Structural Violence and Cooperation for Survival: Exploring Livelihood Strategies In Rural Mexico

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ABSTRACT

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND COOPERATION FOR SURVIVAL: EXPLORING LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN RURAL MEXICO

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Northern Illinois University, 2023
Mark Schuller and Kristen Borre, Co-Directors

This research investigates the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on trade between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. As a result of increased competition in the agricultural sector, households in El Fresno, Michoacán, and El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco in Mexico had to compete with conventional agriculture from the United States. This ethnography studies how community members cooperate and work together to overcome difficulties caused by open markets. The research involved conducting twelve interviews in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra using the framework of sustainable livelihood approach to understand how households use their resources to overcome challenges. Semi-structured interviews, economic network maps, and participant observation were also utilized to gain further insight. This research adds context to the livelihoods of people in these communities.
STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND COOPERATION FOR SURVIVAL:
EXPLORING LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN RURAL MEXICO

BY

Luis Chavez
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Thesis Co-Directors:
Mark Schuller and Kristen Borre
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Thank you to the people of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. Thank you for lending me your knowledge and understanding of your world. Your interest in me has guided me to understand how compassion can help you overcome hardships. To my parents, thank you for your support and teaching me how acts of kindness can shine a light in our world. Finally, thank you to my committee and friends for being supportive during one of the most tribulating times of my life. Your advice and empathy are a testament to how a simple act of kindness can help uplift a person during a difficult time, which can mean the whole world to this person. You have all been my inspiration to create this thesis. I hope I have made you all proud.
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PREFACE:
A MINOR SETBACK

This thesis has had many shapes and forms. The idea for this research started in my undergraduate career: in 2019, I was watching the news and saw that President Trump argued against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its adverse effects on the American market. This trade agreement was passed in 1992 under George HW Bush and enacted in 1994 under the Clinton administration. President Trump’s discourse sparked my curiosity because many people dismissed his ideas because of his antics during his presidency. I started to read more about the trade agreement and decided to make it a part of my master’s thesis. I worked tirelessly on my proposal until it suited me to work in the field. Then, in the summer of 2021, I intended to drive to New York for a wedding before then packing my bags to fly to the Guadalajara airport to begin my research.

Eager to begin my travels, I had excitedly prepared my car; my love for road trips, the stories you collect from strangers in gas station parking lots, and my passion for cars made it a perfect opportunity to drive to the wedding. On the morning of the seventh of June, I drove past a small town in Pennsylvania on Interstate 80 while on my way to New York. As I was driving through a forest preserve, I decided to pass a semi-truck that tested my patience. Suddenly, my
car slammed into something. Struggling to keep the car on the road, I hit the median separating the road from the forest line. I got out of my car, feeling light-headed.

I looked over to the shoulder and saw a furry black body lying there. I noticed the black bear I had just hit and wondered if I had killed it. I felt the racing pain traveling down my back, my legs felt weak, and I heard shouting from the truck driver I had attempted to pass. (Thank you, stranger, for stopping and making sure I was ok. Thank you for calling for help. At this time, if it was not for you, I do not know if I would have received the support I needed.) Once I was in the ambulance, I noticed the bear was no longer in the road: the bear had run back to the forest. I like to think that the bear is ok. The bear showed me that you must stand up and carry on even after you get hit by a car traveling 80 miles an hour.

After healing from the accident, I could finally travel to Mexico in the Summer of 2022. I was eager to see my family again. My mom was born in El Fresno, Michoacán, a community with a main street dividing the town, with the only thing stopping traffic being a minor speed bump that many fly past. My dad is from El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco, a small community in the mountains, where most of the houses are vacant because of migration. I grew up in these communities, spending most of my summers with loved ones whom I have rarely seen in the years since my childhood. My family and I make the most of it by sharing food and stories, remembering that even though a border separates us, we do our best to stay in each other’s lives. I recognize that as a citizen, I have the privilege of being able to visit my family, unlike migrants. However, this time was different. Changes in politics and the increase of threats of cartels made me question the safety of my loved ones, an experience I have brought back to the
United States—an experience I have had difficulty letting go of that often creeps back into my head.
CHAPTER 1
OPEN MARKET AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Historically, Western governments have exploited the resources of emerging economies worldwide, introduced de-regulation to restructure their economies, and implemented export-driven strategies to boost trade. In the case of Mexico’s colonial history, various Western elites unequally divided the access to resources between indigenous people and themselves. The elites controlled natural resources and agricultural land, thus pushing campesinos (peasant farmers) to become cheap labor (Buve, 1975, p.115). Rural communities revolted and fought for the right to support their households and to return to traditional communal land ownership. After many years of conflict between the elites and campesinos, the Mexican government enacted Article 27 of the Constitution. In 1917, large plantations were split and given to the campesino population (Stavenhagen, 1966, p.467). Natural resources had become a public resource; this allowed campesinos to return to traditional agriculture and household organization. Traditional campesino household organization used their relationships to provide a workforce for food production. The crop production was used for self-consumption but also to access money by selling any surplus of crops. Additionally, the household could use their members to access paid labor to supplement household expenses. Households could work with neighbors to complete their duties for a successful harvest.
The Mexican government continued to expand subsidy programs to support traditional agriculture. In 1930, The National Company for Subsidies for the Population (CONASUPO) was enacted to provide crop price protections and subsidies for public and private land. Additionally, CONASUPO created a public safety network to provide affordable and healthy food for Mexican citizens facing poverty by purchasing many of the crops that rural communities produced.

However, in the 80s, the Mexican economy underwent a depression. The economic stagnation was due to the debt accrued by the Mexican government, the lack of investment in the country, and the drop in oil prices (Bergoeing et al., 2002, p.16). The sudden drop in financial capital forced Mexico to default on international loans. The United States stepped in to provide Mexico with temporary loans to prevent the international banks from defaulting and causing a global depression. Mexico had to cut government expenses, restructure its loans, and raise taxes to meet the obligations of the loans (Feldstein, 1998, p.21). Mexico started to restructure its economy from a regulated economy to an open-export driven strategy. Many public programs began to erode to decrease expenditures slowly. This restructuring of the economy started in 1982 and has continued with the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA continued to use the restructuring of the Mexican economy to continue free trade between Mexico and the United States.

NAFTA was a trade agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States to increase trade between the three trading partners. The agreement was enacted in 1994 and ended in 2019—the trade agreement aimed to eliminate tariffs to increase trade between the three countries. Additionally, NAFTA would promote investments in Mexico by de-regulating the
economy. This agreement promised to lower the poverty rate by increasing jobs and wages. However, these promises failed to trickle down to the rural population. The agriculture industry in Mexico was severely affected by the implementation of the trade policy. American agriculture heavily relied on subsidies and mechanization to gain a competitive edge over Mexican agriculture.

Additionally, American corn is heavily subsidized, allowing them to sell it in Mexico at 30 percent of the market value (Polaski, 2006, p. 8). Eliminating agricultural subsidy programs in Mexico and competition from foreign agricultural products increased the rural poverty rate to 82 percent by 1998 (Ojeda & Hennessy, 2006). Trade policies aim to intertwine world economies, so looking into the effects of the 2007 to 2009 global recession was important to research the livelihood strategies currently used in rural communities such as those in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra.

This thesis presents an ethnographic study on how households in rural Mexico handle the structural changes in the economy. First, since households are not generic and each has a specific history, it is crucial to define household for this thesis. David Crawford (2008) describes a household as a demarcated economic association. It is distinct from a family organization because households are economically obligated and may or may not include family members (Crawford, 2008). These demarcated economic associations take different shapes. For example, some households may send men who may or may not be family members residing in the home to work for people in exchange for food, building relationships, or earning pay to make a living. Crawford’s definition of households is fundamental in the case of Mexico because many households may use these networks to build relationships, gain access to agricultural land, or
access paid labor. Another critical case in Mexico is that some households depend on absent family members’ remittances in the United States as income or access to resources. These remittances can help create businesses, access resources, or help people in their network. Since the emphasis of my research is to look at the household level, I focused on two research questions.

1. What strategies did households in El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco, and El Fresno, Michoacán, use to make a living between 2009 and 2021?

2. How do households use these strategies to improve the quality of their lives?

I utilized the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) to link the macroeconomic changes to individual households and answer the research questions. This approach suits the various resources and strategies households employ for adaptation. The framework helps form an understanding of the diverse factors and decision-making that help create livelihoods (Morse & McNamara, 2013, p.18). SLA emphasizes how people create sustainable livelihoods to aid in overcoming certain pressures, which can be categorized as economic (trade policies, regulations), social (class, ethnicity), and environmental (resources, pollution) (Morse & McNamara, 2013, p.4). However, while this framework lends itself to a methodology of analyzing the development of sustainable livelihoods, my thesis emphasizes how households use their resources to create livelihoods that help them survive. For this reason, I draw on Ian Scoones’s Figure 1 from Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis (1998, p.2), which demonstrates how policies, capitals, and institutions shape the livelihoods individuals practice and the respective outcomes in the methods in which people make a living.
Significantly, Scoones questions how using different capitals helps develop various livelihood strategies (1998, p.3):

Figure 1: Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis.

The SLA framework was critical in analyzing the data using the different elements and the outcomes, as shown in Figure 1: Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis. The first step of the process was to distinguish the conditions and trends that have impacted the livelihood strategies in this thesis. I used this section of SLA to combine what I had learned from the literature on the structural changes to the Mexican economy with stories that households provided on how they used to practice agriculture in the late 80s and 90s. This element of the
The next step of the process was to research the livelihood resources essential for the people of the communities. This gave me an insight into how people use these resources in their livelihoods, the trade-offs, and trends. The third step I used from this framework was analyzing the current livelihood strategies in the two communities. This helped connect the macro changes of NAFTA to how they changed the livelihood strategies for the people from El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. The last step I used from this framework was the section on livelihood outcomes. The data I collected primarily focused on how households were impacted by the livelihoods they practice and the threats they face to make a living. Many of the elements from this framework were not adapted to the study due to time constraints and their relevance to the project. My focus was not on the sustainability of their livelihoods but rather on their ability to adapt to the economy and identify the essential components necessary to earn a living.

Scope of the Study

My mom was raised in El Fresno, and my dad was born in El Paso de Piedra. Both parents have always been close to everyone in their communities. My mother always played an important role: she volunteered in the voting polls, taught adults how to read and write, and often volunteered in the local church. She worked with her family in their fields, where my grandfather grew corn, squash, and beans. After working with her family, she would go help other households to make some extra money to help her household. My mother has always worked hard but has always made time to help others.
My father worked with my grandfather and his brothers in the fields, growing the same crops as my mom’s household. They would help supplement the money earned with other livelihood strategies. My grandfather always had cattle and other livestock to make extra money. Additionally, my grandfather would employ community members when he needed additional laborers.

In 1990, my parents married and decided to migrate to the United States. Once in the US, my dad worked in Fresno, California, on a dairy farm, and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. In 1995, my parents decided to migrate back to Mexico. My grandfather on my paternal side asked my dad to come back and help with their cattle. From 1995 to 1998, I was part of my parent’s communities, learning to help the people around me. People in our neighborhood watched me grow up, often taking care of me or watching me run up and down the road. I went to school in Mexico, made friends, and learned many lessons about empathy. I remember a story my mom always tells me about how I would share my lunch or ask for extra money to purchase food for some friends I had made at school. When we decided to migrate back to the United States, I would visit my family every year. While I forgot many of the names of the people I met as a kid, I remembered their faces, and they remembered me.

While I cannot say that I had difficulties getting access to spaces and people in these two communities of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra, it was not because of some skills that I have. The relationships my parents developed from their youth to adulthood opened many doors for me. I can acknowledge this because, before every interview, my participants would ask me about my parents or tell me stories about how great my parents were to them. I also acknowledge that my experiences in these two communities developed this research topic. I have always believed
that people help you overcome difficult situations, and I wrote my thesis to represent how networks accomplish this. So, I went into the field with assumptions about the two communities from my own experiences and stories from my family. While I went into the field with beliefs and knowledge about the communities, I took a step back and had members of the communities provide examples about their networks, generosity, and empathy. This thesis is a testament to the knowledge my parents have passed down to me. My research is an endeavor created by myself and everyone from El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra.

El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra have always been agrarian, like many other rural communities in Mexico. The communities are small and close-knit. Everyone knows the business of other households. Some households dedicated their lives to operating small bodegas out of their homes. Public transportation in these communities has become privatized and has slowly disappeared due to a reduction in population and subsequent loss of profits. Since most of the livelihood strategies in these two communities are agrarian, I decided to shape my two research questions around open markets and their impacts on agricultural communities.

1. **What strategies did households in El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco, and El Fresno, Michoacán, use to make a living between 2009 to 2021?**

Question one allowed me to probe livelihood strategies and how they have changed between 2009 and 2021. Most of my participants were older than 50 and had experienced changes in agriculture since the economic restructuring in 1982, and most participants had worked in their households as children and were thus able to share their experiences which changed over time. With the term ‘strategies,’ I was also able to include different capitals; this was essential to investigate how households use their capital in their livelihoods to gain access to money. I
specifically chose the time frame of 2009 to 2021 to investigate if there had been any changes to livelihoods or capital as a consequence of recessions in the United States; this timeframe was used to gather evidence on how economic hardships in intertwined economies ripple down to household levels in Mexico. Additionally, I used the question *What strategies do you use to make a living? (¿Qué estrategias usa usted para ganar dinero?)* to include any strategy that brings in money or helps to overcome household expenses—such as temporary labor, day labor, gift exchanges, or informal—into this thesis.

2. *How do households use these strategies to improve the quality of their lives?*

Question two significantly contributed to my understanding of how households enhance their members’ lives because it delves into how households utilize their social, financial, and human capital to acquire other resources. To frame this question, I first asked participants about their aspirations and whether they were satisfied with their current situations. As an ethnographer, it is not my place to decide which strategies work best in improving their lives; rather, I listen to how people utilize their strategies to fulfill their household’s needs.

To better understand the circumstances that the households in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra face daily, it is best to learn more about the communities. Both communities are rural and located in west-central Mexico. First, I discuss El Fresno, and second, I discuss El Paso de Piedra. The following section will describe the two communities where I conducted my research, demographics, and sample size.
Study Communities and Sample

El Fresno is situated on a meadow with a stunning view of various vegetation and mountain ridges. Whenever I stayed in El Fresno, I enjoy observing people passing by with their children, returning from school, or delivering food to their neighbors. Mexico’s Route 110 runs through the middle of El Fresno, acting as the main road. Like other rural communities, there are no traffic lights in El Fresno, and speed bumps regulate the speed of vehicles passing through the town. Several houses and stores are located north of the road, including five family-owned bodegas.

El Fresno is in Michoacán, and as of 2020, it had a population of 263 (citypopulation.de). The population of El Fresno has a higher proportion of women than men: according to J. Galinzoga – Elvira, 150 identified as female and 113 as male (2022). The higher proportion of women in the community is a result of males migrating and working abroad. In addition, this migration trend has led to many homes in El Fresno becoming uninhabited: in 2020, there were 140 homes in the community, of which 78 were inhabited (INEGI, 2020). However, the community is constantly changing and growing. In 2001, many people had dedicated land for agriculture on their homes’ properties. Households would grow a combination of corn, squash, and beans. For instance, the maiz prieto is a magnificent color that had always grabbed my attention. As of 2020, very few homes have dedicated land for agriculture, now reserved for plots of land for new homes.
Figure 2: Map of the states of Michoacán and Jalisco within Mexico (Google, n.d.). The Orange ping represents El Paso de Piedra, and the blue ping represents El Fresno.
Over the past 25 years, there has been a shift in the building material used for houses in this area. Previously, adobe houses made of earthen materials and dried grass were typical. However, as of 2020, most adobe houses in El Fresno have been replaced with brick. This change is due to the availability of more expensive materials. In addition, some houses have become larger with multiple stories. The community continues to grow each time I visit, expanding along Route 110. Route 110 is an essential road for El Fresno as it links the town to Jiquilpan, El Fresno’s municipality. It also connects the states of Michoacán and Jalisco.

While working on my research in El Fresno, I walked around the community asking people to participate in my interviews. I asked fifteen households to interview, but many rejected my proposition because of work or because they believed they would not understand the questions. At the end of the project, I interviewed seven households. El Fresno is a beautiful community with friendly and accommodating people.

The route from El Fresno to Jiquilpan has been labeled *la carretera peligrosa* (dangerous road). The road leading to Jiquilpan is rough and winds through the mountains. During the rainy season, mudslides occur, making driving even more difficult. A specific portion of Route 110 is narrow, posing a challenge for semi-trucks to navigate around the curve and causing traffic jams. Unfortunately, this stretch of road lacks guardrails on the cliff sides, resulting in debris from past accidents visible along the cliff’s edge. Recently, I visited my aunt in Jiquilpan and noticed the need for more safety measures on the road.
Figure 3: Navigation route from El Fresno to Jiquilpan (google, n.d.). The white dot represents the location of El Fresno, and the red ping represents the municipality’s location.

Long ago, when the bus line was more active, there were a few accidents where buses would fall off the road into the cliffs. Just after that dangerous cliff, the road begins to slope down the mountains. From the road, you can look down at all the houses, and the city seems large compared to El Fresno. As you descend, it gets hotter: the heat gets trapped in the bottom of the valley of Jiquilpan.

Residents of El Fresno can benefit significantly from access to Jiquilpan, as it provides access to education opportunities and affordable goods. First, In El Fresno, the community only offers an elementary school, so those who wish to pursue a high school education must travel to Jiquilpan. Second, Jiquilpan hosts a tianguis (flea market) on the weekends, where people can find various items such as groceries, clothing, toys, and tools. Many residents of El Fresno visit
the *tianguis* to purchase goods easily and negotiate prices for better deals. With numerous vendors available, they can also compare prices and choose the best option. Notably, El Fresno does not offer a clinic to community members. They must travel to Jiquilpan to access doctors or pharmacies, which is especially important for a growing community.

Driving east on Interstate 110, you will see small communities and pastures where livestock roam freely. El Paso de Piedra is only a 30-minute drive from El Fresno, and taking this drive was an excellent time for me to observe the livelihoods of households along the route. However, the roads in Michoacán were challenging due to numerous potholes caused by heavy rain carrying gravel and tar. Although the speed limit was 45 kilometers per hour, most drivers traveled slowly to avoid potholes and maintain their vehicles. The road was nicknamed “The road of the pools” because water pools in potholes, making it difficult to determine their depth. It was sometimes easier to drive on fields than on the road. El Paso de Piedra sits on a meadow at the community entrance. There is a soccer field, a kindergarten, and a basketball court. Driving down the hills, there are many businesses. Four stores sell vegetables, meats, and other home necessities. A few warehouses store semi-trucks, and one is used to host events and parties. There are a few homes down the hill that process chorizo and cheese. The community center has an elementary school for grades one through six. Next to the elementary school, there is a community clinic that offers a doctor’s services and subsidized medicines. Driving further down the community, one can see a lagoon which provides water for the few cattle in the community and is used for fishing and recreation.
Like El Fresno, the municipality of El Paso de Piedra is essential for business and meeting the household’s needs. El Paso de Piedra is a community in Jalisco with a population of 468 people as of 2020. According to INEGI (2022), 244 females and 224 males reside in the area. Just as with El Fresno, El Paso de Piedra also experiences high migration trends. Of the total 311 homes in the community, 161 are currently inhabited (INEGI, 2022). However, there is a trend of migrants returning to El Paso de Piedra for retirement; this has resulted in a rise in the community’s population. In 2010, there were 284 inhabited homes in the area (INEGI, 2020). Although I intended to interview ten households in El Paso de Piedra, scheduling conflicts made it difficult—I could only interview five households for the project.
El Paso de Piedra is a small community in the municipality of Valle de Juarez in Jalisco. It is about 6km or a nine-minute drive from Valle de Juarez, with a paved road that is safe to travel on. Unlike the road from El Fresno to Jiquilpan, there are no significant risks associated with this route. Although public transportation is unavailable, there are affordable options for getting to the municipality. Moto-taxi services charge only fifty pesos per trip (equivalent to 2.5 USD in 2021) and can accommodate up to four people using a motorcycle engine. For those who cannot access reliable transportation to Valle de Juarez, a sidewalk along the road provides convenient access to businesses and schools.

Figure 5: Navigation route from El Paso de Piedra to Valle de Juarez (Google, n.d.). The white dot represents the location of El Paso de Piedra, the red point represents the municipality’s location, and the red circle is the location of Mazamitla.
Valle de Juarez is a large city center with various businesses, pharmacies, doctors, and schools. Many El Paso de Piedra children who wish to pursue higher education travel to the municipality for high school. The municipality also has markets and grocery stores that offer a more comprehensive range of products to meet household needs, and there are stores for agricultural supplies and home improvement. Additionally, many restaurants in the area attract tourists from other parts of Jalisco. El Valle de Juarez also relies on people from neighboring towns. For example, Mazamitla is only a thirty-minute drive from El Valle de Juarez. Recently, the community of Mazamitla has built many cabins to attract tourism from Guadalajara. Mazamitla has a bus service that takes tourists around the surrounding area, including Valle de Juarez and El Paso de Piedra.

In this section, I have set the stage for showing how communities interact with their environment to make a living. Overall, El Paso de Piedra has better infrastructure and has a vastly larger population than El Fresno, and in general, El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra have access to different resources—significantly, the El Paso de Piedra community has access to a health clinic whereas the El Fresno community does not. Robert Chambers (1987) states that a livelihood comprises the capabilities, capitals, and activities required to make a living, and rural communities depend on their natural resources (land, streams, vegetation) to create a way of accessing paid labor (Scoones, 1998). Everyone has access to different resources that help supplement livelihood strategies to help them overcome difficult times.

Ethnographies allow us to show the emotions of the world’s harsh realities. The greatest gift someone can give you is to share their experiences and life lessons. Therefore, I used a methodology that would allow me to use the experiences of the people from El Fresno and El
Paso de Piedra to explain how structural changes impact households. In the following section, I will describe the methodology and research tools I used.

Methods and Research Tools

My three chosen research methodologies were network mapping, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. Together, they paint a fuller picture, aiding in making sense of data during analysis. The network mapping helped determine the resources households use, where they are transferred to, and the location of members. This helped supplement the interviews with visual data so that we could narrow down the questions during the conversation. Participant observation was practical to collect more data to see how households manage their livelihoods and to include community members that did not feel comfortable participating in the interviews. During this time, I would ask them who helps with the work, how it is funded, and how they started using this livelihood.

I first started conducting my research in El Fresno. I spent that time in El Fresno and would alternate between El Paso de Piedra each week. At the beginning of the research project, my recruitment technique was to knock on each door until someone agreed to participate. However, at the end of the project, I began to ask my participants or family members if they could recommend households to interview. This was a strategy to cope with my anxiety. I felt nervous and unsafe because of the news coverage of violence in the surrounding communities.

From May 26th to June 18th, I interviewed twelve households: seven in El Fresno and five in El Paso de Piedra. These interviews were conducted in people’s homes, either in the living room or courtyard. The twelve interviews were divided into two days to prevent fatigue.
On the first day, my participants and I drew an economic network map, and on the second day, we began our conversations using the scripts I had written to answer the two questions. I scheduled these two days based on participants’ availability.

In some circumstances, I had to be more flexible because some households would find work on the day of the interviews, so patience and appreciation were key. For their safety, I have changed the names of the people involved in this project to pseudonyms to fit their identified gender. I often stopped to ensure they accepted me recording difficult conversations, but they waved their hand and told me to keep recording.

Participant knowledge in this thesis belongs to the communities of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra; I do not claim ownership over the information provided during the interviews, as I am simply a messenger. This thesis is available in Spanish so that community members can read what I have learned and shared with people in the United States. The information I wish to provide to the communities includes the community-member concerns that participants shared with me, so I have been sure to confirm that community members agree with the information and have given me consent to share it. Lastly, some stories of how I met my participants have been altered to protect their identities: many community members saw me walking around talking to people, so some identities would be identifiable without these alterations. In the following sections, I go into further detail on how I used the economic network maps, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation to collect my data.
Economic Network Maps

On the first day of the interviews, my participants and I drew a network map. I chose to use the economic network map first because it was a way to gather preliminary data without a survey. I wanted to use a way to make this process more interactive and help ease any concerns participants had with me being in their homes. Mapping was also a way to create a visual representation that would make it easier for me to remember everyone that helps contribute to the household.

Mapping was key to creating a visual guide on the SLA framework; mapping helped me determine if households traverse borders or space. Firstly, they show who resides in the home and learn of any members living outside the home. On the maps, we would draw different colored circles around members that lived together. Under each household member, we would create a list including age, where they live, occupation, and the capital they contribute to the household. Households would describe the capital associated with the network, such as social, human, and financial (See appendix C). (Actions that would help continue to build on the relationship, such as emotional support, were considered social capital.) Secondly, after concluding what resources network members contributed to the household, we would draw arrows to show who receives these resources since many homes in Mexico can contribute abroad as well. In addition to drawing the economic network maps, I would record their explanations with a voice recorder in case they had additional information that would benefit the map.

In many cases, households shared the immigration status of members working abroad. For this reason, I adjusted some of my interview questions to ask how legal status impacts the
household. Being thus flexible also helped me adjust the questions for a more interpretative answer. For instance, I observed that many older males participating were not considering other capitals outside of financial support as contributions to the household. These maps often took about an hour to complete, and they served as references for interview questions, making interviewing easy to pick up the following day.

While the network mapping exercise was helpful during the interview and analysis, it took much work. One issue I encountered is that since the maps were limited to the size of the papers on which they were drawn, I could not fit all of the information provided by larger households or households that received many resources. It is for this reason that I often used a voice recorder to fill in any information left out of the drawings. Another issue I ran into was that households with multiple participants had different views and often interrupted one another or made it difficult for us to proceed with the map. A voice recorder helped immensely during this obstacle, allowing me to capture both perspectives.

During the analysis process, I added all the information to an Excel sheet (See appendices D and E). The mapping exercise helped collect the trends that many households have, such as the livelihoods they practice, the important capitals, and the household members’ location. I emphasized the common strategies to determine the vulnerabilities of each community while adding the different strategies to the description of the households to note what they use to make a living. In addition to this method, I used semi-structured interviews to help answer their perceived thoughts on their livelihoods and other strategies they use to overcome hardships.
Semi-Structured Interviews

When I was in the field, I conducted twelve interviews to gain insights into the livelihoods households use to make a living and the strategies they use to improve their lives. For conducting semi-structured interviews, I ask the same open-ended questions for everyone, but the responses are flexible and may vary with each participant (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). The length of the interviews varied from household to household: some would last about an hour, and some would go up to three hours. At the beginning of my interviews, I would ask the household members if I could record the conversation. I was afraid that a household would feel intimidated by my request, but all of them were willing to share their experiences and for me to record them. I used my cell phone to record the interviews since it would automatically upload the audio recording to my cloud service. Also, to ease my anxiety, I used a second voice recorder I purchased online to have an extra audio file in case something went wrong, although I had little faith in this handheld device because I bought it online for around ten dollars in the United States.

At the beginning of the research process, I developed questions from the literature review I had conducted before traveling to Mexico. However, I ultimately found many of the questions to be unnecessary or difficult to respond to due to how they were phrased. So, with the help of the network maps, I adjusted my questions to best fit with the information that the households provided. In doing so, I was able to maintain the same questions for all interviews while also enabling the households determine what was important to them.
I interviewed people from twelve households during my time in Mexico. Most of the participants were the heads of households with their partners. The most participants I had at a given time was six people. In general, the people of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra always have their doors open and are welcoming to guests; this makes it easier for people to walk in and listen to the conversation. So, on some occasions, people walked into a home and joined the interviews in progress. When this happened, I would ask the heads of households if they wanted me to stop the recording. However, each time, they would shake their heads from side to side and move their hands forward, signaling to continue the interview.

The predominant issue I ran into while conducting interviews was that men tended to be hesitant when responding to questions about household hardships. Overall, men were less willing than women to be open about economic hardships, wanting to move past these questions and proceed with the interview. However, on some occasions, men would say they knew someone facing issues. Regarding interviews conducted with women and men simultaneously, women were more likely to cut off the male participant and state their own hardships in addition to providing examples from other households.

I transcribed the interviews using the transcription tool in Microsoft Word and used content analysis. I chose this methodology because of the flexibility to analyze content from my interviews and economic network map. As Marilyn White and Emily Marsh (2006) state, content analysis is an analysis technique to get replicable inferences from the context of the research methods. I read each transcript and highlighted each piece of data that corresponded with my research questions. Additionally, I noted the vulnerabilities they faced and how they overcame
each situation and connected it with other households to see if they were common strategies within the community. This helped determine if the vulnerabilities occurred on a community level. While I highlighted some pre-conceived themes during the analysis process, I added more because of the frequency in which they appeared in each household.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation was the third method I used in my research. Participant observation is when the researcher follows community members’ lives to understand better their views or actions (Gunn et al., 2013, p.147). I chose three locations to conduct participant observation: a bodega, a plot of agricultural land, and a household selling food out of their home.

First, I chose the bodega because more men were in that location, and they were open to discussing Mexico’s political and economic trends. In the bodegas, I would take notes and ask questions about their views while building relationships with the people joining us for a drink. Additionally, I would help the bodega owner by making drinks and bagging items. On the plot of land—the second location for participant observation—I helped rebuild fencing to prevent animals from destroying a household’s cornfield. Due to the nature of this work, I was not able to take many notes, but I was able to participate and learn about the techniques small-scale farmers use to make a living. The third and last place I conducted participant observation was in a participant’s home selling food. Here, I observed the kinds of foods people prepare to sell, why they choose that dish, and the challenges of balancing life with business. I could take notes in this location while helping serve the food and giving it to the clientele. I learned a lot from my
participant, allowing me to understand new thinking methods and feeling about my environment (Gibson, 1979).

I used participant observation to supplement explanations left out of the interviews, and in my analysis following participant observation, I noticed that many participants had shared trends, worries, and vulnerabilities. Examples include how I learned why specific political figures in Mexico gain recognition from rural communities and how the macro and household levels interact daily from their perspectives. A lot of people’s concerns were unanticipated. Using the information gleaned from participant observation, I reformulated my questions to gain more knowledge about the concerns of the community’s people. I then revisited the homes of the interview participants to ask questions about what I had learned during my observations. This allowed me to contextualize some responses I had received and initially overlooked.

Overview of the Thesis

My thesis begins with a comprehensive overview of the structural transformations in the Mexican economy. Then, I demonstrate how these changes profoundly affect the household organization and work roles in the network, using Milpa agriculture as a case study. Next, I delve into the subsidy programs, such as The National Company for Subsidies for the Population (CONASUPO), which aims to provide low-cost food and support sustainable agriculture, as well as the advent of open markets that led to replacing CONASUPO with Pro-Campo. I then thoroughly examine the impacts of these subsidy program changes on Mexico’s agricultural market.
The second chapter of this thesis delves into the current organization of households and each member’s roles. Furthermore, it explores the various methods households utilize to secure paid work and the networks they rely on for additional support.

Chapter three explores the crucial role that migration networks play in survival strategies. An in-depth analysis of these networks reveals the impacts migration has on household dynamics, often necessitating women to assume the role of household heads. Additionally, the vulnerabilities that threaten livelihood strategies in these two communities are examined, alongside the various ways households leverage their available assets to overcome these challenges.
CHAPTER 2

THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF BAD POLICIES

The push for open markets promises to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of the global population by incentivizing investors to create jobs in emerging markets. In 1993, under the provisions of NAFTA, Mexico deregulated most job sectors under advisement from the IMF, which promoted investment from foreign investors (García-Cuéllar, 2001, p.18). However, the power dynamics between Western countries and emerging economies are unequally distributed. This power imbalance allows Western countries to exploit emerging economies by creating more competition in the Mexican agricultural sector. Foreign investors are not allowed to own 100% of a Mexican company or land, as stated in Article 27 of the Mexican constitution (Chollet, 2009, p.84). However, after the modification of Article 27, American investors began investing heavily in Mexico. The restructuring of the Mexican economy allowed foreign agro-businesses to buy land and Mexican companies, destroying 28,000 small to medium Mexican agro-businesses (Balakrishnan & Elson, 2011).

The acquisition of Mexican agro-businesses by an American corporation resulted in significant changes in the agriculture industry. More households in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra depend on modified seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, as shown in other regions of Mexico (Bowness, 2018). The variety of corn in Mexico has decreased, with field corn replacing
indigenous types like *maiz prieto*. Agricultural practices have also changed from traditional milpa agriculture to mono-cropping. Traditional agriculture provided agricultural goods to the household for consumption and to make money. However, with the drop in corn prices due to the introduction of subsidized American corn, genetically modified corn, and changes in Mexican subsidies, households have changed to mono-cropping agriculture (Bowness, 2018).

The purpose of this chapter is to first look into how neoliberal policies impact rural communities such as El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. I define neoliberal policies as economic reform policies that aim to deregulate the economy, liberalize trade and industries, and privatize state-owned enterprises (Ganti, 2014, p.91). I choose to research the impacts of neoliberal policies on the household level. Economic restructuring has affected many people, creating inequality and difficulty accessing livelihoods, especially in regions with little investment, such as El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. I argue that neoliberal policies cause harm to a population and strengthen the unequal distribution of power and resources (Weigert, 2010, p. 126).

Analyzing governments’ impacts on livelihoods in the SLA framework is essential, and neoliberalism has been a vital part of the Mexican economy since the IMF proposed reforms in 1982. These changes to the Mexico’s economy have created structural violence, which I define structural violence as systemic changes that unintentionally cause death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatization, or trauma in a group (Farmer, 2004, p.307).

In this chapter, I explore the historical background of Mexican agriculture and the consequential impact of economic reforms on the livelihoods of agricultural communities in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. The second part of the chapter is on CONASUPO, the subsidy program in Mexico, and its significant role in Mexican agriculture. Additionally, I discuss the
effects of Pro-Campo, the replacement program for CONASUPO, on agricultural households. It is essential to comprehend the policy changes to fully grasp how rural communities are affected and how they are forced to adapt to the economic changes.

Traditional Agricultural Systems

Rural Mexican economies revolve around agriculture to sustain households. Before implementing open economies, households relied on milpa agricultural practices to grow food for self-consumption and access to earning a living. Milpa is when corn, squash, and beans are grown together to maximize crop production in a small plot of land (Bowness, 2018). Intercropping minimizes the risk of crops failing, ensuring the household can obtain the necessary nutrients to survive. Milpa agriculture also eliminates the need for fertilizers and pesticides due to the three crops replenishing nutrients in the soil. Each plant plays a role in the success of the harvest. Squash traps moisture in the ground, providing the corn stalks with the necessary moisture, and serves as a living mulch, which prevents weeds from destroying the crop. Beans replenish lost nutrients absorbed by the corn, and corn stalks provide a way for the beans to wrap around the stalk, ensuring the beans get the necessary light to grow (Lopez-Ridaura et al., 2021).

While milpa agriculture provides food security for households, it is labor intensive. Each crop requires different harvesting methods, which eliminates the use of machine harvesters. As a result, the household provides the necessary workforce to hand-pick each crop. In peasant agriculture, men, women, and children played a role in agricultural production (Cabrera et al., 2001). While the role of women depended on the land size and the number of crops produced,
women dedicated their time to seed selections, clearing land, and harvesting (Cabrera et al., 2001). In the case of El Paso de Piedra, men were the primary workforce for large, allocated plots of land. They were responsible for clearing land using a yoke and mules and harvesting the crops. Women oversaw curing the beans to prevent an infestation of bugs and grinding the corn for the use of cornmeal. In El Fresno, women and men worked together to cultivate and harvest products, as it was a means of accessing food security for the household and providing an adequate workforce. Women’s primary role in El Fresno was to help clear land, feed workers, and harvest any remaining crops left behind by men. In El Fresno, men were the primary harvesting labor force since it was considered more strenuous work. Men are responsible for cultivating crops in larger plots, and women provide additional labor, generating gender relations through production spaces (Lope-Alzina, 2007, p. 26).

The sale to small markets contributes to women’s time and effort allocated to agriculture, as P.L. Howard (2006, p.171) argues, “Women were more likely to manage crops destined for subsistence or the sale in local markets.” In El Fresno, some women in the household would collect the surplus of pumpkins to sell to merchants. Some other women in El Fresno would provide their time to other households in the community to provide an extra workforce. On some occasions, milpa agriculture also supported livestock to sell; however, this was a secondary strategy for households (Bowness, 2018, p.35). In addition, milpa cultivation utilized livestock to manage agricultural land and sustain the animals. For example, households would use their land to feed their cattle and pigs. Obtaining free feed involves utilizing cattle to remove the stover from the field. Also, after households milk their cattle, they can use the milk skin with squash to fatten pigs for later sale in the market.
Milpa agriculture has many benefits, such as nutrient replacement in soil, food security, and using the strategy as a natural capital to supplement other livelihood strategies. Historically, households in El Paso de Piedra used the milk from their cattle to make cheese and a form of sour cream to sell in the markets.

CONASUPO

The National Company for Subsidies for the Population (*La Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares*) or CONASUPO was a state-owned enterprise that controlled Mexican agricultural policies, production management, and agricultural subsidies from 1930 until 1999 (Yunez-Naude, 2003). For one, CONASUPO was a safety net and offered services to impoverished Mexicans and peasant farmers. Such services include regulating the prices of essential goods, such as food, to combat price inflation, creating a relationship between producers and consumers, and creating a fair market by creating price protections on crops (Yunez-Naude. A, & Barceinas. F, 2000, p.191). CONASUPO also played a role in providing underprivileged consumers access to healthy and affordable products and protecting the prices of crops. CONASUPO opened state-owned stores to offer these services to rural communities (Galvez. A, 2018). CONASUPO policies ensured that consumers and producers from rural communities could have a self-sustaining livelihood and access to healthy food. For one, it was a way to expand the purchasing power of underprivileged households and to pay the market prices of crops and subsidies to incentivize rural growers to produce these crops. CONASUPO had such a heavy weight on the agricultural market that, by 1996, the agency was the consumer of 30
percent of agricultural products in Mexico, most notably in corn (Yunez-Naude, A, & Barceinas, F, 2000).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) implemented economic reforms that led to the gradual elimination of CONASUPO, starting in 1985. This aimed to deregulate the Mexican economy and promote an export-driven strategy to boost economic growth. The IMF aimed to reduce regulations to incentivize international investors into the Mexican economy; this was partly to get Mexico to recover financially after the 1982 economic crisis, which was caused by the drop in oil prices (Huato, 2010, p. 464). Mexico depended on the oil revenues to fund many of the public services. As part of the recovery plan, public services were privatized. This was also done to meet Mexico’s obligation to the United States to draft a trade agreement for North America. This commitment was to begin the discussion of joining Canada and the United States on open border trading, which would come to fruition in 1994 through the North American Free Trade Agreement.

CONASUPO slowly started to get phased out of the agricultural sector in Mexico. Due to the early plans of NAFTA, Mexico began implementing neoliberal policies to open the market to and privatize all agriculture. CONASUPO went from subsidizing and managing eleven staple crops in Mexico in 1991 to controlling and subsidizing only corn and beans by 1999 (Yunez-Naude, 2003). Furthermore, while CONASUPO had the right to regulate and control the prices of corn and bean, in 1995, the Mexican Federal government intervened. CONASUPO had to allow other private companies to purchase these two crops and follow a stipulation of being the last resort consumers, buying beans and corn at a minimum price. The liquidation of the government company eradicated the safety net that allowed many people facing hardships to find
affordable healthy food. As a result, to ease the lack of subsidies and increased competition from the United States, the Mexican government created Pro-Campo in 1993, a temporary program to help peasant farmers in rural towns transition to a more open market. Pro-Campo is still active in 2022 (Lema et al., 2022).

**Pro-Campo**

The introduction of neoliberal policies by the IMF and the passing of NAFTA eliminated Mexico’s safety nets and agricultural subsidies. Mexican peasant farmers depended on these resources to create livelihoods. Due to the policy changes, wealth inequality in Mexico became more apparent, eliminating the middle class and separating the country between the wealthy and the poor. Pro-Campo was an income-driven subsidy program to help rural agricultural producers compete with the open market (Esquivel & Cruces, 2011). The Mexican government began to constitute the program in 1993 and passed Pro-campo in 1994.

The agricultural subsidy, Pro-Campo, was a program created to promote the production of cash crops. The program paid peasant farmers 100 USD per acre to promote the cultivation of nine cash crops: corn, cotton, beans, rice, soy, wheat, sorghum, barley, and sunflower (Lema et al., 2022). The program speculated that the subsidies would apply only to small-scale agriculture on private land. However, the clause of land ownership would create further vulnerabilities in indigenous groups that practice communal agriculture since they were not allowed to use the subsidies. Pro-campo further excluded peasant farmers by adding a clause that farmers could not own more than five acres of land (Rodriquez & Hernandez, 2022). Pro-Campo was a method of alleviating the barriers that were created by the changes to the open market. These barriers
included the increased competition of foreign crops, the dependence on pesticides and fertilizers, and changes in the crops households produced. The subsidy program was designed to promote conventional farming practices and incentivize rural communities to produce crops for commercial purposes. However, the program’s implementation challenged farmers who relied on agriculture for their sustenance, as they were forced to sell their crops to purchase food. At the outset, only a few crops were qualified for support under the Pro-Campo initiative.

Eventually, more agricultural products would be added to the subsidy, covering fruits, vegetables, and feed for cattle. However, while the program was adding new eligible products, between 1995 and 2012, the funding of the program fell by 44.2 percent (Lopez-Hernandez, 2019). With the change of new political leaders in Mexico, a radical change happened to the provisions in the Pro-Campo subsidy policy. In 2013, Enrique Peña Nieto, a president who ran on a message to bring jobs to rural communities, adjusted the subsidy program to Pro-Agro to promote and increase efficiency and productivity. 2014 Pro-Campo became Pro-Agro, with adjustments to promote competition with subsidized American products.

The policy was limited to people who owned fifteen acres of land or less because of the assumption that if people could afford more land, they did not require government assistance (Perez-Castro, 2017). Furthermore, the households that met the criteria had to agree that the harvest of agricultural products was for sale in the market, eliminating the assistance of agriculture for self-consumption. The subsidies only apply to purchasing fertilizers, modified seeds, and agricultural machinery (Lema et al., 2022). Although subsidies were provided, they did not cover the entire cost of agricultural machinery. As a result, small-scale farmers used the funds to rent machines, leading to a financial industry for agricultural rental businesses.
Unfortunately, this also contributed to wealth inequality, as only the wealthy could afford to invest in these machines. This policy change helped wealthy people receive some of these subsidized wages from small-scale agriculturists. However, these changes in the policy increased wealth inequality between peasant farmers and large factory farms.

Significance

This chapter is a contextual analysis of conditions and trends set by the restructuring of the Mexican economy. In the SLA framework, the context of politics, history, policy, and socio-economic standing helps determine how pressures affect households to research how they cope and create sustainable livelihoods (Scoones, 1998, p.3). Governments and institutions such as the IMF have promoted policies that create unequal opportunities for many. In the case of Mexico, the open market was a strategy to modernize the economy by promoting export manufacturing (Huato, 2010, p.448). However, most of the infrastructure to handle manufacturing jobs was in the northern states of Mexico, along the Mexican and United States border. In addition, the elimination of CONASUPO eliminated many services that rural communities needed to survive. Eliminating subsidies, price protections, and ease of distribution of agricultural goods displaced many peasant farmers. From 1997 to 2007, 4.9 million household farmers lost their jobs; they were forced to migrate to different states in Mexico or abroad to work in factory farms or find other livelihood strategies (Weisbrot et al., 2018). Juan, one of the heads of households I interviewed from El Paso de Piedra, mentioned that agriculture had changed after introducing industrial machines in the region. The harvest that would require forty to fifty people went to needing just a handful of people. They went from planting the seed and covering the hole with their foot to being unemployed, watching the tractors complete the work they once depended on
to make a living. Juan described that people were excited to work and come home with money, but with the loss of agricultural jobs, they had to find new ways to support their households. The following chapter describes how the organization of households in two communities has changed in response to these neo-liberal economic policies between 2007 and 2021.
CHAPTER 3
SURVIVAL THROUGH COOPERATION

Households around the world take many shapes based on their livelihoods and circumstances. These demarcated economic networks include different members with different relationships within the household. It is essential to note the difference between the household as the economic unit and the people that reside within the home. The labels that distinguish the two have become messy and convenient to describe the home. However, households in Mexico do not solely fit the description of the household. In this chapter, I describe the structure of each household into different categories. However, I describe the people living within the home, but it is essential to understand that many people contribute to the household. So, while many people in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra may resemble specific organizations, they have assistance from members living within the community and abroad. This is where the economic network map was essential to distinguish the people living within the home and household members contributing to the household.

I begin by describing the traditional household organizations in Mexico before the economic restructuring of Mexico’s economy. I describe the household members’ duties during this period. Next, I separate the households I interviewed between the two communities. I begin
by describing El Fresno’s households and their duties within their network. I then continue by describing El Paso de Piedra’s households and their duties. Lastly, I discuss the different networks available to understand better how networks help one another within these two communities: I first describe local networks, which capture relationships at the community level; second, I describe international networks, which captures the relationships between members living abroad and their households in Mexico.

Traditional Household Organizations

Everyone worldwide has different wants and needs, so interviewing households allows researchers to determine household and community goals. The SLA approach uses the household as the unit for analyzing the economic changes that accompany stressors and shocks. Stressors are small and regular disturbances that households face, and shocks are unpredictable disturbances with immediate impacts (Holling, 1993). Looking at the household level initiates a conversation about what it means to be in poverty. Lasse Krantz (2001) argues that poverty is not just a question of accessing financial capital but includes other barriers such as bad health, education, and declining social services. Describing the household is an essential component of conducting research within SLA, as households take many shapes and often do not resemble the home’s organizational structure.

For this reason, I collected data to see what people residing in the homes in Mexico do to make a living. Additionally, I collected data on how household members make a living. The purpose is to investigate how households use different strategies to help overcome difficult times and how they contribute to the home in Mexico. Due to the time constraints of my research, I
could only interview some household members. The following sections are the perceptions of the people I interviewed.

In Mexico, it is common for homes to have close-knit families living together, including extended family members. Similarly, Latinos residing in the United States tend to live with their extended family members more often (Chavez, 1985). In the past, like many agricultural communities in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra, they tend to have large families. Many of my parents and their friends lived with their families most of their lives. The occasions when family members would move away from home were when they were getting married or if they were migrating in search of work. Most reside in their parent’s homes because it is often regarded as an important social support strategy that provides many different capitals (Van Hook & Glick, 2007, p.225). In the first chapter, I discuss how households in traditional agricultural systems rely on their members to provide the necessary workforce to meet their needs. The traditional home organization also allows members to pool resources to adapt to difficult times. Additionally, migration changes the composition of the home’s structure because many cannot return home due to immigration status (Van Hook & Glick, 2007).

In the following section, I provide descriptions of the home structures, livelihoods, and household members in El Fresno. The households I interviewed included female multigenerational homes, nuclear homes with young children, multigenerational homes, and single head-of-household homes with a child.
El Fresno Michoacán

Female Multigenerational Household

I have known Emma and her family for about five years. Her parents have always been a part of the community, but as life goes on, some members have come and gone, finding their places and attempting to bring their hopes to fruition. Emma was married to the father of her children, and a divorce brought her back to her parents’ home. She has been living in her parents’ house since 2019, helping in the household. Emma is as extraverted as someone comes. I have watched her in a rush taking her children to school but always finding time to stop and have a conversation, greeting everyone that comes across her path. Emma can make any subject matter seem fascinating by using her tone, body language, and emotions to submerge you in the topic. She has a direct personality; she will let you know if she does not appreciate a particular idea but will work with you to help you see her point of view. As we spoke about the local economy, she gave me all her opinions about the mechanisms of El Fresno, Jiquilpan, and the overall function of the Mexican federal government. These ideas created so many curiosities in my mind, which difficult to decipher in a preliminary study.

Emma comes from a large family; Emma has three sisters and four brothers. However, some have moved with their partners and have started a family, and some have migrated to the United States in search of better opportunities. As of 2020, Emma lives in an all-female multigenerational home. Emma lives with her mother, Valeria, her sister, Adela, and her two daughters, Isabella and Amalia. Emma does not hold a job that gives her access to financial capital, so most of her duties to the household are through the chores in the home. Emma is
responsible for cleaning the house, grocery shopping, and caring for her children and mother, Valeria, who is in her late 70s and cannot complete chores due to health complications.

Valeria spends most of her time sitting, watching soap operas, and talking with her family, providing help when she can stand for some periods. While Emma is ensuring that everyone has enough to eat, clean, and care for her mother, she must also take care of her two daughters. Isabella and Amalia are in the early stages of their schooling. Isabella is still young and can attend El Fresno’s elementary school, a few meters from Emma’s home, which gives Emma more time to put her energy into other housework. When Isabella is not at school, her primary responsibilities are to finish her homework and to help her mother with some of the chores. Amalia is Emma’s oldest daughter, and because of her age, Emma gives her more responsibilities in the home, including the more labor-intensive chores. Amalia graduated from the elementary school in 2022 and is preparing to continue her education in one of the schools in Jiquilpan. This will require more of Emma’s time since public transportation is unreliable in the community. Emma will have to drive Amalia to the school and pick her up in the afternoon.

Adela, Emma’s sister, is younger than Emma and has moved around a lot. Adela worked in a hospital in Guadalajara, Jalisco, about a two-hour car ride from El Fresno. She helped care for elderly patients but was let go because of COVID-19 and restrictions. So, Adela moved back to El Fresno to help Emma with her mother and to find a place to live. She has found seasonal work in a corn de-husking processing plant from January to May and some additional jobs in Jiquilpan.
Two of Emma’s brothers have remained in El Fresno. Lucas lives with his wife and two children. Lucas works in construction, often allowing him to work in the neighboring communities and El Fresno. Because this job takes most of his time, he cannot contribute to his mother’s home. Instead, Lucas focuses on his family, ensuring he can support his wife and children. His wife’s role is to take care of the chores of her home and take her older children to Jiquilpan to attend school. Santiago has also started a family in El Fresno. He works in construction along with Lucas, keeping him busy as well. His primary focus has been on his family.

Emma and her family in Mexico work together to complete housework, care for her mother, and meet their household’s needs. Emma’s siblings, who live abroad, also help them overcome economic hardships. Four of Emma’s siblings migrated to the United States and can access different livelihood strategies. For example, Antonio works in a liquor store in Florida. Roman works in a factory in Indiana. Emma also has two sisters in New York, Bábara and Carmen, who live together. Barbara is an assistant teacher in a school, and Carmen works as an assistant teacher for special education. In Carmen’s free time, she also makes jewelry that she sells in online commerce. The money the home in El Fresno receives is used for expenses such as medical care, education, food, utilities, and home repairs. While I could not gather data on the reoccurrence of these remittances, Emma stated that it was when household members could contribute or when there was more need for the financial contribution into the home.

Emma’s home organization is female-led and multi-generational because of the diversification of livelihood strategies: her siblings migrated abroad in search of better opportunities. In El Fresno, there are limited livelihood strategies. As described earlier,
community members either practice agriculture, family-owned convenience stores, sales of food, or the de-husking plant. Most of these livelihoods are seasonal because they depend on natural capital such as rain and land. For that reason, many migrate to the United States in search of paid labor. In El Fresno, some constraints prevent people from accessing paid labor. One of the barriers that homes face is health issues, making it challenging to perform the physical labor required for many jobs.

Additionally, limited public safety nets are available to care for elderly parents, so children often must take on this responsibility themselves. Emma cannot work because she cares for her mother and cannot leave her alone. Since Emma cannot work, one less person contributes financial capital to the household. Valeria can work in the de-husking plant for only six months, operating solely during the corn harvesting season. Valeria’s seasonal livelihood impacts the money that comes into the home. They solely depend on the remittances that her siblings send to the home to meet their needs.

**Nuclear Household with Young Children**

Liliana lives in a nuclear family household. Based on my limited sample size, this was one of the few household structures that resemble a nuclear family considered the ‘norm’ in the US. However, some household members help Liliana and her family overcome difficult situations. I met Liliana through Guadalupe, whom I had interviewed previously. Guadalupe and I walked down a rough patch of the road toward Liliana’s house, ensuring we would both make it down without falling or tripping on the loose gravel. A large metal gate surrounded the home. Kittens were running around the courtyard, chasing bugs. Large green plants displayed along the
main wall of the house made it feel welcoming. Liliana’s youngest children were playing in front of the door. I felt anxious approaching the door because I was disrupting Liliana’s work. I was lucky enough to have Guadalupe introduce me and initiate the interaction. Guadalupe squeezed between the children, smiling at them softly while knocking on the metal door. A short, slim woman came out, telling the children to move out of the way while she was washing her hands.

After a short introduction, she was excited to participate. She was excited to hear that I was continuing my education and to hear that I wanted to learn more about my mother’s community. She welcomed me into her home, offering me something to drink while I sat on her couch. I was preparing my voice recorder while her children sat around me.

The house used to belong to Liliana’s father-in-law before he passed away. Liliana, her husband Javier, and Estefanía, their oldest daughter, had been deported from the United States in 2003. They had made this house their home, worked hard to support their family, and made minor renovations, like adding a bathroom. Liliana also has two young children that live with them, María and Alvaro. She worked a job in a corn de-husking plant, but currently, she sells snacks around the neighborhood. She says this job allows her to choose what to sell and can provide for her family. Javier works as a dairy farmer, often working all day, sometimes in severe weather, to make money.

Estefanía is their oldest daughter. She was born in the United States and was brought to Mexico. She helps her mother with the household chores, temporarily works in the corn de-husking plant, and flies to New York to spend time with family and find work. Estefanía is also responsible for helping her siblings with their homework. María is the middle child, currently finishing elementary school in El Fresno. She often cares for the kittens and dogs and helps with
the laundry and schoolwork. The youngest is Alvaro. Alvaro is a sweet kid, and he and I were talking about the times he would help Javier with the cattle. Alvaro said he likes working with his dad but would prefer to finish school because dairy farming is difficult. Alvaro is still in elementary school, and most of his responsibilities revolve around finishing his schoolwork.

Liliana and Javier have family members in the United States. Most of Liliana’s brothers work in factories in Georgia and California. Javier has siblings in the United States. While they cannot see each other often, they maintain contact and support one another with financial, human, and social capital. They frequently talk about the issues they face, and this compassion strengthens their relationships.

Like other agrarian livelihoods, dairy farming has been impacted by economic structural changes. According to Javier and other community members, dairy production pays poorly. Liliana has identified that the household experiences stress when the cattle produce less milk during dry months. The elimination of tariffs introduced more importation of goods into the Mexican economy. Mexico is the largest imported of powdered milk from Canada and The United States (Carlsen, 2011).

Additionally, Javier cannot access agricultural subsidies, as he leases land from a community member. Pro-Campo eliminated subsidies for non-landowners. Javier, unlike other dairy farmers, is unable to cultivate corn. In El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra regions, many households combine corn and dairy livelihoods to convert field corn into cattle feed during the dry months. This tactic helps to counteract the decline in rainfall, which slows down grass growth and raises the price of cattle feed. Unfortunately, Javier cannot access natural capital, which hinders his ability to diversify his livelihood strategies.
Multigenerational Households

I met Benjamín while he was working in El Fresno. Benjamín was replacing the roof tiles in the local elementary school. Benjamín’s wife, Alejandra, was helping by giving him the tools he needed for work. I wanted to approach them and ask them to participate in the interviews, but I did not want to interrupt their workflow. I waited patiently until Benjamín was climbing down the ladder. Then, I approached the school’s chain link fence, waving at Benjamín to get his attention. We started talking about the research I was conducting in El Fresno, and after some time, Benjamín began to get interested in the topic. Finally, Benjamín confirmed with his wife that it was ok to have the interview. We organized a time to meet, and we went our separate ways.

I walked toward their home, approaching a stone fence house surrounding the front of their home. Their single-story home has a dark red finish and a wooden door adorned with flower carvings. I knocked on the door, and Benjamín let me in. He had had a long day at work and was taking a break before dinner. Benjamín works in construction, building homes in the surrounding communities. He stated that lately, they have been working from seven in the morning until late afternoon, sometimes getting home around six in the afternoon. He told me he was amazed by the amount of work, which meant more money coming into the home. Alejandra walked into the living room after preparing dinner. She sat down next to Benjamín so we could start our conversation. Alejandra also works to provide for the household. Alejandra works in a tortilla manufacturer in El Fresno. She works from five in the morning to four in the afternoon,
making tortillas. Alejandra also finds work within the community, such as cleaning migrant houses.

Benjamín and Alejandra live with their children and are part of a multi-generational household. Leonel is the oldest child of Benjamín and Alejandra’s five children. Leonel started working with his father after finishing elementary school, which helped to cover the household expenses. Leonel is also responsible for his girlfriend, Sofía, who is expecting a son. Sofía takes care of most of the housework when Alejandra is away working. Due to Sofía’s pregnancy, she is limited in her workload. When Alejandra can find extra work cleaning some of the houses in El Fresno, Sofía provides additional help. Sofía also helps take care of the children when Alejandra is working. Sergio is the second oldest son. He works with Benjamín as a peón, or unskilled laborer. He helps clean the rubble from the site and helps load the material into the truck. Benjamín and Alejandra also have a younger daughter named Sandy. Sandy attends the elementary school in El Fresno and helps Sofía with the household chores. According to Alejandra, once Sandy is done with school, Sandy will have to find work in the community or help more around the house. Alejandra has two infant children, a boy named Río and a daughter named Jacky. Alejandra spends most of her free time caring for her children outside of work.

Benjamin and Alejandra have faced food insecurity while struggling to find work in their community. Previously, Mexico used to provide subsidized healthy food to many households. However, structural changes were made to promote an open market that eliminated these services. Households lost their ability to access food and ensure that their loved ones would not go to bed hungry. In El Fresno, people used to go to CONASUPO in Jiquilpan to buy food at lower costs and were guaranteed consistent prices as CONASUPO provided price regulations for
food. An active bus service transported people back and forth from Jiquilpan. Now, homes like Benjamin and Alejandra’s must develop strategies to feed their families due to this service no longer being provided. This household has implemented a strategy of cutting out meat as a protein source. They have the advantage of Alejandra being able to obtain free tortillas from her job, which helps reduce costs. Their diet mainly consists of rice and beans during these times, and when they have enough, they purchase some vegetables. De-regulation of the market has unintentionally starved households. Now that their children are older, things have been better for Benjamin and Alejandra’s home.

Benjamin and Alejandra’s household consists of multiple members who contribute financially. The children and their partners all have livelihoods, and sharing the same living space allows for expenses to be split among them. Benjamin has used his human capital (knowledge of construction) and social capital to provide his children with paid labor. Their combined pay can provide their homes with their needs. Additionally, Alejandra can use her social capital to find work by cleaning migrant homes. Their livelihoods provide enough to overcome stressors, but they have difficulty overcoming shocks. This is because while they have larger financial support coming into the home, they are vulnerable to losing work due to illness or injury.

Another strategy that they implement is a tanda. Tandas are livelihood strategies that operate in an informal economy network. For example, informal economies are a system where the government neither taxes nor regulates the line of work (Beasley, 2012). These strategies operate to fill the gaps that are left behind by the lack of resources in which help their communities while building relationships, prestige, and income. Tandas are informal rotating
saving associations that depend on social capital to function. Most tandas are developed with close relationships to pool money but may include extended members. These extended members are allowed into the tanda if the primary member vouches for the home, houses putting their reputation on the line. Tandas take many forms and have different rules that apply to the association. Usually, on the first meeting, each home pulls a number to determine in which order each home will receive the money and the dates on which the money will be collected. Each association member will collect money at the agreed time to create a lump sum. Each household will eventually receive the money. Benjamin and Alejandra said these tandas help them pay for large home expenses. Occasionally, they pay off their debts and buy building materials for home projects or other necessities.

Single head of household With Children

One evening, as I was walking out of my aunt’s house, I met Joaquín. Joaquín was sitting outside his home trimming a garbanzo plant. He was looking at the ground and watching people pass by. I waved hello to him; he waved back, and with the motion of his hand, he asked me to come closer. We started making small talk before easing into a deeper conversation. He asked me whose son I was, and I responded with my mom’s name. After a while of talking, I gave the purpose of my visit. Joaquín was intrigued by my questions and welcomed me into his home to discuss the local economy.

Joaquín is a father to a huge family: he has nine children, some living in Mexico and some living in the United States. Joaquín predominantly works in agriculture harvesting onions, peppers, and corn, and he also frequently helps one of his sons, Ernesto, paint homes in
Jiquilpan. Joaquin has access to a travel visa, so he often visits family members in New York and Illinois. Despite some of his children moving away, Joaquin remained in El Fresno, Mexico with his son Ernesto. Ernesto works as a handyman, painting homes for his brother Mário, who lives in New York. Mário has purchased many homes in Jiquilpan, Sahuayo, and El Fresno. Joaquin and Ernesto are the only ones that paint these homes and fix basic issues. For larger projects, Mário hires construction workers from El Fresno. When he is not busy working in new homes, he helps his father harvest the many agricultural products they produce. Ernesto spent most of his life migrating to California to work in factories in the late 90s; he decided to migrate back to Mexico in 2005. Ernesto and Joaquin work together to maintain the household, but they also receive help from Joaquin’s daughter, Dolores, who lives in Jiquilpan.

Dolores is married to someone in Jiquilpan. On the weekends, she comes to visit her brother and father. She tries to hold a conversation while cleaning the house, doing laundry, and prepping meals for her father for the rest of the week. The rest of Joaquin’s children live in different states in the United States.

Efrain is the oldest son of Joaquin. He lives in Texas with his three children and wife. He and his wife worked in a factory to sustain their household and support his father. Efrain’s children have received an education in the United States and have been able to find work in their fields and can provide additional financial support. Occasionally, Efrain’s family can collect money to help Joaquin with expenses. Most of Efrain’s brothers migrated to New York.

Marco lives thirty minutes from New York City in Connecticut. He works as a landscaper with other community members and his brother, Mario. Mario started a landscaping company based in Connecticut. Most of his financial capital is from working in this company, but he also
Joaquín directs funds to build houses in Mexico. Each home in Mexico is a passive income for his household. He rents many places in the larger city of Sahuayo, twenty minutes west of Jiquilpan. He also has been building commercial spaces so other families can create storefronts.

Joaquín has four daughters in the United States. His youngest daughter, Paulina, moved to Texas with her daughter after marrying her husband. Paulina works in a restaurant and works in catering. Paulina’s sister, Cristina, moved to Connecticut. Cristina lives with her three children and husband. Cristina runs a daycare out of her home. Their last two sisters moved to Illinois. Inés lives in Chicago, where she works in a clothing store as a clerk. Finally, Marcia is the last daughter of Joaquín. She lives in Illinois, where she works in a department store.

Joaquín expressed that while all his children work hard and live abroad, the family is still close and has so much love. They always talk on the phone since many cannot visit because of their immigration status. Fortunately, Joaquín qualified for a federal Mexican government-sponsored visa program to allow elderly parents to see loved ones. He attempts to visit each year, spending most of his time in Chicago and Connecticut.

Joaquín and Ernesto have expanded their methods of making a living. Joaquín could buy land upon his return from the United States, and he utilized various institutions to fund his agricultural pursuits. The first source of financial capital he uses for agriculture is Mexico’s social security program. This is a program where elderly citizens receive money every month. Joaquín receives around 2,000 pesos, but the amount varies between households. He also received subsidies from Pro-Campo for buying fertilizers and pesticides and renting tractors to prepare his land for planting onions. Joaquín has an advantage over other households who only grow corn because he has less competition when he harvests his onions.
One way for him to save money on food is to grow garbanzo beans, papayas, and chiles on his property to share with friends and family or for his consumption. He has the resources to support this strategy, including financial, social, and human capital. Despite most of his family living in the US, his financial resources allow him to hire workers from the community to assist in farming. This approach creates job opportunities for other households as well.

Joaquín can overcome stressors and shocks because of the vast network of members in the United States. Joaquín receives frequent remittances from his eight children, which increase during the planting season to support his agriculture practices. According to him, these remittances are voluntary, and his children want to help him as he has supported them for a long time. While Joaquín sometimes receives remittances from his grandchildren and extended family members, they are not as regular as those from his children.

El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco

Female Headed Multigenerational Households

Beatrix earns a living by selling food every Friday afternoon. Her day begins with moving the trucks out of the courtyard to make space for the tables and chairs. Beatrix is always in a hurry to finish her tasks, which include cooking for her mother, cleaning the house, sweeping the courtyard, and preparing the ingredients for the tortas. Beatrix’s oldest sister, Aurelia, is wiping the grills for the bread. Beatrix told me that Fridays are the most chaotic days for her because she has a lot to complete at home before starting work.
Beatrix shares a home with her mother, sister, and daughter in a multi-generational female home structure. Her mother, Lucía, is a US resident and enjoys watching television in the courtyard. Beatrix’s sister Yolanda completed her high school diploma and worked as a clerk for the local government. Before heading off to work, Yolanda helps with household chores, which allows Beatrix to take care of other tasks. Beatrix’s daughter, Inés, had to stop school due to an illness. She helps Beatrix prepare the ingredients and sells crochet items online, as she cannot stand for long periods. Aurelia, the oldest daughter, lives nearby and visits on weekends. Aurelia sells clothing and other items from her home, and when she visits Beatrix, she helps cook and package orders. Although Beatrix has five brothers living in the United States, she has a large family in Mexico.

The oldest brother in the family is named Vicente. He moved to the United States in the early 80s and started working in dairy production in California, a livelihood he had gathered much experience. In 1986, he returned to Mexico to assist his father with his cattle but later returned to California with his wife to begin their family. Eventually, in 1998, Vicente relocated to Illinois to work with Carlos. He is now retired and living in Oswego.

During the late 90s, Carlos relocated to Aurora, Illinois, and began working in construction. He worked his way up the company ladder and eventually saved enough money to start his construction company. His siblings also moved to Illinois to support him.

Alejandro first moved to California to work in a factory. While in Los Angeles, Alejandro met his wife before deciding to move to Illinois. His wife worked as a manager of an apartment complex, and Alejandro started to work for Carlos. Alejandro retired in early 2019. Currently, he lives in Mexico from January to May.
Felipe first migrated to California, where he worked as a dairy farmer. He moved to Aurora, Illinois, to work for Carlos’ construction company. However, he was tired of working in construction because of the pain growing in his joints and working under the beating sun. He currently lives in Aurora, Illinois, as a maintenance worker for an apartment complex.

Eduardo first migrated to Illinois. He lived with Vicente, and after settling in, he started to work with Carlos. He helped to pay for Vicente’s home expenses and cooperated to purchase a home together. After some time, he started to save money to hire an immigration lawyer, to bring his wife and children to the United States.

The youngest of the men, César, lives in Aurora, Illinois. He was the last to migrate to the United States in 1998. César is the only brother without legal status in the United States and cannot go to Mexico. He fears that he will not be able to come back. César works for Carlos’ company and has started to help expand the company by having his crew. This allows the company to complete more jobs. César married in Illinois and started to build a life.

Beatrix’s home is female-multigenerational because all her brothers migrated to the United States to make a living. Her brothers migrated when agricultural jobs in Mexico declined and the Reagan administration offered amnesty for migrant workers in the late 80s. Most of her brothers could use this amnesty program to find other livelihood strategies in the United States. Therefore, six of her seven brothers have legal status in the United States, allowing Beatrix to access more capital. Her brothers visit Mexico yearly, bringing gifts to their sisters each year. These gifts have been able to be used in Beatrix’s livelihood strategies. For example, Vicente brought the sandwich presses and grills that Beatrix uses in her strategy. Additionally, Eduardo has given money to Beatrix to purchase a large baking oven she uses to make bread to sell
around the community. Financial capital has allowed this home to purchase physical capitals that help them diversify their livelihood strategies. At the same time, Beatrix faces constraints with accessing certain ingredients due to supply chain issues. She can access financial capital because of other household members.

Lucía can support the home because she has access to services from government institutions. Lucía is a United States resident and receives social security benefits every month. Lucía and her husband went through the legal immigration process and worked tirelessly to invest in their lives in the United States. Additionally, she can also receive benefits from the Mexican government each month. These benefits help support the home with household expenses. Furthermore, Lucía inherited natural capital from her husband who passed away. Her husband purchased many lots of land to invest in their future. The natural capital they own has been used to overcome stressors and shocks by selling, leasing, or using the land for agriculture. Beatrix’s son uses his grandfather’s land to raise cattle to support his wife and children.

The home’s inhabitants have been supporting each other by pooling their resources. Lucia and her spouse generously financed Yolanda’s children’s education, which enabled them to graduate from college and pursue a master’s degree successfully. The elder son completed a master’s degree in biology and then secured a job in a research firm in Jalisco; the younger son received a master’s degree in chemistry and worked in a chemical laboratory in Mexico City. Yolanda’s children have been able to support their mother, inspiring her to pursue further education. With her children’s help, Yolanda could pay for skill training courses and finish high school, gaining new skills that enabled her to work in a government office and serve her community.
I met Jorge while walking to the El Paso de Piedra soccer field. Jorge was driving down the road with milk churns on the truck bed. He recognized me, but needed a moment to figure out who I was. He pulled over and asked me how my dad was doing. Jorge and my father were childhood friends. The more Jorge and I continued our conversation, the more stories he would share about the trouble he and my dad got into and how my grandma would chase them out of the house with a broom. Jorge and my father were always together with the other boys in the community. Life happens; Jorge started his family, my dad did the same, and they went their separate ways. The memories of these relationships help people feel connected when divided by a border.

Jorge moved to the United States in the late 90s and worked in agriculture in California before moving to Illinois to work in a plastic manufacturing plant. In 2005, he returned to Mexico to be with his family and began working in dairy farming. From June to August, he grows corn and sells it to a mill that turns it into livestock feed. Jorge employs two people to assist him with milking the cattle and delivering dairy products to local consumers.

Jorge’s brother Jesús consistently assists him with producing dairy and harvesting corn, while Martín, a community member, is his go-to person for handling tasks on his parcel. The assistance of Martín is based on need and is not a consistent source of paid labor. The head of the household, Jorge, is responsible for making many of the investment decisions. He built his home using his earnings from his jobs in the United States. Meanwhile, Jorge’s son, Miguel, can make financial decisions and contribute to household expenses. Miguel, a truck driver, resides with his
family in the same home as Jorge. Their family recently moved in with him because homes in Mexico are expensive to build with the local pay rates and building material costs. When Miguel is resting between deliveries, he helps Jorge with the cattle. Miguel’s wife, Maria, dedicates her time to care for the household. She cleans, cooks, cares for their children, and cleans the home. María and Miguel have a son name Moises and a daughter named Daisy. Moises goes to school for two hours a day and mostly spends time with his mother. Daisy is an infant, so María looks after her most of the day.

Households in El Paso de Piedra have many ways to overcome hardships. The strategies of mobilizing assets and converting them into valuable resources are applied to decrease vulnerabilities (Knutsson & Oswald, 2006). Sharing the home has become a strategy for household members to cooperate by sharing resources. For example, Jorge and Miguel coming into the home allows them to be more prepared during a sudden loss of money coming into the home. Without each other, Jorge would have to pay for all home expenses, and Miguel would have to find a way to buy a plot of land, purchase building materials, and wait for his home to be ready to move in.

Health is a stressor that many households must face, especially in rural communities. Rural communities are more vulnerable to declining health and loss of paid labor because most jobs rely on manual labor. In 2020, Jorge and his brother, Jesús, contracted Covid. I asked Jorge if they were able to stay home and rest. He replied that they could not. He had to get up for work every day, sweating from the high fever and trying to catch his breath. Jorge was working under the beating sun while suffering from a debilitating virus.
Jorge said that he had to push himself to go to work, the cattle depended on him to feed them, and he depended on the cattle to make a living; if you did not go to work, you did not get paid that day. Jorge had to use his sick days a few times to ensure they could still finish their daily tasks despite feeling unwell. He reached out to some families that worked in dairy production to see if they could help a lending hand. While he lost some of the pay that day to give to the households that helped him out, he was able to keep his cattle fed. Miguel was able to use some of his pay to recover from the loss of Jorge’s daily pay. Cooperation allows households to contribute financial capital while the other person regains their strength to return to work. However, the severity of the illness may turn into shocks, and it may be tough to recover from the loss of money flowing into the home.

**Multi-Family Households**

I met Juan through some friends I made in El Paso de Piedra. We were planning to play some poker while we were discussing Mexican politics. We often went into such deep conversations that we would need to remember to open the deck of cards. I would hang out with this group daily, discussing the topics that mattered to them. These conversations were essential because I listened to their frustrations and what made the community unique.

Additionally, it made me feel a deeper connection to everyone around me. When I started the interview with Juan, we were inside a garage with the door open, watching the rain. Juan is a people person, often sitting outside with a group of men, listening to people’s different perspectives. I was not surprised when we were interviewing that he would invite people passing
by to participate. Some people accepted the invitation and stood in a circle. I was able to gain access to different perspectives, with their supporting thoughts on the reason why they had an opinion.

Juan migrated to Illinois when he was in his early 20s. He worked in a factory in the Chicagoland area, assembling machinery parts. He was unsatisfied with the work, making just enough money to survive. Juan migrated back to Mexico in 2006 to be with his wife and to start a business. Juan owns a green grocery store where he can make a livable income. He lives in a multi-family home with his wife, child, and brother’s family. Juan’s wife, Camila, helps around the store by selling and packaging the merchandise and going with Juan to purchase goods from wholesalers. Camila also cleans and cooks in the home, making time to take their daughter, Mariana, to school. Juan shares the house with his brother, Raul, to alleviate expenses. Raul is a truck driver that drives to the United States a few days a week to deliver agricultural products. Raul’s wife, Eliana, spends most of her time caring for their son, Adrian. Eliana takes Adrian to school and helps Camila with the housework.

Juan and Raul have found that cooperation is essential in building homes due to the area’s expensive building materials and low wages. Juan sells produce for a living and has been able to rent a storefront in El Valle de Juarez, where he notices an increase in sales during the holiday season when migrants come to El Paso de Piedra. Raul’s trucking business tends to do well as he often takes a trailer a week to Texas. Both men’s livelihood strategies are adaptable to stressors and shocks to the economy. Juan’s wife helps with the grocery store to support their household, while Raul’s wife cooks, cleans, and looks after their children. This cooperative effort ensures that expenses are paid and gives them money to overcome difficult times.
Networks in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra

In this section, I aim to explore how households use their networks to overcome hardships. I cover the capitals that networks need to survive. Additionally, I explore community-level networks and how they contribute to people’s lives within the community.

Local Networks

Local networks are a set of relationships within a given community. For instance, a local network may include household members that have migrated to the United States. In this section, I describe how households use their relationships to overcome economic hardships and how cooperation is necessary to provide for the household.

Cooperation is an essential capital that many community members hold close to their hearts. For this reason, households within a community help one another during times of need. For example, Juan creates a support system for the community by using his business to fill in the vulnerabilities created by unequal development. He delivers produce to community members to compensate for the lack of public transportation or people with limited movement. This service allows Juan to gain more customers for his business.

Most households in both El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra are eager to extend a helping hand. As Jorge stated, most of us grew up together, so everyone in the community knows each other and is there for one another. For example, Jorge told me a story about a young girl who needed a machine to help her breathe. Unfortunately, her family could not afford the device. So,
the community came together, collecting money through extended families and going door to door to help in any way they could. Joaquín said that the community is generous, providing examples of how people from El Fresno help one another. For instance, is someone sees someone unable to find something to eat, they offer them a seat at the table.

In both El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra, social capital is meaningful for community members to access livelihood strategies. Households looking to hire community members use the individual’s reputation to decide if they can handle the workload or the responsibility. During our interview, Joaquín said he knows who the good and bad workers are in the community. No one wants to pay someone money if they do not have a strong work ethic. This is because households put significant financial effort into cultivating crops and want to minimize the risks involved with their livelihood. Social capital has also become necessary when working in the construction sector. Most construction teams are composed of individuals from the household, although they may occasionally hire individuals from outside. Close relationships help ease the anxieties of people not showing up to work or leaving halfway through a project. People engage outside the home because they have support from someone within the network. For example, Benjamin could find a construction job from the experience he collected while working in the United States. After building a bond with his construction team, he got jobs for his sons, Leonel, and Sergio. With their collective experience, knowledge about construction, and reputation, they can work on side projects on the weekends to earn extra cash for the household.

Emma and two other community members were part of a state initiative to provide help and resources to women facing domestic abuse within the community. The state of Michoacán was supposed to provide grants to pay Emma and the other two people for their time and was
supposed to purchase teaching materials and other miscellaneous items to help comfort the children. However, the state cut these grants, making Emma uncomfortable. Emma loves her community and wants to help make her home a great place to live. Emma and the other two community members worked without pay, volunteering to help create a support system for families facing domestic abuse. Emma went around the community looking for donations, including contacting the elementary school. Together, Emma and one of the preschool teachers collected used books, toys, and notebooks for the children. Emma wants this program to work because these children are in need of love and attention; the children act out because they are only noticed through their emotional outbursts.

While the community does the best it can to create a support system for their households and community members, on many occasions, families seek help from extended networks in the United States. Remittances make up most of the support migrants contribute to their households and occasionally extend to the community. Emma stated that migration is a strategy used to help support families.

International Networks

International networks are a system of relationships that include people working abroad. While migrants are a part of their communities of origin, they may not be able to immediately help their households because of the constraints imposed by borders. While local community members may be able to provide some assistance, migrants are required to overcome more challenging situations.

Alejandra and I were conversing about some of the hardships her home has overcome. She brought up an example of when she and Benjamin could not find work. Benjamin would
spend much time going to places in search of work, but he needed help finding something. Their family had very little money; they could not afford to eat. Her close relationships helped her overcome food insecurity.

Alejandra: There was a time when we did not have anything. I had two boys at that time. I did not even have tortillas to give them. To tell you, we did not even have salt. They were asking for money, without knowing if we had any. We did not have anything. I called my mom and told her, “I do not have any money; I do not even have any to buy tortillas to give to the boys so they can eat. I told her, at least for the boys, we can put up with being hungry, I told her, but they will not put up with it.” The next day, she came with a box full of groceries, from soap to food. Then, the following day, my brother-in-law, who lives in the United States, sent me another box full of food. So, I could feed my children.

In 2012, Benjamín spent most of his day looking around the community, attempting to find a way to make ends meet. At this time, Leonel was eight and Sergio was five; they were too young to work and help with household expenses. Alejandra reached out to her mother, asking for help. Alejandra’s mother did everything she could to help, eventually reaching out to her other daughter to see if they could provide additional support. Finally, Alejandra’s brother-in-law sent money to purchase more food. Alejandra described the hopelessness and the pain of crying because she could not feed her children. Household cooperation has become an essential tool to overcome economic hardships.
In the case of Liliana’s home, debt has become an intricate part of life. Javier accrued 20,000 pesos of debt over the years: the increase in the costs of leasing land for storing the cattle, feed, and veterinary care, combined with low milk production created economic hardships for the household. Although Liliana said, “We pushed him to sell the cattle, they barely made enough milk to break even, and we had much debt,” he did not want to sell the cows because it dairy was his livelihood. In 2019, Estephani migrated to the United States to help her household. Estephani worked at a McDonald’s restaurant earning eight dollars an hour and sending most of her wages to her mother. Liliana and Javier would use these remittances to pay off their debts. Liliana also got help from her aunt living in the United States. Liliana’s aunt occasionally sends some money to help with some of the household expenses. In addition, Javier’s older brother sends remittances and other gifts to help alleviate their household expenses, such as gas and electricity.

Additionally, remittances help alleviate some inequalities that homes face. One problem that was brought up in my interviews was the need for more young adults to afford an education. Like many other parents, Emma hopes their children can live without facing the struggles they face in the community. Emma has many siblings in the United States that help support her children’s education. Her oldest daughter, Isabella, is continuing her education in one of the many high schools in Jiquilpan. Because of the remittances coming into the household, she can afford the transportation costs, tuition, uniforms, and school materials necessary to excel in school. Emma hopes that with her daughter’s education, she can aspire to get a job that can make her live a comfortable life without worrying about where she will get the money to eat.
Significance

In this chapter, I demonstrate how changes in livelihood strategies have changed the organization of homes in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. In traditional agriculture, households worked together in the fields, and while most families were not wealthy regarding financial capital, loved ones surrounded them.

Now that agricultural livelihoods have changed to conventional practices, fewer people are required to harvest crops. Households had to diversify their livelihoods to overcome the shocks of the economy. These shocks include eliminating public services, subsidies, price regulation of crops, and limiting the competition of foreign products in the market. I described the home structures of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra to demonstrate how people organize and their livelihood strategies to gain access to different capitals.

Many of the women that participated in my 2021 research dedicated their time to performing housework and finding imaginative ways of accessing money to help their homes. Most jobs in the two communities are performed by men, leaving women with seasonal work, such as the de-husking plant. However, these livelihoods provide the bare necessities and often are vulnerable to stressors and shocks of the economy. As Emma, Joaquín, Benjamín and Alejandra, and many others stated, the earnings in the community are enough to eat and to have a roof over their head. They cannot save enough financial capital to overcome job loss. Households that practice agriculture are worried about the rising prices of fertilizers and pesticides and how these issues will result in the profitability of their yields.
Additionally, many of these livelihood strategies are vulnerable to health problems. With the limited human capital in the household, few people can perform the work. However, some households with access to social capital can overcome minor stressors by asking others to perform those tasks in exchange for payment or favors. Households with long-lasting health issues would lose their livelihoods. They will not be able to access financial capital to overcome home expenses and will not be able to contribute to the overall household.

These vulnerabilities have forced households to adopt survival strategies to help sustain their home in Mexico. Every household I interviewed had members living abroad and sent remittances to provide for their loved ones. Migrants with access to legal status can see their household members frequently. Additionally, this group of migrants has been able to access resources that will help them live comfortably in Mexico once they retire. Social security has been a method in which older household members continue to use their capital to help everyone within the network. However, undocumented immigrants experience cruel events in their life. They experience hate from people, but the migrant’s only fault is wanting to help their families, friends, and neighbors, aiding them in times when they cannot find food to feed their children or to meet their basic needs. Migrants experience environmental violence such as extreme heat while hiking across dangerous terrain, and they often confront dangerous animals or border agencies along the way, which can prevent them from providing for their households. Undocumented immigrants often go years without seeing their loved ones, missing significant events like weddings or the funeral of someone they cannot see or share a burst of laughter with again. Migrants commonly only return to the community once they retire.
However, international networks are essential to supporting one’s home. They provide many benefits, occasionally facilitate building capital, and render more livelihood strategies available to friends, family, and neighbors. Remittances in the communities of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra help support businesses and create jobs for many.
CHAPTER 3
RESILIENCY OR SENSE OF ABANDONMENT

During our conversation, Emma and I talked about the livelihood strategies and aspirations of households in El Fresno. Their primary goals are survival, providing for their families, and having a place to call home. El Fresno households are constantly dealing with economic challenges and adapting to overcome them. In the upcoming section, I explain how migration networks support individuals seeking employment abroad. Additionally, I discuss how these networks encourage women to become heads of household. Finally, I will describe the threats that the communities in both El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra are facing.

Migration Networks

Remittances have become a vital capital that households use to overcome economic hardships; more households have adopted migration as a survival strategy. The increased inequality, inflation, and unequal access to jobs in the region push people to leave their loved ones to maintain a decent living. However, the increased migration restrictions have made this survival strategy difficult for households. Migration networks have become a strategy to access
the necessary resources for the arduous journey to an unfamiliar country. In this chapter, I discuss how households create migrant networks to access better-paying jobs abroad.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, networks are an adaptation tool used to overcome economic hardships. These strategies of using different capitals are adopted for migration networks. Members of rural communities such as El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra have close-knit relationships and are likely to know someone that has migrated than those in urban areas. This is why the two communities have a perception that more houses are vacant and that more people are leaving the community to work abroad.

Access to social capital is why rural communities are more likely to migrate than urban centers (Garip, 2012). Urban communities tend to have more job opportunities, making migration a less necessary survival strategy. In contrast, rural communities often rely on strong social connections with their neighbors and those who have migrated abroad. Rural communities also tend to have higher reciprocal exchanges through different capitals to create a support system (Massey & Aysa-Lastra, 2011, p.2). Social capital opens access to other capital, such as human and financial capital that eases the constraints of migrations. In the following section, I discuss how Jorge, and many others that migrate to the United States, use their relationships to access these different capitals to survive in an unfamiliar place.

Jorge migrated to the United States in the late 90s to provide for his mother and sister. Jorge had never migrated to the United States before and needed to gain experience finding a place to live and work. As a result, Jorge decided to migrate with some people from El Paso de Piedra and to share their journey. Jorge was able to travel with people he was familiar with, thus
easing his anxieties of the unknown. First, Jorge, and the other men traveling abroad for work, started by looking for a coyote, which is a guide that takes migrants across the desert to the other side of the United States border for a fee. Jorge’s used his network to find a coyote’s information—one that many community members have used to cross the Northwestern desert into the United States. Exhausting all his resources, Jorge paid the coyote to guide him through the harsh terrain to avoid border security along the Mexican and United States border: Jorge paid the coyote 2,000 dollars.

Upon arrival in the United States, Jorge faced financial challenges and uncertainty about his living arrangements and where he would work. He turned to his network for assistance and eventually found support that allowed him to settle in without worrying about basic survival needs. His friends from El Paso de Piedra provided him shelter, money, and food while he searched for employment. Jorge mentioned during the interview that he sees them as family, showing that while these relationships seem distant, their empathy brings them closer together. For the first few weeks, Jorge’s friends gave him money to purchase new clothes, and Jorge would save some of the money to send remittances to his mother in Mexico. Jorge could live and eat for free until his friend helped him find a job in the dairy industry in California—an industry he was already familiar with. He noticed significant differences between dairy agriculture in Mexico and the United States, including using technology to increase productivity and reduce fatigue during his shift. However, he wanted to explore other job opportunities that could provide better job security, higher pay, and new experiences.

Wanting to look for other opportunities in the United States, Jorge migrated to Illinois in 2000. He moved in with some friends he had made to help cover the living expenses and to have
more to send to Mexico monthly. He worked in a plastic manufacturing plant, where he was getting paid better, around seventeen dollars an hour. During difficult times, his friends would lend him money so he could keep a consistent schedule when sending remittances to his family. Eventually, he would pay them back, purchasing inexpensive food to have the ability to save money. His strategies were to go to work and home and not spend money on unnecessary items.

Migrants use their different networks to access the resources they need to survive while working abroad while also maintaining the ability to sustain their household in Mexico. Using a community-level network, such as extended family and friends, allows migrants to overcome hardships (Massey & Aysa-Lastra, 2011). However, these networks are often unevenly distributed between men and women. Migration has become a method of demonstrating masculinity on the grounds of being able to financially support their family (Cohen, 2011, p.78). However, migration also allows men to provide for other members looking to migrate abroad for opportunities. Men have become the decision-makers of migration patterns by accumulating financial capital, more extensive social networks, and knowledge capital (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991). The unequal access to migration networks pushes women to become heads of households at home in Mexico.

**Women as Heads of Households**

While walking around the community, I often bumped into people familiar with my parents. My parents were why I could access community members willing to participate in my ethnography. We would discuss how I remembered the two towns as a child, how they were different compared to the United States, and how I have fond memories of spending my summers
in Mexico. My participants would tell me stories about my parents and how they all grew up together. These stories would make my participants, and I feel more comfortable with one another, but I also learned more about my family. These relationships allow me to understand all the painful experiences that community members face and how I made them comfortable to share with me. Once we were more comfortable with one another, I would begin my interviews with one question, “What do you do for work?” Many women respond similarly, “Soy ama de casa (I am a housewife).” While they shrugged off their answer, the more we continued the interview, the more they displayed the importance of maintaining the household.

On some occasions, female-multigenerational households develop when male network members migrate. It is often the oldest daughter that oversees the household. Women left behind gain greater housework and economic responsibilities (Martin, 2004). In this section, I cover the head of the household role through two examples: Emma from El Fresno and Beatrix from El Paso de Piedra.

Emma became the head of the household after her father passed away in 2018. Emma’s siblings either migrated to the United States or had a family to care for. Emma returned home after her divorce to have a place to live with her two daughters. Not only does Emma have a responsibility to her daughters, but also to her household and broader family members. Emma’s duties include caring for her mother and completing the housework. Managing these relationships is essential since the remittances she receives from her siblings cover most of the household expenses.

As Emma’s mother gets older, she has had more health problems. As a result, Emma often must take her mother to doctors in Jiquilpan and specialists in Guadalajara. Trips to
Guadalajara take most of her day since El Fresno is four hours from the capital of Jalisco. Emma works tirelessly to find the doctors that will provide good care, and she walks from pharmacy to pharmacy to find better medications and reasonable prices. She does this to limit overspending and limit the waste of resources. In addition, Emma takes her mother to private care so Valeria can receive more attentive care. However, private care is more costly and requires more from her siblings in the United States. Because of the costs, Emma must negotiate with her household on what care to pursue, the medication they should purchase, and any other care their mother needs. Emma spends much of her day ensuring her mother has everything she needs. Aside from caring for household members and completing housework, women also manage relationships with family members in the United States.

Beatrix dedicated most of her time to caring for the household, cooking, watching her grandchildren, and cooking on the weekend to sell to community members. When I was visiting one Saturday, Beatrix had been up since seven in the morning and was busy cooking breakfast, feeding her mother, Lucía, and giving her medication. Beatrix was running around the house, continuously pushing the hair out of her face and attempting to catch her breath. Every so often, she would have a moment to relax, but then her phone ring—her brothers would call to see if the household needed anything or if Beatrix could go and see if the construction workers were working on their homes. Vicente, Alejandro, Carlos, and Eduardo all live in the United States and are building their homes to have a place to live when they retire. That Saturday, Beatrix had a busy day, but even so, she had to find the time to drive to El Valle de Juarez to collect the money her siblings had sent for the household and to pay for their home’s building costs. So, she
ran around El Paso de Piedra, meeting with the construction crews to ensure they completed the week’s work.

Threats to the Communities

The communities of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra have a long history of relying on agriculture to support their households. Some families focus on dairy production, others grow corn, and others do both. I remember seeing men tending to their cattle while households cultivated corn in their fields when I was fifteen. However, fewer people are now participating in agriculture, and many families have abandoned it as a livelihood. Emma explained that fewer campesinos could afford to spend much time in the field for the little pay they earn from selling their crops. Many see agriculture as making ends meet or saving money for the future. It serves as a household savings account since they may earn more than initially invested in their crops. The remaining campesinos rarely hire people from the community. In this section, I discuss the threats to agrarian livelihoods crucial in providing food for families. I also highlight the risks associated with migration, which some households use as a survival strategy to support their homes.

While fewer people practice agriculture, small-scale agriculture is common in these two communities, usually managed by a few household members. Typically, crop harvesting is done by the eldest male in the household, with occasional assistance from another male household member. Currently, households engage in mono-cropping agriculture while frequently using pesticides and fertilizers; this occurs despite community members becoming aware of the negative impacts these chemicals have. For instance, Jorge and others have expressed concern
about the potential land degradation resulting from their use. Despite this, they acknowledge that these products can help produce a successful harvest. Emma, on the other hand, noted that increased chemical use could prevent many community members from practicing agriculture in the future and destroy one of the few livelihood strategies in the community.

The prices of pesticides and fertilizers have increased due to inflation and changes in the global market. Corn-producing households are the ones who have been affected the most. They are already struggling to generate income to sustain their families, and rising costs have made their lives even more uncertain. However, the public is only willing to pay a specific price for their crops, so households eagerly await harvest season, hoping for a positive outcome. Many households are still determining how these changes in the market will affect them. As one farmer, Jorge, stated, he does not know how well consumers will pay for the corn, and he can only hope for the best. This issue becomes more apparent when many people in the community grow the same crop, leading to an oversaturation of corn in the local market and potentially causing a price drop. Still, there are other issues besides local competition. Since the implementation of NAFTA, foreign competitors have been importing more agricultural products into Mexico.

Large factory farms have a significant advantage over small-scale farmers. With their access to extensive land, irrigation systems, a larger workforce, and better distribution networks, they can easily dominate the market and control prices. More significant production of crops gives factory farms leverage over local markets (Clunies-Ross & Hildyard, 2013, p. 7). Unfortunately, this can devastate local farmers who struggle to keep up with the competition. For example, Juan shared a story with me about a local farmer who could not
harvest his crops due to a larger company lowering prices so much that hiring workers would have cost more than the profit earned. *Campesinos* rely on the seasons and rainfall to cultivate and harvest their crops, which limits their access to income during the dry season. To supplement their agricultural livelihoods, households often combine crop production with other strategies, such as dairy farming.

Within these two communities, corn and dairy farming are intertwined as a means of subsistence. The purpose of the corn produced is not for human consumption but rather for animal feed. Dairy farming is a year-round profession that is heavily reliant on seasonal changes. The dry season is particularly challenging for dairy farmers, and as natural resources become scarce, they must depend more on feed such as corn. During this time, the demand for feed surges, leading to price hikes that make it challenging for households to generate a profit. Liliana’s family, for instance, accumulated debt due to the high price of feed combined with low dairy production during a dry season.

The dairy industry faces a big hurdle due to oversaturation, producing fierce competition in production. Regrettably, some dairy farmers feel that dairy goods manufacturers have an advantage as they can increase their prices while paying farmers less. This competition results in a decrease in milk prices, with some farmers receiving as little as five pesos per liter while consumers purchase it for twenty-five pesos. Moreover, industrial dairy farms have the upper hand due to mechanization, enabling them to produce more milk than small-scale farmers. Unfortunately, many small-scale farmers cannot afford the necessary automation for mass production. Lastly, many households are abandoning agrarian livelihoods in search of better opportunities. One of these strategies that offer better options is migration, but migration is a
vulnerable survival strategy because of the United States’ political climate, which ultimately affects the households in Mexico.

Households have adopted migration as a survival strategy to overcome changes in the local economy. Remittances that migrants send to their homes help them overcome hardships and open access to resources. However, households that receive help from undocumented family members are vulnerable to losing assistance. Deportations are one of the most prominent fears migrants working abroad face.

Liliana migrated to the United States in 2000 after growing tired of the few opportunities in the community and wanting to help provide for her household. She arrived in Los Angeles after walking through the desert with other migrants. In Los Angeles, Liliana worked in a factory and a grocery store, sending remittances frequently to help. After some time, Liliana received a call from a friend who told her that there were better working opportunities with better pay in Atlanta, Georgia. Once in Atlanta, she found a job in a yoga mat production plant, where she met Javier. Liliana and Javier married, had their daughter Estefanía, and built a home in the United States, making enough to help provide for their family and network.

On a morning in 2004, Liliana and Javier went to work like any other day. However, while they were working, United States Immigration and Customs officers raided the factory, arresting Liliana and Javier. Liliana and Javier were deported back to El Fresno, wondering how they would make a living or provide for their household. Most of the money Liliana and Javier made in the United States was to provide their parents with medical care. She could not continue supporting her family financially to purchase medications.
Significance

Households in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra have implemented various livelihood strategies to navigate challenging situations. One common tactic is migration, which allows families to support their homes in Mexico by using remittances to create alternative sources of paid labor. Remittances allow homes in Mexico to invest in human, physical, and social capital.

Regarding human capital, migration allows homes in Mexico to invest in education and learn skills or a workforce that can be used in other livelihood strategies. Households receiving fewer remittances cannot provide their children with an education. This is because they cannot invest in long-term strategies that do not generate quick returns. Unfortunately, due to the lack of affordable public transportation to Jiquilpan, only a few children in El Fresno continue their education beyond the sixth grade. This is due to the high costs of schooling, class materials, and food, which exceed the average daily pay rate of 500 pesos for the people in these households. For example, in Alejandra, Benjamin’s, and Liliana’s homes, children must find work to support the family after finishing elementary school. The few examples of where children could continue their education were because migrants were sending re-occurring remittances to pay for schooling. Children with schooling can learn more skills that they can promote in other livelihood strategies that are more stable. In El Fresno, Francisco is currently studying architecture and plot planning in college, so he can work in construction designing homes (see Household 2 in appendix D). It is possible for children who have not received formal education to acquire skills and knowledge from migrants. For instance, Benjamín migrated to the United States and gained knowledge about construction through his work experience. He has shared this
knowledge with his children, who now assist him with his livelihood and contribute more to the family’s home.

The workforce, a part of human capital, is closely linked to the investments made by migrants in physical capital within Mexico. Physical capital is the infrastructure, technologies, and production equipment that help homes with livelihoods (Morse & McNamara, 2013, p.29). Migrants have started to invest in homes in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. This gives households a way to invest money and create wealth. As shown in the previous chapter, homes have many roles: they can be places of shelter and places of business.

Additionally, investments provide many people in the community with jobs and knowledge that they can use in their homes and other livelihood strategies. More people are moving from agriculture to construction because of worker demand and better pay. During the Covid pandemic, households like Benjamín’s were unsure about their future. People were worried about losing their jobs and being unable to provide their loved ones. However, migrants with legal status were able to receive stimulus checks from the US government. Some migrants decided to put this money towards building their homes in Mexico. Interestingly, US stimulus money helped create more jobs in Mexico during this difficult time. Benjamín was excited when he told me the story; he said he would get home late and tired but was delighted to earn money building houses.

Although, overall, households diversifying their livelihood strategies, such as through migration, has created unequal opportunities between men and women in El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. Men can access skills through migration that can then be used for livelihood strategies
in Mexico, and men can access social networks that help them migrate to the United States, giving them the opportunity to accumulate resources. However, women have been pushed into the role of head of household while they have limited resources and depend on household members to survive. While migration creates livelihoods for men, women are pushed to find other methods of accessing paid labor.

It can be easily argued that migration is not a sustainable livelihood. This is because undocumented migrants are vulnerable to deportation. Once a migrant is forced to return to Mexico, their households lose critical resources needed to survive. This contributes to the accumulation of barriers that households face. The restructuring of the Mexican economy caused many job losses in rural communities such as El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra. The elimination of CONASUPO eliminated the price protections of crops and increased the uncertainty of their yields and profits. The changes in agricultural jobs pushed households to migrate and find other strategies to make a living. Migration became a survival strategy many depended on when the pay rates and available livelihoods decreased. However, the migration networks have increased the number of people who have migrated to the United States, and households have been able to have more members migrate. This helps with the vulnerabilities of suddenly losing access to remittances.
CONCLUSION

A VISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE

This thesis was a preliminary study using the sustainable livelihood approach framework and ethnographic methodologies. I selected this framework because it focuses on the household level, which is crucial to understanding how households define poverty. As someone with access to livelihood opportunities, education, and safety nets in the United States, I did not feel comfortable making assumptions about the needs and wants of these households. Moreover, examining the context, trends, and macro policies was essential to comprehend how they influence these households’ livelihoods and home structures. As stated in the introduction, the framework investigates the different resources households utilize to make a living. Due to time constraints, I was unable to ask specific questions about all the resources, but some households voluntarily shared that information during the semi-structured interviews. However, I could only analyze some of the resources for each household. I plan to investigate each resource more thoroughly in the future. Exploring other resources, too, is essential as they could help supplement the lack of specific resources. Nonetheless, I collected data on physical, social, financial, human, and natural resources.
During my fieldwork, I faced a challenge with using economic network maps. Initially, people had trouble distinguishing between their family and household, so I had to modify my interview questions to address this. I asked who provided any help to the household and included questions about the frequency of the help. However, I encountered difficulties when larger households or multiple people participated in the same interview. It was challenging to track who received resources or how they were utilized, and the second day of interviews helped me identify the limitations of the economic network map.

Like any research project, there are limitations due to time, space, and life events. The increased cartel violence in the region made it difficult to feel comfortable asking people I did not know for an interview. Researchers have been kidnapped or murdered for asking too many questions or appearing nosy or intrusive. During my time in Mexico, I hesitated to discuss financial support and ask for specific information about household members. The increased anxiety from feeling like I was in a dangerous situation made me withdraw from my research and cut it short: I was in Mexico from May 16, 2002, to July 1, 2022; however, I stopped researching on June 14.

Through my research, I have discovered that people can conquer life’s difficulties by working together. The residents of El Fresno and El Paso de Piedra serve as shining examples of this cooperation. My thesis offers a glimpse into the lives of those who leave their homes to support their families, highlighting how such help creates a sense of security for households in Mexico. The journey migrants take is often fraught with danger and hate, all in the name of providing for their loved ones and preventing them from experiencing the pain of not having enough food, unpaid bills, or inadequate shelter. As such, I implore politicians to consider how
their policies impact the economy and all its citizens. Policies are not created equal, and many limit access to resources for the majority while benefiting corporations. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a prime example of how the poor were further disenfranchised.

Furthermore, I hope that the takeaway from this thesis is that migrants do not leave their families willingly but are forced to migrate as a response to economic changes within their communities. Migrants come to the United States to work hard, and they positively contribute to both the US and Mexican economies. Their efforts and contributions should be recognized and appreciated.
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APPENDIX A

OPEN-ENDED ENGLISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Thank you so much for taking the time to help me with my thesis project. I understand that you are very busy, so I greatly appreciate it. My name is Luis, and I am a student from the United States. My parents were born and raised in El Fresno y El Paso; I have spent most of my life in the United States and visit occasionally, so I want to learn more about life here in these two towns. That is why I’m talking to the people in the community. I will also use all the information I collect to write a thesis on how the economy affects rural communities in Mexico. I want to discuss the changes in wages for the household and the decisions made by the family. I also understand that household networks are important and help people in Mexico. I want to clarify what I mean by a household network; household networks are anyone that you rely on to gain access to wages, food, childcare, and other resources to help your network. These networks can include family friends that help you care for the land, cousins that lend you money, or your aunt that cares for the children while you work. These are just examples and I understand that every network is different. I know that some of these topics can be sensitive, so if you do not want to share with me just tell me to skip and we can move on. I also hope you can permit me to record the interview so I can review important sections and I can listen to our conversation. To begin the interview, I want to work on the network chart to visually see your network. Since the interview process is long, I would like to start with the network map so I can better understand your situation, then move on to the interview on a day you are free.
Day 1 of Interviews

Economic Network Map

To begin with this interview, we will start by drawing your household, any outside members that contribute to the household, or people you provide any help or resources to. We will start by drawing you in the middle and how these relationships connect to you. When I discuss resources, I am talking about any monetary, food, help with labor, to help anyone in your network. Please remember that all this information is confidential, so feel free to speak openly. There will be no judgment from me. No one outside the two of us will be able to identify you.

Advice: explain how to draw a kinship diagram if they are unfamiliar with it.

1. We can start by drawing people in your family tree.
   a. What are their ages?
   b. What are their relationships with you?
   c. What do they contribute to your network?
   d. Where do they live? No specifics are needed. You can state which town or country.
   e. Next, can you draw an arrow to where those resources go to or receive them?

2. Do you have any people outside of the family that contribute or receive resources from you?
   a. If it applies: Can you draw them outside the kinship diagram in a corner or off to the side?
b. Repeat questions 1.a through 1.e

3. Are there particular people that you talk to first when you need help?
   a. Why do you go to them first?

4. What are your contributions to your network?
   a. Where do these resources go to?
   b. Who receives these resources?

5. Are there jobs that are important to you?

6. What other jobs do you do to make the household function?

7. How do you balance all this work?

We will jump around a bit before we begin our second interview. I have two follow-up questions.

1. Have there been times when their ability to provide help has changed?

2. Did they provide different resources in 2009?

Day 2 of interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews

In this interview portion, I will use the economic network map to refer to questions. As a visual tool, help use the participants’ memories, help answer some questions, and see how they exchange resources within the group.

1. How often do the people in your network come and visit (apply to those who live outside of the town)?
   a. What do you all do when they are in town?
b. Has the occurrence of them coming to visit changed?

8. If you feel comfortable, can you answer this question for me?

9. Does the occurrence of their visit change based on their immigration status?

Now I will reference the economic map that we made in our last interview. I have some following questions about what we discussed the other day.

1. Have there been times when resources are tight for your household in the past?
   a. Probe for 2009

10. Why were resources tight in your home?

11. Were you able to ask for help from your network?

12. Who were the members that contributed to you when things were tight?

13. Why do you think they provided these resources?

14. How did these resources help overcome the problems with things being tight in your home?

15. Have there been times when you do not receive help from your network?
   a. How was 2009 impactful to the changes of help?

16. What have been your strategies to overcome the struggles of resources being tight in your home?

17. Have these strategies been able to help?

18. Have any of your strategies failed?
   a. Why do you believe these strategies have failed?

19. Have there been times that you have had to share your resources with people?

20. When person A. provides any resources, who decides how to invest them?
21. Has the person that makes the decisions changed?
   a. Why were those changes made?
22. Why did the people in your network move to this location to work?
23. Who decided to migrate here?
24. Why did they decide to migrate there?
25. How did they migrate?
26. Did they receive help to get there?
27. How have jobs changed in Mexico starting as far as you can remember?
28. Possibly draw a timeline to help them organize their thoughts.
29. How has your town changed?
30. Why do you think these changes are happening?
31. What do you think of these changes?
32. How are these changes impacting your life?
33. Those are all the questions I have; I appreciate your contribution to the knowledge about people in Mexico and Mexicans that live in the United States. Is there anything you would like to add that we did not have a chance to talk about? Do you have any questions for me?
APPENDIX B

OPEN-ENDED SPANISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Muchas gracias por tomar su tiempo en poder ayudarme en mi proyecto. Yo entiendo que usted esta muy ocupada, pero le agradezco por tomar el tiempo para platicar conmigo. Me llamo Luis y soy un estudiante de los Estados Unidos. Mis papas son del Fresno y del Paso, y quiero aprender mas sobre la vida mexicana. Y por esto estoy platicando con la gente que vive aquí. También toda la información que estoy colectando me va a ayudar escribir una tesis sobre la economía mexicana y como afecta la vida de las personas que viven en los ranchos. Vamos a platicar sobre los modos de vida que ustedes usan para ganar la vida aquí en los ranchos. También quiero platicar sobre como a cambiado and ingreso y las decisiones familiares. Pero yo también entiendo que las redes sociales económicas también ayudan a las familias aquí en México, entonces también podemos platicar sobre estos temas. Para empezar la entrevista vamos a dibujar las personas que viven en su hogar y como ayudan aportar en la casa. También podemos dibujar personas que pertenecen en su rede sociales económicas que viven afuera de su casa. Las rede sociales económicos son personas que se ayudan frecuentemente para aportar recursos, como comida, dinero, y otras cosas que son necesarias. Si tiene preguntas en cualquier tiempo, por favor pregunte me. Si no se siente cómoda sobre estos temas, no tiene que contestar y nos podemos mover a otro tema. También si me da permiso, quiero grabar la conversación para poder recordar las partes importantes para mejor describir las vidas en mi tesis. Entonces si usted esta lista para empezar, podemos hablar sobre su vida. Yo entiendo que esta platica va a ser larga, y usted tiene cosas que hacer. Entonces para hoy podemos dibujar so red social económico, para mejor entender su situación, y luego podemos platicar sobre las preguntas que tengo.
Primera Entrevista

Mapa de Redes Sociales Económicos

Para empezar esta entrevista, vamos a empezar con dibujando su sistema de hogar, cualquier persona afuera de la familia que aportan a su hogar, o personas que usted ayuda o aporta recursos a su hogar. Para empezar este mapa, me puede dar el favor de dibujarse a su misma/o en medio del papel, y dibujar flechas para ver donde se mueven los recursos en su hogar. Que estoy platicando, mi definición de recurso yo estoy hablando sobre dinero, ayuda laborar, comida, favores, cualquier cosa que sea importante para usted. Por favor recuerde, que esta conversación será privada, nadie afuera de nosotros dos van a saber que esta información es derretida a usted. Yo voy a cambiar nombres y cualquier otra información que es una señal para su identidad. Aviso: Explica como dibujar un diagrama de familia, si so desconocidos a este modo.

1. Vamos a dibujar su hogar en este papel.
   a. ¿Qué son las edades?
   b. ¿Qué es la relación de esta persona a usted?
   c. ¿Qué recursos contribuyen a su red social económico?
   d. ¿Dónde viven? No ocupo específicos, momas puede nombrar el estado, pueblo, o país.
   e. ¿Ahora, puede dibujar una flecha dirigiendo del recurso a la persona que lo recibe?
2. ¿Tiene personas afuera de la familia, que contribuyen o reciben recursos de usted o otra persona de su familia?
   a. (si aplica esta pregunta) ¿Puede dibujar esta persona afuera de su árbol de familia, en un rincón o alado?
   b. Repite las preguntas 1. A – I. E

3. ¿Cuándo ocupa ayuda, ay una persona en particular que va a pedirle ayuda?
   a. ¿Por qué platica con esta persona, primero?

4. ¿Cuáles son sus contribuciones a su red social económico?
   a. ¿A dónde van estas contribuciones?
   b. ¿Quién recibe estas contribuciones?

5. ¿Cuáles son los trabajos importantes para usted?

6. ¿Qué otros trabajos usa usted para que el hogar funcione?
   a. ¿Qué hace para equilibrar el trabajo del hogar?

Ahora vamos a brincar en temas un poco, pero antes que pasemos a la segunda entrevista, tengo dos preguntas.

1. ¿Habido tiempos donde las personas de su red han cambiado la flauencia que piden o contribuyen?

2. ¿Cambiaron lo que ellos contribuyen, como en la época del 2009?

Día 2 De Entrevistas

Entrevistitas semiestructuradas
En esta porción de la entrevista, yo voy a usar el mapa que dibujamos en la primera sesión para referir a ciertas preguntas. Voy a usar este mapa como una herramienta visual, para que los participantes tengan una referencia para responder unas preguntas, and para ver como estos entre cambios ayudan al grupo.

1. ¿Mi primera pregunta es, cuándo vienen las personas de su red social a visitar?
   a. ¿Qué les gusta hacer cuando vienen al rancho a visitar?
   b. ¿Ha habido tiempos donde no pueden venir a visitar?
      I. ¿Por qué son las razones que no pueden venir a visitar?
   c. ¿Qué otros beneficios tienen las visitas de sus amistades?

2. Si usted está cómodo/a, puede contestar la siguiente pregunta.
   a. ¿Han cambiado la frecuencia que personas vienen a visitar, por el estado migratorio?

Ahora voy a usar el mapa económico como una referencia. Tengo unas preguntas sobre lo que platicamos el otro día.

3. ¿Han ávidos tiempos donde las cosas se ponen apretados en el pasado?
   a. ¿Cuáles son las razones que se han puesto apretados?
   b. ¿Cuales eran los límites de los recursos?
   c. ¿Cómo cambiaron las cosas en el 2009?

4. ¿Pudo pedirles ayuda a los miembros de su hogar o otras personas?

5. ¿Quién fueron las personas que pudieron ayudarle?
   a. ¿Por qué cree que estas personas escogieron ayudarle?
6. ¿Cómo le ayudo tener acceso a estos recursos?
   a. ¿Cómo le ayuda a sobre pasar estos obstáculos?

7. ¿Han ávidos tiempos donde los miembros de su grupo no pudieron ayudarle?
   a. ¿Porque eran las razones?
   b. ¿Cómo cambio la ayuda que recibía en el 2009?

8. ¿Cuales son las estrategias de vida que usa usted para sobre pasar estos obstáculos cuando se la ve apretada?
   a. ¿Como han trabajado estas estrategias?
   b. ¿Han ávidos tiempos que estas estrategias fajan?
      A. ¿Porque han fajado?

9. ¿Han ávidos tiempos que usted a tenido que compartir sus recursos con otras personas?

10. ¿Cuándo Julano, le da acceso a recursos, quien hace la decisión de invertirlo?

11. ¿Han ávidos tiempos que la persona que hace las decisiones cambia?
    a. ¿Por qué cambio la persona que hace las decisiones?

12. ¿Por qué se migraron las personas de su red social?
    ¿Cómo escogieron este lugar?

13. ¿Quien hizo la decisión de migrarse a este lugar?

14. ¿Recibieron ayuda para poder migrarse a este lugar?

15. Mi próxima pregunta es sobre la economía de México.
    a. ¿Asta que pueda recordar, como han cambiado los trabajos en México?
b. (Podemos dibujar una línea de cambios de encadas)

16. ¿Cómo a cambiado el rancho?
   a. ¿Porque cree que a cambiado tanto el rancho?
   b. ¿Que impactos tienen este cambio en su vida?

17. ¿Estas son todas las preguntas que yo tengo, ay un tema que usted quiere hablar sobre, ¿o tienen preguntas para mí?

Muchas gracias por su contribución en ayudarme a grabar la historia y vida de los mexicanos de este rancho.
APPENDIX C

ECONOMIC NETWORK MAP EXAMPLE
Miguel Chavez
Rancher: Sold milk and Cheese Products
Retired U.S resident
Lived in El Paso, Jalisco, MX

Emestina
78
head of household
Purchases goods for the household
Retired U.S resident
Contributes 1200 a month from retirement
Lives in El Paso, Jalisco, MX

Aurora
Age 57
Sells goods in Mexico that are sent by family members in the U.S.
Uses the money to sustain her home.
Lives in El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco, MX.

Sandra
Age 45
Maintains household
receives money from brothers every month
Lives in El Paso de piedra
Sandra cares for
Ernestina in exchange for a place to live.

Jorge
Age 24
Milks cows from a living
Inherited the animals from Miguel Chavez
Uses the milk as a source of income and to give to family members in Mexico
Lives in El Paso de Piedra, Jalisco, MX
Jorge maintains the house and the land that belongs to Luis Chavez Sr.

Luis Chavez SR.
Age 55
Drywall
Pays for mortgage and house Bills and sends money to Mexico Monthly to
mother
Lives in Oswego

Luis Chavez Jr.
Age 29
Student
Contributes to the internet bill and translating paper work
Lives in Oswego

Luis Chavez
Age 53
Maintenance
Pays for general bills and purchases goods to send to Mexico for sale.
These goods are sold at a discounted rate and sold to people in Paso de Piedra and El Fresno Michoacan.
She employs relatives to sell the goods in exchange for a wage.
APPENDIX D

EL FRESNO ECONOMIC NETWORK MAP ANALYSIS SPREADSHEET
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/ Household</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Area of Residence</th>
<th>Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Casandra</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caregiver, Helper</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Helper</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Catalina</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Estrella</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Morn</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tortilleria</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 1</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tortilleria</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cultivating Mal and Seasonal worker</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Mom</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Sister</td>
<td>Mexico City, MX</td>
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<td>Cassy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Sister</td>
<td>Jalisco, Mich, MX</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Penelope</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Jalisco, Mich, MX</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>Brother Los Angeles, CA, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 2</td>
<td>Sandy and Guillermo</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F/M</td>
<td>Retired U.S Residents</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 3</td>
<td>Liliana</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Informal business: selling snacks</td>
<td>Ego</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 3</td>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Dairy Farming</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>El Fresno, Mich, MI</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 3</td>
<td>Estephane</td>
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<td>Daughter</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 3</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>El Fresno, Mich, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 3</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>El Fresno, Mich, MI</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 4</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tortilleria, Cleaning houses</td>
<td>Ego</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 4</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Labor/ Construction Worker</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Fresno</td>
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<td>Labor/ Construction Worker</td>
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<td>Daughter-in-law</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 4</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 4</td>
<td>Jacly</td>
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<td>Daughter</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 5</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Manages the household</td>
<td>Ego</td>
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<td>Valeria</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Worked in Guadalupe, El Fresno</td>
<td>Mother</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>Brother</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 5</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 5</td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Assistant teacher</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 5</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Assistant for Special Education, Jewelry (Look at transcript)</td>
<td>Sister New York</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 6</td>
<td>Joaquin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Agriculture/ Handy man</td>
<td>Ego</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Agriculture/ Handy man</td>
<td>Son</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 6</td>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife provides help in El Fresno</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Jalisco</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Factory</td>
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<td>Tucson</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
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<td>Ines</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Owns Landscape company/ Real estate</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>El Fresno: Household 6</td>
<td>Maricela</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Works in Clothing Store</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
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<td>Cristina</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Day care</td>
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<td>Paulina</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fresno: Household 6</td>
<td>Delores</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

EL PASO DE PIEDRA NETWORK MAP ANALYSIS SPREADSHEET
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/ Household</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Area of Residence</th>
<th>Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Does not work, He is medical impairment (change the word disabled)</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife (Cleans homes, Sells food and snow cones)</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Miguel JR.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Sister in Law</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 1</td>
<td>DIF NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Government Assistance Program</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter in Law</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Moises</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Granman</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Granddaughter</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Jorge R.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Helps Raise cattle and Milks</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Helps Raise cattle and Milks</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>The community as a whole (see transcript)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Retired (Housewife)</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Apartments (Maintenance)</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>EEUU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Handyman (daily worker)</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Valle de Juarez, MX</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Fieldwork (Maize, Cotton, Wistering)</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Tulare, CA, USA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Factory worker (clothing)</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA, USA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Freya</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Tulare, CA, USA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Scarlett</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Shoe Factory</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Ontario, CA, USA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 3</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife/ General work</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA, USA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Green Grocer</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Camila</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Green Grocer</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Elisa</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Sister in Law</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 4</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Head of Household</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Lucie</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Yolanda</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Works in a government building</td>
<td>Sister in Law</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Aurelia</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sell Clothing</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Inés</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Helps with housework</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Sabino</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Vicente</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Illinois/El Paso de Piedra</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso Household 5</td>
<td>Felipe</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>