Socio-cultural Conformation of Urban Indigenous Communities, Gender Roles, Sexuality and Early Pregnancy

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Abstract: The construction of adolescent pregnancy as a phenomenon influenced by ethnicity has not been addressed by social sciences in the indigenous context. The entire social body works to maintain stability that allows its survival, until conditions change when trying to continue operating under the same parameters in circumstances as different as those found in the new urban environment. But just as we see at the social, political, belief or linguistic level, there is also a significant movement towards social change in gender relations and sexuality that brings the community and the city closer. Regarding gender relations, the socio-occupational demands of the urban environment are forcing a profound restructuring of the traditional gender distribution of work, breaking the rigid dichotomy of public-male and private-female spaces. Despite the logical resistance of men to lose their traditional gender privileges, migration has caused dissidence to multiply among the youngest (also men), who see their development opportunities and life options increased. Closing this journey through the dynamics of change and permanence of indigenous communities established in the MMA, the field of sexuality, the last and most hidden bastion, is also reached by the new logics of interaction. Sex is still taboo at home, but in public spaces or community centers there are civil groups and government agencies, such as the Secretary of Social Development, that are starting dialogues and providing information about this issue. The greater access to information and media modifies the sexual behavior of the youngest but this is only a portion of what is intended to be addressed in subsequent research, focusing on these liminal spaces between the community and the city, spaces inhabited and resignified by the true protagonists of change: young indigenous migrants or those born in the urban context.

Keywords: Indigenous Communities, Gender Roles, Sexuality, Early Pregnancy

Introduction

In 2015 the National Strategy for the Prevention of Pregnancy in Adolescents was launched in Mexico as a joint effort of more than 16 government agencies and civilian groups eradicate pregnancy in children under the age of 14 by 2030 and reduce it by half in the group of 15 to 19 years old (INMUJERES, 2020). The plan arose from a generalized concern on the increase of fertility rates from 2009 to 2014, escalating from 70 to 77 births for every thousand adolescents between the ages of 15 to 19 (UNFPA, 2018). This means that one teen gives birth nationwide every two minutes or less. According to data from the Secretary of Health, in 2017 approximately 32.3% of babies born in the state of Nuevo León had mothers between the ages of 10 and 19. National strategies like the aforementioned result from a certain social awareness that has been brewing for years, reflected in several research studies that emphasize the problem of early pregnancy. At this point it is imperative to recognize the contributions from different epistemological and methodological approaches.

Social sciences' approach to early pregnancy has been characterized by recognizing the dual nature of its motivation, influenced by both the social and cultural contexts that contrast with individuality (Herrada, 2014). On the one hand, early pregnancy is recognized as the product of external forces that derive from social expectations that idealize motherhood and the traditional family (Franco *et al.*, 2019), ceasing to regard pregnancy as a problem "but rather a life situation and a gender condition" (España *et al.*, 2019, p. 196). In contrast, early pregnancy is viewed as a vindication of individuality, an assertion of identity, and a claim for independence in society (Ojeda, 2019). In this duality, sexuality is finally recognized as inherent to the individual, but still not separated from "social and cultural determinants such as family, social environment, cultural ethnic origin" (Ojeda, 2019, p. 44). Regarding the construction of adolescent pregnancy as a phenomenon influenced by ethnicity, it has not been long since it has been addressed from social sciences in the indigenous context, precisely because "it is complex to think of indigenous people as subjects of sexuality" (Bautista, 2018, p. 101). The governmental and social neglect to analyze this situation among the indigenous population is one of the reasons for the lack of relevant statistical data, still, researchers such as Cruz (2015) warn of the need to pay special attention to this demographic sector.

Despite the apparent absence of the topic in the media or government sphere, in Mexico (Rivas *et al.*, 2009; Nazar & Salvatierra, 2008) and other Latin American

countries (López, 2010; Acosta & Segura, 2011), for a decade certain sectors of the academy have noted the specificity of the phenomenon of early pregnancy when it occurs in indigenous communities (whether rural or urban communities, and even indigenous migrants who reside sparsely). It is critical to highlight Rivas' work considering it establishes a clear relationship between structural sexist violence and unwanted pregnancies: "based on interviews with indigenous migrant women, the influence of the environment of social marginalization is evident, as well as the abuse of power by men, in the root of unwanted pregnancy" (Rivas *et al.*, 2009, p. 615).

At this point, introducing the term indigenous migrant is problematic. This double condition became popular at the end of the century when internal migration intensified in Mexico, creating the perception of the Monterrey Metropolitan Area (MMA) as a pole of high economic dynamism with informal employment opportunities attractive for indigenous people in the public *imago* (Granados & Quezada, 2018). That perception remains as Nuevo León became the state that has received the highest proportion of internal indigenous migration (Grace, 2016).

On the other hand, the indigenous term by itself is complex as developed by Gil (2018), when addressing the issue that the label is attributed in Canada by blood, in Guatemala by surname, and in Mexico by language. This lack of consensus is particularly troublesome when obtaining demographic information. Therefore, for this study, we adopted the self-ascription criterion which could be recognized through participation in the indigenous communities (Lobo, 2018).

This transition from the countryside to urban areas like the MMA has generated different types of settlements in the city Depending on the number of neighboring families and form of residence, Durin *et al.* (2007) classifies them as dispersed, isolated and congregated. In the latter, the identification of urban indigenous communities, their development, the replication of native customs in urban territory, and their impact on sexuality decisions that motivate early pregnancy are of special interest to this study.

At this point, the term community faces its own conflict. In previous research by the Centro de Estudios Interculturales del Noreste (CEIN) ascribed to Universidad Regiomontana, we delved into the ideal and operational notions of the term community by analyzing group cohesion in three foreign communities within the MMA. As such, we attribute to communities an acknowledgment of its imperfection, blurred classification of collectives, a necessity for a common cultural substratum, interpersonal knowledge among its members and a self-ascribed character (Doncel,

2013). Thus, for this study urban indigenous communities are understood as a congregated collective, made up of individuals who self-identify as indigenous and interact within a shared space, not only for political reasons as defined by Herrera (2018), but because of mutual social ties that attempt to replicate cultural and ethnic practices of their native communities, while maintaining individual freedom to be part of it.

Having established the criteria that shape this research, the objective of this study is to describe the process of change or reproduction of traditional gender roles and attitudes towards sexuality based on the characterization of urban indigenous communities in the MMA (of their processes of gestation, development and integration, as well as the changes in cultural identity that come with entering an urban environment).

Methodology

In line with what was stated, it is both pertinent and paramount to characterize different urban indigenous communities in the MMA insofar as their circumstances condition and explain the logic that leads to early pregnancies. This problem was already identified as urgent in a workshop for project design that we carried out in 2017 alongside the non-profit organization *Zihuakali. House of the Indigenous Woman*. In 2018 students enrolled in the Qualitative Methods in Social Research course taught at Universidad Regiomontana carried out in-depth interviews with five key informants to acquire a panoramic view of the issue and six resident informants, who are members of urban indigenous communities, hoping to access their specific reality from a closer and experiential viewpoint, that is to learn about cases and situations "from within". The results consist of the analysis and interpretation of informants' answers regarding their community development, political organization, sociocultural reproduction dynamics, and their implications on gender relations and sexuality. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize the characteristics of both the key and resident informants.

Table 1: Adscription and Occupation of Key Informants

	IC1	*IC2*	*IC3*	*IC4*	*IC5*
Occupation	Founding president	Employee	Founding president	Independent activist	Regional delegate

Group or organization adscription	Zihuame Mochilla	Network of Immigrant Indigenous Women in Nuevo León (Red de Mujeres Indígenas Inmigrantes en Nuevo León, REDMIN)	REDMIN	Nahua community	National Commissionfor the Development of Indigenous Population (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, CDI)

Table 2: Characteristics of resident informants

	I1	*I2*	*I3*	*I4*	*I5*	*I6*
Age	39	29	34	36	24	22
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female
Marital status	Married	Single	Single	Single	Married	Single
Ethnic group	Nahua	Mazahua	Nahua	Nahua	Mixtec	Otomí
Native community, state	Unknown community, Hidalgo	Boshesda, Mexico State	Chicontepec, Veracruz	Nexcuayo, San Luis Potosí	San Andrés de la Montaña, Oaxaca	Born in MMA, Nuevo León
Urban community, zone in the MMA	Fernando Amilpa, Escobedo	Agropecuaria Emiliano Zapata, Escobedo	Arboledas de los Naranjos, Juárez	Alianza Real, Escobedo	Héctor Caballero, Juárez	Lomas Modelo, Monterrey

Development of urban indigenous communities in the MMA

In accordance with several key informants and scholars of the topic (García Tello, 2013), the indigenous migration to Nuevo León in the nineties, consisting mainly

of entire families who initially lived "crowded into neighborhoods, barracks, with relatives or renting" (IC5), ended up settling on the margins of the urban area, land that they will later demand ownership of (IC1). At a certain point in the process of migrant settlement, entities from different levels of government began to play a prominent role:

> *For example, between 2005 and 2006 the Mazahuas of Mexico State received credits to acquire houses of social interest, located in the northern periphery of the metropolitan area on the margins of the municipality of Monterrey (…) through the Housing Institute and the intervention of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Population (García Tello, 2013, pp. 59-60).*

The random allocation of land lots by the state agency FomentoMetropolitano de Monterrey (FOMERREY) entailed a series of unwanted or at least unforeseen consequences that markedly affected the social, cultural and identity composition of the original communities, fragmenting and disarticulating their sociopolitical order or preventing their partial reproduction in the urban context. In light of this intervention guided by ignorance or scarce sensitivity towards the pre-existing collective, ethnic and community identities, the CDI intervened to remedy the situation and sow the possibility of urban indigenous communities from better directed andorganized migration flows in their settlement process. This was recalled by an informant who until recently was the maximum representative of the CDI in Nuevo Len[1]:

> *Theoretically, the raffle ought to avoid an indiscriminate allocation of lots. Understand? Because it could lend itself to- it could generate envy. (…) They had two thousand lots in a tombola, land lots. In the other tombola they had two thousand beneficiaries. From here, they got the lot and from there the beneficiary and that's it. (…) And it happened that the Mazahuas said: 'no, my compadre was allocated god-knows-where, and my brother was allocated god-knows-where and just no'. 'Far from benefiting us, they screwed us because before we all lived there, packed together in the neighborhood, and we rented there among the rocks, but we lived together and we hung out and partied and we helped each other and now my compadre left his home alone and got robbed and his house was emptied and I don't know' (…) Then they [the community] decided to write a document asking us [CDI] to make the necessary arrangements before the authority [FOMERREY] so that their houses could be assigned in one area so that they could keep their language and carry out their celebrations. They argued several things. Finally, after much effort, the FOMERREY gave in, although under certain conditions to sort out logistics. (…) One year after the settlement they were more satisfied. Lawsuits were generated between neighbors as expected, but finally they cared*

for each other. They began a project of traditional dance, the macheteros dance, for which they brought a native of their hometown that taught them the choreography, made the attires, etc. The dance was performed at the patron saint celebration. They wanted to have their church, their plaza, so they built a small chapel. For the celebration they close off the street, decorate the chapel, bring flowers and food, haul gunpowder, etc. In short, it is a history of the creation of a community out of a process of reconstituting the community. (IC5)

In the previous quote there is a vivid narration of the dilemmas that a human collective with identity, both ethnic and communal, must face to reconstitute itself as a social and cultural entity in a new urban context and after a systematic migration from its original context. This is one example of the establishment of urban communities. These dynamics (each with its own conditioning factors) were replicated throughout MMA over the years. To get an overview of the situation let us return to García Tello, who at the time of publishing his work identified the following communities[2]:

Out of the congregated type there are the Mixtecs, located in the Héctor Caballero neighborhood [municipality of Juárez], the Otomí of the Genaro Vázquez and Lomas Modelo neighborhoods [Monterrey], the Mazahuas in the Alianza and San Bernabé [Monterrey] sectors and from a group of more than twenty Nahuas families from the state of Veracruz, located in Arboledas de los Naranjos neighborhood [Juárez]. (García Tello, 2013, p. 64)

One of the main attributes of these settlement processes is their dynamism found in the composition of the migratory flows that concern us. Interviewed five years after the publication of García Tello (2013), a key informant identifies more than 20 indigenous communities in the MMA, hinting that there might be unknown ones, among which the Nahua ethnic groups (from San Luis, Veracruz and Hidalgo), Mixtec, Zapotec, Mixe and Otomí are distributed throughout the municipalities of García, Escobedo, Santa Catarina, Pesquería and Juárez (IC3). The transition from the migratory flows typical from the nineties towards a progressive increase in youth migration with different motivations stands out. Thus, in line with what was documented in previous research (Doncel & Sordo, in press), the president of the non-governmental organization *Zihuame Mochilla* addresses how, in recent years, there has been a hike in migratory flows composed of young people, many of whom migrate motivated by the prospect of continuing their middle and higher education (IC1). Much of this youth live scattered, renting rooms in the MMA (Monterrey, Juárez, Guadalupe, Escobedo, García Apodaca, Santa Catarina, Salinas) and consequently raising the percentage of indigenous population in remote

municipalities such as Pesquería, Zuazua and Mina (IC1). Regarding this segment of migrants, young and with different expectations, we will now focus on those who reside in indigenous communities or minimally congregated settlements because of their liminal location, given by their generation and their relational position to the broader society (if not because of their access to upper and higher secondary education), makes them play an essential role in possible changes or resistance in the field of gender roles, sexuality and sexual education within their communities.

Processes of configuration and sociopolitical adaptation of indigenous urban communities in the MMA

In these communities, members share, with a variety of degrees, their belonging to a low socioeconomic stratum with a predominance of informal employment, although in assorted occupations such as artisans, workers, healers or musicians. In the material dimension, job insecurity in many communities is defined by the absence or intermittency of services in urban infrastructure, as communities are usually established on the city's periphery. Over and above these material difficulties there is an impulse to maintain a bond beyond mere ethnic identification, since communities are generally built based on common peasantry, a neighborhood situation or kinship. For example, in Colinas del Topo Chico there is relevant hubof Nahua population from Chumatlán, a town in Veracruz, maintaining a native community identity that reproduces social ties and cultural patterns in the new urban context. The former CDI delegate of Nuevo León stated the following:

It is necessary that the nucleus of a community comes from the same locality for one to reproduce in the city because the feeling of belonging originates in the collective environment and historical community life that existed there. When there is heterogeneity of localities of origin, although cultural elements are shared [language, music, clothing, food, tradition, myths], these generate affinity but not identity. (IC5)

Because of migration, the number of family members living under the same roof is notably reduced compared to what is usual in the rural context (IC3)[3]. Despite that, the search continues to maintain the collective and identity spirit: "if it is congregated (the community), it is very similar to the native community, they usually seek to make it look similar. They try to maintain the essence of what the native community was like. On the one hand, the conditions, and on the other, the attempt to preserve a sense of community here in the state [of Nuevo León]" (IC3). This idea is expressed similarly by another key informant:

Regularly, they have adapted to the infrastructure of urbanization, but the idea –and it is evident: all the houses are full of plants. They sow. We can easily know if a person, even if you have never exchanged a word, out of the characteristics of how his house is, is of indigenous origin. It has plants, trees. (...) It does not produce enough to live on that [your own garden] but they have it as part of their culture. (IC 4)

These efforts to replicate the original collective way of life in the new destination are not enough, blurring with more or less intensity depending on the community, societal structures, cohesive traditions and customs. A key factor that prevents a social and cultural reproduction more faithful to the original "model" is the end of communal land ownership, collective work and celebrations associated with a series of needs specific to the peasant sphere. The former delegate of the CDI in Nuevo León stated the following:

In the case of the Mixtecs who live in Héctor Caballero, for example, festivities are reproduced as replicas of those typical of the dynamic of San Andrés de la Montaña [native community of the Mixtecs living in Héctor Caballero] in the date of their patron saint celebration. However, the rest of the time they return to an individualistic life that, although some affinity is shared, is not very collective because it disregards a common element: the land. (IC5)

In addition to communal property, the jobs and agricultural needs of their native communities entail a conception of collective life marked by organic solidarity that disintegrates in the logic of the urban environment. This is exemplified by a Nahua interviewee who lives in an urban indigenous community, Fernando Amilpa in the municipality of Escobedo.

Not there [at the original community there are no deficiencies]. In other words, most of them work there. They work in the field, I mean. So, do they have a stable job? No, but they do work in the field and everyone coexists and shares. 'Okay, well, if I have more then I help you out with this and when I stop having, well, you help me out.' So, I mean, that's what I like of the community. Also, when someone gets sick regarding health issues. 'Well, you don't have. I lend you and ... later you can pay me, I don't know, with food or corn or so.' In other words, there is no need if you lent him money, 'you have to pay me back with money or whatever you have, even with animals'. (...) No, here [at the city] it is a bit difficult [to help each other out] because, on the contrary, here they criticize or tell you: 'oh, no, that person does not have enough because they are lazy'. And right after you hear comments like: 'because they are lazy, they don't want to work, they just stay at home, they don't move'. In other words, no, they don't encourage you like back in the native community: 'I help you out and you help me out'. No, not here in what I have seen because in the neighborhood they say: 'no, she does have because she works

or because she is killing herself working day and late at night or rotating shifts and so, that's why she has'. (…) In this way coexistence is indeed different (I1)[4].

Processes of cultural and religious change in the urban indigenous communities in the MMA

A clear expression of the agonizing struggle for original social and cultural reproduction in the urban context is represented by the gradual disuse of the native language. The key informants frequently stated that the usage of the native language only occurs among the middle-aged and above all elderly population. Its usage is being progressively abandoned by children and youth as a measure to integrate socially, culturally, and economically in the host society. This must be understood as a resource or strategy to reduce the discriminatory attitudes they suffer daily in school, work, leisure activities, etc. This situation of substitutive diglossia, empirically documented (Sordo, 2017), and the result of a process of ethnic concealment (Olvera, Doncel & Muñiz, 2014) limits the usage of the native language exclusively to community spaces so that when entering the host society, the linguistic switch to Spanish occurs mostly automatically (IC3). A specific description of this generalized situation was shared by an Otomí informant born in the urban community of Lomas Modelo.

> *In my community they do [speak the native language], which is Otomí. All old ladies talk to kids in that language, but the children, the young people, we understand it but don't speak it because we have this issue that they [older people] don't go out of the community, so they're there and they're the ones who chat. And we go out and we are in another society. We are to speak Spanish (…). Look, if a lady speaks to a child in Otomí, the child responds in Spanish (I6).*

Regarding the social and political organization of urban communities, there is also a weakening process of the collective organization in relation to the one that leads communal life in the native community. Thus, the formal organization in the city, compared to the native communities, is less structured and more based on recognized local leaders, generally because of seniority, wisdom or considered important for another reason. In short, it is leadership by influence. Their counsel is sought after and followed, but there is no coercive authority that makes these agreements binding. Among the different urban indigenous communities, we find varying degrees of organization, being a Mazahua community the most organized[5] (IC1, IC3). Nonetheless, there are other communities successful in the reproduction of ancestral norms and values, as well as the traditionalist ascription and gender roles, such as the Mixtecs (IC1). In general terms, the greater or lesser collective energy available to the communities is employed

towards the organization of native celebrations and festivities, rather than political organization. They organize themselves "to celebrate the patron saint festivities as they would in their native community" (IC2), often due to the infeasibility of traveling back to their native town. The communities in which the social ties are stronger are those with greater kinship. This strength results in superior group solidarity, collective decision-making, and willingness to gather periodically to consolidate their unity, fighting against the labor dynamics and time restraints imposed by the urban survival logic. This is explained by a Mazahua informant, one of the most politically organized and structured communities.

> *Coexistence is very [good] because we are all family. Most of us, in fact, all who live in the neighborhood are family. They are the majority. They are my dad's brothers, my dad's cousins. We are all- we all know each other. Maybe our relationships are not so close as a day-to-day thing because we all work. We have quite different schedules. They are all merchants, so that also implies very different schedules because my dad, my family, can go out to sell and arrive at two in the afternoon or they can arrive until six in the afternoon, but another family just arrived and so on. But the moments of coexistence when we all meet are for three or four situations: one, when there is a party, be it a baptism or whatever, a family reunion, but it must be a big party. Right? As it's customary in the village. [When there is] some problembecause we usually treat problems as if we were a council, that is, in the sense that we have our own way of organizing ourselves. If there is a big problem, we call our family members, for example, my parents. And if my aunt or uncle who is having a conflict at that moment want me to be there, even if I am not married or my brother who is married or someone else, they ask us to please participate in the meeting. The grandparents are also there. The situation is narrated. The grandparents decide as if it were a final verdict because their word is like the law, it must be followed or else [abide by] the consequences that the grandparents themselves or the family establish (I2).*

Beyond the prominent unifying role of the celebrations, moments of Turnerian *communitas*, the religious motive that sustains and gives meaning to these holidays speaks of their deeply embedded belief system, which also plays a role in sexuality and gender relations. Characterized by "a high degree of religiosity, of beliefs. They are quite the believers, whether it is in saints or God, they are about practicing prayers, being and involving themselves within religions" (IC2). A Nahua informant of Fernando Amilpa referred to the depth of (catholic) religious belief, including the naturalization of belief, when she stated from a distant position regarding her own community that the vast majority is Catholic and "they are devout and do not wish to change. That is already like a tradition that was born from the people so it cannot be changed. (…) They are in it from birth" (I1).

There are many traditions related to Catholicism, highlighting the festivals dedicated to the patron saints that regress them nostalgically to a common origin. On the other hand, if the polysemy of the term patron is pointed out, we might think of a hierarchical patriarchal order derived from the imposition of a belief system. From a similar position to the previous informant (which we believe is not accidental but has to do with age, higher educational level, and their ways of relating to the host society), a Mazahua interviewee describes the central importance of these festivals in their community, as well as their church maintenance, which depends on a representative and responsible role:

> *The festivities are a particularly important date for us. I think that those celebrations, as I say, are exaggerated. A lot of money is spent, a lot, but it also has much to do with this aspect of faith. The church is beautiful, it is very pretty. The truth is that I am not much of a believer, I am not very religious, but the truth is that it is very beautiful. The church is so very beautiful. You have no idea how many adjustments have been. It even has things like gold plates and stuff that the community itself has donated and they're doing it and if they don't like it, they throw it away and rebuild it and so on. In other words, the church is always in constant restructuring and expansion as well. Each year it takes, that is, the people who have to take care of the church have to make an improvement and at the end of their period, as if they were politicians, they have to deliver a report and show the improvements that they did and say: 'Let's see, this year so many thousands of pesos were collected and spent here, here, here and there. And there's spare money or not'. (I2)*

Although the Catholic foundation of the public manifestation of religiosity is major, there are also other belief systems and syncretisms that condition both daily life and ritual ceremonies and festivities. Thus, although most describe themselves as Catholic, there is a large and growing segment that identifies with Protestant groups derived from Christianity.

> *[In the communities] there is a very strong veneration for the Virgin of Guadalupe for whom they make the pilgrimages, but in another sense (...) Catholicism is the dominant religion, although there are many groups of evangelical churches, which have been getting closer to the communities. Here is where it is seen with the highest index in Los Naranjos neighborhood. If you go out you will see four or five houses arranged as a temple, right? So yes [in this neighborhood] you see a greater presence [of evangelicalism]. (IC1)*

As another key informant adds, it is not only the sphere of Christianity in which their belief systems are developed, since this has coexisted for centuries with elements of their original belief system:

> *In the communities they are very religious. (…) There is a mixture of religions and beliefs, both ancestral and religious. Realistically the Catholic is the predominant one, although*

there have been religions that have emerged within the communities and that generate conflict in families or in the community. (...) There are other religions: Christianity, Jehovah's Witness, Light of the World. (...) [They practice rituals] a lot, prayers, lighting candles. All houses have an altar, almost all families believe in Catholicism. The integration of new religions is recent. Before there was only Catholicism, everyone had her altar. (IC3)

Regarding these ancestral beliefs like those related to shamanism, "they are ingrained. They don't openly manifest it, but it's rooted in health issues or economic stability" (IC1). Shamanism rather than providing a moral framework that regulates behavior, including sexual and interactions between opposite gender, is a short-term remedy to address specific vicissitudes of life, be it health, love, or pecuniary problems. This type of belief is an indissoluble part of the original peoples' worldview, integrating elements from Christianity, but giving them another entity:

They are like healers or shamans. There is also a lot of belief about that in the communities and there are those who dedicate themselves to this type of issue. And there is the belief that they have a gift from God or issues that are already more spiritual. (…) [More than] religion, we are talking about spirituality and yes there are figures who practice this spirituality in some communities. (IC2)

In this spiritual terrain, the indigenous communities established in the city also face a process of disintegration moderated by the same generational vein that leads to a progressive loss of capacity for the political self-management of the community, and to a weakening of the linguistic identity and ultimately community ties. This is how a young 24 years-old Mixtec informant and resident at Héctor Caballero| perceives it:

[Believing in shamanism] is more or less like someone who believes, well, in witchcraft and that you can be healed with cleansing and such instead of medicine. Before you'd see much of it in our community, because people believe in it a lot, but as people traveled to the cities, they realized that, well, a shaman is not going to fix a disease like renal failure. Then they were changing their minds. There are some who still believe that this will be the cure, but it is not so (I5).

Regarding the public display of other ancient beliefs, we found customs and celebrations that survived in the urban context. The most recurrent case is the celebration of Día de Muertos, but we also found essential adaptations, especially in the sense of self-absorption, circumscribing the celebration only to the family environment, and sacrificing its communal dimension. "Holidays are more memorial-type, such as the Día de Muertos, but now it's celebrated more familiarly.

(...) There are no more calls for something special, and each family makes their beliefs" (IC4). These ancestral beliefs also materialize in codes of conduct and sustain the preponderance of certain moral values such as respect for the ancestors and veneration of old age, understood as a synonym of life experience or wisdom. We appreciate this in the following explanation of the meaning given by the informant to the celebration of Día de Muertos, finding here expressive elements or symbols from both belief systems: Catholic (holy water, for example) and ancestral (green grasshoppers as "horses that are going to return the deceased to the land of the dead").

> *Later, when Día de Muertos ends, you can remove the food the next day. In other words, you cannot remove it during the same day because the deceased will punish you. In other words, until the next day you can withdraw it, but you cannot remove it like that: 'Alright, I'll take this'. No. First you must catch some green grasshoppers that are, in our belief, the horses that are going to return the deceased to the land of the dead. Then you have to grab a little bit of everything and put it in a bag with the green grasshoppers and bury it (…) You bury everything, you spray holy water and light the incense so that it smokes. Only then you can take what is on the table. If you don't do that, well it's a bad thing if you suffer an accident. (I5)*

Despite the difficulties in recreating their customs (for example, finding green grasshoppers in Monterrey), the beliefs and celebrations (whether it has an ancestral, Catholic or Protestant basis) survive to some degree and provide a normative and moral framework that governs marital, family and sexual life within the community. Another factor in this regard is the strength of group cohesion of the community, considering peasantry and kinship to varying degrees, rather than ethnicity, explanatory of how to acquire a cohesive dynamic. Let us now see how gender roles and the social and cultural treatment of sexuality develop under these new circumstances and community configurations. The narrative of an Otomí informant anticipates the central role of women in the general and religious education of children, as well as their political irrelevance, although thanks to the open positions in civil associations and government agencies in the urban context, the balances of power and decision-making based on gender are changing significantly.

> *Politically, no woman has higher hierarchy than anyone. In politics you are going to find are all men. In any area at any opportunity you say, [the role of women] is small. It's like they say, is incoherent (mean "inconsistent"?) and do not let a woman take a responsibility of some kind. In the matter of religious offerings and that [like celebrations], women oversee everything, food, and men oversee killing the pigs and*

large animals to skin them. That. In religious matters women must go to church because they are the example we are giving to the children. (I6)

Gender roles and sexuality management in the family and community environment

Beyond the diversity between communities in decision-making based on gender (for example, in the Nahua community of Chahuatlán "we see a lot of female leadership and some women who make important decisions at the family level ", IC1), the minimal role of women in public affairs and prominence in children education and upbringing are a common denominator. The latter is widespread among the communities studied here, as the value of motherhood is the essence of feminine identity ("you are only a woman in order to have children, educate them and be there for them. That's it, until there", I1). The unquestioned belief that a woman's nature consists of motherhood makes her the custodian of family integrity, for which she must necessarily perform almost entirely in the domestic sphere. On the contrary, the function culturally assigned to man, that of providing, necessarily pushes him to perform in the public sphere. Motherhood, which is intrinsically associated with the fulfillment of women, is considered a superior good. "Motherhood is associated with mother nature, it commands respect" (IC4), as long as it happens in a stable marital relationship.

Being a mother is seen as a blessing. It is something which at a certain point is very aspirational within the communities. Being a mother. There are still many people who say they want a child so I could say it is aspirational. But it is seen as a blessing that you get a baby into your life (...) It's like a blessing, regardless of age, provided it is within marriage. (...) If within marriage, it is seen as something good, something positive. (IC2)

For this reason marriage, understood as the necessary preamble for childbearing and having a family, appears as the first vital objective of indigenous women who reside in native communities and have not emigrated, being educated for it from early childhood: "being a mother in my community is very important because that's rooted from education and since you are born and raised" (I1). Because of this premise the customary age to marry is much lower than what is normalized and even legal in the city. In the native communities the menarche is the socially accepted signal to start this transition process. But in the urban indigenous communities the lower limit of age to marry changes, among other reasons because the law establishes that no one can marry until the age of 18, which is easy to evade in the

native community considering marriage as one of many forms of union without necessarily being formalized by a public authority.

> *In general, [in the city] they expect people to marry young more or less. These patterns have been changing around the age of 18, but in general there is already a commitment and it is between the ages of 16 and 18. What is expected? That women maintain their virginity until marriage and that gives them a high value. They continue practicing the rites such as asking for her hand in marriage, gift-giving among the families. However, if they know that a girl is no longer a virgin, they no longer deliver those gifts and the custom is void. (IC1)*

This communal control and surveillance mechanism on women and the exercise of their sexuality tries to ensure that the steps taken are in the prescribed order that custom dictates. Thus, the deprivation of the dowry (a persisting objectifying custom that turns women into merchandise or exchangeable goods) can be used as a measure of pressure, among many that lead to extreme sexual repression, to compel women to follow the culturally marked path. On the other hand, women's options are further reduced when there is no habit of dating (as in the Mixtec community of Héctor Caballero that originates from San Andrés de la Montaña, Oaxaca), an institution created to test or experience the relationship between future spouses before taking the step, ideally understood as definite when divorce is not culturally regarded as an option as in most native communities.

Once women are married, the social pressure mechanisms continue to work in an opposite direction so that the pregnancy occurs promptly. On the contrary, in the urban context this is expected to be delayed, but still not as much as the standardized parameters in the city: "generally, in the city pregnancy is expected way later, but they usually bear children fairly young: 18 or 20 years old" (IC1) . Other informants (IC2, IC3) state the proper age "to have a family" as 16 or even 15 years old. In the face of a morality strongly conditioned by the Christian religions that prevail in the conscience of these communities, which prioritizes the creation of life and life itself, it is not surprising that all informants agree that "abortion is not an option". The social sanction towards the possibility of abortion is so intense that it goes well beyond induced abortion (understood "as evil", IC3) and determines spontaneous or accidental abortion to be "providential punishment" (IC3), which refers us to a logic typical of magical thought that coexists with religious thought.

Consistent with the above, pregnancy resulting from rape does not justify abortion. According to a key informant (IC3), when the victim is not blamed as the cause of the aggression (the blame falls on the woman, as is Christian cosmogony), a pact of silence prevails in the family and community. However, this naturalization

of rape does not occur uniformly in all communities. For example, when rape occurs and is reported in the community of a Nahua informant, the authorities act against the perpetrator (I1). Nonetheless, this will not prevent the children conceived through rape from being birthed and cared for by the sole mother or both parents (victim and victimizer). As such, the action of the communal authority over the perpetrator is invariably directed, with or without rape, towards the consecration of pregnancy through marriage regardless of the age of both. It is a matter of correcting as soon as possible the order, considered erroneous, of two life events: marriage and parenthood. However, there are situations in which, by increasing pressure and vigilance on women's behavior, men can be freed from the obligation of marriage and recognition of paternity: when the community under a more or less lenient criteria considers that the behavior or previous relationships of a woman were not adequate or according to the social prescriptions. This is one possible way to raise a social figure that receives the most rejection and exclusion in the community: the single mother (another isolated and undervalued figure is the "spinster" without children who is considered to not have fully developed her feminine nature). The epithets reserved for them are numerous and especially aggressive and hurtful ("crazy", IC3; "street woman"; "old whore"; etc.)

> *They speak very ill and discriminate single moms because 'you do not have a stable marriage, you are a nobody, you liked the street life, (...) you are an old whore (...), you are a street woman'. If you get married or reunited, you must take great care of your marriage. They always go for the parents and criticize them too. It looks awfully bad for the community and sometimes they get kicked out of the community (I1)*

The social pressure suffered by single mothers often elicits them to emigrate, while committing to send money to their parents. It is also very common for children born out of wedlock to be raised and educated by their grandparents. Sometimes when children are abandoned by their mothers, they grow up thinking that their caregivers are their parents. In these cases, although not exclusively, it is frequent for women to experience a process of sexual liberation in the city (with its consequent moral and identity conflicts), especially among those who migrate independently and live far from their community's urban settlement, as those residing in a congregated settlement continue to a greater extent under the influence of the norms and roles expected of them. Another common topic in the interviews is the absolute taboo of sexuality and sexual education, unless silence and total repression of female sexuality is understood as a way of educating. Although they are not educated in contraceptive methods, their usage, health risks related to sexually transmitted diseases or even what menstruation is, women constantly receive moral indoctrination through

which they learn that feeling pleasure when having sex is directly associated with sin or that, as the creation of life is the supreme good and the main function of females, avoiding procreation by any mean is morally reprehensible. Through an exercise of brilliant synthesis of one key informant, we can understand that sex for men represents an opportunity to display and assert their manhood, while for women it is an act of love (or sacrifice?), and for the community as a whole it is a means of reproduction (IC3).

Concluding Remarks

In sum, it seems that the entire social body works to maintain the stability that allows its survival, until conditions change when trying to continue operating under the same parameters in circumstances as different as those found in the new urban environment. Along the same lines of this functionalist/organicist metaphor, when a disruptive element (a woman) threatens to alter the established order (an alteration that may be perceived as highly polluting), the social body may end up expelling the element perceived as disruptive and polluting. This may be explained through an experience narrated in first person by an informant from San Luis Potosí, the state that provides the largest proportion of indigenous migrants to Nuevo León:

> *I had a baby and the baby is now 20 years old, twenty-ish. I got pregnant very young and returned to San Luis already pregnant. And it's something very difficult because over there in San Luis you cannot get pregnant. You can't. In other words, it's something that you don't and truth is I was at that time. I couldn't say where it came from, how it happened, how it was, how all of this was. I couldn't say it out of shame, out of indignity. No matter what I said, what they were thinking, but I'm already pregnant I can't say a thing. Whatever you say is not acceptable, because you already had someone. They crossed you out as a person; you failed your parents, society, everything. (I4)*

But just as we see at the social, political, belief or linguistic level, there is also a significant movement towards social change in gender relations and sexuality that brings the community and the city closer. Regarding gender relations, the socio-occupational demands of the urban environment are forcing a profound restructuring of the traditional gender distribution of work, breaking the rigid dichotomy of public-male and private-female spaces. A clear example is Mazahua women, the majority of whom are paid workers. Another example are Mixtec women of Héctor Caballero:

> *When living in the city, families need work. For example, in the Mixtec community, which are more traditional in their customs, they have seen that those who always went*

out to sell were men. However, they realized women are the ones who sell the most in the city. So, the women go out to work and the men stay at home, but that does not mean that they have given up control. They stay, weave the palm. Many are musicians and work on weekends while women work all week. Tuesday is the only day that women stay in the community. (IC1)

Despite the logical resistance of men to lose their traditional gender privileges, migration has caused dissidence to multiply among the youngest (also men), who see their development opportunities and life options increased. "There are already more cases [of disagreement with traditional gender patterns] with younger women who go out, rebel, study and wish to become independent. They don't want their parents to decide their marriage. They want to decide for themselves" (IC1). Regarding the effect of migration on the diversification of options and lifestyles, both in terms of access to education and the decision about the person with whom to start a family (also to break the trend of inbreeding, since emerging technologies are increasing marriages between people of different community or ethnic origin), another key informant comments the following:

[Before migrating they do seek] marriage. They yearn for a family as the traditional way of doing things. But the migration process has been the one that has been breaking all these types of issues, because when you migrate you already have more opportunities, work, education, and that is what they live here. The communities that live here are people who have migrated. So, you could say that comparing Nuevo León versus where indigenous peoples are, here the ratio of young couples is still lower. (IC2)

Closing this journey through the dynamics of change and permanence of indigenous communities established in the MMA, the field of sexuality, the last and most hidden bastion, is also reached by the new logics of interaction. Sex is still taboo at home, but in public spaces or in community centers there are civil groups and government agencies, such as the Secretary of Social Development, that are starting dialogues and providing information about this issue. The result impacts the new generations. An informant, who is a collaborator in one of these associations, states:

For example, the new generations now even talk about contraceptive methods. In some communities I have even had to see that they bring the arm as a method of contraception. These topics are now being discussed. (…) They are resignifying what sexual relations are. This has a lot to do with women's empowerment. (IC2)

Although there is much resistance ("even breast examinations are costly", IC1), the brigades or campaigns on sex, reproductive health and contraceptive methods are coming across people, mostly women, who participate and gradually implicate

themselves. This entails the incorporation of these women into public life, which eventually results in a political or social activism career. Likewise, the greater access to information and media modifies the sexual behavior of the youngest (IC3), but this is only a portion of what is intended to be addressed in subsequent research, focusing on these liminal spaces between the community and the city, spaces inhabited and resignified by the true protagonists of change: young indigenous migrants or those born in the urban context.

Notes

1. One of many measures adopted by the new federal administration, as a result of the election of president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, was restructuring and renaming of the CDI to National Institute of Indigenous People (INPI), which meant the resignation of this informant (key for us and, for better or worse, for the development of indigenous communities in the MMA).

2. Following Durin's terminology (2007), we consider "congregate-type" (what we deem a community) all settlements made up of at least 20 indigenous families. This is distinguished from the dispersed type of settlements (of families) and the isolated one (when indigenous migrants live alone in their workplace, especially stay-at-home domestic workers).

3. Some of the change in the patterns of family coexistence is partially explained by the notable reduction of the number of offspring per woman in the urban context, mainly due to the different labor and economic logic which includes new expectations of material well-being and educational development, which are different regarding the logic and expectations that underline the social and economic life in native communities).

4. The same informant, albeit unintentionally, mentions to what extent is this new individualized conception of social justice internalized in the city at another point in the interview, expressing an opposite viewpoint in the sense of valuing hard work as a justification for material prosperity. In this interview we see how this mentality change causes a rupture familywise, in this case, the family that remains in the native community:

    [The relationship with my family in the native community] is distant because sometimes we can't see each other there. For example, if they say 'oh, why do they have [money]? Why do we not have?'. But sometimes I answer, 'if you have it's because you work. I mean, you're killing yourself working and that's why you have it'. In other words, no one is going to come to you and say: 'here, have it'. In other words, if you work and you know what you have, you have earned it with your work'. But yes, you see that even the family itself gets angry. They say or criticize you: 'well, I want to have some too'. But if you don't work and if you don't struggle, you never will. If he keeps criticizing you, he is going to keep telling you things, but if he doesn't try to do, then I say there is also an issue for you. There is family conflict sometimes, because you have, because you have, they also criticize you. So, I do not know what it seems like, but a matter of what you need to work and fight if you want something. That's what I learnt. (I1)

5.   As one key informant explains: "there are very well-established structures in the Mazahua community" (IC3), in which internal conflicts are first resolved between themselves, seeking internal means or sanctions. The Mazahuas choose certain people to delegate power and the duty to protect the community. The norms that govern the community life are implicit, "[by] the fact that belonging to the community is instilled in you. What the elected authorities do is ensure compliance with these rules, and in case of violating them, they get together and the group decides what the sanction or punishment will be and the community is informed what the sanction will be" (IC3).

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