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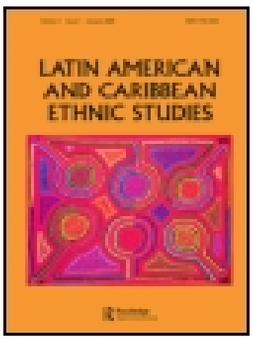

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The social construction of difference for the reproduction of inequality: Maya youth in Yucatán

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ABSTRACT

We propose to analyze how difference is constructed in order to produce diverse inequalities along the lines of ethnicity, social class, generation, and gender, in Yaxcabá, a Maya village in Yucatán. We show how the people of Yaxcabá differentiate themselves ethnically through the use of surnames associated with either Maya or Spanish descent. This interethnic classification system emerges from a collective imaginary that employs a supposed cultural difference to reproduce social, economic, and symbolic inequalities. These are then used to justify discriminatory practices by Yaxcabá people who claim Spanish origin against other community members who are identified as of indian origin. These practices are expressed through a complex social organization between family groups, linking and confronting different collective, essentialized, and stigmatized identities, which serve to establish social and prestige positions. We show how other inequalities are compiled on top of this ethnic differentiation, such as generational inequality and gender inequality. Women of Maya origin suffer a compounded inequality, rooted in Mayan language and culture, which subordinates them to men. All of this motivates young men and women to desire to change their social situation.

KEYWORDS

Cultural difference; gender inequality; generational inequality; Maya; youth

Starting points

The information used in this article comes, principally, from ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Yaxcabá, Mexico, from the year 2002 onwards, as the state of Yucatán experienced increasing globalization (Bakllanoff and Moseley 2008; Othón 2017; Güemes Pineda and Quiróz 2012). Cunill (2012), open-ended interviews were carried out with adults and young people, including high school students. Questionnaires were also conducted on identity, cultural consumption, life expectations, and the meanings of 'being Maya' and 'being young.' To enter into local meanings we adopted the *emic* perspective; we engaged debates about the historicity of these concepts to discover what the population thought about these things, trying not to impose our predetermined, external criteria, whether these were historiographical, sociological, or political.

In the case of Maya identity, privilege was given to the voices of the population of Yaxcabá, as this form of belonging was almost inexistent in the region until the end of the

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twentieth century. Today this exogenous identity is imposed through public education, government programs, popular and news media, social movements, and tourist campaigns, among other means. Thus we discarded the *etic* perspective, which has polemicized Maya identity through historiographic and ethnographic studies. We find, for example, that during the late post-classical period the term 'Maya' referred more to a region (Mayapán) and a language than to an identity, although in colonial times it was used to claim prestige (Gabbert 2001, 27–28). There is little evidence supporting the supposed continuity of Maya identity; even during colonial times, natives identified with their community and lineage more than with some wider identity (Restall 1997, 29–37). Some authors have turned to political and cultural arguments to prove the existence of such an identity. For example, some point out that the contemporary Maya form a people due to their shared history, and this helps them maintain their collective identity in the present (Bracamonte Y Sosa 2007). Another position holds that Maya identity is recreated in the Peninsula by intellectuals and teachers in the indigenous subsystem (Quintal and Patrón 2011). Others claim that this identity is preserved in the cultural reproduction of Maya ways of life (Lara Cebada 1997; Lizama Quijano 2007), or that it emerges from the language, kinship practices, and rituals that express Maya being (Guzmán Medina 2005). Finally, scholars have argued that Maya cultural identity persists in hiding when necessary, due to the mistreatment received from national society (Faust 2010, 79), or that it may fold into *macehual* identity (Tuz Chi 2013, 114). *Macehual* refers to 'the common man,' a local indian from the people, that is differentiated from upper-class noble indians. Regarding youth and generational conflict, we turned to fieldwork and history to verify the continuity of these concepts over time, in dialogue with those scholars who argue that 'youth' did not exist historically as a concept within indigenous communities Pérez Ruiz 2014, 234).

We analyze identity more generally as a social classification that gives meaning and specificity to those said to share a given identity category. Identity functions by marking the similarities and differences between who is included and who is excluded, in contexts where it is important to organize social relations based on belonging. Hence identity is integral to the struggle for social classification, representation, and recognition (Bourdieu 1980). Barth (1976) observed that ethnic identities are formed through the complex relationship between identity and culture, and that ethnic boundaries are constructed using selective emblematic elements to organize social difference along lines of inclusion and exclusion. While there is an essentialist tendency to justify the existence of Maya identity through the continuity of certain cultural elements, it is important to remember that these are constructed and reproduced in relation to the identity category itself.

To understand current classificatory categories we start from the principle that their construction occurs at the intersection of power relations and intersubjective processes. Through these relations, social subjects can identify and articulate the cultural symbols that justify their peculiarity in contrast with others, in opposition to differentiated groups around which otherness is built. Under asymmetrical social conditions, the 'other' is constructed and named by groups in power, and the 'other' is denied the right to name or conceptualize themselves, thus legitimizing their subjugated social classification (Bourdieu 1982, 136). Naming is one of the main mechanisms of ethnicization, a primary factor in producing or constructing ethnicity (Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart 1995). In this way an identity is constructed to exclude certain forms of difference, without

requiring that all members be exactly the same, nor claiming that these categorical lines of difference are necessarily naturally constituted (Giménez 2007; Grossberg 2003; Hall 2003). For this reason it is important to identify the asymmetrical power relations between social actors who subscribe themselves or others to a certain identity in ways that classify differences in order to dominate minorities (Pérez Ruiz, 2007, 43–45).

For the purposes of this analysis, we do not take as natural any forms of difference that are employed to sustain identity categories. Instead, we consider how these differences are constructed within what Grossberg (2003, 158–159) calls a historically produced economy, specific historical and institutional spheres that frame discursive and social practices. We situate our analysis within the context of power relations and struggles for recognition and representation. Within this framework we consider that the construction of ethnic difference in Yucatán has functioned to establish a system of social relations that justifies unequal interaction between populations that consider themselves different. In Yaxcabá, these social relations are charged with prejudice and stereotypes, creating friction between those who consider themselves indian versus non-indian (Cardoso de Oliveira 2007, 55; Solís Robleda 1997, 45).

To understand the diverse social classifications operating within one social actor, we start from the principle that all individuals have multidimensional identities, but are immersed in collectivities toward which they feel loyalty as a result of sharing, by choice or imposition, the cultural-symbolic complex that distinguishes the collectivity (Giménez 2000, 52–62). This means that someone can have diverse belongings and identifications, but some may be more significant than others, according to their spheres of interaction and feelings of loyalty. Thus the people of Yaxcabá can subscribe to, or be subscribed to, various collective identities. Some of these identities may be based on geography, like being Mexican or Yucatán or from Yaxcabá, or based on ethnicity, like being a Spanish *vecino*[1] versus a *macehual* indian, or based on age, gender, or other features. All of the former occurs within a conflictive framework of power relations, which mold the opportunities available to and limitations imposed upon individuals who subscribe to a collective identity. For example, when a person of Maya origin tries to free themselves from the indian identity category, stigmas and prejudice imposed by other people who identify as non-indian still limit their social ascent and political power.

In order to understand how the population of Yaxcabá classifies family groups, we turn to the category of social representations. We define representations as socio-cognitive constructions which are derived from 'common sense,' oral memory, historical data, values, emotions, prejudices, and interests, and which provide references for interpreting reality and orienting social action. Denise Jodelet (1986) points out that, through the analysis of social representations, it is possible to see how individuals internalize culture and social contexts. Furthermore, representations operate according to a logic of difference and opposition and thus play a role in the construction and reproduction of identities, expressing a certain conception of the world, the self, the groups one belongs to, and others who do not belong in those groups. This perspective allows us to analyze how the sense of belonging to a certain collective identity in Yaxcabá, like being a *vecino* or a *macehual* indian, is built from an imaginary that supposes a culturally stereotyped difference that may be difficult to prove empirically. Though it may seem contradictory, these differentiated identities exist alongside wider identity classifications that enable positive interactions across ethnic lines, like the 'people of Yaxcabá.' This communal identity was mobilized, for

example, in a confrontation with the inhabitants of Sotuta when Yaxcabá was attempting to become an independent municipality (Domínguez 1979).

The opposition between *vecino* and *macehual* indian identity groups is present in the common imaginary of the community of Yaxcabá as well as in specific social practices like marriage. But this has not always been the case. As Lentz (2009) and Gabbert (2017) point out, historically *vecinos* (Spanish) and indians were not the only groups in the Yucatán Peninsula, nor did they live in rigid segregation. They were not separated linguistically by the exclusive use of one language for each group, nor did they behave as unique groups, one confronting the other. Here we affirm that, in certain contexts, it is possible that some groups manipulate ethnic classificatory categories for their own ends, as occurred during the Caste War[2] (Gabbert 2004, 2017) and occurs today within public policies, social movements and commercial and tourist strategies.

Finally, in order to deal with the articulation between inequalities of ethnicity, class, gender, and generation, we take up the idea of intersectionality (Crenshaw 2011; Hill Collins 1984, 1990; Viveros Viyorga 2016). Intersectionality offers a way to understand how micro and macro dimensions of power converge in diverse forms of inequality upon each individual social subject. This approach requires that we denaturalize social classifications and instead examine the historical and cultural contexts in which they were first generated and in which they continue to be articulated, producing antagonism and social conflict. We aim to make explicit the inequalities and power relations that are engaged and reproduced by each form of belonging.

Yaxcabá: a frontier town, ethnically and economically differentiated

Yaxcabá is located some 90 kilometers from the city of Merida, the capital of Yucatán State. Once territory of the *cocomes* tribe, this land was incorporated into the colonial *encomienda* system (by which the Spanish crown granted native land and labor to conquistadors) in 1562, and became a provincial headquarters of the Tekax district starting in 1840. According to José Luis Domínguez (1979, 73), in colonial times the town of Yaxcabá was considered the last safe place before the forested lands to the south and east where the 'rebel' Indians lived. Due to this strategic location, different classes and strata of society have lived together in Yaxcabá since the colonial period, occupying a range of social positions with regard to labor and political power. Descendants of Spanish settlers were called *vecinos* (neighbors) in order to distinguish themselves from native indians. This division corresponded to the colonial social organization, by which the Yucatán territory was organized into Indian Republics and Spanish Republics, and the population was encouraged to assume such categories to distinguish themselves for political, judicial, and administrative purposes in villages where Spanish and natives lived together (Quintal Avilés and Patrón 2011; Gabbert 2017). This classification system persists today in Yaxcabá.

Before the Caste War of 1847–1901 (Domínguez 1979), Yaxcabá was home to landowners who employed local labor in the form of *luneros* and *jornaleros*[3] on their *haciendas*, ranches, or farms; tradesmen who managed local politics and sometimes also owned *haciendas*; indian chiefs, former nobles, who farmed maize fields paying day laborers but neither paid tribute nor offered personal service; indentured workers; and free peasants who sold some of the maize they harvested. The region produced maize, honey, wax,

cotton blankets, chickens, turkeys, fruit, chiles, and rope for urban markets. During the Caste War, Yaxcabá became a strategic zone once again, fought over and pillaged by both rebels and government forces, and as a result the population was reduced; by 1919, there were only 484 people remaining in the village. With peace restored, the village was repopulated by estate owners, *mestizos*, indians, and *hidalgo* indians,[4] who held positions of privilege and were rewarded for their services against the rebels. Though the war had somewhat limited the encroachment of estates upon indian land, colonial social relations were only modified partially. *Hidalgo* indians formed alliances with landowners, and *luneros* and indentured workers disappeared as social categories, but the estate system and day laborers remained, and within this social organization came the rise of local power groups.

During the socialist period in the early twentieth century, when Yucatán was largely governed by the Partido Socialista del Sureste (the Socialist Party of the Southeast), poor indians and a growing local bourgeoisie in Yaxcabá (made up of *vecinos* and *hidalgo* indians) confronted the large estate owners of Sotuta, who controlled commerce and politics in the region.[5] In Yaxcabá, socialist leaders fought for land redistribution, autonomy, and infrastructure developments, and they eventually freed Yaxcabá from Sotuta control. The first *ejido* (cooperative land tenure) of 1926–1937 allocated 6,336 hectares among 132 beneficiaries, limiting the amount of land available to 48 hectares per beneficiary. An expansion in 1943 provided 24 additional hectares per beneficiary. This amount of land was insufficient to support a peasant family practicing swidden maize farming, so many family members had to look for work elsewhere (Domínguez 1979).

Today the Yaxcabá *ejido* (land cooperative) has not been divided up[6]; it comprises of 11,700 hectares for some 552 *ejido* members, as well as an indeterminate number of peasants without agrarian rights, who are simply known as 'peasants' (Pérez Ruiz 2013, 23). The town of Yaxcabá is the presidential seat of the Yaxcabá municipality, which includes 15,203 inhabitants, 70% of whom (10,706) speak Mayan (INEGI 2015). The principal educational facilities (preschool – high school) for the municipality are located in Yaxcabá, and the majority of homes there have electricity, running water, plumbing, cell service, and cable television. Internet is available in various cyber-cafes. Despite changes in production, technology, and consumption, most inhabitants still farm maize, honey, vegetables, and fruit. Social and class differences between *vecinos* and indians persist as well (Pérez Ruiz 1983, 2013). Although *ejido* lands are mostly in the hands of people who believe themselves to be of indian or Maya origin, the Yaxcabá government is controlled by residents who claim Spanish origin based on their surnames. In fact, of the 18 people who have held the position of municipal president between 1956 and 2018, 13 have had both surnames in Spanish, 3 have had a Spanish first surname, and only one has had a Mayan first surname "Cronología de los Presidentes Municipales 2018). Thus we see a political and economic hegemony of *vecinos* over those considered to be indians.

The people of Yaxcabá: differentiated, asymmetrical, collective identities

Given the persistence of colonial-era interethnic relations, the inhabitants of Yaxcabá continue to recognize themselves as descendants of either the ancient Maya or Spanish settlers (depending on their surnames). Tracking lineage in this way creates a framework of diverse and asymmetrical collective identities for themselves and others. Some of

these identities refer to birthplace; people born there are *yaxcabeños/as*, but they may also subscribe to wider identities that transcend local frontiers, like *yucateco/a* (from Yucatán) or *mexicano/a*. The identities that differentiate residents into various positions in the social hierarchy are built on cultural references and symbols such as language, dress, labor, and economic position. So people recognize themselves, and are recognized by others, as *mayero/a* if they belong to family groups that speak the Mayan language and are supposed descendants of the ancient population that inhabited the Yucatán peninsula. These same people can also be considered *milpero/a*, if their family farming practices follow the techniques and social organization of Maya origin. In this way, there are *yaxcabeños* who are both *mayeros* and *milperos*, because they are supposedly descendants of the native inhabitants of Yucatán. Only in recent years, with the influence of schooling, tourism, and media, have they begun to see and think of themselves as Maya. Additionally they can consider themselves as *macehual* indians, and assume such a characterization, belonging as it does to the interethnic system of colonial origin.

When asked if there were people in Yaxcabá who are known as Maya, one resident (an 80-year-old man with Spanish surnames) replied, 'Maya? No, no … no one is called Maya … they just know that they are Maya. Maya is the race … the indian race … but they don´t call themselves Maya' (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 134). A survey conducted in 2004 confirmed that only a small sector of *yaxcabeños* see themselves as Maya. This questionnaire was carried out among 58 students (28 females and 30 males) between the ages of 14 and 18 at the Baccalaureate College of Yucatán, founded in Yaxcabá in 1981 (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 142–165). In response to the question, 'Who are the the Maya?', only 34% of students referred to them as their ancestors, with arguments such as:

> 'They were our ancestors, maybe like the parents of my great-grandparents' (male, 14 years old)
>
> 'They were the first people that existed on Earth, who created culture, traditions, language, clothing, and the beliefs of our ancestors' (female, 15)

On the other hand, 66% of respondents did not recognize any kinship with the ancient Maya, who they learned about through formal education and mass media. When asked if it is the same to be Maya and to be *mayero*, the majority (74%) said that it is not the same, because there can be people who speak Mayan without being Maya, or Maya who do not speak Mayan. Some of their responses express the complexity of identifying what it means to be Maya:

> 'No, because being Maya means you come from the Maya culture and being *mayero* means that you speak the Mayan language' (male, 14)
>
> 'No. Because being Maya is our culture, which is not lost, and being *mayero* means speaking Mayan, but if you don´t belong to the culture you are not Maya even if you know the language' (male, 15)
>
> 'No because there could be someone from another country who learns the language and practices a lot but won´t be Maya' (male, 15)
>
> 'No because I´m *yucateco*, I speak Mayan but I'm not Maya' (male, 15)
>
> 'No because Maya refers to the culture and *mayero* refers to the language' (female, 14)

'No. Because the Maya are those who lived in primitive times and the *mayeros* are those who speak Mayan. So no [they're not the same]' (female, 15)

'No. Because there are some people who are Maya but don´t speak the language' (female, 15)

'No. Because the Maya were the people in antiquity and *mayero* is someone who talks the Mayan language a lot' (female, 15)

Another way that *yaxcabeños* differentiate their collective identities is through clothing – most noticeable in the case of women. Those who wear the *hipil* (traditional blouse) are known as *mestizos* while those who adopt modern clothing are called *catrinas* (skeleton lady). Nevertheless, the *hipil* is losing importance as an identity marker due to the fact that most young women have given it up, and only wear the dressy version, known as a *terno*, for special occasions like patron saint festivities. Besides, cultural policies have 'folklorized' the *hipil*, using it to represent all Yucatán women in festivals, carnivals, and to promote tourism. For this reason, people in Yaxcabá still use surnames, instead of dress, to mark differences. Doña Cuca Maldonado Peña, a woman over 80 years old with two Spanish surnames, explained it this way:

Interviewer: Is *macehual* the same as *mestiza*?
Cuca: They used to say that mestizos were *macehuales*, but not anymore because there are mestizos, many mestizos who have good surnames, many have good surnames.
Interviewer: So being mestizo has nothing to do with surnames?
Cuca: No, nothing.
Interviewer: So what does it have to do with?
Cuca: Ah, well, there are those who are known as mestizos, who wear espadrille sandals, and mestizo trousers, and who dress well when they dress completely like *macehuales*. That´s how the young dress now, although they have a surname like García, that´s a good surname, like González, Díaz … those are good surnames, and they are always mestizos. They wear mestizo trousers, but they have good surnames. It wasn´t like that before. Before they used to say: 'Don´t marry that boy, he is a poor mestizo' … but it's alright if he has a good surname … he is a mestizo for the clothes that he wears, he is a mestizo, but he has a good surname, and that´s what counts.
Interviewer: Who are the *catrinas*?
Cuca: The *catrinas* are like us … yes, yes there are many here in Yaxcabá who are *catrinas*.
Interviewer: So does it have anything to do with speaking Mayan or not?
Cuca: No, that´s got nothing to do with it because now many mestizos speak Spanish. Yes, for example, these girls who are selling here, one of them has the surname … What´s that boy´s name? … Benito, this Benito, … his daughter is here, she is a *catrina*, she has dresses, but she has an indian surname. So clothing has nothing to do with the surname. Now many mestizos know Spanish, many *catrinas* know Mayan as well as Spanish … that´s why there is no connection. It´s the surname that counts, you have to marry a man with a good surname. Yes of course … (November 2007)

Much like traditional Maya dress, the Mayan language is seen to mark lower social standing, and it is therefore losing ground to the Spanish language. This is the case both in family environments – where individuals seek to avoid the stigmatization, discrimination, and poverty associated with indian identity – and within the education system, where Spanish is imposed to match national curricula.

The use of surnames to organize *yaxcabeños* hierarchically is also associated with another colonial legacy: the oppositional identities of the *vecino*, recognized as of Spanish origin, versus the *macehual* indian, associated with a Maya or pre-Hispanic origin.

Those said to be *vecinos* have Spanish surnames like Rodríguez, Pérez, and González; while *macehual* indians are those with Mayan surnames like Pat, Moo, Chi, and Dzul, among others. Each type of surname corresponds to a different social position. When somebody has one name of each type, they will rise or fall in social status, depending on if the paternal or maternal name predominates. Additionally, there may be people who have Spanish surnames but are not considered Spanish 'by blood' because they were adopted or named after a godfather; their Spanish surname would not be considered a legitimate indicator of their origin. The importance of surnames is explained by Cuca Maldonado:

> Cuca: Yes here there are many *macehual* indians … the *macehual* is an indian. Like Chan, or Tum … The good surnames are like ours … Now, you'll notice, indians marry with *vecinos*. *Vecinos* are what we call people with good surnames. 'She married a *vecino*,' they say, or 'She married a good surname.'
> Interviewer: It wasn´t like that before?
> Cuca: No, before you couldn't marry an indian surname with a good surname. Now if the first surname is good, then you can look for a bad surname, that is to say an indian surname. So the good surname marries with the bad surname and nothing happens. The person has the indian surname but it doesn´t matter because when they have children the first surname, the good surname of the father, will be passed on – the other surname too but it will be lost over time.
> Interviewer: Today do families still pay attention to this when looking for marriage partners?
> Cuca: Oh yes. A lot. But before it mattered even more. 'I don´t want you to marry him, because he´s an indian and you, what surname do you have?' (November 2007, in Pérez Ruiz, 2015, 99).

Those who are recognized as, or recognize themselves as *vecinos* are also organized in family groups, which sometimes form alliances in order to maintain the preeminence of Spanish surnames. To this end, some families hope their daughters marry someone not from Yaxcabá. But this rule is often broken; people with Spanish surnames have been marrying people with Mayan names for as long as anyone can remember – but with varying consequences. So, when a Maya woman marries a man with a Spanish surname, she moves up a rung in the social ladder, because her Mayan surname will be lost in the next generation. Vice versa, when a woman of Spanish surname marries a man with a Mayan surname, she will descend in her social and even economic position. According to the kinship system in place, she will become part of her husband's family and take on their social standing. Hence, one young woman complained about the fact that her mother, with a Spanish surname, married a man with a Mayan surname: 'Mother, why did you marry my father? Why did you fall in love with my father? Why didn't you marry someone else with a surname like yours? My father is a *macehual*, a Dzul' (November 2007).

In this polarized situation, it is important to verify if such a cultural abyss really does exist in Yaxcabá to construct the difference between *vecinos* and *macehual* indians. It is also necessary to see if this ethnic classification corresponds with class position at all, as residents claim; if this connection does exist, it may be discrete, as occurs with many forms of discrimination that are not always blatant and open.

Cultural difference as an imaginary for the reproduction of inequality

Examining class inequality based on the genealogy of Yaxcabá surnames since 1983, it is clear that most residents with Spanish surnames belong to a superior economic class,

which could even be considered capitalist based on the labor practices and social relations engaged. Meanwhile, locals with Mayan surnames generally maintain peasant lifestyles and labor practices, but they are not all the same, neither in social status nor economic position. Depending on whether they are descendants of common indians or *hidalgo* indians, they have developed different strategies of reproduction. Individuals descended from *hidalgo* families tend to benefit from relationships with local, regional, and national political power. This takes the form of not only access to greater productive and economic resources, but also influence over the management of the *ejido* (Pérez Ruiz 1983, 89–96). We must therefore reconsider the stereotypical imaginary that homogenizes all people with a Mayan surname as *macehual* indians – in other words, poor indians. However, it does seem true that people with Spanish surnames, in general, belong to a superior class position.

With regard to cultural difference, there are more common shared practices, beliefs, and behaviors among the people of Yaxcabá than there are differences. Shared culture, for example, is expressed in the belief in a Christian God, accompanied by saints and virgins for Catholics, or worshipped alone by Protestants. It is also commonly believed (whether openly or not) that this God coexists with ancient deities that rule over forests, caves, and *cenotes*, and intervene to heal or provoke illness. Being on good or bad terms with the ancient deities influences good or bad rains, droughts, hurricanes, harvests, hunts, and wellbeing, like accidents and illnesses that affect men, women, and children. For example, the Christian God is solicited alongside the god Chaac and the wind lords in rain ceremonies carried out every year in the four points of the world, symbolized by the four corners of the *ejido* territory. The ancient deities join baby Jesus on 25 December, when *yaxcabeños* celebrate his birthday by dancing with a pig´s head with a corn cob in its snout, to give thanks for the harvest.

Common beliefs about the life cycle are also part of shared culture in Yaxcabá, as seen in the *hetzmek* ceremony for boys and girls, through which they learn to become men and women and to carry out their corresponding roles. Even amongst Protestant *yaxcabeños* we can observe the tension between those who wish to do away with indian and Catholic beliefs, and the demands of custom. Ceremonies to give thanks for harvests may no longer be carried out in the fields, but *elote* corn cooked in earth ovens (*pib)* is brought to Protestant temples to thanks Jesus instead. One peasant (male, 50, with Mayan surnames) expressed this tension: 'After I became a brother (Protestant), I understood that Jesus is the boss of all the gods, and taking *elote* to him at the temple would be enough' (2007).

This shared culture is a product of complex processes of imposition and cultural loss, but also of appropriation, exchange, and innovation on the parts of both *vecinos* and *macehual* Indians in the region, developed over time since at least the Conquest. Thus the inhabitants of Yaxcabá have learned from each other to construct common practices and lifestyles, only safeguarding certain areas of specialized or clandestine knowledge. One such preserved expertise is the medical and religious knowledge of traditional priests, known as *hmem*. Cuca Maldonado Peña, an evangelical Christian, tells us more about this shared culture:

> Cuca: The surname doesn't matter. Whatever surname you have, the *hetzmek* [coming of age ceremony] is very necessary, very necessary …
> Interviewer: And the *Ch'a Chaac*?

> Cuca: The *Ch'a Chaac*? It´s still carried out here. Every year, every year. This year it was done in the month of November, but yes every year, every year … And when the *hetzmek* is carried out, they open their legs this way; when they do the *hetzmek* they open their little legs like this …
> Interviewer: And people from both churches participate?
> Cuca: Yes, yes … There where they do the *Ch'a Chaac* all the Catholics and all the evangelicals get together. Jehovah's Witnesses don't join, their doctrine is different. They ask us, 'Why do you do that, why do you do the same thing as the Catholics?' And I reply, 'There´s no problem with what we do.' 'No it´s not OK. You shouldn´t do the same thing. The Catholics are different' – 'But this is what we´re used to,' I tell them. (November 2007, in Pérez Ruiz 2015, 120–121)

We are not arguing that there have never been cultural differences between the people of Yaxcabá, nor that they all experience and share cultural expressions in the same way. What we are trying to point out is the impossibility of separating Hispanic culture from Maya culture today. Furthermore, despite everything they share, *yaxcabeños* use idealized, stereotyped, and essentialized historical references to draw the boundaries of ethnicized identities of unequal value, while presenting these as mere cultural differences. This hierarchy legitimates *vecinos*'s privilege, which they can wield for political power and economic benefit. It is no coincidence that the municipal presidency is consistently occupied by individuals with Spanish surnames, that local commerce is dominated by Spanish-surname families who control the accumulation of honey for export, and that these same families try to influence the *ejido* assembly so that the land can be allotted and commercialized. This social imbalance also reflects and reproduces racism, as shown in the following comment from a *vecino*:

> 'If your daughter is a Carrillo and she marries a Moo, a Chan, or a Cuxim, whatever, she is crossed with that race. When you see the ugly grandchildren, and all that, it's because they come from that race. When the two races are Spanish, of the Spanish race, even the children come out good looking' (male, over 80, November 2007).

In Yaxcabá, the differences between being a *macehual* indian or being a 'Spanish' *vecino*, and the collective identities attached to each, are based on social representations that designate a value, a social position, and certain highly stereotyped attributes and elements to each group. Even if individuals do not behave exactly as the ethnic classification implies, the classification contributes to the reproduction of social asymmetries, above and beyond individual transgressions. Thus ethnic differentiation is effective because the values associated with each classification are presented as natural and objective, as are the characterizing attributes. This naturalization hides the construction of difference to justify the minorization of the other, homogenizing everyone of Maya origin and calling them indian. Such naturalization also hides the economic and political interests behind certain identity classifications. Naming and characterizing the 'other' from a position of power constitutes an act of recognition and evaluation; in this case, the prejudice and stereotypes invoked in this process result in discriminatory treatment toward the subjugated person (Giménez 2009, 182–189). Over time, the dichotomy of Spanish *vecino* vs *macehual* indian, reproduced to stratify social relations, has been internalized by the people of Yaxcabá as a natural and objective difference.

Internalized stigma leads people like Margarita Kab, a woman with two Mayan surnames who is over 90 years old and doesn´t speak Spanish, to refer to *macehual* indians in the same derogatory tone as would someone who considers herself a *vecina*:

> '[T]hey call them *macehuales* because they don't do things well, whatever they do comes out badly, that's why they call them *macehuales* … Only those who behave badly. That's *macehual*. He's an indian because he doesn't know how to work. That's why they say he's very indian, he doesn't know how to do anything, he doesn't know how to work' (November 2007 in Pérez Ruiz 2015, 106)

These discriminatory attitudes affect the expectations of people who are classified as indians, even pressuring them to abandon their emblematic cultural markers. As intersectionality makes clear, this form of inequality is in turn articulated with other inequalities, like gender and generation. In this case study, everyone who identified as a *macehual* indian suffered ethnic discrimination, across all generations, genders, and economic positions. However, young men and women also suffered generational inequality relative to older adults. Women suffer an additional inequality given their inferior position with respect to men. As we shall see further on, this subordination is embedded in Mayan language and culture.

Gender and generation: other forms of inequality

In Yaxcabá, among the population associated with Maya culture, being a man (*xiib, (j)xiib, wínik, máak*) or being a woman (*ch'up, ko'olel*) is something constructed from birth, and different social position are assumed for each gender, with men occupying the more valued position (Diccionario Básico Maya-Español-Maya 1992).[7] Among more traditional families, when a midwife is employed she will charge less if a girl is born, and more if a boy is born, considering his future role in labor production and patrilineal family reproduction. The *hetzmek* ceremony is another important moment that constructs gender, when infants are straddled for the first time and symbolically taught the work which they will have to learn to do. With the support of godparents and a prayer specialist, girls participate in *hetzmek* when they are three months old, because the kitchen hearth has three stones; boys, on the other hand, participate when they are four months old because the maize field has four corners. During the ceremony, objects are placed in their hands to indicate the work they must learn: boys to cut down forest and plant maize, and girls to make tortillas and sew. In both cases, the child may be handed a pencil and notebook for going to school. From that moment onwards, asymmetrical differences continue throughout their gender-specific education and socialization, including special forms of body care and eating to build strength in men and reproductive capacity in women (Güemes Pineda 2010, 4). For example, during menstruation girls should not eat cold foods, lemons, oranges, or jicama; nor should they be exposed to rain, lest they get sick from chills, become sterile, or even die. There is a certain tendency to give men priority at meal times, both in quantity of food and order of eating (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 205–212). Gender difference also organizes spaces of work, specialization, and ritual, producing differentiated abilities and knowledge between men and women (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 214–215).

Another expression of the asymmetrical value between genders is the way in which young people are characterized. Girls in Yaxcabá are called *chu´palech*, which means to be in danger as well as generating danger, alluding to their sexuality and menstruation (*éemel k'i´ik*), their reproductive capacity, and the norms they must follow. According to the linguist Fidencio Briseño Chel, calling girls *(x)lo'obayan*[8] (another characterization) associates them with harm and implies that they are damaged because they have

menstruated (personal communication, March 2016). Adolescent boys, meanwhile, are known as *táankelem*, or 'the face of strength,' in relation to the dominant masculine power.

According to tradition, youth is a transitory stage that demands obedience and respect towards adults. A third or even fourth gender is also know, also subordinated to masculin adult power, although there is little empirical evidence. Álvarez (1997, 63-65) mentions the following terms: *pak-alaay*, which means to powering women committing sin whit one behaving as if she was a man: *ch'up-lal uinic* refers to an effeminate, cowardly man. The Diccionario Maya-Español-Maya (2001) mentions *ch'upal ol* as an effeminate man, *x-ch'upul xib* refers to a hermaphrodite woman and *xbil x-ch' up* is a woman whit the chatacter of man. for girls, 'youth' starts with puberty, around the age of 11 or 12, although recently the urban-style *quinceañera* has become amarker of youth and status. for boys, the changes in voice, body hair, and certain behaviors are indicators that they have entered youth.[9] This stage generally ends with marriage, regardless of age, since marriage marks the beginning of adulthood and its associated social responsibilities (Pérez Ruiz 1983, 2015).

The characterization of youth, according to gender, includes elements of biology, behavior, and social guidelines depending on social position, in an ordered hierarchy where adults predominate over youth and men of any generation dominate over women and other genders. This social imbalance can be traced throughout the work of Diego de Landa (2001) and in the colonial Yucatec Mayan dictionaries that were systematized by Álvarez (1997) and used by Pérez Ruiz (2015). De Landa points out that among the 'naturals' (local natives), the inheritance system privileged sons, brothers, or even a tutor, before daughters, sisters, or wives. The latter were under the social control of men, first under the guardianship of their father or brothers, and later of their husband (de Landa 2001). Álvarez (1997) explains that colonial Yucatec Mayan used the same verb (*al*) to mean 'giving birth' and 'working the land.' Women were akin to a plot of land: under the care and control of a man, each could bear fruit; a woman who could not conceive was referred to as barren ground. The control of female bodies and sexuality affected both single and married women, but applied differently to slaves, orphans, and widows, who were considered 'land without owners' because no man looked over them.

With respect to youth, de Landa (2001, 51–53) catalogs the rituals associated with puberty, and documents the advice given and worry expressed surrounding sexuality, abstinence, and the sin of 'touching.' Girls were expected to conserve their virginity, while boys could have relations with prostitutes. For both men and women, youth was a period of transition that ended with marriage, always arranged by parents. Even among upper classes, the matrimonial alliance was fixed by parents in order to consolidate social ascent and the continuity of their lineage (Álvarez 1997).

After the colonial conquest, missionaries fought against adultery, polygamy, cohabitation, and masturbation (Ruz 2004) and imposed, throughout the whole colonial period, a social order based on their beliefs about the body, the soul, conjugality, virginity, chastity, and faithfulness (Santana Rivas 1999). The resulting amalgams and transformations have yet to be fully understood. Nevertheless, the important thing to point out is that in Yaxcabá we find several of these elements present in the inferior positions of youth and women. Males still have precedence in land access and control, and when they are adults they assume the role of heads of household, with authority over male children,

youth, and seniors, as well as women of all ages and conditions. Female virginity and sexuality is still guarded, domestic violence still targets wives and daughters, and until the mid-twentieth century parents continued to arrange their children's marriages (Pérez Ruiz 2015).

One extreme example of violence against women can be seen in the case of Margarita Kab, who was married off to an elderly man at the age of 15 in exchange for a bottle of alcohol. Her new husband was a widower who had recently 'married' his deceased wife's sister, also a widow at that time with a son and daughter from a previous marriage. Years later, the man also 'got together' with his stepdaughter, the daughter of his former sister-in-law and current wife. This man thus had three 'wives' simultaneously, all living together. Margarita's daughter described the situation as follows:

> [My mother] said that things were just like that, there was a law. What father and mother said was always done … But she was forced, it wasn't what she wanted … The parents [said who she should marry]. That's how the parents arranged things, in the middle of drinking … They would appear with bottles of alcohol and would make an agreement to give the daughter away … Well she has told me her story … my father and my deceased grandfather drank a lot, so my grandfather was fooled by the drink. They would come with beer, hard liquor, bottles of the stuff so that my deceased grandfather would get drunk. That's how it was arranged that my mother would go with that man; because my father was a widower, his wife had died … With the first wife that died he had seven children … then he got together with my aunt, her sister [of the deceased wife] … Then my aunt got pregnant. I think she had gone to help [her sister] with the work and she got pregnant by my father also. Yes, the two sisters … The husband of my aunt [the sister of the wife] had also died, and she had a son and a daughter. She got together with my father, and when the daughter grew up she stayed with my father too. With her he had another two, or four children as well. Yes, well. There weren't many like him but there are some who have two or three wives … It was fairly common, here in the village. But there are other [families] like that, there's one family that still lives like that. Here in Yaxcabá there is a man, who is the grandfather of my son in law … As my mother says, although she feels she is suffering, that she is not happy, but it is done, she has children, she started to have children. My father, although he has them together in this way [the three women], but he is responsible for paying the midwife. He sells the maize … (Testimony, November 2007, in Pérez Ruiz 2015, 278).

> [My mother] says that they suffered a lot with my grandfather … After going to dance without permission, they were whipped with a rope when they got back home … She says that when there was a visit with her father and mother, they wouldn't be allowed to get close to hear the conversation. They just look at you and you know what it means, if you are stubborn and try to get closer, they would put toasted chile in your eye, to punish you … . Ow!! (My mother) says that now it's different, [the girls] even know more than the mother, more than the father … She says that she lives better now that she is old, because she is free … (Testimony, November 2007, in Pérez Ruiz 2015, 281)

This story demonstrates how, even within a subjugated discriminated group like so-called indians or Mayas, other inequalities affect certain sectors of the population more specifically. As we shall see later, internal conflicts arise as a result of these inequalities when some some group members seek to end or even invert them. This occurs, for example, with generational conflict in Yaxcabá, where young men and women seek to not only liberate themselves from an oppressive identity (like 'indian'), but also shake off the authority of adults. They hope to do better than their parents, to earn more money and

gain higher levels of education; these accomplishments would enable them to free themselves of the stigma of being culturally backward, poor indians.

Generational conflict and the emergence of individualism

Residents of Yaxcabá are currently in a process of generational conflict. This conflict expresses itself in the complaints of adults who consider the youth to be rebellious, depraved, lazy, and disobedient to their parents. From the youth's point of view, many of them are more educated than their parents, and as a result have access to new possibilities for earning money, either as migrant workers or through a profession, that have not been available to their parents. Combined with the influence of mass media, these economic changes have brought about the emergence of a personal identity based on the idea of individual progress. This emergent identity is distanced from the collective peasant identity and the forms of social organization where collective interests predominate over individual concerns.

In an open-ended questionnaire carried out in 2004 with 149 students between 15 and 19 years old (43% women and 57% men), 50% of the respondents–and 55% of girls surveyed – declared they wanted 'to be themselves' and 'not be like anyone else.' Additionally, 26% said they wished to be like a famous singer or actor (19% of girls and 30% of boys), while only 15% expressed a wish to be like their parents or grandparents (17% of girls and 14% of boys). With regards to their future, 94% of the students, girls and boys, imagined their future outside of the village (Pérez Ruiz and Arias 2006, 342–344).[10] Similar responses were recorded in another questionnaire carried out in 2010 with 80 baccalaureate students (28 women and 52 men). When asked about what they hoped for their future, 86% of them indicated individual projects associated with success and economic wellbeing, like having a good profession or getting a good job (42%). Others mentioned 'achieving goals and dreams' (14%), or getting 'to be someone,' 'being someone important,' and 'being successful' (14%), demonstrating a new type of expectations. Among girls, who were traditionally destined for marriage, 74% associated their future with being somebody important; within that segment, 21% dreamed of a good career, 21% of getting ahead professionally, 14% of having a good life, and 18% of achieving goals and dreams. Only 14% of girls mentioned marriage as their principal expectation for the future. Many of the activities students referenced are not possible locally; the expectation of work is necessarily associated with leaving Yaxcabá. Only 19% of men expressed an intention to stay in the village. Surprisingly, a mere 10% of girls planned to stay in the village, challenging notions that idealize indigenous women as cultural guardians, particularly rooted to their places of origin (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 260–277).[11]

In Yaxcabá, migration to the U.S. or other countries is non-existent. The logical places for young people to look for work would be cities like Merida or Valladolid, or the beaches of the Mayan Riviera, Cancun, or Playa del Carmen. Because the 2010 survey asked about expectations, the responses allow us to explore the imaginaries of the students. Later they will confront the reality of limited work opportunities and other disadvantages of their ethnic and social condition, like discrimination on the basis of their surnames, skin color, or ways of speaking. This is exactly what happened to Delfina, a young woman with Mayan surnames who studied tourism development at the Universidad de Oriente. Trained as a hostess, she applied for work in an important hotel chain in Cancun but

was offered a position to either wash laundry or dress up in a fancy *hipil* to greet tourists as a local *mestiza*. Her father commented sadly, 'We were fooled. So much effort for our children to study and it's all a failure' (Interview, November 2012).

The same 2010 questionnaire further exposed young people's willingness to distance themselves from their upbringing. Asked about Spanish, English, Mayan, or some combination of these, 33% of respondents indicated they would teach their children only Spanish, and 14% said Spanish and English. Less than half of them planned to teach their children Mayan: 6% exclusively, 31% along with Spanish, and 10% all three languages. Although these expectations may have little relation to what really occurs, they are an indication of the lack of importance students give to their mother tongue.

Another indication of generational change was how girls answered the question: what would be unacceptable in a future partner? About half of responses (49%) mentioned mistreatment or abuse, 21% alcoholism, 14% being irresponsible and not working, 8% having problems with her family, and 4% having children with another woman.[12]

One particular conviction situates young people in opposition to previous generations: the idea that parents should not have a say in their children's choice of partner, neither for dating (a new relationship form) nor for marriage. Although this trend has been growing for a while, a significant number of young people now demand it: 92% of boys and 71% of girls insist on making their own relationship choices. Only 6% of boys and 29% of girls think it is correct for parents to interfere in this respect. What's more, some 90% (88% of boys and 93 % of girls) declare that when they marry they will live separately from their parents, subverting the expectations of social hierarchy that dictate that young brides move in with (and serve) their in-laws.

Young people's resistance to the tutelage of their parents breaks with the logic of economic and peasant organization in Yaxcabá, which is based on multiple generations sharing the same plot of land, the same kitchen, and the same work, or else building solidarity through exchange with several related nuclear family units. This allowed one of the grown male children to inherit the leadership of the family unit and take responsibility for the elderly parents. New family forms have led to grandparents moving into nursing homes or raising grandchildren while parents work elsewhere, at least until their grandchildren are old enough to migrate like their parents (Pérez Ruiz 1983, 233–237).

Young men and women value new qualities that they believe set them apart from previous generations: being alert (*despierto/a*), creative, intelligent, better informed, more realistic, and honest; speaking better Spanish; exercising more freedom and independence; pursuing education; and having physical strength, agility, and passion for sports (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 282). Among young women, youth is associated with beauty, elegance, and learning. The association between youth and learning seems to be a recent development; colonial Mayan dictionaries describe young women in terms of their childbearing abilities alone (Álvarez 1997, 7–9). Girls also appear to associate youth with the right to enjoy life, be able to study, have fun, go to parties, and go out with friends. One 16-year-old Catholic girl, who speaks only Spanish but did not wish to identify her surnames, put it this way: 'For me, being young means having wings to fly as high as we can and achieve what we desire. [I am young] because I am opening my wings to fly' (Pérez Ruiz 2015, 269).

Final reflections

We have shown how residents of Yaxcabá use diverse classificatory markers to identify and differentiate themselves according to a complex social organization, and how this framework reproduces inequalities. The identity categories in place may have been first externally imposed (by, for example, colonial policies dividing the population into Indian Republics and Spanish Republics), but over time they have been internalized and reproduced through particular historical dynamics that we have described here.

We have seen how the *yaxcabeño* identity categories of indian versus non-indian are built upon an imprecise cultural difference that has been sustained in the collective imaginary, mixing historical references with individual and collective memory, as well as value judgements, stigmas, and stereotypes. For such identity categories to emerge, this difference itself must be constructed and reproduced through discriminatory social practices, stereotypes, and essentialisms devoid of any empirical evidence. In this way, locals who see themselves as *vecinos* of Spanish origin have used their supposed origin to justify prestige, economic domination, and political power for years, subjugating others who are characterized and named as *macehual* indians through racial and cultural criteria. The use of highly racialized, stereotypical, and essentialist social representations – created in conditions of inequality through social and political power historically wielded by *vecinos* – has led *yaxcabeños* to internalize and legitimize ethnic classifications as 'real.' This denigration is directed toward people of all genders, generations, and economic levels that fall within the umbrella of supposed cultural difference, which is used to construct them as an inferior 'other.'

We have aimed to show that the naturalization of supposed cultural difference, by making the population of supposed indian origin seem inferior, also functions to not only hide but also facilitate the reproduction of other inequalities like social class, which is here reinforced through kinship links between certain family groups. The construction of identity classifications, like the opposition between *vecinos* and *macehual* indians, is a mechanism for justifying and reproducing economic, political and social inequalities. Difference is used in two ways: first, to construct the borders between one identity and another; second, to hide social, economic, and political inequalities within the population. This reveals one of the characteristics, or perversions, of identitarian strategies or politics: constructing and manipulating difference to justify itself.

We have also seen how those who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to be of indian origin, have internalized many of these negative cultural characterizations, for example being called ignorant and lazy. This image fails to take into account those so-called indians who have historically occupied higher economic positions, even developing relationships of exploitation over others, as occurred with the *hidalgo* indians who owned vast areas of land and contracted their own laborers. This has encouraged a racialized and ethnicized conflict that obscures class relations and pushes many young people to abandon 'indian' cultural references and identity markers. Despite this, family groups use their supposed cultural difference as a resource to generate their own life strategies, including defending themselves and opposing the group of *vecinos*.

As regards Maya identity, we have seen how this exogenous identity has been promoted in recent years by external social actors but not widely assumed by the local population. As an identity, it contains diverse elements, according to the actors and

interests activating its promotion. There are great differences between the characterizations of Maya identity offered from historiographical viewpoints, promoted through tourism, or claimed by political parties or activists who see themselves as Maya. In Yaxcabá, we see how Maya identity may be replacing the colonial identity category of *macehual* indian, without provoking any substantial local changes with respect to the subordinate position of those bearing this identity. This situation is different when the leaders of social movements recover the notion of Maya identity as a positive value in order to obtain rights.

On the other hand, through our analysis of gender and generations we have seen how these differences are also social constructions which build on representations and hierarchies from Maya culture. Both forms of inequality simultaneously intersect with ethnicity and class inequality. This generates complex situations of intergenerational and gender conflict, where meanings and normative patterns are questioned; social hierarchies are being subject to social change. We can recall the comment of a 60-year-old Mayan-speaking woman in response to youth rebellion: 'well, you'll see how they calm down when they get married,' in allusion to the guiding forces of family and custom (Testimony, November 2004).

It is possible, based on our survey responses, that gender and generational inequalities are also present among so-called *vecinos*. If this could be demonstrated through further fieldwork, it would mean that these two inequalities are trans-ethnic and trans-class, even if they are not identical in practice.

We have insisted on examining the co-construction of difference and identity in association with various forms of social inequality, how these are built, justified, and reproduced through social imaginaries and practices in a specific context and historical moment. Only in this way can we understand inequality in all its dimensions and forms, how it is interwoven and justified among different social subjects, and finally how it can be eliminated.

Notes

1. Since colonial times in the Yucatán Peninsula, Spanish people who establish themselves in indian villages to carry out commercial or government activities are known as *vecinos*, 'neighbors.' In places like Yaxcabá, this identity form is still maintained today, and is differentiated from *avecindados* (settlers) who come to live there, but were born elsewhere.
2. The Caste War refers to the armed conflict in southeast Mexico between 1847 and 1901. The name derives from the false notion that this was a struggle between indians and non-indians; it was actually a confrontation between different factions of the regional elite, who used the existing social discontent to their favor and mobilized indians using a discourse of caste conflict (Gabbert 2004, 109).
3. *Luneros* were peasants who were allowed to farm on *hacienda* estate land as long as they turned over a certain amount of their maize harvest to the estate owner. The work for the master was usually carried out on Monday (*lunes*), hence *luneros. Jornaleros* were paid day laborers. Both could become indebted to estate owners.
4. *Hidalgo* indians, like *caciques* (chiefs), had a superior economic and social position within the indian villages compared to other indians. Their *hidalguía* (nobility) status was granted by colonial authorities in exchange for their loyalty and cooperation. In Yaxcabá, Domínguez (1979) and Pérez Ruiz (1983) have demonstrated how some family groups still occupy

different economic and status positions depending on whether they descend from common indians, *hidalgo* indians, or Spanish *vecinos*. Cunill (2012) and Machuca Gallegos (2010) present other cases in Yucatán of indian estate owners and ranchers, disproving the stereotype that all indians were poor.

5. The socialist period in Yucatán refers to the revolutionary movement (from approximately 1916 until 1924) led by Salvador Alvarado (from the Partido Socialista Obrero, or Socialist Worker's Party) and Felipe Carrillo Puerto (of the Partido Socialista del Sureste, Socialist Party of the Southeast), to generate important social, economic, and political transformations. Among these were agrarian reforms, which re-distributed large extensions of land among peasants through the creation of *ejidos* (collective land units).
6. Until 1992, the *ejido* represented a social form of land ownership, guaranteeing the *ejido* member possession but not property of the land. After the reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, *ejido* members could divide up *ejido* land into individual private property rights, or maintain their land in common property usage, as is the case in Yaxcabá.
7. Translations in this section are taken from the 1992 *Diccionario Básico Español-Maya-Español*.
8. They can also be called *ch'úupa, lo'obayan*, or *(x)lo'obayan*.
9. A third or even fourth gender is also known, also subordinated to masculine adult power, although there is little empirical evidence. Álvarez (1997, 63–65) mentions the following terms: *pak-alaay*, which means two women committing sin with one behaving as if she was a man; *ch'up-lal uinic* refers to an effeminate, cowardly man. The Mayan-Spanish dictionary (2001) mentions *ch'upal ol* as an effeminate man, *x-ch'upul xib* refers to a hermaphrodite woman and *xbil x-ch'up* is a woman with the character of a man.
10. When the numbers do not add up to 100%, in this and the next questionnaire mentioned, it is because some students replied that they did not know or did not reply.
11. Although the survey data was analyzed by respondents's surnames (Mayan, Spanish or mixed) and their parents's activities, there was no significant variation in the expectations of young people along these lines. This is logical given that *yaxcabeños* who reach baccalaureate study are those who intend to become professionals; peasant workers usually only study primary school, and those who migrate for work do so after secondary school.
12. Students were not asked about the ethnic characteristics of future partners. This question was considered too sensitive for the school context. Based on observation, we estimate that generally students would group themselves according to ethnic and religious affinity.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

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