural sector as well as costs. For example, while remittances may enhance women's and children's agency related to their food activities and social relations, they also support enhanced access to highly processed and calorie dense commercial foods. Furthermore, remittances are understood to foster a desire to attain elevated material standards; a pressure that is evident with *campesino's* perceived "need" to consume status foods and to avoid stigmatized regional foods. Although there is evidence of a reduced capacity to grow and consume home grown food staples by some *campesinos*, a pattern commonly attributed to their displacement as small producers, there is a subsector of *campesinos* that show a blended food pattern characterized with less consumption of high calorie foods. Overall, there is no indication that *campesinos* intend to permanently sever their food production capacity as evidenced by a majority of respondents still producing food, even though at lower levels.

## Dedication

My mother is an expert cook. She has a gift to transform food that others may see as past its prime into desirables. She peels, slices, and carefully deposits her magical blends into the bellies of preserve jars. By the time I was in high school I understood that my mother's delectably seasoned pickled chilis, *nopalitos*, and vine-ripened tomato preserves were sought after not only by us, her children, but by our network of extended family, co-workers, and neighbors. And this began to concern me.

It was common to see my mother arrange one, two, or three vibrant jars into a brown paper bag on her way to visit *fulanito* or *sutanito*. These moments peaked my sense of ownership over her preserves, not so much because I had a hand in creating them but because I had witnessed her work late into the warm summer nights. Often she would can through midnight and still rise at 4 or 5 a.m. the next morning to her life of toil in one Napa's oldest vineyards to earn a living. Neither the scorching heat of the summer nor the exhaustion of *la pizca* (harvest) could prevent her from ensuring that those ripe tomatoes would make it into the blessed jars during the evenings. One day, compelled to safeguard her hard work I said to her, "Why not in place of giving your jars away, you sell them! You would supplement your wages with your product!". "Logical", I thought, "How can she not?"

My entrepreneurial advice was consistently ignored. Time passed and her generosity outgrew my patience. One day I saw her trying to walk out the front door unnoticed, with brown paper bag in hand and clinging jars inside. In my fog of genuine concern I built up special courage to assert my frustration. "Why don't you think of yourself for once? How could it be that you devalue your hard work to the point of giving it away? ...and worse, with people we don't even know". I was aware of my harsh words but I wanted so much for her to see things my way. She stopped walking. I stopped talking. A surge of fear came over me when her reaction was - silence. My heart sank when I saw tears running down her cheeks. I swallowed my ego. Her tears humbled me past the concrete floor I stood on. I wanted to shower her with apologies but I knew nothing I could say would roll her tears back. She said, "YOU have a lot to learn about giving". At that point the best way to honor my mother was to allow her words to settle in me.

At that moment, when my mother and I stood at worlds apart, I wondered, "what exactly did she think I did not understand? How could giving away her hard work make perfect sense?"

I realized I needed to better understand the two vastly different worlds that I straddled: my rural Mexican root and my home in the United States. An opportunity came to me as a graduate student of University of California, Berkeley's School of Social Welfare, to figure out what my mother was trying to tell me. I conducted fieldwork in the beautiful state of Guanajuato, Mexico and one day I noticed something:

... I was helping two rural women cook dinner at one of their homes. I was asked to make the salsa and was given a handful of dried chilies to roast over an open fire. Then it hit me- I hadn't the slightest idea how to roast chilies over an open fire without charring them! And to risk over-roasting would be foolish because it would never go unnoticed; if only one chili is over-roasted

the salsa will taste bitter. This experience put in order several thoughts. It is true anyone can learn to make delicious and healthy salsa from the internet, which I will call a “useful” skill because it creates useful food to nurture the physical body. But to live the experience of harvesting and preparing one’s food WITH another is vastly different. That day after I admitted to my culinary deficiencies when the women came to my rescue and worked with me to make that salsa we not only created food that was physically useful but one that was communally meaningful. That evening we made food that re-kindled the human bond.

And that is what my mother was trying to explain to me, how our modern commercial food system breaks the human bond through commodification, mechanization, and pre-packaging of one of life’s most basic and sacred elements. I understand now that my mother was not thoughtless about her food labor; she was caring about her relationships. I was right about one thing, that my mother’s generosity makes sense after all. Thanks to her, all along our home has not only been blessed receiving other people’s fruit, home baked breads, and services of all kinds, but with friendships and family bonds that withstand the test of time and space.

To my greatest teacher: *Mamá, eres el espíritu que levantó el vuelo de este trabajo y por eso te lo dedico.*

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“*Ya no somos pobres de dinero sino que somos pobres de cultura*”  
[We are no longer fiscally poor but rather culturally poor]

These words are by a young Mexican *campesina* [rural small landholder] regarding the impact that shifting rural economies have had on rural food ways during the past three decades. She emphasizes the socio-cultural implications that subsistence farmers experience as a result of changing from a limited interaction with the commercial food system towards a marked reliance on it. Traditionally, the subsistence food system orients meeting household nutritional needs through family-farm raised staples; for *campesinos* the self-produced food staples are aimed at self-consumption first and commercialization second. During the decade of the 1980's poverty stricken populations across Latin America including Mexican *campesinos* increasingly integrated into the domestic and global low skilled labor market; as a result, an improved access to fluid income also improved their capacity to interact with the commercial food system. The low skilled labor opportunities in the United States led to an increased reliance on fiscal remittances as a significant livelihood strategy for rural households in Mexico; fiscal remittances are income that is sent long distance including state-controlled national borders that represent social ties, solidarity, reciprocity, and obligation and that bind migrants to their kin<sup>1</sup> (Guarnizo, 2003).

A noteworthy consequence of shifting livelihoods and increased access to fluid income among rural households is their rapid integration in the *nutrition transition* phenomenon that comprises of increased consumption patterns of dietary fat and refined commercial products such as salty snacks, cookies, soda, and reduced physical activity levels (Popkin, 2001; Kaiser & Dewey, 1991). These dietary patterns have been associated with the rising global incidence of nutrition-related chronic disease Mexico; in fact, their patterns of diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease echo that of global patterns (Bermudez & Tucker, 2003; Uauy, Albala, & Kain, 2001; Romieu, Hernandez-Avila, Rivera, Ruel, & Parra, 1997). Mexico's fast-paced food pattern changes are evidenced by its increased ranking to second position among the world's nations having the highest rates of obesity. In this scenario, it problematic that the changing food patterns of one of Mexico's historically vulnerable populations, the *campesino* community, has been scarcely documented.

Remittance-sending and receiving are one of various livelihood strategies used by rural households to meet their nutritional needs; however, their influence on food patterns remains largely unstudied. This linkage between remittances and food patterns is significant, particularly considering the economic dependency that non-industrialized countries have on remittances from its diasporas; for example, in 2001 an estimated \$9.3 billion dollars in remittances were received in Mexico (Multilateral Investment Fund, 2002; Guarnizo, 2003).

This study is responds to gaps from past research as well as to three grassroots level concerns expressed from CEDESA, a Mexico-based rural development non-profit organization and their affiliated *campesino* community groups. This *campesino* coalition is based in the state of Guanajuato and takes interest in the extent to which migration and fiscal remittances increase rural household's reliance on poor quality commercial foods; specifically, they aim to understand the extent to which remittances undermine the traditional subsistence food system. In their perspective this is important because the self-production food system represents a type of social insurance against extreme poverty and socio-economic insecurity for rural households. Given the historically insecure and underpaid nature of wage labor opportunities available to *campesinos* on both sides of the border, they consider it critical that rural households maintain the option to retain food sovereignty through the traditional subsistence family farm.

CEDESA's perspective is in line with the global movement of *La Via Campesina*, an international agrarian coalition comprised of small and medium producers that since the early 1990's constitute a voice from below to assert the right to food sovereignty; food sovereignty is defined as the capacity to freely decide the content and method of food production, consumption, and marketing- particularly on behalf of the world's small to medium food producers (Rosset, Martinez-Torres, & Hernandez-Navarro, 2006). The technical assistance that CEDESA offers to small producer communities, field sites included, orient toward agroecological practices that *Via Campesina* also supports as adequate for the small to medium producer (Altieri, 2000). Study participants' involvement with CEDESA activities were documented.

Theoretically, this study engages the *nutrition transition* framework that has typically characterized food pattern change as a multi-stage change process, that global food patterns show a gradual advancement towards a Westernized food pattern. It posits that for any on population at any given time, transnational communities experience varying forms of food pattern change; specifically, while non-migrants in the community of origin may be relatively isolated with very little exposure to commercial fatty and calorie-dense foods, their urban counterpart migrants may experience a mid-level exposure, and their transnational migrants may have high exposure levels (Drewnowski & Popkin, 1997). This characterization suggests a linear model of dietary acculturation in terms of time and geographic distance. The present study aims to show that the varying forms of change are more dynamic, and that the shift towards Westernized foods is neither uni-directional nor fated.

This study offers an initial characterization of how an unprecedented rapid food pattern change process is experienced by *campesinos* in two rural communities in the northern region of Guanajuato. The data presented here is based on fieldwork conducted from February, 2007 to July 2009; the state of Guanajuato is an appropriate site considering it is historically one of six *core* Western Mexico migrant sending states to the U.S. (Massey & Parrado, 1994; Alejandre, 1989).



**The State of Guanajuato, Mexico**

To answer the question of how *campesino* food patterns change in the context of remittances and other fluid income-based livelihood strategies, *campesinos* inform that their rural changes in food habits between pre-migration and current times occur along three interrelated

levels: a broader economic frame of shifting rural livelihoods, a local social context, and individual consumption. At the macro level, findings show that irrespective of their migration history, *campesino* households currently have increased access to fluid income and commercial foods which may be explained by diversified livelihood strategies relative to approximately three decades ago. Specifically, it is shown that the emergence of newer use of fluid income-based livelihoods that include remittances, wage-based employment and cash transfers, coincide with *campesino*'s increased access to and interaction with the commercial food system. Food pattern changes are also evidenced by changes in consumption frequency of key foods, the manner in which dishes are served and eaten, the freshness of the staple ingredient/s used, and the resulting food pattern diversity. These food shifts are shown to ebb and flow through time and that they are neither linear nor rigid in the direction in which they change.

In regard to the question of how *campesinos* negotiate their food patterns in rural spaces, *campesino*'s explanations of their consumption commonly refer to three motivating factors; these include taste preference, social returns motivation, and newer notions of time and convenience. Remittances specifically are shown to place *campesinos* in simultaneously socially enhancing and vulnerable positions. Non-migrant women and children of migrants for example, remain in the community of origin and often adopt a variety of new roles including that of fluid income management. As new managers of fluid income women benefit from an enhanced capacity to negotiate their gender roles that pertain to food related activities and to respond to food related social pressures that emerge from local narratives; however, this role also drifts their consumption away from wholesome self-produced and locally available staples. Newer notions of food "needs" that include taste satisfaction and obtaining desired social benefits encourage consumption of economy commercial foods, that tend to be of poor quality; the practice of *el peso* (allowance giving) in particular provides children direct access to highly processed calorie-dense foods.

On the other hand, not all *campesinos* acculturate to the Western style food lifestyles. The sub sector that shows a more critical blended food pattern between self-produced and commercial foods is one that places value on maintaining self-production for self-consumption as a leading strategy for long-term food security. That is, maintaining self production allows *campesinos* to maintain access to whole and fresh foods that they may not otherwise be able to afford in the commercial food market. Furthermore, there is no indication that *campesinos* are parting from their tradition to produce food; findings show that a majority of households produce food at some capacity, even households that do not own a *milpa* (productive field).

These findings provide basis to argue that newer configurations of economic strategies that rural households use to meet their nutritional needs, including remittances and migration, encourages enhanced food negotiation power as well as social vulnerability for *campesinos*. Their low earning power from domestic or transnational labor does not show to improve *campesinos* purchase of quality commercial foods to compensate for the loss of the wholesome home produced staples. This signals that their displacement as producers towards low wage workers does not work to pull them out of fiscal poverty and instead it integrates them into the commercial food market of economy foods. With their increased risk to nutrition-related chronic disease risky food patterns should be considered as threats to this sector falling deeper into poverty. Overall, rural household's interaction with the commercial food system is currently problematic not by virtue of their increased fluid income access, but rather due to lacking adequate public policy and social supports and that offer them the conditions and capacity to re-

define modern rural life in their terms. Genuine food choice is one that enables them to continue growing and making a livelihood from their own food production, if they desire to do so.

Overview. To answer the research questions and to substantiate the proposed arguments in a manner that maintains the richness and complexity of interacting factors, the first chapter offers base knowledge from diverse fields including food, migration, remittances, and food sovereignty to tell the state of past literature on food shifts among Mexican campesinos. Chapter 2 offers a description of the study design, participants, measures, fieldwork methodology, and analysis procedures that were used to produce the data and discussion presented in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 details contextual descriptions and observations regarding *campesino* households and the communities of interest. The words and characterizations provided by participants of their lived experience are embedded in the text in their original Spanish expression to allow readers to appreciate the nuances obtained during fieldwork; the translations to English may not always correspond literally to the words used by the speaker due to the investigator's attempt to translate gradations of meaning. Chapter 4 extends the data presented in Chapter 3 to synthesize results and contextualize them with past research. This provides a basis to conclude with recommendations for future policy, practice, and research. Overall, the data in this study provides insights to programs that aim to mediate food insecurity, agriculture rural development, and nutrition-related health risk prevention among the *campesino*-origin population.

## CHAPTER 1: Background

At least 3.1 billion people or 55% of the world's total population live in rural areas. Hence, the scale of the world's population that is currently negotiating their food ways in the context of a fast-paced global economy shifts is significant. The case of Mexico is taken up in the context of its rapid rise in obesity and other nutrition-related chronic diseases that are simultaneously occurring with rising rates of poverty. This chapter provides a review of past research to provide base knowledge about the interplay between individuals in the process of historical change and the role of historical change in individual practices; the cultural-development framework helps to organize the literature from diverse fields including food studies, immigration and remittances, and food sovereignty.

To start, the cultural development framework is described along its two major dimensions of time and context. These provide a framework to organize the review of past literature from the various interrelated fields. For the time dimension a review of *campesino* social history essentials that are particularly relevant to food pattern change are presented; these lead to the two interrelated factors known to have sparked a dramatic food system shift in rural Mexico during the past three decades. First, it is the widespread pattern of transnational out migration to the United States from rural spaces and second, the extent to which remittance-receiving and sending has been linked to food. Finally, a review of the various forms of food consumption analysis are provided as background for the methodology used in this study.

### The Cultural Development Framework

The design for this study is founded on Saxe & Esmonde's (2005) cultural-development framework that adequately responds to food pattern phenomena by approaching it as a daily, shifting, and collective socio-cultural activity that "creates and re-creates a pattern of social organization constituted by norms, values, and routines that endures over many years, even though the particular actors change" (Saxe & Esmonde, 2005, p. 208)<sup>3</sup>. Food patterns are also approached as patterns that are "constituted, solved, and reconstituted on a regular basis"; that is, people's understanding of food ways shift according to distinct understandings, beliefs, positions, and motives of actors that, at the same time, are influenced by external events such as increased opportunities to obtain fluid income resulting from external events such as international economic policies (Saxe & Esmonde, 2005, p. 208). From this perspective, the key source of change is people's explanations about it, which in turn relies on language that is assumed to be given a particular form and meaning according to each person's views and values (Charmaz, 2006). For this reason a case study approach is deemed appropriate for various reasons. First, due to its capacity to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of socio-cultural phenomena, it achieves this by allowing for in-depth observation in real-life context (Yin, 2009). This feature is significant given there is no clear definition between the boundaries of food consumption and the socio-historical context in which it occurs.

In addition to context, methodology that considers the phenomena over time is critical. The time dimension of the present study aims to understand how *campesinos* (small landholders) negotiate their food system in the context of two interrelated factors known to have sparked a dramatic food system shift in rural Mexico during the past three decades; these include widespread transnational out migration to the United States and a rapid increased access to fluid income which is partly due to remittance-receiving. In this context, capturing the nuances of the

social history of *campesinos* is important. Saxe & Esmonde's (2005) case study exemplifies how case study methodology attends to both the context and time dimensions, they successfully document the interplay between people's collective thought and historically situated individual practices. It provides a useful analytical framework to the present study on how to observe the interplay between *campesino* social history and the development of new forms of food consumption. However, in contrast to their work this study does not aim to demonstrate causality of food pattern changes; rather it aims to provide data from initial inquiry iterations that are intended to serve as a foundation for future research. Finally, a case study is appropriate because it allows for mixed methods where qualitative and quantitative measures are used to complement and strengthen the accuracy of findings.

### Time Dimension

Poverty challenges in Mexico range along economic, health and rural inequity dimensions. Mexico's population in 2010 comprised of 110.6 million people. It ranks number 56 in the Human Development Index with a value of .750 and is categorized as a "high human development" country, with only one higher rank of "very high human development" represented by countries such as the United States and Norway (Human Development Report, 2010). To contextualize further, Mexico's gross national income (GNI) per capita is \$13,971 as compared to \$47,094 in the U.S. (Human Development Report, 2010). It has the second largest economy of Latin America with an estimated GDP per capita of \$14,151 in 2010; between 1996-2001 it had an average growth of 5% per year but has reduced since to 3.8 percent in 2009-2010 (World Bank, 2010). In 2010 the majority of Mexicans live in urban areas (77.8%) which represent a 6.4% increase from 1990 (71.4%); this pattern suggests a reduced growth in rural population in proportion to the growth of the urban population (Human Development Report, 2010).

**Rural Inequality.** Despite Mexico's classification by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country poverty is widespread. Almost half of Mexico's population (47%) remains under the income poverty line (World Bank, 2010). In 2008, the population living in moderate poverty at \$4 per day was 28.8 percent while 14 percent were in extreme poverty; one year later those living in moderate poverty rose to 29.5 percent and those living in extreme poverty to 15.8 percent (World Bank 2010). In the same year only 57.1 percent of people 15-64 years old were employed, and of these 70.5 percent have formal employment while 29.5 have "vulnerable employment", meaning unpaid or own-account work (Human Development Report 2010). Historically, *campesinos* largely comprise among the nation's most marginalized populations.

World Bank data shows that from 2006-2009 Mexico's rural population has remained constant at 23% of the total population and by 2010 it had reduced by 1% to 22% (Human Development Report, 2010). The rural sector traditionally is not part of the formal economy due to their subsistence livelihood tradition. Of all of Mexico's agriculture producers, it is estimated that half of Mexico's producers are subsistence farmers, that is, those that produce on five hectares of land or less. But this is changing rapidly as a result of national and transnational agricultural policies that have led to an increased diversification of rural livelihoods.

Mexico's agricultural sector may be described as a three-level structure: commercial farms, traditional farms (poor, but with commercial potential), and subsistence farms (very poor



with virtually no commercial potential) (OECD, 1997). Concurrent with this distinction, recent examinations suggest that systematic and unequal distribution of natural and productive resources is the basis for the current disenfranchisement of Mexico's subsistence farmers or *campesinos* (World Bank, 2001). For example, a World Bank report produced in 2001 suggests that agriculture development loans issued to the Mexican government in the previous three decades largely supported a neoliberal development policy agenda, favoring large-scale, monoculture, cash cropping, and export-oriented agriculture production to the detriment of the small rural *campesino*<sup>7</sup> (World Bank, 2001). Consequently, as of the 1980's Mexico's rural sector entered into a new poverty as evident by increased hunger and preventable disease.

For *campesinos*, significant changes imposed by Mexico's national agricultural development agenda included the removal of basic food production resources. *Campesinos* were frequently ineligible for the new public support programs such as credit, technical assistance, or subsidies because they did not fulfill requirements including ownership of large land lots or access to infrastructure needed for large-scale farming (Rosset, Collins, & Moore 2000; Calva 2001). They also lost competitiveness in the food market as fair price guarantees for national agriculture products were eliminated and heavily subsidized food imports forced price reductions for their home-grown products, lower than the cost to produce them (Calva, 2001; Petras, 2005). Furthermore, President Salinas de Gortari's amendment to the constitution's Article 27 devastated *campesino* land tenure rights allowing *ejido* land to be mortgaged, rented, and/or used as collateral for private loans<sup>8</sup>. The privatization of communal land as well as other policies that came soon thereafter, such as the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which continues to exclude the *campesino* from national agriculture development.

To respond to *campesinos*' persistent and increasing vulnerability to poverty the Mexican government has implemented social development programs including *Abasto Social de Leche Liconsa*, *Oportunidades* [Opportunities] and *Programa Apoyo Alimentario* [Food Support Program]<sup>9</sup>. *Oportunidades* is a nutritional program whose principal objective is to enhance the food and nutrition conditions of rural communities that rate low in socio-economic status. The conditional cash transfer program comprises of a food basket with a value of 150 Mexican pesos or approximately US\$13; it is accompanied by an educational component that requires *campesinas* to attend diet, nutrition, and health-related educational seminar. It currently serves 5 million people and is one of three newer fluid income-based sources that *campesinos* use to meet their nutrition needs.

**Food Sovereignty.** One counter-argument to the large-scale agriculture model of development that are favored by free-market public policy is put forth by *Via Campesina*, an international agrarian coalition of small to medium producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities who share the commonality of being sectors of the global north and south that are politically and economically marginalized (Borras, 2008). Their work promotes and advocates for the maintenance of food sovereignty, a sustainable rural development paradigm developed and defined by *Via Campesina* as, "the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods while respecting cultural and productive diversity". The *campesino* food sovereignty movement reflects two distinct dimensions: the distributive (national/international) and the local (individual/household). The distributive dimension is concerned with *campesinos*' right for equitable access to decision-making processes that determine the distribution of productive resources at the local level; it aims to protect and maintain local food systems from threats of unfair policies that allow low priced food imports and unfair prices for domestic agricultural products (FAO, 2006). The local dimension

on the other hand is concerned with *campesinos'* capacity to define the food that they consume and produce, the manner in which they consume and produce it, and equitable and sustainable access to the resources that are needed to produce and distribute their products. Hence, their policy demands include the right to: food, access to productive resources (land, water, etc.), family and community-based agroecological models of food production, and local markets (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005). As can be seen, these demands call upon the field of agroecology as the productive framework that best allows *campesinos* to retain sovereignty of their food ways; they share similar aims.

Agroecology encompasses a holistic ecological vision of homeostasis between human, land, animals, vegetation, and all the biodiversity that contributes and benefits from the other (Altieri, 2002). In practical terms it is an alternative approach to rural food production that relies on intensive agriculture and instead relies on a combination of local knowledge and techniques which are already adjusted to the particularities of local conditions, local resources, and modern biological principles of farming systems (Altieri, 1999). This approach to rural food system is not only supported by political movements such as *Via Campesina* but mentioned as a viable approach to rural poverty by a recent World Bank report for example, albeit with differential execution.

**Rural Transnational Outmigration.** Unable to sustain their traditional livelihoods, many *campesinos* that had previously resisted migration joined the migration streams towards Mexican urban centers and the U.S. (World Bank, 2001). As a case in point, a study of the state of Guanajuato, one of six *core* Western Mexico migrant sending states to the U.S., showed the percentage of population living in rural areas decreased from 75% to 50% as a result from out migration between 1950 and 1980 (Massey & Parrado, 1994; Alejandre, 1989). These data point to the significant implications of *campesino* out migration and further suggest considering related ones such as the shift in livelihoods that occurred as a consequence of this out migration.

**Food Consumption from a Transnational Perspective.** Transnational lives as an analytical lens to examine *campesino* food consumption provides the opportunity to examine food patterns in their dynamic process; it takes in a wide range of evolving and mutually influencing cross-border factors that connect migrants to their communities of origin (Guarnizo, 2003). *Transnationalism* asserts that migrants and stay at homes influence one another across distance through their continued social relations; this concept highlights the idea that people with transnational lives exchange resources such as fiscal and social remittances and that this exchange process is a two-way street. Mass out migration from rural México to U.S. urban centers during the past three decades has formed pocket of *transnational* communities across the U.S.-Mexico border (i.e., networks characterized by social relation linkages across distances and borders that are simultaneously embedded in more than one society and engage in mutual influence (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). The transnational dimension of this study is specific to the influence of remittances, in the context of a migrant counterpart residing in the United States and by community-wide patterns of historical migration that have also been influenced by past remittance-receiving and return migrants.

**Fiscal Remittances.** Remittances are a significant livelihood strategy of rural Mexican households, the sector that receives the highest rates of remittances in Mexico; estimates indicate that they represent approximately 50% of the rural family income (CONAPO, 2001). Almost half (40%) of Mexican remittance-receivers are remittance-dependent, their only source of income are income from remittance-senders in the U.S. (CONAPO, 2001). Fiscal remittance research is generally interested in evaluating the volume, transfer channels, and determinants; it

is generally interested in measuring the rural household's impact, if any, on productive investments which are typically considered to be a driver of growth in rural areas and a potential creator of local economic alternatives to migration (Guarnizo, 2003; Taylor & Mora, 2006). Remittance research that examines its impact on food consumption beyond the econo-centric perspective of development is limited.

Remittance research places food expenditures in the category of *daily household consumption*, a category that encompasses needs such as clothing, personal care, household maintenance, furniture, appliances, and utilities (Zarate-Hoyos, 2004). A study of Mexico's National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH) data compared remittance use between rural remittance receivers and non-receivers and found that among the receivers the expenditures for their *daily household consumption* is not disproportionate relative to other categories such as education, health, and productive investment expenditures (Zarate-Hoyos, 2004). It also found that remittance-receiving households have a higher average expenditure for *daily household consumption* than non-remittance households. However, the percentage of the expenditure that represents food expense is unavailable and indicative of the scant data informing about how much of remittances influence food purchasing.

Few studies assess the impact of remittance-receiving on food patterns among the Latin American rural population; there is general consensus that remittance-receiving is associated with increased commercial food consumption and a reduced consumption of heritage foods. Rural households emerging out of poverty with increased incomes are known to increase their consumption of high fat and industrialized fats (Popkin et al., 2001). Another study of 178 rural Mexican households found that remittance-receiving households de-emphasize the use of traditional foods such as maize and beans while increasing their consumption of processed foods (Kaiser & Dewey, 1991). In terms of food quality, findings of three rural Mexican communities (N=178 households) found that the sporadic nature of remittance leads to a tendency for families to purchase cheaper and more processed foods (Kasier & Dewey, 1991). Further, it found remittance-receiving households purchase less traditional foods compared to non-remittance receives and did not find that consumption of luxury foods such as meats increases with remittances. These studies signal that rural Mexico has been for at least three decades undergoing significant dietary shifts that are not unique to it regionally, but are part of a global nutrition trend of rural households emerging out of poverty. No studies have conducted an in-depth analysis to understand how fluid income-based livelihoods, such as remittances, have influenced rural food consumption and how campesinos negotiate and understand their food consumption.

**Nutrition-Related Health and Transition.** Among non-Latin American countries in economic transition obesity is more prevalent among higher income groups and in urban, compared with rural, communities but there are indications that this burden may be shifting towards the poor, in adults at least (Popkin 2004; Wang 2002). This global trend is also evidenced in Mexico with its rapid rise in prevalence of nutrition-related chronic disease including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, all of which have been found to be associated with rapid increases in access to and consumption of fat, animal products, sugar, and highly processed foods<sup>10</sup> (Bermudez & Tucker, 2003). For example, the proportion of cardio-vascular deaths pertaining to total mortality increased from less than 2% in 1960 to 14% in 1992 (Romieu, Hernandez-Avila, Rivera, Ruel, & Parra, 1997). In recent years obesity, diabetes and other non-communicable chronic diseases (NCCDs) have been increasing among the poor (Drewnoski & Popkin, 1997; Peña & Bacallao, 2000). Data also shows that 85% of deaths in Mexico are related to diabetes, hypertension and

accidents/violence while the remaining 15 percent are poverty related deaths of infectious diseases and under nutrition (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, 2007). These nutrition-related disease patterns are evident among low-income groups who are known to increase their consumption of high fat/high carbohydrate, energy-dense, and industrially processed foods while reducing their fruit and vegetable intake as they improve their household income (Uauy et al., 2001). Therefore, by definition, campesinos whose communities of origin are out migrating in large numbers transnationally represent an at-risk population for nutrition-related illness.

### Context Dimension

It is established that as people move cross-nationally and away from their indigenous food system, their food patterns transition into new combinations of consumption. However, less is known about how *campesino* non-migrants interface with their foodways given their changing socio-economic and political contexts. This section aims to examine the various contextual influences that are known to influence food negotiation among the rural non-migrant *campesino* in Mexico.

**Food Consumption Indicators.** A more recent analysis model concerned with food consumption changes resulting from increased access to industrialized foods is *dietary westernization* where a list of few indicator foods are needed to measure the degree of food *westernization* (Uusitalo et al, 2005; Rodriguez Moran et al., 2008). Its central concern relates to how people in developing countries incorporate in their indigenous diets foods from more economically developed and commercialized countries, such as North America and Western Europe (Uusitalo et al., 2005; VonLaue, 1987). It emerges from research that suggests *western* societies have distinctive food indicators including white bread, fat spreads, and dairy products, among others (Mintz & Schlettwein-Gsell, 2001; Drewnowski & Popkin, 1997). The application of this concept in rural Mexico is recent.

The single study known to apply a *westernization* measure in a Mexico rural sample is a cross-sectional survey study that compares *Yaqui* and *Tepehuano* indigenous groups from Sonora and Durango; these groups differ in their physical accessibility/remoteness where the more accessible one adheres more closely to a western-like lifestyle compared to the other that maintains their traditional culture (Rodriguez Moran et al., 2008). Findings showed that, compared to *Tepehuanos*, the *Yaqui* community scored higher in a *westernization* measure; the latter group showed a significantly higher prevalence of obesity and diabetes, a finding that was related to a higher consumption of saturated fat. While it was beyond the scope of the study to consider mediating factors, perhaps it would have been useful to assess explanatory factors such as migration differences between the communities.

A second type of food pattern change indicator in past literature is dietary patterning. It comprises of a survey assessment method based on the premise that diet patterns at any given time are not static; rather they are “continually changing as one part of a dynamic social system in which social organization, food supply, environment and the individual’s beliefs and perceptions interact” (Romero-Gwynn & Gwynn, 1994, p. 359). This perspective mirrors the transnational lives framework discussed below. Rather than comparing foods along a *western* and *ethnic* foods binary, Jerome’s (1982) Food Patterning Analysis framework compares food consumption along the categories of pre-migration *core foods* and post-migration *core foods*; it assesses whether core foods increase or decrease in consumption after migration. Core food items are grouped according the following consumption frequency categories: *primary core* (foods eaten two or more days per week), *secondary core* (foods eaten once a week), *peripheral*

(foods consumed 2-3 days per month), and *ceremonial* or *marginal* (foods eaten at lower recurrence levels) (Romero-Gwynn & Gwynn, 1994). Each food indicator may move towards or away from *primary core foods* as time progresses.

The strength of the *food-patterning* model is that it provides a systematic way to describe the *campesino*-origin *core diet* in a way that allows for comparisons across both time and space. Its comprehensive analysis reflects a wide range of food consumption information as compared to associations between key food items alone. For example, in a sample of 266 low income Mexican immigrant and first-generation women living in the U.S. Romero-Gwynn & Gwynn (1994) found that less acculturated Mexican migrants show an increased consumption of vegetables and a lower consumption of fat-rich foods such as lard and cream. While it is tempting to evaluate these findings as desirable, upon closer inspection it was found that the newly adopted vegetables (post-migration) tended to be less nutrient-dense than pre-migration varieties. For example, vegetable salad showed to be a new way to eat vegetables while previous patterns of vegetable consumption decreased; lettuce as a base for vegetable salad is not as nutrient-dense as the previously consumed vegetables including chilies, sweet peppers, tomatoes, cilantro and *verdolagas* that were frequently added to stews and tortilla-based dishes. Furthermore, they found that for every two pre-migration fat-rich foods six new fat-rich foods were added post-migration. For example, oil replaced lard, mayonnaise and sour cream replaced the Mexican cream topping, and salad dressing was added without a replacement. Thus, their study concludes that higher vegetable intake and lower fat intake among poor Mexican women are in fact *less desirable* trends and that these occur in greater number compared to healthy ones.

Few other studies consider pre-post migration assessment. A mixed methods study that uses focus group and semi-structured survey data to evaluate dietary acculturation among 24 Mexico-origin found that socio-economic factors including shifts in post-migration time demands due to wage labor schedules influenced the increased consumption of convenience foods such as hamburgers and pizza and concludes that less healthy trends after migration are greater in number than the positive ones<sup>12</sup> (Gray et al., 2005). This study is among the minority showing that the adoption of some convenience foods occurs prior to migration to the U.S. Echoing Romero-Gwynn & Gwynn's (1994) conclusions, they recommend that future research focus on identifying and understanding social factors that influence dietary changes rather than focus on dietary change patterns.

Considering the range of indicators used in food studies thus far illustrates that the analysis lens to examine transnational lives remains narrow.

**The Current Study.** The purpose of the current study is to apply a community-based participatory research approach to examine how *campesinos* understand and act upon their understandings regarding their food pattern change in the context of a transnational family life and fiscal remittances. Time and context dimensions of the cultural-development framework are attended to in answering the following research questions:

1. How have Guanajuato *campesino* food ways shifted with increasing migration and remittance-receiving?
2. How do Mexico-based non migrant *campesinos* migrants understand and act upon their shifting food patterns in the context of changing livelihood strategies and food systems?

## CHAPTER 2: Methods

### Study Design

The study design used for this multi-sited research is a community based participatory research approach utilizing mixed methods but primarily qualitative in-depth focus groups and semi-structured in-depth household interviews, filmic ethnography, and participant observation, complemented by a few quantitative measures. The quantitative measures include an adapted version of Jerome’s *Food Patterning* instrument and a demographic data survey. These were implemented in two distinct phases, as shown in Table I.

Phase 1 consists of focus group interviews of *campesinas/os* in two rural Mexico-based communities; it comprises of in-depth focus groups interviews and filmic ethnography in two Mexico-based rural communities. This phase aimed to obtain baseline food pattern data, initial qualitative accounts regarding local food patterns relative to the communities’ pre-migration social history, and filmic ethnographic data to visually document people’s food related activities at home. Phase 2 consists of individual in-depth interviews that were conducted with *campesina/o* heads of households in Mexico; it aimed to obtain household-level food pattern data as well as in-depth details about changes in food patterns in the context of the family migration history.

As can be seen in Table I, during phase I focus group and filmic ethnographic methods were implemented only in the two Mexican rural communities. Focus groups allowed a discussion about food consumption change across time from pre-migration times to more current times. During phase II, in-depth interviews and food patterning instrument and procedures were applied to participants in Mexico. Phase II interview and Food Patterning Assessment tool allowed to explore food consumption change across time to compare pre-migration patterns with more current ones

|          |  | MEXICO        |         |
|----------|--|---------------|---------|
|          |  | Pre-Migration | Current |
| Phase I  | <b>One Focus Group Interview in each community</b> | X             | X       |
|          | <b>Filmic Ethnography in each community</b>        | n/a           | X       |
| Phase II | <b>14 Head of household In-Depth Interviews</b>    | X             | X       |
|          | <b>Food Patterning Assessment tool</b>             | X             | X       |

**Table I Study Design, Corpora, and Quantitative Data for Comparisons**

### Participants

As can be seen in Table II, 31 adult heads of household who are migrants and non migrants were interviewed in group and household interviews; all are originally from two rural communities in the Municipality of Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Mexico. Participants were 4 males and 22 females of which sixteen participated in Phase I (focus group) and 19 in Phase II (household interviews). Of all participants 26 are non-migrants residing in Mexico. Four heads of household participants in both focus group and individual household interviews. These interviews were held after 10 new households were conducted; they allowed dialogues with higher levels of trust based on previous interaction. They also provided the opportunity to corroborate emergent findings. Of all participants the refusal rate was 30%.

**Table II. Participants**

|              |              | <b>La Rivera Community</b><br>(outmigration: 1980's) | <b>Mar Delgado Community</b><br>(outmigration: mid-1990's) | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------|--------------|--|--|--------------|
| Phase I      | Males        | 4  | 0  | 4            |
|              | Females      | 6  | 6  | 12           |
|              | <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b>  | <b>6</b>   | <b>16</b>    |
| Phase II     | Males        | 0  | 0  | 0            |
|              | Females      | 4 (1*)   | 6(3*)  | 10 (+4)*     |
|              | <b>Total</b> | <b>4</b>   | <b>6</b>   | <b>10</b>    |
| <b>Total</b> |              | <b>14</b>  | <b>12</b>  | <b>26</b>    |

\* Respondents that participated in both focus group and household interviews appear in parenthesis; in this chart they are not counted among the total number of phase 2 participants. Therefore, phase II interviews in reality consist of 19 households, not 15.

\*\*Focus group interviews were not conducted in Austin, Texas due to logistical and time constraints.

In Mexico, *corpus construction* included selecting households in two rural communities in the Municipality of Dolores Hidalgo, using the following selection criteria: rural status, municipality, total population, U.S. bound migration history, representation of land tenure and non-tenure, availability of community-based convenience stores, varied but mostly low participation levels in CEDESA's sustainable rural development capacity-building, and physical accessibility (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). The two selected communities have more than 50 living units but no more than 120; this qualifies them as small to mid-range communities in size as compared to surrounding rural communities and implies that they have some public services such as an elementary school while lacking others such as a health clinic. As one of the six historical "core" migrant sending states to the U.S. the state of Guanajuato is an adequate field site because of its important rates of transnational linkages between migrants and non-migrants (Massey & Parrado, 1994; Alejandre, 1989). Both communities are approximately 15-20 miles distance from one another. They were also selected for their distinct migration histories which

allows for comparisons; one has extensive migration up to approximately three decades, an out-migration pattern that has progressed towards the migration of entire families. The second community has a more recent migration history of approximately one decade which is characterized as majority males. As seen in Table II, of the 31 participants 14 adults reside in the community with longer migration history and 12 in the community with a shorter migration history.

To fulfill the objectives of the guiding framework, sampling was conducted using two methods. During Phase I, focus group recruitment initiated conducting using a sampling method known as *sample to maximize range* (Weiss, 1994, p. 23). It aims to include a wide-ranging panel of knowledgeable informants that fit the strata and role criteria to closely represent the community of interest; this is achieved by including infrequent instances that random sampling might miss. The main goal of this method is to recruit a wide range of people that view the topic from different perspectives or know different aspects of it. In this study, the *campesino* co-investigator assisted to make a list of all the relevant characteristics that his/her community may possess; these included age, civil status, business ownership, migration history, food production experience, land tenure status, occupation, and education level. A total of 24 households that possessed a range of identified characteristics were visited and personally invited to attend the first focus group interview; as can be seen in Table II, 16 adults participated in the focus groups.

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants for Phase II. Focus group participants were asked to refer co-residents to interview for Phase II Table II shows that during Phase II the Mexico non-migrant sample comprised of all female adults (14) and of Phase II referrals, two persons were not able to participate, one had to attend a family emergency and the other was not home when the investigators arrived to the scheduled appointment.

### Procedures

The substantive frame of the study was developed in consultation with three *campesina* founders of Centro de Desarrollo Agropecuario, CEDESA, [Center for Rural Development] and two CEDESA-affiliated *campesinos* who acted as co-investigators throughout the research study. CEDESA is a small non-profit organization that conducts sustainable rural development accompaniment to small landholder residents of the northern region of Guanajuato, Mexico. For over forty years it has facilitated grassroots community organization processes across the northern region of the state to increase *campesino* capacity to meet their basic needs collectively. CEDESA's support has created local and regional *campesino*-led advisory councils that have actively negotiated local land tenure, water supply, and food production issues towards a goal of self-sustainability. They provide capacity building opportunities that include family farm planning, organic farming, water harvesting, water recycling, family-based business planning, *trueque* (barter system), food transformation, artisan products (such as organic shampoo, etc.), apiculture, cultural development (sewing, music, theatre, etc.), sustainable tourism, and among others. CEDESA facilitated the investigator's entry into the communities of interest and provided linkage with the two co-investigator *Promotores* (indigenous community liaisons) whose familiarity with the communities of interest was critical<sup>5</sup>. One *Promotor* is a 23 year-old female and the other is a 26-year old male. The role of the *Promotores* during the interview process was to record data, observe and listen for emergent themes, and to provide an oral assessment during a post-interview debriefing. They also participated in the development of study procedures and in concurrent analysis. The two CEDESA co-founders, also familiar with the communities of interest, participated in the development of the study design and procedures



and provided logistical support related to community visits. As described above, the study comprised of two related phases.

**Phase I:** As described above, the study comprised of two phases. The first task during phase one was to recruit focus group participants. The investigator and co-investigator visited homes individually to explain the purpose of the study and to invite them to the first group meeting. At the first meeting the investigators introduced themselves as a university student and as a CEDESA-affiliated community educator, they verbally explained the scope of the study consisting of several group dialogues that aimed to examine local food consumption; participants were informed the group interview follows previous dialogues with neighboring rural communities. As participants, their role was explained to consist of providing their personal experience and opinions as well as their perspective about proposed methods to collect data materials. Time and location for a follow up meeting were decided upon by the group.

At the start of the second meeting the investigator indicated her role as the facilitator, and explained the scope of the study and their rights as free will participants per the consent form. The consent form was distributed for their review and signature. The group dialogue began with the task of conceptualizing the usefulness of examining food patterns. In order to introduce the filmic ethnography methodology to the participants, the manner in which it has been used in the past, and the experience of seeing other people's lives through images, the investigator passed around the book titled "*Camaristas: Fotógrafos Mayas de Chiapas*" (1998) [Camera People: Mayan Photographers from Chiapas]. All participants were given an opportunity to inspect and informally comment about the book with their peers. As a group they were asked to provide reasons why the book was interesting and captivating; the reasons given had to do with the enjoyment of learning about indigenous women's daily activities through *Chiapaneca* photography. This discussion was followed up by the investigator proposing ethnographic film as a tool for gathering data. All participants responded positively and the only expressed reservations were related to concerns about not having experience using a photographic camera.

During a second meeting each participant received a single-use color camera with step-by-step instructions on how to use it; most were first-time users and time was taken to ensure that everyone understood how to take a photograph indoors and outdoors. Then participants assisted in creating a photo assignment to document their household food consumption during a one week period; guidelines for the documentation process included taking one picture of each family meal for seven consecutive days; guidelines included that photographs could be taken at their kitchen table, of the stove, before the meal, during the meal, and in general, however they saw fit. Because each camera has 28 exposures the 7-day documentation would only take up to 21 exposures; they agreed that the other seven exposures could be used to photograph other important food related activities or resources, such as their corn field. The investigator emphasized to photographers to use their best judgment and that there is no incorrect photograph. One participant from each community volunteered to collect all the cameras after the seven days and the investigator collected the cameras after the seven days and the film was processed.

In order not to influence the filmic documentation process, less time in the initial focus group meeting was dedicated to introduce ideas and observations about shifting food consumption patterns. No specific household food patterns were discussed at this time.

During a third meeting each participant received a copy of their printed photographs and the investigator instructed them to label the food content of each photograph on the back side to assure that the photograph would be accurately recognized. For example, one photograph shows

a scoop of a white cream on top of a plate of beans and it would be impossible to distinguish it between *crema* (Mexican sour cream), dressing, mayonnaise, or other visually similar substances. As the findings show, this distinction is critical. Labeling the pictures also helped to refresh the participants' memories about the foods consumed during that particular week. Through a group interview participants then described the consumption frequency of their documented foods and the investigator recorded their responses in a large *Food Patterning* graphic; foods not photographed were also discussed and recorded. Participants made observations about their changes in staple foods and more recently adopted commercial foods between before and after migration and/or remittances. By the end of the discussion a list of core indicator foods for each community were obtained; these foods established a local baseline food pattern that was used during the individual household assessment in Phase II. The qualitative interview and participant observation material from this interview and the previous meetings also provided key themes for further inquiry in Phase II. To enhance consistency between the two focus groups, only the lead investigator facilitated the group discussions and transcribed the interviews.

**Phase II.** Phase II of the study involved administering a non-structured in-depth interview to head of household residents of the two selected rural communities and their migrant counterparts in the U.S. Only the lead investigator conducted all interviews. One co-investigator was present during each interview to record the responses of the *Food Patterning* assessment tool (described in the Measures section) and to listen for key themes during the interview. All the household interviews were audio recorded and transcribed only by the lead investigator.

Community co-investigators made certain that research procedures were respectful of local community value systems. In this study, care was taken to uphold sustainable rural development *campesino* philosophy; instead of the conventional incentives such as cash or a department store gift cards, co-investigators recommended offering incentives that promote the vision of sustainable rural living. As such, each participant received two small packages of commonly used vegetable seeds (squash, cucumbers) and a jar of locally harvested honey by local *campesinos*. Phase I participants were also given the option to keep one set of their print photographs and all accepted to do so.

### Qualitative Methods and Quantitative Measures

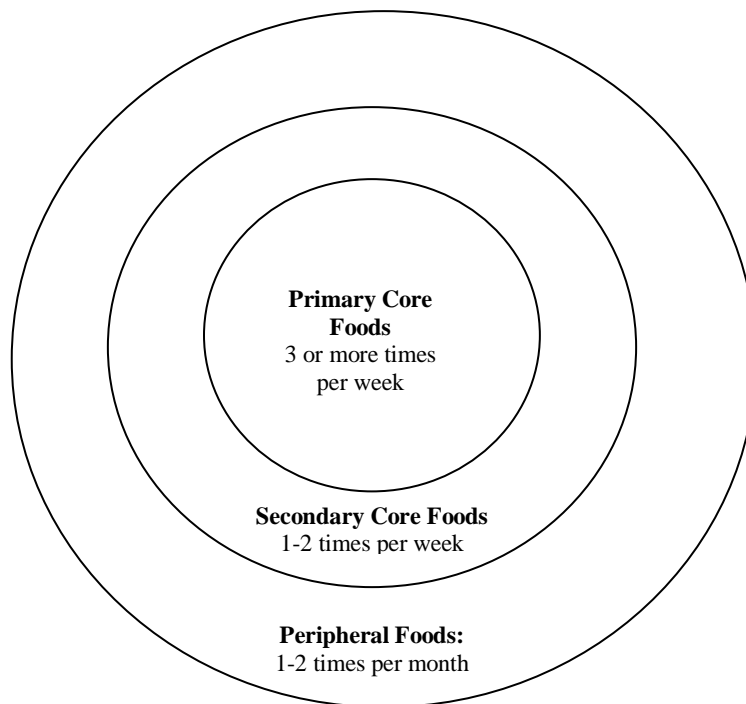
The present case study uses a mixed methods design was used that appended standardized items to qualitative interviews in order to produce data that may be used for statistical tests while at the same time achieving depth knowledge regarding food consumption (Weiss, 1994). Primary data materials include focus group and household in-depth interviews that are informed by a food patterning instrument, participant observation notes, photographic materials, an acculturation scale, and demographic data.

**In-depth Interviews.** In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain more detailed descriptions about the observed food patterning changes in the *Food Patterning* assessment and to learn about respondent's understanding of the implications for the changes. As respondents told their story about what happens with migration and remittance-receiving and remittance-sending, in-depth information was obtained that pre-fixed item survey questions may not have drawn out (Weiss, 1994). For example, there were cases where the food patterning assessment indicated maintenance of staple foods such as beans but it was in-depth interviews that uncovered the new iterations by which these staples are eaten.

Both phases of the study used the *non-scheduled standardized interview* methodology which consists of asking a standardized list of information from each respondent (Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Kelin, 1965). Rather than relying on the traditional practice of scheduled interviews that consist of administering a fixed set of questions to all respondents in the same manner, this method allows the investigator to phrase questions to suit the respondent. Attention is paid to use language that is familiar to the respondent while maintaining consistency in the meaning of the questions; the ordering of the questions should also suit the context under which the interview occurs.

Focus groups and in-depth interviews consisted of open-ended questions about key themes that emerged in preliminary research dialogues. These questions elicited data about how stay-at-home and migrants perceive, react to, and understand their food consumption patterns in relation to the increased availability of fluid income through remittance-receiving, and crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, respectively. For example, they were asked to tell about their family's migration history, their perspective on how their family meals have changed since migration occurred, among others.

**Food Consumption Pattern.** Participants report their food patterns along two time frames, “before their household experienced migration and remittances” and “current food consumption”. Data from these two time frames are used as comparison points to explore what changed and as a starting point to discuss how they understand the change that occurred. A modified version of Jerome's (1982) *Food Patterning* assessment is used as the assessment tool; it consists of a four concentric circle graphic which allows people to categorize how frequently they consume a list of specific foods. Each food item is recorded according to four frequency categories that correspond to one of the four circles in the graphic; starting from the center, the categories include: *primary core* (foods eaten 3 or more times per week), *secondary core* (foods eaten 1-2 times per week), *peripheral* (foods consumed 1-2 times per month), and *ceremonial or marginal* (foods eaten at lower recurrence levels) (Romero-Gwynn & Gwynn, 1994). Familiar local photographic images of each food item were used to provide a visual representation of the frequency each household consumed key foods that were identified during Phase I; the visual representation of their consumption pattern provided discussion material during the in-depth interview. Open questions were used to query about each theme.



**Modified version of Jerome's (1982) *Food Patterning Model***

**Filmic Ethnography.** Filmic ethnography methodology aims to provide a more autonomous process for people to discover and define concerns that are important to them according to their reality and less bound by class-based, gendered, or other social norms; it shifts power dynamics between participants and investigators because respondents act as co-creators of knowledge (Gil-Garcia, 2007; Carlson & Gerrior., 2006). *Photovoice* is one interpretation of filmic ethnography (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004; Wang & Berrick, 1994) where single-use color cameras are used as documentary tools. The storytelling and the dialogue that emerges from sharing photographic images taken by each participant raises awareness and critical assessment among participants; simultaneously, it is an important data source where photographic image accounts complement participants' verbal descriptions (Gil-Garcia, 2007; Carlson & Gerrior, 2006). In this study for instance, the Food Patterning results showed maintenance of beans, but it was photographic data that uncovered they are often garnished with mayonnaise. This knowledge led to further investigation about the use of mayonnaise.

**Participant Observation.** Participant observation included documentation of visible community resources such as community food markets, visible technology, road conditions, and household appliances to inform about the socio-economic standing of the general community and households in Phase II. Information about household appliances is important, in particular to the appliances that influence food preparation and preservation. For example, the presence of the gas stove may suggest a shift in the use of the *fogón* [brick and mortar stove (fueled by firewood)]

for internal and external use] and the presence of microwaves may imply shifts in the preparation and the type of foods consumed. To further contextualize community-specific data, data was sought from public sources such as the local municipality government and the local public health department, such as incidence and prevalence rates of nutrition-related chronic disease. Data that informs about regional migration patterns and rates of regional remittances were also sought.

**Demographic Background.** Demographic data recorded for all participants included the following characteristics: gender, age, marital status, formal education, number of household members, types of household sources of income, family food production and land tenure items.

### Data Analysis

The key source to examine food pattern changes from the perspective that it is socially constructed and continually changing relies on people's explanations about it; thus, text *corpora* which relies on language that is assumed to be given a particular form and meaning according to each person's views and values is primary (Charmaz, 2006). As such, this study reflects various levels of interpretations, first by respondents and then by the investigator (Charmaz, 2006).

**Qualitative Analysis.** The analysis of textual data is the primary source of support. While the aims of grounded theory extend beyond the aims of this study, key analytical principles of grounded theory were employed in the interpretive process; drawing propositions and ideas directly from the experience of migrants and non-migrants is key for a study dealing with "change" processes (Lofland & Lofland, 2004). Data materials were first sorted into various strata according to the two geographical field sites and according to the type of data materials obtained; the various textual data included in-depth interview transcriptions, transcription of post-interview consultations with co-investigators, and participant observation field notes (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). Each of the two communities comprised a distinct corpus which allows for comparisons of representations from one corpus to another.

The coding process consisted of two simultaneous sorting and categorization processes called "initial coding" and "focused coding" (Charmaz, 2001). Initial coding starts by separating interview accounts into data fragments in order to conduct a line-to-line analysis where each fragment is given a label to account for the action and meaning that it expresses; as the number of data fragments grew, relationships between data fragments began to draw together into analytic categories and were given labels (Charmaz, 2006). These codes were divided, coalesced or re-named as data fragments were added and grouped and re-grouped; specific codes were created for key places and key people. This process was repeated by examining large chunks of data; these were examined for contextual considerations of ideas provided by people and coded accordingly. For each analysis iteration relationships between codes were organized using a matrix document; these produced a working schema to represent the varieties of representations across the interviews and their relation to one another.

**Quantitative Analysis.** Demographic and Food Patterning data were entered into an SPSS database to generate descriptive statistics and bar graphics to summarize the data.

### Study Limitations

The objective to observe food patterns in its context deems less appropriate designs that decontextualize phenomena by isolating, manipulating, and controlling for selected variables or using random assignment (Yin, 2009). This design choice however raises concerns about how accurate the data that people immersed in the phenomena depict is "really the case" (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Yin, 2009). While it may be the case that "there is no royal road to truth", this

study attends to internal consistency and reliability by using data and methodological triangulation to allow for spatial-temporal cross-referencing in order to evaluate for contradictions and inconsistencies in any given case (Gilchrist & Williams, 2000, Yin, 2009).

Complimentary lines of inquiry that were employed (text, photographic, and numeric data) produced separate accounts of food habits from the same households. In addition, two communities produced two separate corpuses of data to compare with one another (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). During the interviews, random error was reduced by using local terms and photographs of food items and landscape that is local and familiar. To assure reliability case respondents were re-contacted to clarify their responses (Bauer & Aarts, 2000).

To minimize the effects of observer bias, external consistency is strengthened through investigator triangulation (Gilchrist & Williams, 2000). This is achieved through a co-investigator observer that records and makes note of data during all interviews; his/her accounts provide independent observations during a 10-20 minute post-interview debriefing with the investigator. Other external consistency measures included accounting for perceptions of oneself and others, accounting for the relation between the co-investigator and participants, and the use of first-hand observation data (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

Due to the limited time spent in the field the data collection did not reach the point of “saturation” and should therefore be considered base knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Bauer & Aarts, 2000). Other limitations to the present study include results not reflecting a full year cycle which would have been a “normal cycle of change”; rather interviews were conducted in a time frame of several months which did not account for consumption changes that occur during the remaining months (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). In terms of the sample across the U.S.-Mexico border, the undocumented status of U.S. rural Mexican migrants is an important challenge to overcome; Mexico-based participants are clearly hesitant and fearful to provide contact information about their migrant counterparts in order to minimize risk to their security, particularly in the case of undocumented migrants.

Finally, the goal this study should not be interpreted as generalizable to the *campesino* population but as an account of a subsample in two northern Guanajuato communities in the context of its social and demographic history.

## CHAPTER 3: Results

The results of exploring the food pattern change process among rural communities in Mexico's northern Guanajuato region begins with a description of key contextual rural community life elements; these provide relevant background to food related themes that are taken up throughout the remainder of the section. Then, to address the first research question of how *campesino* food ways shift with increased migration and remittance-receiving in the context of other livelihood strategies, results from a food frequency analysis comparing pre-migration with current food consumption patterns are presented; key food items act as food markers to represent the type of food pattern change that is occurring. Once rural food pattern change is affirmed and grounded, the second research question regarding how Mexican rural-origin *campesinos* understand their negotiation of food consumption is tackled; dialogue regarding the food markers tells how rural people understand and actively negotiate local food pressures. These suggest key mechanisms that motivate the food pattern change that *campesinos* have experienced in the past three decades; these include current notions of taste preference, social returns, and time savings and convenience. This data provides a basis for and shows consistency with the food *culturas* model contained in the discussion chapter.

### The Rural Context

The two community research sites of La Rivera and Mar Delgado were selected based on their differential characteristics including their transmigration histories. According to study participants one key difference is La Rivera's earlier emigration pattern, approximately 15 years prior to Mar Delgado's (approximately 1980 and mid-1990's, respectively). Other differences include demographic data points as noted below.

**La Rivera.** La Rivera is located approximately 16 kilometers from the county seat of Dolores Hidalgo. It is a slow growing rural community comprised of approximately 200 households; approximately 20-30 new families have newly settled there since 1980. Along the commute to this community, one will notice large monoculture fields that provide a dark green background to an otherwise semi-desert region; the region-specific drought tolerant plants may not be in sight for miles or may be seen being uprooted by large bulldozers as water-intensive plantations of broccoli and other agriculture exports require their clearing. At the time of fieldwork in La Rivera, the concrete highway transitions into a bumpy dirt road for approximately 5 additional miles. Along this road large monoculture fields also dominate the landscape. Then, a glimpse of the typical water tower that hovers over each rural community in the surrounding region signals that the main entry into La Rivera is near.

The dirt road narrows once one enters the community and branches out into several roads; there are no paved roads in La Rivera. In this community road conditions are not smooth due to potholes and to the characteristic *tepetate* or surface level stone, a notorious poor soil condition that challenges local *campesinos* to produce food. Also, along the margins of the roads there are notable above ground steel tubes that distribute water to all households. All homes have access to electrical power. Three of the seven small convenience stores in La Rivera are situated along the main entry road; the eighth business is a *tortilleria* [a small tortilla factory] where locals may purchase their daily supply of freshly made tortillas.

A noteworthy migration-related characteristic of La Rivera are its "*casas California*" as locals refer to them. These are homes that are visibly different in terms of layout and architectural details as compared to the typical local structural design. For example, these tend

to have pitched roofs and front porches as well as non-traditional finishes relative to local construction such as insulated windows and stucco exteriors. Clearly these homes are modeled after homes in the United States; *casas California* are material manifestations of remittances streaming into La Rivera from emigrants living and working in the U.S.



One example of a *casa California*. Photograph taken by the investigator.



A small convenience store appended to a two story residence showing typical newer construction; it is one of La Rivera's smaller local convenience stores. Photograph taken by the investigator.

La Rivera community has a history of emigration of almost 30 years with a reported dramatic increase in the early to mid-1980's. A recent inventory taken by long time La Rivera residents estimates that at minimum half of the community households have at least one family member living and working in the United States. The emigrants from this community tend to be older males as well as younger males and females; young males usually migrate once they finish the *secundaria* or middle school while females tend to migrate slightly older at about age 20. In



addition to migration, young men and women also tend to provide low skill labor to the middle and large agriculture industry in the region.

**Mar Delgado.** Mar Delgado is located approximately 8 kilometers from Dolores Hidalgo, the county seat. It is much closer to the main highway as compared to La Rivera; the dirt road leading up to the entry of the community is approximately 1.5 kilometers. Along the main highway and the dirt road that leads up to the entry of the community are large plantations of corn, broccoli and other export crops. Similar to La Rivera, dirt roads persist throughout the community. However, compared to La Rivera, Mar Delgado's population is smaller; it is comprised of approximately 50-60 households. As is typical with surrounding rural communities Mar Delgado's residents fund and manage their *pozo* [water well] through a *comite del agua* [water committee]. Since water is a scarce commodity in this semi-desert region the committee has actively refused access to their *pozo* to mid-range agriculture producers; for this reason Mar Delgado is characterized by outsiders as a "closed" community. Mar Delgado's residents describe themselves as a tight knit community that is protective over their natural resources and social accessibility; the latter corroborates with outsider's experience regarding the community's selectivity about who and how they to interact with outsiders.

Next to the water well is a picturesque *capilla* [Catholic temple] and across from it is Mar Delgado's one and only convenience store that limits sales to nonperishable food; residents must obtain their fruits and vegetables from the mobile produce stands that drive by once or twice a week or during a commute to neighboring community stores or the city of Dolores Hidalgo.

Immigration history in Mar Delgado is more recent than La Rivera by approximately 10 years; it is reported that higher rates of emigration initiated during the mid to late 1990's. The most frequent emigrants are adult male heads of household and similar to La Rivera young men from this community tend to seek emigration as soon as they complete their *secundaria* (middle school). The primary destinations to the United States from this community are San Antonio,



*Jornaleras* are provided roundtrip transportation to and from work, this picture shows a group of women being transported home after a day's work. Mesquite trees can be seen in the background. Photograph taken by the investigator.

Texas and Tennessee. Young females on the other hand do not show patterns of emigration yet; instead they tend to work as *jornaleras* (agriculture workers) for the mid and large agro industry in the region. The following section describes rural lifestyle characteristics that relate to food production and consumption; it is offered to further provide context for the results that follow and as a prelude to addressing the research questions.

### Rural Households

Typical rural properties vary in size from approximately ¼ of an acre to 3 hectares. These are most often enclosed with fencing material from local plants such as densely planted cacti or compacted dried thorny *mesquite* twigs. Once inside the property households that engage in agriculture production will typically have a *volanda* [a 2-wheeled donkey/horse drawn cart that is used to haul large loads of harvest], tall piles of browned *rastrojo* [dried corn stalks], donkeys or horses, and/or a *tronco* [wood or iron tilling tool]. Scarce households own large agriculture machinery such as a tractor, and these tend to be of higher socio-economic status that often coincides with long term remittance-receiving; however not all remittance-receivers show economic advantages over their non-migrant neighbors.



A parked *volanda* within the boundaries of a rural family farm. Photograph taken by the investigator.

Households that maintain food production for self-consumption may also maintain a small vegetable and fruit garden along the periphery of the enclosure of the home; this is called the *traspatio* and serves as immediate and daily access to fresh home grown food. Typical *traspacios* grow corn, zucchini, chilis, cilantro, chard, radish, garlic, onions, and *nopal* [cactus]. Also, common fruit trees include apricot and peach and fewer families have lemon and/or avocado trees.



A *traspatio* in this photo produces zucchini, cactus, corn and other vegetables for a rural family. Photograph taken by the investigator.

Rural living spaces are usually enclosed with walls made of adobe, brick, or concrete block; the main entry into the household residence usually leads into a *patio* [open courtyard]. Here it is typical to see decorative plants and herbs in elevated pots or arranged in designated spaces at ground level. The *patio* floors may comprise of compacted dirt or concrete. The bedrooms and kitchen usually face the courtyard, each with its separate entry; these rooms may stand independently or may share walls with one another. Most homes have an “outside” kitchen that features one of many iterations of a *fogón* [a home built brick and mortar wood-fueled stove] that may or may not have a roof covering. The formal kitchen space on the other hand is usually an enclosed room structure that houses a gas stove and/or a *fogón* in addition to other modern appliances including a refrigerator, blender, etc. Scarce homes own microwave or coffee pots; only one household in the sample owns a microwave. This household is a non-migrant household which is useful to point out that families with migration are not the only ones with increased access to fluid income or modern technology. This topic is taken up in the following section.

### Background and Demographic Characteristics

To begin to address the first research question about how food ways shift in the context of migration and remittances it is necessary to first establish the current demographic make-up and economic resources that meet rural household nutritional needs. County government offices could not provide demographic data of the two communities of interest, in part due to the fact that neither of the communities host a county clinic; in addition, public entities that service these communities such as the health department tend to cluster demographic data by multiple adjacent communities. Therefore the data presented here is obtained from the demographic survey taken during in-depth interviews. The following profile is based on 14 rural households across the two communities of interest.



Doña Simona works on her *fogón*; her husband built it in their space behind their home, it is surrounded by their *traspatio* where she obtains fresh ingredients for her cooking. This *fogón* is protected by a roof and two walls. Photograph taken by Armando Quiroz.

All interview respondents are *campesina* heads of household between ages between 23 and 53 years with a mean age of 42 years. All are married with an average formal education level of 2-3 years; however, younger respondents tend to have completed greater number of years of education. All participants are housewives living in their family-owned homes.

*Campesino* respondents show that they currently depend on various combinations of livelihood strategies that include traditional subsistence farming and newer ones that offer access to fluid income; the newer ones include remittance-receiving, employment based income opportunities, and conditional cash transfer benefits. It is important to know about rural livelihoods and how rural families currently connect to them in order to begin to understand the economic base that supports rural family nutrition patterns.

**Diverse Livelihoods.** Respondents indicate that outmigration in their region became notably stronger as of the 1980's. Subsequently with remittance-receiving rural life ways became increasingly reliant on remittances as a way of life. *Campesinos* suggest that during this period a second major event occurred to changing their historical livelihood strategy of subsistence farming, an abundant issuing of permits to excavate new *pozos* [water wells] by agro-industry companies for the purposes of irrigation. This established a large agro-industry presence in the region and increased the availability of low wage employment; currently, adult and younger *campesino* males as well as young *campesina* from surrounding rural communities supply their labor to it. These two major events, respondents suggest, are mainly responsible for the exodus of many *campesinos* from subsistence livelihood as a primary economic strategy towards fluid-income based livelihoods in the past three decades.

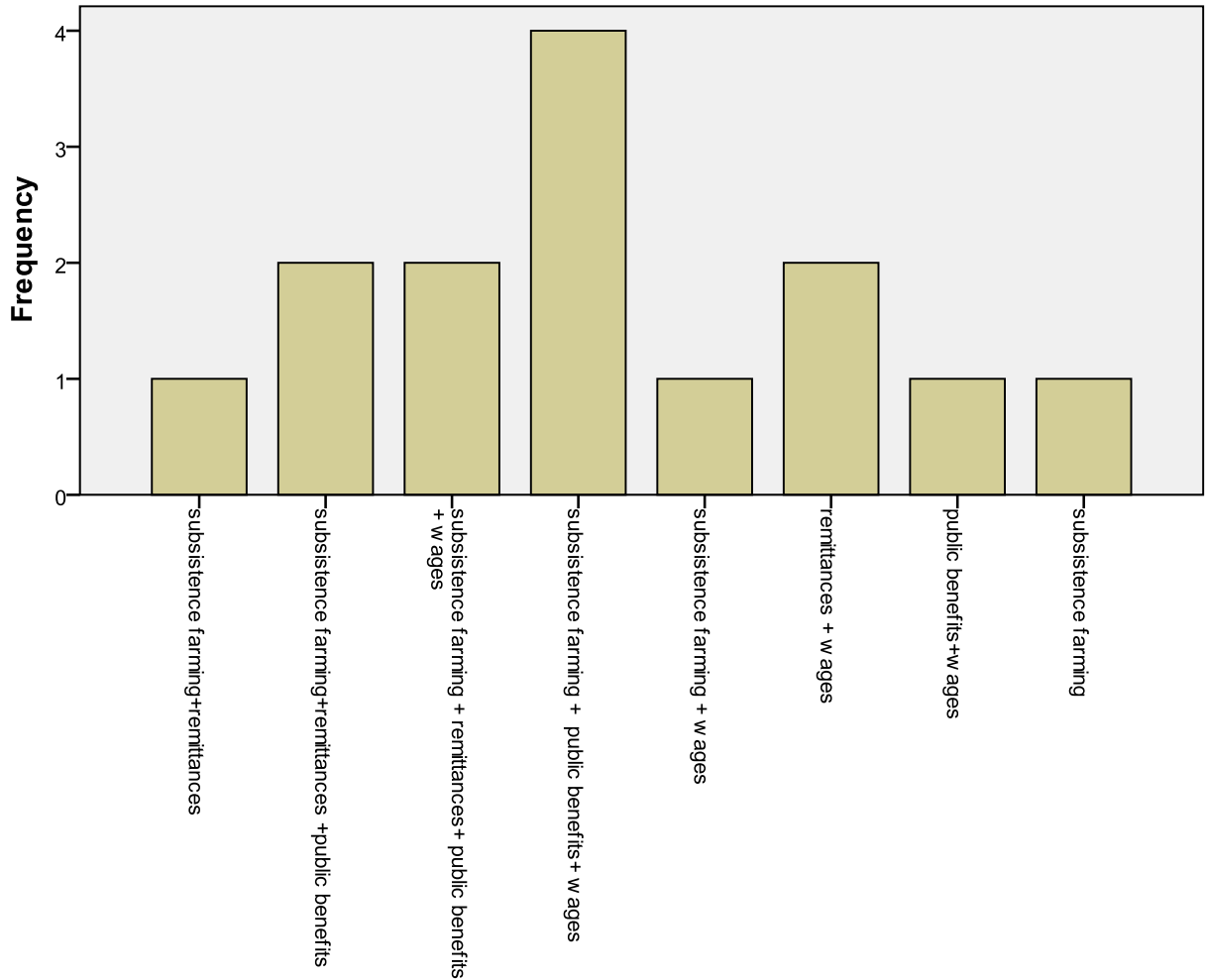
A less acknowledged newer economic strategy that contributes to rural nutritional needs is the conditional cash transfer program known as *Oportunidades*, a program that was initially launched as *PROGRESA* by Mexico's federal government in 1997 to address rural shortcomings in health, education and nutrition. Since the program's inception conditional cash assistance is

offered only to women if they fulfill conditions to receive medical care, attend nutrition education meetings, among others. It also offers food baskets containing basic foodstuffs to its recipients. A question that emerges from understanding the newer fluid income strategies is, how do *campesinos* use these diverse strategies currently compared to premigration times? Results from the demographic survey shed light to this question.

*Campesinos* rely on various livelihood strategies which remains a consistent practice with previous historical times. What is unique in current times however, are the types of livelihood strategies and combinations that have emerged during the past three decades. As can be seen in Table I only one male head of household primarily relies economically on *campesino* or subsistence farming work; most households rely on livelihood combinations that engage one or more strategies that earn fluid income.

Rural livelihoods and food ways are largely influenced by landownership and food production capacity. Half of households (8 or 57%) own *milpas* and of these all but one use their land to produce food staples to some extent. Two of the households that report home grown food production produce at much lower yields because they do not own a *milpa* and are limited to grow their food in their *traspatio*; families lacking a *milpa* must purchase their beans and corn because these staples require larger productive spaces to grow them. Of the 10 households that produce food, a majority (8 or 57%) indicate that they consume “most” of what they produce; fewer sell at least half of what they produce. From these results it is evident that not all who own land produce food, not all who produce food consume the totality of what they produce, not all who consume traditional staples produce them, and not all who produce own productive spaces; therefore the status landowners, producers of food, and consumer of cultural staples should not be understood as indicators of a particular form of consumption.

In terms migration and remittances as a form of livelihood, findings show that all male heads of households have experienced migration to the U.S. at some point during their married life. All respondents began to migrate after 1980 which means that all fluid income access from remittance-receiving occurred during the past three decades. Currently less than half (5 or 41%) of the households have 1 -3 migrants residing in the U.S., and seven (50%) households receive monthly remittances that range between US \$200-\$1000, with a mean of US \$436. Two households receive remittances from non- household family members such as married children. The household receiving \$1000 in remittances may be atypical due to the migrants’ extended working schedules of up to 80 hours per week in highway construction. Most migrants however work in low paying service sector jobs. It is important to note that all who currently receive remittances, over half the sample, did not have this form of fluid income source just two to three decades ago; during this short period of time remittances therefore are an important contributor to *campesino*’s increased access to fluid income.



**Table I: Combinations of Rural Livelihood Strategies**

As far as employment-based income, results show that six adult non-migrant male heads of household (42%) hold seasonal employment in the region’s large scale agro-industry; their positions are described as irregular due to the seasonal nature of their work. Fewer adult males hold jobs in other employment sectors such as construction or free-lance musicianship. Male heads of household that work outside the home frequently work in their *milpa* as well; but *milpa* production in these cases is only feasible if other family members such as a spouse, older parents, and/or working-age children fill in for the displaced labor. Older children who work for wages usually begin after they complete *secundaria* education (middle school); if they work they are also less available to contribute to family farm production. Of the sample, four additional households (29%) rely on income contributions from older children who are employed in local factory or agriculture jobs, these jobs also tend to be seasonal and irregular. On the other hand, four other households working age children that have not sought or obtained employment outside the home; these tend to be females whose roles focus on assisting female heads of household

with their duties. Thus, employment-based income for *campesinos* households comes largely from the agro-industry and *maquiladora* sector and represents a recent fluid income stream considering these jobs became increasingly available in the 1980's. Today, employment-based income is used in higher proportions (71%) relative to all other types of livelihoods indicating a widespread access to fluid income, particularly given that the majority of these households (9 out of 10) couple it with one or more additional fluid income strategies (see Table II).

Government-sponsored cash transfer programs including *Oportunidades and ProCampo* also contribute to rural economies. A majority of households (9 or 64%) receive some sort of cash transfer support between \$150 pesos (US\$11.50) and \$900 pesos (US\$69.00)<sup>3</sup>. Relative to other livelihood strategies, cash transfers are reported as the least fiscally significant fluid income sources towards meeting household nutritional needs; only one respondent indicated it is the most important source to meet their food needs. However small the contribution from *Oportunidades* may be relative to other fluid income sources is, it provides fluid income to more than half of the sampled rural households which also indicates widespread use. As a form of fluid income access it is recent given that the program initiated in the mid 1990's.

Overall, data regarding the various livelihoods that *campesino* currently use suggests that during the past three decades rural households have experienced unprecedented and fast-paced access to fluid income. Results reveal a pattern of increased reliance in fluid income with 79% of the sample combining at least two newer fluid income-based livelihoods. This pattern suggests that family farm labor is likely to be displaced away from subsistence food production; however, evidence suggests that in spite of the partial exodus of *campesinos* from a subsistence lifestyle it has not precluded families from maintaining a level, however reduced, of food production. Subsistence farming as a primary livelihood strategy is no longer the norm among *campesinos* but shows persistence within a more diversified economic strategy. And there is no reason to suspect that *campesinos* will completely phase it out from their livelihood strategies.

**Remittances Influence in Rural Life.** The introduction of remittances in rural spaces is credited for dramatically changing social and material standards in rural spaces. As an example, a respondent commented, "In previous times [pre-migration], if you had a boom box you'd be considered cool; but today you have to have a nice truck or better yet, build a house!" Clearly, there is social pressure to seek out fluid income sources that allow access to the costly trucks and homes. In this context, migration is the primary strategy to access such economic gain while fluid income sources from local employment simply cannot. Marta is a 22 year old *campesina* living in Mar Delgado; she describes her husband's frustration with local economic opportunities:

Entrevistadora: Tu esposo trabaja en el campo?

**Marta:** Si

E: Le pasa a el lo mismo como a ti en el fogón? [en referencia al dialogo previo donde describía la pena que siente cuando la gente pasa por su casa y la ve cocinar afuera en el *fogón*]

**Marta:** Pues si, yo creo que si, y mas a el. **Por ejemplo, cuando trabaja llega como a estas horas y llega muy cansado. Y se pone el a pensar que no progresamos. Y se va desde que amanece y seguimos en lo mismo. Asi me dice "ya me voy a ir al norte, ya me voy". Y le digo, "no, no te vayas, aunque este aquí con el hambre, pero que no se vaya".**

E: Pero juntos.

**Marta:** Si, juntos. Porque se van y pues hacen allá su dinero y lo mandan, hacen sus casas, y compran sus camioneta.

E: La camioneta.

**Marta:** Yo tengo unos hermanos que se fueron al otro lado, tenían 14 años. **Ahorita acaban de llegar y tienen sus casas y su camioneta, apenas tienen 17 años y ya tienen sus casas y camioneta. Pues trabajando aquí nunca hacen nada, y yo creo que por eso a los otros les dan ganas de irse. Por sus camionetas. Hay veces que a la mejor no es mas valioso [lo material] pero tienen que irse.**

[Interviewer: Does your husband work in the field?

Marta: Yes.

I: Does he mention if he experiences the same thing as you with the fogón? [referring to the previous dialogue where she described feeling shame when people pass by and see her cooking on her fogón]

Marta: Well yes, I think so and more so for him. For example, when he arrives home from work more or less around this time and he arrives very tired. And he starts to think about how we have not made progress. He goes to work from dawn and we continue to be in the same situation. Then he tells me, “I am leaving to *el norte*, I am going to go”. And I tell him, “no, don’t leave, even if I go hungry, but don’t go”.

I: But you’d be together.

Marta: Yes, together. Because they leave and we

l they earn their money and they send it here, they make their houses, and buy a truck.

I: The truck.

Marta: I have brothers who left to cross the border, they were 14 years old. They just returned and they have a home and a truck. They are only 17 years old and they have their house and truck. If they stay to work here they wouldn’t be able to achieve any of that. I think this is why others are interested in migrating. To buy their trucks. Sometimes it [material gain] may not be more valuable but they must go.”

While Marta clearly prefers that her husband not migrate, her story asserts a perceived necessity to emigrate for the purposes of accessing desired life standards in a short time frame; this notion is related to their experience that local livelihood strategies do not achieve a similar progress level. While homes and autos may certainly be interpreted as basic necessities, the drive and desired timeframe to attain them suggests a social pressure to keep up with local material standards. Thus migration and remittances have played not only an important role not only in creating but in supporting a particular type of rural narrative of consumption as compared to pre-migration times. As it will be seen, the drive to attain a higher level of life standard plays an important role in rural food pattern orientations.

The above descriptions of livelihoods and remittances partially answers the research question regarding how *campesino* food ways shift in the context of migration and remittance-receiving. Results show that livelihood strategies are the basis for a *campesino*’s food system, and that as subsistence farming as a primary livelihood source becomes more diversified, the use of multiple fluid income-base activities has increased rural access to fluid income in a compressed timeframe. In turn, increased access to income shifts rural people’s understanding of life standards that influences their consumption patterns. Now that food ways are briefly introduced in their broader socio-economic and historical frame, we turn to examine the specifics of food pattern shift among *campesinos*.

### Rural Food Patterning Shift

To continue answering the question of how *campesino* foodways have shifted in the context of migration and remittances results it is necessary to examine the food practices of current times as compared to those of approximately three decades ago when migration and remittance-receiving were significantly less salient in rural lives. Results from the Food Patterning assessment, one component of an in-depth interview with rural heads of household, inform regarding these changes. *Campesino* respondents were prompted to recall their food



ways prior to experiencing migration and remittances; with statements such as, “¡*Aquellos tiempos fueron muy diferentes!*” [Those days were quite different!], convey a common perception that the pre-migration period contrasts in important ways to the current one. And the Food Patterning assessment results corroborates this by showing that the pre-migration food frequency pattern is very distinctive from current patterns.

**Foods Patterns in Transition.** Data from the Food Patterning instrument suggests rural food habits have principally shifted along four dimensions: how frequently certain foods are consumed, the manner in which foods are consumed, the freshness and quality of ingredients used, and food diversity. As can be seen in Table II the Food Patterning assessment produced a list of food items that respondents indicate they have maintained, reduced, increased or eliminated from their food ways relative to pre-migration food patterns.

Table II offers an overview regarding *campesino* food transitions during the past three decades. Although the list of foods are too numerous to discuss separately, results of selected foods are described below to offer a sense of how they change. For example, one food that embodies the dramatic rural food pattern change is *atole de puzcua*, a porridge that is traditionally prepared from fresh ground corn. During pre-migration times it was customary to drink *atole de puzcua* two or three times per day, a frequency of consumption that the Food Patterning assessment categorizes as “core” due to its primary location in daily consumption. To give a sense of its trajectory across time, Mrs. Jimenez shares her experience with it. She is a 50 year old La Rivera resident:

**Sra. Jimenez:** El atole de puzcua, desde chiquititilla mi abuelita no me hacía tomar atole. Hacían su casote, y vaciaban y llenaban otra olla para tener para en la noche. Entonces acabó mi abuelita y siguió mi mama con su atole. En ese entonces no había café, no había canela, lo que habían era hojas de no se de que, serian [las compañeras contestan, “eran hojas de naranjo”]. Pues ellos iban que a Rodríguez y traían sus canastas de chiles, de jitomates, bueno de todo, y unos manojotes de hojas y té. Eso era lo que yo tomaba porque el atole no. Y pos yo así crecí, y fui la única que no me gustaba. Y llegué aquí [casa de su esposo], y halle la misma costumbre que allá en mi casa, el atole y el chile...Entonces ya después entró el café, pues le entre yo... Duré mucho tiempo haciendo atole, hice en mi casa [de soltera] y si hice aquí [de casada]. “No, ya no, ya los tiempos cambiaron”, eso les decía yo, “pues ahora nada más de poner la canelita a la estufa, ya cual entretención de atole”. Pero ya vamos dándole vuelta a eso...Ahora si, me heché un posillo, no pos ‘ta rre bueno! Agarra uno ideas...ahora que si ya estoy haciendo atole.

**[Ms. Jimenez:** Corn porridge, since I was a little girl my grandmother was not able to make me drink it. They would make it in a big *caso* [copper pot] and would pour it into and fill another pot to drink in the evening. After my grandmother, my mother kept the tradition of corn porridge. During those times there was no coffee, there was no cinnamon bark [for tea], and what we did have was some kind of leaves [other participants chime in, “they were orange tree leaves”]. They would go to *Rodriguez* and bring back a basketful of chilies, tomatoes, everything, and large bundles of tea leaves. That is what I would drink and not corn porridge. And that is how I grew up; I was the only one that did not like it. And I arrived here [her husband’s home] and I found the same custom as in my house, porridge and chile... Then coffee became available, and I began to drink it... I prepared porridge for a long time, I made it in my house [as a single woman] and made it here [as a married woman]. Later, I would say to them [her family members], “No more. Times have changed. Now we just boil cinnamon bark over the stove, no more time consuming porridge”. But I am coming around... I tasted a cupful; I discovered its very tasty! One adopts ideas... now I make porridge.”

Her description highlights that consumption of *atole de puzcua* is linked to a variety of influential factors including taste, accessibility to alternative and newer products in the market, perceived ease or difficulty of its preparation, perception of the food, among other factors, that

are discussed later. For now note Ms. Jimenez’s description about how *atole de puzcua* consumption are reduced, eliminated, and re-appropriated across several decades and across generations. Similarly, the Food Patterning results show that most rural households have significantly reduced or replaced *atole de puzcua* with instant commercial varieties or sugary drinks; this rural subgroup however co-exist with people like Mrs. Jimenez who had stopped preparing it for her family but is now re-appropriating it.

|                                  | Maintenance   | Reduced Consumption  | Increased Consumption   |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Regional/Cultural Staples</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beans</li> <li>• <i>Nopal</i> (cactus)</li> <li>• <i>Tortilla a mano</i> (handmade tortillas)</li> <li>• <i>Salsa Casera</i> (homemade salsa)</li> <li>• <i>Tuna</i> (prickly pear fruit)</li> <li>• Eggs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• farm produced eggs*</li> <li>• farm produced corn</li> <li>• farm grown beans</li> <li>• <i>quelite</i> (wild greens)</li> <li>• <i>verdolaga</i> (wild greens)</li> <li>• <i>huitlacoche</i> (corn fungus)</li> <li>• <i>atole de puzcua</i> (corn porridge)*</li> <li>• <i>aguamiel</i> (extract/drink from <i>maguey</i> plant)*</li> <li>• lentils</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• <i>Aguas Frescas</i> (homemade fruit drinks)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Commercial Foods</b>          |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>habas</i> (fava beans)*</li> <li>• garbanzo beans</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>salchicha</i>(beef franks)**</li> <li>• mayonnaise**</li> <li>• sliced ham**</li> <li>• salty snacks (chips, etc)**</li> <li>• bottled hot sauce**</li> <li>• soda pop**</li> <li>• instant artificial drinks**</li> <li>• green salad</li> <li>• meat</li> </ul> |

\* foods that are practically eliminated from rural food patterns.

\*\*foods that may be categorized as rural “fast foods” and that generally increased in frequency of consumption to either “primary core” or “secondary core” foods in the current rural diet.

**Category definition:** “regional/cultural staples” indicates the food shifts among those that have been historically consumed by rural families; this category also includes seasonal regional foods that may be harvested from regional plants. “Commercial food” includes foods that are long-time staples as well as recently integrated commercial foods. The “maintenance” category indicates foods for which no difference in consumption frequency was reported between pre-migration and current times.

**Table II. Rural Food Patterning Findings:**

Reported frequency of consumption comparing pre-migration and current times.

Although Mrs. Jimenez did not explain it in the text, she is part of a local food movement of rural consumers that are reclaiming their regional and cultural foods. The case of Mrs. Jimenez's demonstrates that the direction of her *atole* consumption shifted in response to available influences and resources, for her it was an NGO that provides education about the value of cultural and fresh foods that led her to reinserting it in her food habits. Shifts in *atole de puzcua* shows that foods ebb and flow through time and that any frequency pattern at any given time should neither be assessed as one-directional nor as fated; rather, just like Mrs. Jimenez's story it is a snapshot of flexible processes that may look differently across time.

In addition to frequency, change is also evident in the manner in which a particular food is consumed. For example, traditional foods such as beans and lentils are changing in terms of how they are garnished (Table II). The photograph below shows a meal that consists of a bowl of beans and lentils, tortillas and soda:



For clarification the investigator asked the community *camarista*, "What is on the spoon?". The *campesina* replied, "Mayonnaise".

This photograph uncovered the story regarding the widespread use of mayonnaise as a garnish across both rural communities; it is generally added to lentil and pasta soup, rice, beans, tuna salads, green salads, among other dishes. Of the fourteen households only three report using mayonnaise during pre-migration periods, this means the majority of participants have adopted it during post- migration periods. Currently, ten heads of household report to use it at least once per week.

Flavor enhancement is a key reason for its use; flavoring traditional dishes and seeking out new flavors is a newer food behavior. Consider the observation from a young *campesino* resident of La Rivera:

**Campesino:** Porque aquí me ha tocado también ver que a muchos no les gustan los nopales, que no les gustan los frijoles negros, entonces porque es eso? Porque no le va a gustar a uno la comida natural? Y ahora lo que esta de moda es comer lo que trae un sabor diferente y ya procesado. Ahorita esto es lo que se debe de comer, todo lo que tiene la tienda. Que si no es bien chatarra como quiera son aderezos, o cosas que se le ponen a la comida, pero que le dan otro sabor a... porque yo me acuerdo a los nopales o los quelites a mi no me llegaron a gustar pero era porque tenia la idea que lo bueno era lo otro...

[**Campesino:** I have seen that a lot of people do not like *nopales* [cactus] or black beans, and why is this so? Why don't we like natural foods? And more currently, it is fashionable to eat foods that offer a new flavor and that are processed. That is what we currently understand we should consume, any food that the [local] store sells. They are often highly processed foods such as dressings, or garnishes that may be added to one's food, to change the flavor... I remember I didn't like *nopales* or *quelites* and that was because I was under the impression the good stuff was that other type of food...."]

Like Ms. Jimenez, notice that he describes the important role that an individual's perception regarding specific foods has in deciding what is flavorful and what is not, about what is "fashionable" to eat and what is not. Whereas beans and lentils were eaten without garnish for decades there is a notable widespread practice of adding mayonnaise to them in both communities. This *campesino's* words, taken together with Mrs. Jimenez's and the descriptions of others regarding food change, it is common to hear how they frame food change as an individual level process often not determined by individual preference or criteria alone. Rather, that is often influenced by external factors.

In addition to food frequency and the manner in which foods are consumed a third type of food change relates to the type and freshness of the staple ingredients that are used in regional dishes. Specifically, the Food Pattern assessment and qualitative data show that rural households have less access to fresh, whole, and organic home grown vegetables, legumes, and herb staples. For example, while half of the households maintain the practice of making fresh homemade tortillas, the corn used to make them are not always home grown maize; some families must supplement their homegrown corn with purchased maize or with ready-made *Maseca* corn mix due to a limited or lacking a supply of homegrown corn. Furthermore, modern amenities of pre-made and convenience foods as well as newer food services in local towns such as the *tortilleria* (tortilla factory) in La Rivera offer the option to purchase ready-made tortillas. *Tortillerias* are known to use commercial maize and/or corn mixes such as *Maseca*. Also, for some families the preferred type of maize has shifted from the *criollo* (heirloom) varieties towards the commercial and "lighter colored" varieties. Another staple ingredient, the homegrown chili, is largely replaced by commercial chilies. Related to the finding that displaced *campesino* labor from family farms shifts towards fluid-income based work and that it is likely to reduce food production capacity, the above results show how reduced access to fresh cultural staples changes the quality and freshness of the cultural foods that are maintained.

The fourth type of change that the Food Patterning assessment shows is an increased diversification of foods consumed. As Table II shows, rural people currently show a greater access to diverse protein sources; whereas pre-migration patterns relied primarily on beans, lentils and garbanzos as key sources of protein, more current patterns show that commercial meats including tuna, chicken, beef franks, among others are used in the rural diet. However, there is an important tension in the more diversified rural diet. In the newly adopted food column it is evident that various foods are characteristically salty, fatty, and sugary, a consumption pattern that signals potential health risks in the long term; at the same time, in the

reduced consumption column there are important nutrient-rich vegetables such as *verdolagas*, *and quelites* and legumes including fava beans and garbanzos that are known to support a healthy nutrition. This scenario interrogates the more diversified diet that is supported by the shift towards increased access to fluid income and whether the benefits may outweigh the costs.

Thus, findings regarding how *campesino* foods ways shift in the context of increasing migration and remittance-receiving show that food change is visible through a list of key foods that shift in terms of frequency of consumption, manner of its consumption, freshness and quality of its ingredients, and diversification. This base knowledge however remains less comprehensive because *campesino* foodways are more complex. A deeper qualitative analysis informs a follow up research question, how do *campesinos* understand and act upon their shifting food patterns? These findings reveal key motivating factors to food pattern change that *campesinos* negotiate on a daily basis.

### Core Mechanisms of Rural Food Negotiation

The previous section described the macro and micro frame of rural food pattern by examining socio-economic and individual practices that contribute to and signal food change. It introduced the notion that *campesinos* frame their understanding of daily food negotiation in terms of individual preferences that are embedded in broader influential ones that may comprise of mass culture, historical events, and political circumstances. To continue developing a more complex portrait of rural food consumption change, this section begins to explore the second research question that focuses on how Mexican rural-origin *campesinos* understand and act upon their negotiation of food consumption. To answer this question data from interviews with rural heads of household, photographic, Food Patterning and participant observation data is synthesized and cross-referenced in order to substantiate the observations made.

*Campesino* explanations about how they experience food changes during the past three decades suggest that food pattern change is motivated primarily according to three interconnected mechanisms. The first mechanism deals with newer notions of taste preferences and is followed by a second one that has to do with the value of obtaining social returns; these two mechanisms suggest a shift towards more individualized and social status driven food system as compared to the previous food system focused on collective activities around growing and preparing food. Further, notions of work in food spaces and *flojera* (lazyness) show newer understanding and value of time savings and convenience foods as compared to pre-migration food ways that valued cost-consciousness and family-based labor.

To ensure that context and time dimensions are attended to in addressing the phenomena of food change, care is taken to describe how current food negotiation strategies may contrast with earlier ones. The first mechanism reverts back to themes that Ms. Jimenez and the young *campesino* expressed in the previous section; both emphasized the important role that taste preference plays in rural food negotiation.

**Taste: A Newer Food Need.** The distinction between consumer wants and needs is widely used in the literature to separate consumer absolute needs with relative ones. These categories provide a useful way to think about how taste preference as a motivator to food change may shift perceptions of “wants” towards “needs”. During pre-migration times, taste preference as a factor for food selection was less salient than current times; rather, stories of scarce resources often refer to taste in regards to how much enjoyed they got out of the food that they did have, however limited in choice it was. More currently, to explain their consumption of newer commercial foods *campesinos* explain that they like “*lo bueno*” [the good stuff], a reference to pallet preferences and not to nutritional content. But *campesino* accounts also indicate that a person’s taste preference for *lo bueno* is not a mechanism solely determined by voluntary, flexible and individual decision-making processes; rather, taste as a motivator for change is more complex. Consumption of *la Coca* (Coke brand) for example illustrates how taste preferences are supported and reinforced by socially motivated meaning-making processes.

The Food Patterning assessment corroborates interview data that suggests soda pop consumption precedes times of mass outmigration and remittances; as many as half of respondents were drinking soda pop prior to experiencing emigration. However, the consumption at that time rates at much lower frequencies as compared to the more current pattern. The upsurge of soda consumption among *campesinos* then occurred after remittances and other fluid income sources.

The current taste preference for *la Coca* and Pepsi is evidenced with the photographic documentation of their food lives by *campesino camaristas* [photographers]. These products are frequently accompanying a meal. The following two photographs provide examples of the same household:



These two photographs pertain to the same household. In each photograph mother and daughter hold a 3-liter soda bottle; photographs were taken by a teenage family member.

The photograph showing a little girl holding a bottle of soda pop exemplifies the many images of young children and their consumption of soft drinks. For storeowners the high demand for *la Coca* requires daily re-stocking of that particular stand whereas others do not; in fact, *la Coca* provides a healthy profit margin to storeowners that they admit to rely upon.

The notion that individual taste preference adequately explains the collective affinity towards *la Coca* erodes when stories such as Mr. Perez's tells a more complex story. Mr. Perez is a 50 year old resident of La Rivera, he tells about his first exposure to *la Coca* in the early 1970's, approximately forty years ago:

“I remember when I was on my way to the *milpa* early in the morning and I would notice that some people were carrying *la Coca* and *pan dulce* [pastries]. I would say to myself, “I wonder what that is like” and I began to taste *la Coca* accompanied with the pastries. At the beginning *la Coca* did not sit well with me, my stomach turned. But I persisted because, well, I think that is what one must do to compete. One does not want to lag behind the rest. And so one buys it to show that one has the capacity to do so. And well, then you get addicted... I became addicted [with *la Coca*]”.

Mr. Perez’s experience compresses numerous issues in brief sentences. One of the most striking details is the initial discomfort he underwent in order to acquire the taste for *la Coca*. Then, that the acquired taste transformed into an extraordinary taste preference which he calls an “addiction”. In Mr. Perez’s case, taste based on personal preferences does not adequately explain the motivating factor for initiating *la Coca* drinking; rather, he is motivated by a desire to gain social status and the preferred taste develops from the initial one. Mr. Perez’s taste for *la Coca* therefore was not determined by individual “choice”; rather, it involved the influence of constructions that formulated in his mind based on socially transmitted ideas that were shaped by external near and distant factors.

Further, the notion of taste preference also conjures the assumption that consumption of preferred foods is based on a voluntary and flexible choice; rural explanations for soda pop consumption reveal that taste preference is often linked to rigid forms of consumption. For example, 50% of the interviewed sample that show a persistent consumption pattern towards *Coca* drinking with a frequency of more than 3 times per week, this pattern could be daily. When asked about it, the pattern is described as an uncompromising habit. Among this subgroup, often, even in spite of awareness about the cumulative financial and health costs of soda pop they assert that their high intake will not wane. For example, Carla is a *campesina* of Mar Delgado who is in her mid 30’s and describes her preference for *la Coca*:

“I don’t see [food pattern change] as related to the availability of cash, I think *la Coca* is like a bad habit, even if I don’t have money I will find a way to buy it”.

Clearly, this respondent neither describes *Coca*-drinking as a flexible preference nor as voluntary. It is an example of one extreme of newer perceptions for the “need” to satisfy taste preferences.

It must also be noted that not all *campesinos* identify soda pop as a rigid cultural or personal necessity; there is evidence that some families have curtailed its consumption to varying degrees. Mrs. Chavez for example, is a 45 year old mother of seven children. Her husband began to migrate in the early 1980’s and recently they have traded their remittance dependent lifestyle for a subsistence one in La Rivera; they have determined that the social costs that migration represents for their family life are too high. A unique characteristic that sets this family apart from most participating rural households is Mrs. Chavez’s long term engagement with a sustainable rural development education movement. In terms of soda pop consumption she is the only one that reports a reduction from “more than 3 times per week” to “once per week”. This example is useful to demonstrate that consumption reduction does occur in rural spaces, even in the face of taste preferences because Mrs. Chavez still enjoys the flavor.

**Social Benefits.** As Mr. Perez’s story illustrates, *campesinos* understand that certain food choices provide access to desired social benefits. This understanding is not a new phenomenon among *campesinos*, but in the context of fast paced increased access to fluid

income during the past three decades, what is new is their increased access to the desired social benefits by virtue of being able to afford status foods.

In the following account Omar explains his understanding about how improved income access, food preferences, and desired social status interact; he is a 27 year old La Rivera resident:

“...when one has more access to fluid income one starts to aim for something bigger, for the “better stuff”. That is, just because something costs more one believes that it is “better”. But in reality we are now understanding that everything is pretty much similar. Big corporations set up a brand...and sell it through television programming... this has to do with status, wanting to feel superior by consuming a particular brand.”

His analysis makes reference to the current tendency to perceive “value” in purchasing a particular brand of food- that the extra cost is worth the enhanced experience that is associated with it. This way of understanding food contrasts with pre-migration times when the food purchasing experience is described to be dominated by price consciousness and limited to few items that families did not produce in the family farm, scarcity of fluid income of the time may explain this purchasing pattern. When purchasing status foods, cost consciousness is not always the most salient priority.

Another example that shows notions of status overriding the need for cost consciousness is the avoidance of foods that are readily available for consumption across surrounding fields and that do not require purchasing. Whereas during pre-migration these foods were perceived as socially acceptable, the current enhanced capacity to purchase higher status foods discourages the consumption of these stigmatized rural foods. For instance, Ximena is a 28-year old *campesina* of Mar Delgado who explains an embarrassing moment involving *quelites* (edible dark leafy green herb):

Un día yo venia con la carretilla con quelites y una señora me dice, ‘lleva alimento para los puercos?’ y me dio pena decirle que no, que eran para nosotros..

[One day I was pushing a wheelbarrow containing *quelites* and a lady asks me, ‘you’re taking back food for the pigs?’ and I was too ashamed to respond to her that no the greens were for us.]

As Table II indicates, Ximena’s story illustrates how *quelites* and other cultural and regional foods including *verdolagas* are perceived as backwards and shameful; *campesinos* explain that these foods are often associated with poverty as *comida de pobres* (poor man foods). In this context it is no surprise that these two foods show a dramatic reduction in consumption frequency by Food Patterning assessment results. Altogether the tendency to pay higher prices for status food and to purchase or avoid foods that could otherwise be free of charge represent the power of desired social benefits as motivators for food change.





A *campesina* carries a bundle of *quelites*.  
Photograph taken by Armando Quiroz

To further connect the influence of fluid income to attaining desired social benefits through food let's consider the case of rural women whose husbands are working in the United States as migrants and who are experiencing a newer role as household income managers. In this role they express an enhanced capacity to broker new ways of relating with their children through commercial food. Consider the case of Mrs. Chavez, the *campesina* from La Rivera whose husband recently renounced migration for returning to subsistence farming, she tells how fluid income from remittances enabled her to bridge perceived parenting gaps:

**Sra. Chavez: Porque, a principio yo pensaba que llenaba un vacío en ellos... no les daba mucho. Pero** lo poquito que les daba yo veía que ya llegaban con la bolsita de churros y de cualquier cosita.

[Ms. Chavez: **At first, I thought I was filling a void in them.... I didn't give them much [spending money].** But with the little that I did give them I noticed they would arrive home with *churros* [fried corn snacks] or other things.]

Her strategy to fill a “void” in her children due to their father’s absence was to offer them an allowance so that they purchase food they enjoy. She explains that receiving remittances made it possible to *dar peso* (give allowance) but that it backfired because when she tried to reduce or eliminate it they rebelled against her and it strained their relationship. Similarly, focus group interviews support the notion that remittances play an important role in the mother and child relationship-building process through *el peso*. Respondents recall that when they were in elementary school everyone generally knew that the sons/daughters of migrants were “*riquillos*” [the rich ones] because they could afford to buy the best snacks. As non-migrant children respondents said they felt envious and would complain to their parents about to being able to buy snacks at school. During pre-migration times children seldom received allowance.

Currently, *dar peso* is a widespread practice in rural communities. In Mexico children generally do not have access to U.S. style “fast food” restaurants; but they do have access to *tienditas de abarrotes* (rural convenience stores) where desired snacks are readily available. Buying snacks comprises of a daily consumption pattern of chips, candy, cookies, and soda consumption; these products are available at various price points to accommodate children’s

limited budgets; for example salty snacks are priced at \$2, \$3, \$4, and \$5 pesos. A strategy that is used by local *tienditas* is to sell snacks on a per-piece basis; for example, 6 ham slices are sold for \$5 pesos (US \$0.38) and beef franks are sold at \$1.50 pesos each (US\$ 0.12). Thus, a salient feature of fluid income access through remittances and other fluid income access is the relationship brokering that parents engage in with their children, which expands children's agency over the foods they consume.

Thus far the question of how *campesinos* understand their food pattern suggests that food negotiation is often influenced by taste preferences and associated social returns. These newer ways to negotiate food ways tend to orient *campesino* food patterns toward commercial foods and away from regional and cultural foods; they also encourage generational and individualized food consumption patterns with children's newer agency to purchase their preferred foods and parent's newer parenting styles that aim to please the pallet of their children. The final dimension of *campesino* food negotiation schemes is a newer understanding of time savings and convenience.

**Time Savings and Convenience.** *Campesino* accounts show that *campesinos* negotiate their foodways according to more modern understandings of how much work is necessary to produce or prepare one's foods. Newer ideas about work and *flojera* [lazy] are generally negotiated in the kitchen and the *milpa* [productive field]. In the kitchen some rural women negotiate their traditional role of preparing *comida entretenida* [time intensive food] in view of a newer increased access to pre-packaged and ready-made commercial food. This newer access must be understood in the context of the economic and livelihood shifts that enable them to purchase the food products.

For rural women, *flojera* or laziness is a common explanation used to explain why they make use of certain convenience foods such as instant porridge, pre-made tortillas, among others. As they explain further it becomes clear that calling themselves lazy is not self denigrating. Rather, it is a strategy to express a sense of empowerment over their gender roles. That is, to exercise the option whether to engage in labor intensive kitchen work provides a sense of personal agency, in spite of potentially being perceived as lazy by others. Often, *campesinas* smile when they call themselves "lazy".

For other women however, convenience foods neither personify liberation, luxury, nor "choice" but rather a strategy that enhances their capacity to meet their newer and more demanding roles; the modern rural women must often fill in for displaced family farm labor due to out migration or employment. For example, women's food related roles include kitchen, garden, *Oportunidades* meetings, community association meetings, and *milpa* work, in addition to other non-food related roles. Hence, the practicality of convenience foods for these women is less a choice than it is a necessity. For example, Matilde resides in La Rivera convenience foods helps her to open some time to help her husband in the *milpa*:

"One reason I don't make handmade tortillas right now is... that currently I am helping my husband at the *milpa*. I tell you, the older girls work [for wages] and they don't want to help in the *milpa* anymore. Since I am the only one that accompanies my husband then something has to give. Right now we buy them [tortillas]".

There is yet another sector of rural women who do not subscribe to commercial food varieties and who instead seek other solutions to meet their role demands. For example, most of the

women who hand make their tortillas prefer to dedicate one morning per week to make a large batch of handmade tortillas rather and these last for an entire week; of the 14 respondents half the women hand make their tortillas. The divergent understandings and use of convenience foods described above helps to show that convenience foods are not collectively embraced in the same manner and that rather consumption of these foods are best characterized as diverse and under constant adaptation.

Increased access to fluid income also tends to put into question the necessity and feasibility to continue the practice of food production in the *traspatio*, the home garden and herbs. Reasons given for opting out of *traspatio* food production include terms such as *flojera* [lazyness], *atenida* [reliant on others to do it], or *decidia* [procrastination]. Other women wish to continue production but their families may not agree with that the production of is a necessity. For example, data shows that migrant wives and young women who work tend to assert that because fluid income is no longer scarce as compared to pre-migration times, then taking advantage of “*la facilidad*” [ease] is warranted. These women tend to distance themselves from their traditional role in the kitchen and food production spaces such as the *traspatio* and *milpa*. For example, a mother describes her daughters who are in their early 20’s and who work in local *maquiladoras* as “of a different type”. She explains how the disagreement about the use of the patio garden area:

“They want to have everything [the yard] neat. Why? I don’t know, perhaps it is because they have grown up and they want to have everything all neat and clean. I wonder if it because people that walk by may see trash. They accuse us of not doing anything to improve this place. I’ve tried telling them to leave behind some leaves [in the garden, for composting purposes] but they don’t do it. They are in charge of clearing out the *patio*. They say they would like to grow a lawn but my husband tells them to plant a tree which may provide some benefit. This may be explained because of our boy is in *el norte*, he works [in landscaping]”.

This example illustrates contrasting understandings about aesthetics, value of fresh food, and ecological concerns between mother and daughters. The mother explains the daughter’s interest in growing a lawn in relation to her migrant son’s influence; she also acknowledges that what makes her daughter a different type of *campesina* is her reference point as a wage earner. This example is useful to show the influential power of migration and fluid employment based income; note that the influence is not only in terms of access to fluid income but in terms of how they understand their food sources and the use of garden spaces. Other barriers to food production include lacking access to productive land, perceiving wandering chickens a risk to good relations with neighbors, mistrust of neighbors, lacking technology to capture water for irrigation, and lacking knowledge about more efficient forms of food production, among others.

Food Patterning assessment results show that those who produce consume a wider range of vegetables, possibly due to the fact that they can access wild growing herbs and vegetables in their productive spaces in addition to the commercial varieties. Producers also maintain consumption of locally produced milk, eggs, and cheese instead of commercial varieties. It is important not to overly romanticize producers however because some show a high level of commercial fast food. Finally, it is also noteworthy to mention that the food pattern of those who are linked to agroecological food movements is markedly different as compared to those who do not. In addition to the benefits cited above for food producers in general they also tend to consume less sugary drinks, more fruit, more soy products, and replace sugar with honey as a

sweetener. This latter subgroup of *campesinos* illustrates the influential significance of grassroots agroecological education programs in rural food patterns.

It has been shown that food pattern change in rural spaces occurs in a wider frame of interacting variables that should not be reduced to individual processes but rather expanded to understand the influence of large scale influential factors such as diverse livelihoods, migration and remittances, and consequent changes in consumption. Furthermore, it was noted that to understand motivating factors that influence *campesino* food patterns in times of increased availability of fluid income, the wide ranging rural food negotiation strategies should be conceived as neither firm nor fated in time

## Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this community-based participatory research study is to examine how *campesinos* understand and respond to their food pattern changes in the context of recently enhanced access to fluid-income by way of migration-related remittances, among other newer rural livelihoods. The study takes up concerns regarding the *nutrition transition*, a global phenomenon of increased consumption of refined commercial products such as salty snacks, cookies, soda, among others by populations that are experiencing historically recent increases in access to fluid income (Popkin, 2001). To contextualize key study findings with themes from past food research, a summary of key observations is first provided with particular focus regarding the influence of migration and remittances. Then, two themes emerging from the dialogue between study findings and past food research are presented to provide a basis for future policy, research, and practice recommendations.

*Campesinos* [small rural landholders] specifically credit migration and remittances to encourage and sustain newer expectations of material life standards in rural spaces; correspondingly, they also perpetuate the viewpoint of migration as the quasi-panacea to attain such desired standards. This newer consumer orientation is only possible due to their enhanced access to fluid income through remittances and other newer fluid income sources. This orientation is evidenced in the consumption of commercial foods that are associated with higher social status such as *la Coca* [Coke brand soda pop]. At the same time, social status concerns discourage the consumption of region-specific foods, such as dark green herbs, that are stigmatized as “poor man’s food” and that have significantly reduced in consumption. The result is a pattern of reduced whole home grown staples along with an integration of a number of newer commercial foods, some of which are calorie-dense and highly processed foods. This study echoes past studies showing that current patterns are more diverse relative to pre-migration patterns and relative to increased access to fluid income.

A second rural food sphere that *campesinos* assert is influenced by migration and remittances is women’s and children’s enhanced capacity to negotiate their food related activities and social relations. As non-migrants, wives of migrants often adopt a newer fluid income manager role that encourages a sense of agency over their kitchen and *milpa* [productive family field] work; some *campesinas* trade off work in these spaces in favor of convenience foods to claim their right to exercise choice while others use them to offset time needed to carry out additional responsibilities incurred by the absence of their migrant husband. Remittances also allow mothers to relate to their children in newer ways, as in *el peso* [allowance-giving]. While this practice is also known to broker status among children, because the foods that children can afford and frequently eat in the presence of other children in school yards and in the street, it has also connected children directly to the calorie-dense food and drink food market. The food patterning assessment shows that adults too have integrated numerous calorie dense foods into their “core” diets (Jerome, 1982). On the other hand, among notable findings that convey that food pattern changes are neither one directional nor fixed is a sector of fewer *campesinos* that critically engage the commercial food juggernaut showing more healthful and less calorie-dense food patterns.

When considered in the context of past food literature, the above findings complicate two themes. First, past examination of remittances generally represent them as positive development contributions to rural spaces of Mexico. This study however, shows that the influence of remittances in the context of food lifestyles implies both benefits and costs. Also, this study

dialogues with the proposition of the nutrition transition that characterizes a gradual advancement towards a Westernized food pattern, a progression that appears to be linear and inevitable. Findings show that food pattern change is more fluid and relevant to available local and distant influences and supports.

Newer *campesino* fluid income strategies including remittances and migration are generally spoken about in the literature as forms of socio-economic, infrastructure, or political enhancements to Mexico's countryside. However, studying how they impact rural food pattern changes suggests that remittances may not entirely represent all around positive rural development; on the one hand they are shown to simultaneously enhance food related negotiation power while on the other they show to increase social vulnerability. This study asserts that remittances imply health, social and cultural benefits and costs for *campesinos*.

As has been summarized above, newer levels of access to fluid income are reported to benefit *campesinas* by improving their gender role negotiation regarding kitchen, *milpa*, or *traspatio* work and by enhancing negotiation with their children through practices such as *el peso*. In both community sites, in light of available convenience foods and increased access to fluid income a key debate pertaining to *campesina* gender roles is about the "necessity" to engage in time and physically intensive food work; this narrative compromises rural household's capacity to produce their own food in the kitchen and in the garden and *milpa* (field) as in pre-migration times. Echoing findings from a past study on remittances, this study corroborates that access to commercial convenience foods replaces and/or displaces the use of fresh staples and often results in the consumption of highly processed and calorie dense commercial foods such as garnishes, proteins, drinks, and salsas (Kaiser & Dewey, 1991).

*Campesinas* also negotiate newer forms of parenting such as allowance-giving as described above, which connects children directly to the calorie-dense commercial food system in unprecedented ways. Past research shows that among children it has been found that high intake of sugary and fatty foods are associated with increased rates of nutrition-related chronic disease (Brewis, 2003). Similarly, *campesino* adults notice numerous local cases of children and youth with chronic disease such as diabetes and obesity, and severe dental deterioration among other ailments, which they point out were not common during pre-migration periods. Among adults, the link between such newer food patterns and an increased risk for nutrition related chronic disease including diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease has also been established (Bermudez & Tucker, 2003; Uauy, Albala, & Kain, 2001; Rodriguez Moran et al., 2008). Therefore, the challenge that *campesinos* currently face is that in addition to their historical low socio-economic status, they now face the additional burden of an elevated risk for nutrition related chronic disease without adequate access to the healthcare resources.

Another way remittances may encourage social vulnerability among *campesinos* is in regards to a reduced food production capacity. As has been found in past studies, fluid income sources are known to induce and displace *campesino* labor towards the agricultural export industry. Echoing their historical socio-economic marginalization however, *campesinos'* current earnings in fluid income are not robust enough to afford the fruits and vegetables that they grow as agriculture export industry employees. Consequently, as the household food assessment reveals *campesino* access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited, and in some cases decreases with the avoidance of the locally produced staples and dependence on poor quality produce from local vendors. Thus, if subsistence farming is viewed and used as a type of social insurance against extreme poverty and socio-economic insecurity as in the case of food movements such as *Via Campesina*, then retaining, and in some cases re-claiming food production seems like a

viable and time tested livelihood option that *campesinos* ought to retain (Rosset, Martinez-Torres, & Hernandez-Navarro, 2005).

This study also recasts findings from a past study that suggests fluid income sources such as cash transfers improve rural people's food pattern because they cushion market imperfections and enable people to access commercial foods. However, it does not consider that a reliance on cash transfers or further reliance on low income employment may also represent a risk for *campesinos* falling deeper into poverty through food insecurity and its costly consequences.

Until approximately a decade ago, among developing countries undergoing economic transition rates of nutrition related chronic disease among the lower socio-economic populations were lower than higher socio-economic groups. However, the low socio-economic and rural strata have since experienced rising nutrition related chronic disease patterns (Drewnowski & Popkin, 1997; Peña & Bacallao, 2000). These trends support that the nutrition transition progression is occurring in rural spaces, that *campesinos* are consuming higher levels of commercial risky food. However, in this study while it was found that *campesino* labor displacement away from family farms is occurring, and that scarce households currently use subsistence farming as a primary livelihood, it also shows that a majority of rural households still engage in some level of food production. There is no indication from *campesino* accounts to suggest that they intend to permanently sever their ties with the subsistence food ways; that is, they may not rely on it entirely but nevertheless they maintain it as part of a more diversified livelihood strategy. One contribution of this study therefore is the notion that food negotiation in Mexico's countryside is neither uni-directional nor fated but shows that food patterns are a reflection of the circumstances and influence that surround communities. For example, it is shown that NGO's such as CEDESA that support a subsector of *campesinos* towards agroecological practices in order to retain their productive capacity, also influence rural households towards a more critical engagement with the commercial food system.

In this study the impacts of increased fluid income is partly evaluated from the angle of social welfare and poverty. For this reason findings are anchored in first understanding the newer economic context and how it poses newer challenges to meet the nutritional needs of the rural sector. It was shown that poverty persists and this study questions whether the gains in food pattern diversity outweigh the costs of enhanced risk for nutrition-related chronic disease. For this reason policy, practice and research implications are provided to respond to the multi-faceted food challenges that were presented above.

It was shown that fluid income through remittances and other rural livelihood strategies may result in food vulnerability. In the context of Mexico's rapid increase of obesity and other nutrition-related chronic diseases, it is worthwhile to highlight the need for health-related risk reduction and efforts that will prevent permanently disable *campesinos* from their food production capacity. Policymakers that respond to Mexico's rural nutrition must expand funding streams for intervention efforts beyond cash assistance and mandatory education; for example, these funding streams should be inclusive of social programs that attend to grassroots specific concerns such as the ones reflected by this study and policies that reinstitute price protections, market access, and subsidies to *campesinos*.

Policy leadership of this kind will enable the non-profit and public sector for example, to supplement and expand community education beyond the conventional model of *platicas* that focus on transferring cognitive level knowledge about food without attending to the more complex socio-cultural means, values, and challenges of food negotiation. As evidenced in this study, NGOs that use agroecological principles of rural development influence more diverse and

healthful food patterns among *campesinos*; one unique strategy compared to conventional programs is that they collaborate with the *campesino* to maintain access to fresh self-produced fresh staples that they may not otherwise be able to access from the marketplace. Furthermore, these approaches engage the family unit rather than concentrating on one head of household. The success of this type of strategy has been documented across Latin American NGO's since the early 1980s; in fact the international collective of organized *campesinos* through organizations such as *Via Campesina* support these work approaches as adequate for the small to medium producers (Altieri, 2000; Altieri & Masera, 1993).

On the surface food seems to be a relatively accessible and participant-friendly topic to research; however, food investigators soon learn that it probes into the deepest personal realms of people's lives and as such, it is privileged gaze. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct research aiming to capture the dynamic and comprehensive nature of rural food life in its time and context dimensions. The advantage of using community-based participatory research is that it elicits a population's social history in the narratives of current experience and meaning-making and inserts the change process into its dynamic time and space frame. More of this type of social research is needed and particularly as it pertains to populations that have endured socio-historical marginalization and that are often blamed for their own marginalized condition; particularly for food consumption that is often viewed as a voluntary, flexible and an individual decision-making process. This type of research is one methodological step towards attending to and fulfilling social work's call to restore social justice for underrepresented populations.

Findings from this study however should be understood in light of its limitations. The first consideration is the limited length and interruptions of field site visits did not allow for the data collection to reach the point of "saturation" and should therefore be considered base knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Bauer & Aarts, 2000). Future research iterations should build on this data to include additional strata and function so that the comparisons across codes and participants become more robust. Furthermore, results do not reflect a full year cycle of rural food ways that would have fulfilled a more comprehensive analysis of a "normal cycle of change"; rather interviews were conducted in a time frame of several months which did not account for consumption changes that occur during the remaining months (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). Finally, the goal this study is not to be interpreted as generalizable to the *campesino* population, but as an account of a subsample in two northern Guanajuato communities.

Overall, rural household's interaction with the commercial food system is currently problematic not by virtue of the improved access to remittances and other forms of fluid income, but by virtue of lacking adequate public policy and social supports that enhance the conditions and capacity for *campesinos* to critically interact with the commercial food system.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Remittances are known to circulate in the south-to-north direction in cases where community of origin non-migrants send their counterparts in the host country financial contributions; this study however focuses on north-to-south remittance-sending.

<sup>2</sup>transnational migrant communities represent a pattern of migration between Mexico and the US that may be related to a shift from temporary migration towards an increasingly permanent settlement; these patterns emerge as of the 1970's. Irrespective of the physical location of migrant and non-migrants what distinguishes transnational migrants are their relationships, practices, and norms that span across both places of origin and destination (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc- Szanton 1992).

<sup>3</sup>“Westernized” foods is a category used by past food research that suggests *western* societies have distinctive food indicators including white bread, fat spreads, and dairy products, among others. As a mode of food assessment, lists of few indicator foods have been developed and used to measure the degree of *westernized dietary patterns* (Mintz & Schlettwein-Gsell, 2001; Drewnowski & Popkin, 1997).

<sup>4</sup>The exchange rate used is the exchange rate at the time of fieldwork at \$13 pesos per \$1 U.S. dollar.

<sup>5</sup>Saxe & Esmonde's (2005) case study frames a cultural-developmental analysis process that encompasses three inquiry models to document the role of individuals in the process of historical change and the role of historical change in individual's practices.

<sup>6</sup>*Promotores*, and more specifically in this case, *Promotores de Base* are grassroots resident community development workers whose primary role is to support the development of their fellow community resident's leadership. Complimentary to this role is their role in supporting the local community resident council activities as prioritized by its local resident members.

<sup>7</sup>Neoliberalism is a philosophy with a focus on economic growth as fundamental for improved standards of living across the world's populations, especially that of developing countries (McMichael, 1996) and is promoted by leading political and economic powers, such as the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), transnational corporations, and international and national development institutions (Castro Soto, 2006). The Neoliberal paradigm favors free trade, the opening of national borders to foreign investors, and considers that it is achieved in two ways: (1) instituting policies in that enable international trading with the minimal involvement of national governments (deregulation); and (2) instituting policies that shift public goods and property to become private goods and property (privatization) (IFOG, 2001). According to its proponents, investment and free trade produce a trickle down of benefits to the poor sectors of the population and through time, they will emerge out of poverty.

<sup>8</sup>The *ejido* system was legislated in 1930's by President Lazaro Cardenas, it guaranteed *campesinos* access to communal land for their agriculture production.

<sup>9</sup>*Oportunidades* is a program of the Mexican federal government aimed to improve the education, health and dietary intake of the poorest Mexican population. In 1997 the program started in rural areas under the name of "PROGRESA". In 2001 it was extended to semi-urban areas and to urban areas in 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Latin America may be defined as the Andean Region, Brazil, Central America, Mexico, the Latin Caribbean, the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) (PAHO, 2000).

<sup>11</sup>Socio-economic factors includes education, socio-economic background, language fluency, country of origin, and migration context.

<sup>12</sup>length of residency in host country, place of birth, preference of language spoken, friendship preferences/ethnic identification, birthplace of mother/father (Satia-Abouta et al., 2002)

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