

Gender, Work, and Social Integration of Yucatec Maya Immigrants in San Francisco, California

Género, trabajo e integración social de inmigrantes mayas yucatecos en San Francisco, California

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the migration of Yucatec Mayas to the United States since the late 1980s, focusing especially on gender differences, in order to analyze different migratory, work, and social integration patterns in the destination country. The author's findings indicate that Yucatec Maya men arrived in California for economic reasons, while the majority of the women went after being married or for family reunification. She also notes that Yucatec Maya immigrants have integrated socially and economically into the United States at the same time that they have negotiated gender-based changes within the family and simultaneously preserved certain values and family unity.

Key words: Yucatán, migration, gender, work, social integration.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la migración de mayas yucatecos a los Estados Unidos desde finales de la década de 1980 poniendo especial atención a las diferencias de género, ello con el fin de analizar patrones distintos de migración, trabajo e integración social en el país destino. Nuestros hallazgos indican que los hombres mayas yucatecos llegaron a California por razones económicas, mientras que la mayoría de las mujeres lo hicieron después del matrimonio o por reunificación familiar. También [se observa que] los inmigrantes mayas yucatecos se han integrado social y económicamente en los Estados Unidos al mismo tiempo que han negociado cambios con base en el género dentro del matrimonio y conservado ciertos valores y la unidad familiares.

Palabras clave: Yucatán, migración, género, trabajo, integración social.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960s, Mexican indigenous women and men such as the Yucatec Mayas have migrated to California to work in the service and domestic sectors because of poverty and a lack of jobs, healthcare, and schooling in their communities of origin. In the late 1990s, their immigration rates to San Francisco increased for old and new reasons: better employment opportunities for men and women, marriage, family reunification, curiosity, and adventure. At present, as economic migrants, Yucatec Mayas have integrated into the U.S. labor market and society in California and have acquired new economic roles and positions in both the global economy and their families. In this study, I examine social and economic integration of Yucatec Maya women and men who have lived and worked in San Francisco since the late 1980s. I pay special attention to gender differences across generations to analyze distinctive patterns of migration and work in the United States. This article is divided into three parts. First, I discuss my approach to social and economic processes of integration and gender change in marriage and family relations in the migratory context. The second part describes when, how, and why Yucatec Mayas came to Northern California. In the third part, I examine gender and work to understand social and economic integration for Yucatec Maya men and women.

This study was based on 12 months of research in San Francisco between September 2010 and September 2012. Over the course of my research, I used ethnographic methods, open-ended interviews, informal conversations, and participant observation. I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with 19 immigrant women and 11 immigrant men and two community leaders.

INTEGRATION AND GENDER

Historically, in the United States, the debate on immigrants' incorporation has been framed in the language of assimilation. More recently, it is referred to as a process of "integration." The emergence of new ways of naming the multiple processes involved in immigrants' incorporation is rooted in the idea of moving away from the negative concept of assimilation to a host society. That is, classical assimilation theory suggested that assimilation was a unidirectional process, in which immigrants and their descendants acquired the culture of the dominant group. Current studies on migration point out that integration among immigrants to the United States is more complex than this (Alba and Nee, 1999; Gans, 1994; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970/1963; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Immigrants and their descendants incorporate into U.S.

society on various levels: social, cultural, economic, and political (Brettell, 2003a; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Grimes, 1998; Levitt, 2001; Mahler, 1995; Pessar, 1995); and gender, age, ethnicity, class, country of origin, and skills play central roles in that integration process. In contrast to classical assimilation, contemporary assimilation theory highlights that immigrants and their descendants integrate into the host society without rejecting their own ethnicity. This new paradigm considers race, gender, and ethnicity as the organizing principles of the social structure of U.S. society as well as the axes for various forms of integration of immigrants and their descendants (Jiménez and Fitzgerald, 2007; Mollenkopf and Champeny, 2009). As a theoretical concept, integration aims to describe multiple relationships among immigrants and the receiving society. It also attempts to explain how local contexts of reception and migratory policies at the local and national levels shape the integration of immigrants and their children (Aparicio, 2007; Brettell, 2003b; Brettell, 2007; Glick Schiller, 2006; Glick Schiller, 2008; Reed-Danahay and Brettell, 2008; Thomson and Crul, 2007).

Scholars looking specifically at gender and migration have pointed out that the processes of social and economic integration are gendered. Piper (2008) indicates that international migration flows have become more diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, and country of origin. Immigrant men and women arrive to the destination country in different numbers for different reasons and enter the U.S. labor market with different skill and education levels, ages, and legal statuses. Although men and women occupy different sectors in the U.S. labor market, they tend to enter at the bottom and experience gender differences in pay. Research on women and migration specifically indicates that female migration has increased worldwide. This has been explained as the result of the restructuring of the global economy and the rise of poverty and social inequality in poor countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In the context of contemporary global capitalism, the growing involvement of international migrant women in paid work has been described in two ways. First, it is the result of an increase in the demands for labor in unskilled and poorly paid jobs in the service and domestic sector in migrant-receiving countries. Second, it is the outcome of a new international division of labor, which in fact is also gendered. Impoverished migrant women arrive in rich countries to do important work for the social reproduction of thousands of native families there. They mainly take paid jobs that are traditionally related to personal care and domestic work; at the same time, other women—sisters, aunts, godmothers, or grandmothers—take care of immigrants' children in their countries of origin or in the destination country. Ehrenreich and Russell Hirsch (2004) have referred to this phenomenon as "global chains of care." In discussing South/North female migrations, Sassen (2003) indicates that some immigrant women integrate into the informal economy, which she refers to as "counter-geographies

of globalization.” Many immigrant women work at home and remain invisible for the host society. They generate important economic resources that very often circulate transnationally. One characteristic of female informal workers is that they are less visible than formal workers. Particularly, they lack a series of civil and labor rights, social protections, and formal employment as migrant workers. Specifically, female informal workers sell or produce goods from their homes: some are garment makers, embroiderers, paper bag makers, cooks, and bakers. Others are home-based workers, who “work on their own account, while others work on a piece-rate basis for a contractor or firm” (ILO, 2002: 8).

It is often assumed that economic incorporation of immigrant women into international migration processes is part of a set of “survival strategies” for households. As many feminist scholars have demonstrated, migration is a gendered process. In the United States, many immigrant women integrate into the labor market because their work is crucial for supporting and caring for their families. Economic integration goes hand-in-hand with social integration. As Malkin (2007) indicates, immigrant women have had to learn a variety of practices to incorporate themselves and their children into the host society. For example, they learn how to deal with “the bureaucratic mazes of schools, hospitals, and Medicaid applications” (Malkin, 2007: 417). They also gain knowledge of how to manage the new family economy, pay bills, go shopping in urban or suburban malls or supermarkets, and navigate the public transportation system.

For both female and male immigrants, social and economic integration also entails processes of gender change at the individual, marriage, and family levels. Some scholars suggest that as a result of migration, immigrant women and men change their understandings of their gender identity, roles, and expectations in their family, marriage, and work (Hirsch, 2007; Menjivar, 2003; Stephen, 2007). In this respect, some researchers have found that as women begin to work, they become socially and economically independent from men. Some start their own businesses, send money back home, and raise their children with the help of their husbands or by themselves if they divorce, their marriage falls apart, or their husbands die (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2012). For other immigrant women, however, it is expected that as soon they reunite with their migrant husbands in the United States, they will stay at home while the men work. In this sense, Menjivar (2003) warns us that what immigrant women may consider a gain or a loss from their migration experience and socioeconomic integration to host society is highly subjective: “Situations that an observer might deem oppressive may actually represent forms of liberation for women involved and vice versa” (Menjivar, 2003: 103). It is a fact that many women think that they are doing better economically and socially speaking, compared with their lives in their country of origin.

For immigrant women, “immigration brings about changes in gender relations that have complex and uneven effects; it presents women with opportunities and, at the same time, imposes constraints” (Morokvasic, 1984; Tienda and Booth, 1991, cited in Menjivar, 2003: 103). In this study, I intend to show that some Yucatec Maya immigrant women carry out important work at home and engage in marital relations that may seem oppressive and framed within a system of unequal gender relationships, but are indispensable for the social reproduction of their own families in the United States. In what follows, I describe from a historical and ethnographic perspective when, how, and why Yucatec Maya women and men integrated into the international migration and began to settle in California.¹

YUCATEC MAYA MIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA

Previous studies have shown that Yucatec Maya migration into the United States began during the Bracero Program (1942-1964), but was not that significant in terms of the number of farm laborers participating in this temporary work program (Cornejo Portugal and Fortuny-Loret de Mola, 2011; Lewin Fischer, 2007; Solís Lizama and Fortuny-Loret de Mola, 2010; Whiteside, 2006), as has been documented by other studies of indigenous Mexican migration to the United States (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013; Fox and Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Leco Tomás, 2009; Stephen, 2007; Velasco, 2005). However, Fortuny-Loret de Mola (2009) and Quintal Avilés et al. (2012) point out that Yucatec Maya men from the village community of Oxkutzcab were registered as “aspiring braceros” years before and a year after the Bracero Program ended (Quintal Avilés, 2012: 212).² Three Maya families I came to know in San Francisco mentioned that male relatives such as grandfathers, fathers, and uncles went to work in Northern and Southern California between the 1950 and 1960. Mario, originally from Oxkutzcab and today a U.S. citizen, migrated to San Francisco in 1979. When he was 18, his late uncle Simón helped him to migrate to the United States. As he recalled,

¹ Throughout this work, I use pseudonyms to protect the identities of Yucatec Maya participants.

² Fortuny-Loret de Mola found copies of lists of men “who aspired to become braceros” (2009: 240) in the Yucatán State General Archives. The document “no. 247” contains the seal of the municipal government of Oxkutzcab and the signature of the municipal president of the time. This document indicates that 17 men from Oxkutzcab were enlisted. Quintal Avilés et al. document the application processes of the Yucatec “aspiring braceros” between 1955 and 1965. They describe how the Mexican federal government, the state government of Yucatan, and the municipalities became involved in this process, providing specific information about the departure points within Mexico before the Yucatecos went to work to the United States. The braceros, who were already working in Northern Mexico, left from Sonora for California or from Chihuahua and Monterrey for Texas (2012: 386).

I had an uncle who came to California to work as a bracero. First, he arrived in Salinas and then moved to San Francisco. Twenty years ago, he passed away. In fact, he died here [in California]. He helped me come to San Francisco. In 1979, I was working as a construction worker in my town. At that time, I used to work here and there. I had a job in tailoring, in a hat shop, and in the field. It wasn't enough money. My family was very poor and I need to help my parents. When I decided to come, I was 18 years old. I was single. I remember that one day my late uncle went back to the village from California. He said to me, "If you stay here, you're not going to make it. You can invest lots of money selling lemons and oranges, but you won't see profits. There's a lot of competition. Don't waste your time." *Si estás seguro, si estás animado, si eso es tú decisión, yo te ayudo* [If you're sure, if you're up to it, if that's what you decide, I'll help you], he said to me, "Come to California, I'll help you." Then, I decided to emigrate. My late uncle sent me money. I told my mom that I had decided to migrate to California. I didn't tell my dad. I knew he was going to be mad at me. One day, he just realized that I was gone.

At the end of Bracero Program, a very small number of Yucatec Maya migrants from Oxkutzcab began to settle in Northern California. Fortuny-Loret de Mola points out that "Don Tomás Bermejo, perhaps the pioneer migrant from Oxkutzcab . . . traveled to San Francisco in the mid-1960s, attended the Presbyterian church in the Mission District, and in 1965 opened a restaurant (named Tomy's, on Geary Ave.) that served Yucatecan dishes" (2009: 229).³ Also, Maya women began to join this international migratory flow through family networks. In 1968, Luisa arrived in San Mateo, California to visit her youngest maternal aunt. She has lived there ever since. As she recalls,

The first migrant in the family was one of my uncles. In the 1950s, he went to California to work as a bracero. Later, my cousins and my aunt joined him. Toward the end of the 1960s, my uncle worked with an [U.S.] American family in San Mateo. At that time, he was living here [San Francisco], and after that he brought his youngest sister with my cousins. In 1968, I met my aunt and my cousins in the village of Acanceh. My cousins, who went back and forth to work between Mexico and the United States, returned that year to Yucatán to get married. My sister and I were invited to participate as bridesmaids. At the wedding, my aunt told me that my cousins were taking their wives with them to the United States. So, I asked my aunt if I could go with them to California. I was curious and wanted to see California. My aunt said, "Of course, let's go." So, I went to San Mateo. In those days, it was easy to get a visa. I got mine.

³ This information coincides with that reported by my informant Luisa and other immigrants from Oxkutzcab.

Rural-to-rural migration and rural-to-urban migration in the Yucatán Peninsula are common features of Yucatec Maya internal migration. Since the 1950s, this has had two motivations: economic migration to the cities, where employment opportunities existed, and migration for education. The growth of tourism and the hotel industry, the creation of free-trade zones, and the expansion of the highway system in the state of Quintana Roo have offered hundreds of jobs in construction and the service sector (Castellanos, 2010: xxxiii). In the first half of the twentieth century, to provide middle and high school education in the Yucatán Peninsula, the federal and state governments opened dozens of middle and high schools for Maya children, open to children living in isolated rural areas. During the twentieth century, across Mexico, the ideology behind this national policy was to “integrate” and assimilate the Yucatec Mayas into the nation-state.⁴

In the mid-1960s, Yucatec Mayas from Oxkutzcab were on the move within the Yucatán Peninsula. The cities of Chetumal and Merida offered job and schooling opportunities for entire families before some of them later migrated to the United States. Luisa says that when she was nine years old, when she finished elementary school, her mother, who was left with four children, decided to take them to Chetumal, Quintana Roo. Because Oxkutzcab did not have a middle school and Luisa’s mother had to figure out how to best raise her children, Luisa left her town with her family. While Luisa and her youngest sister studied middle school in Chetumal, her oldest brother enlisted in the Mexican army. In about 1965, Luisa migrated again to the city of Merida to study high school, the only place in the state of Yucatán where high school was available at that time.

Internal migration often leads to international migration. Like Luisa, in the early 1970s, Roberto went to Merida and Chetumal to work in construction. In 1974, he migrated for the first time to the United States to work in the agricultural fields of Nevada, and thereafter to the Valley of San Joaquin and Oregon. Roberto left Oxkutzcab because his oldest daughter was very sick and he did not have enough money to pay for her medication. He also recalled that the money he earned in Chetumal was so little that he could not provide his family with the basics: food, housing, health care, and education. Between 1974 and 1979, he worked as a tractor driver in the alfalfa, oat, rice, bean, cantaloupe, watermelon, and tomato fields in Nevada and California. In the 1980s, he went to Oregon to work in the potato packing industry and as a bus driver in agriculture. In 1989, he migrated to San Francisco because his contracts were temporary and the wages were very low. A migrant friend from his village invited him to San Francisco.

⁴ For a broader discussion on Mexican educational policies in the first half of the twentieth century, see Castellanos (2010).

According to Roberto, between 1974 and 1989, he visited his wife and two daughters twice a year in Oxkutzcab. During his stay in the United States, he maintained communication with his spouse Juana by letter and telegram. Roberto points out that for five years, he could not travel to Oxkutzcab nor send money to his family because he broke both legs at work. When Roberto and Juana were married, they went to live with Roberto's family in Oxkutzcab. When he left for the United States, Juana and her two daughters stayed with her mother-in-law. Oxkutzcab is known for its citrus and vegetable production. When Roberto could not provide the basics to his family because of his work accident, Juana and her two little girls began to work as a fruit and vegetable merchants in her village. According to Juana, she and her two daughters used to help her mother-in-law harvest oranges, lemon, papaya, avocado, and mamey, and then sell part of them.

Together with the economic crisis in the Mexican countryside in the 1980s, the downward price trend in the *chicle* (gum) and lumber industries and henequen production set the basis for internal migration within the Yucatán Peninsula (Labrecque, 2005, cited in Oehmichen Bazán, 2013: 48). Throughout this decade, Yucatec Mayas migrated in significant numbers to Mérida and Mexico City. With the development of the tourism sector and the opening of free trade zones, Yucatec Mayas continued to go to tourist destinations such as Cancun and Chetumal in Quintana Roo to work (Be Ramírez, 2015; Castellanos, 2010; Iglesias Lesaga, 2011; Lewin Fischer, 2007; Oehmichen Bazán, 2013). Throughout the 1980s, international Yucatec Maya migration to the United States was very low. This was mainly because Quintana Roo offered job opportunities locally. It is important to mention here that Yucatec Mayas' migratory experience within the Yucatán Peninsula served as the basis for their migrating internationally. As Lewin Fischer writes, "Yucatecans' internal migration to Cancún's tourism sector prepared these workers for international migration, which increased notably in the 1990s" (2007: 17).

Based on the experiences of the Yucatec Maya men and women I interviewed, I found that migrants who went in the 1990s to the United States had migrated first to work to Chetumal and Cancun in search of a better economic situation. For instance, in the early 1980s, Francisco, who is from a poor peasant family in Oxkutzcab, went to work to Chetumal as a single man. When he was married in his village and had his first daughter, he and his wife Angelica went to work to Cancun, then to Isla Mujeres, and then to Cozumel and back to Chetumal. As Francisco and Angelica had two more children, they returned to Oxkutzcab. But, because Francisco's income was not enough to support his family, he migrated to San Francisco in 1983 at the invitation of one of his migrant friends. It is important to point out that Fortuny-Loret de Mola (2009) described the history of migration of Angelica's family. According

to this scholar, Francisco's and Angelica's families are part of old international migrant families in Oxtutzcab (Fortuny-Loret de Mola, 2009: 227). For instance, Angelica's siblings began to migrate to the United States in the 1970s and Francisco's family in the Bracero era (1942-1964). Based on my interview with Angelica, in 1989, she and her four children arrived to San Francisco to her in-laws' home. Norma, the oldest child in the family, remembered that when she arrived to her grandparents' house, she was 11 years old. In her words,

I was eleven years old when we came here [San Francisco]. When we arrived, my brothers and sisters and I were so happy to see our relatives. We hadn't seen them for a while. We met our grandparents, cousins, uncles, and aunts. Lots of people from Oxtutzcab came to visit and welcome us. Among them were our grandparents' friends. Our relatives took us to visit San Francisco. We went to the Golden Gate and Golden Gate Park. We were so happy to be here and see our family.

In the early 1990s, a new generation of Yucatec men and women began migrating to San Francisco. They continued to be impoverished men and women from age of two to their late thirties. Most were young married men and women with foreign-born children, couples with children left in Yucatán, and a few single men and women. One reason for this new international migration was the deterioration of economic and social conditions in Mexico, the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and changes in U.S. labor market opportunities. Another –and perhaps the most important– reason was family reunification.⁵ Nine of the eighteen women I interviewed in San Francisco had reunited with their families in the 1990s. Five of them migrated with their children to join their husbands in San Francisco. Among these women was a young girl who had arrived with her mother in 1999 at the age of two. Another reunited with her sons and grandchildren in San Francisco after her spouse had passed away in Yucatán. Another arrived to San Francisco with the help of her oldest son, and yet another with the support of her eldest brother.

Like the Hondagneou-Sotelo family stage migration model (1994) in which husbands migrate before their wives and children, for most Yucatec Mayas I interviewed, the move of married men from Mexico to the United States depended on social networks that included friendship as well as kinship relationships (Cohen, 2004; Dreby, 2010; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Hirsch, 2003; Massey et al., 1987).

⁵ In this study I refer to the concept of "family reunification" as a social process in which documented and undocumented family members reunite in the United States. The term "family reunification" is also part of the "family reunification program of the U.S. government." In this study I did not find families that had reunited through this program.

In 1995, Rafael was disappointed with his economic situation in Oxkutzcab. He was tired of working very hard all over the Yucatán Peninsula as a construction worker, agricultural laborer, and supermarket bag carrier. After he married and had his first child, he decided to migrate alone to San Francisco. In 1998, he returned to Oxkutzcab and convinced his wife Margarita to migrate with him. As he says,

When I got married, my migrant friends invited me to go to San Francisco. I was surprised that some of them were building their houses in my town. They said, "Come with us, we're going to help you." Then, I told my wife Margarita that I wanted to go to California. She said that we could also ask for help from one of her uncles who was already working in San Francisco. My friend helped me pay for the *coyote*. . . . I left for San Francisco in 1995. I didn't see Margarita and my little daughter Romina for a year and a half. Then, I went back to Oxkutzcab and convinced Margarita to come with me to San Francisco. All my childhood, I had been very poor. I did not want that for my child. Since the age of 14, I had to look for a job outside my *pueblo* to help my family. I went to work to Cancun, Chetumal, and lots of places in the peninsula. When I began working in San Francisco, I was very happy with my wages. I was convinced that there was no future in Oxkutzcab for my family. Even today in my *pueblo*, you eat what you earn. When I realized that my friends and relatives in San Francisco were doing better, I took the risk of bringing my family to the United States. I don't regret this and I don't have plans to go back to my *pueblo*.

During the 1990s, the pattern of wives following their husbands underwent two significant transformations. First, complete extended families began to reunite in San Francisco. Second, young single and divorced women came to San Francisco with the support of their children or older brothers. For instance, in the early 1990s, Felipe and Patricia were married in Oxkutzcab and both went to live with Felipe's family. In 1997, Felipe migrated to San Francisco with the help of his father-in-law, Roberto, and Patricia decided to go back to her parents' home. In 1998, Juana (Patricia's mother) and her youngest daughter Eloisa joined Roberto and Felipe in San Francisco. Patricia decided to go back to her mother-in-law's because she did not want to be alone with her little son. In 1999, Felipe returned to Oxkutzcab and told Patricia that he was planning to go back to California. One of the emerging migratory patterns of this decade is that young married women with children asked their husbands to take them to the United States. As Patricia said,

When Felipe left, I returned to my mother's. I stayed there until my mom and my sister left for San Francisco. But, because I felt so lonely at my parents', I returned to my mother-in-law's. When Felipe came back to Oxkutzcab, I told him that I didn't want to be by myself

and raise my kid without a father. I didn't want to repeat this story. My father was always absent. I remember that he was always working in California. I said to Felipe, "If you want to go to California again, you have to take us." I talked to him about my loneliness and my concern about having a child grow up without a father. We talked to my father about our plans. He was very happy that we could all be reunited in the United States. He lent us some money to pay for the *coyote* to cross the border.

Parents, wives and children, and grandchildren reuniting with family members who were U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or in some cases undocumented migrants began to settle permanently in San Francisco. In 1997, Roberto became a U.S. citizen and applied for visas for his wife Juana and her youngest daughter Eloisa, who was a minor at the time. Today, Juana and Eloisa are U.S. residents, the son-in-law Felipe passed away, and Patricia and their son are undocumented.

In the last 15 years, the pattern of mothers following or reuniting with their children in San Francisco and leaving other children in Yucatán has become a characteristic of the Yucatec migration flow. In 1994, Ines migrated alone from Oxkutzcab to San Francisco after her husband died. Her oldest son, a U.S. citizen, asked her to join him and his other three undocumented brothers in California. In 2005, she became a U.S. resident. Today, Ines sends US\$100 a month to help her daughter and granddaughter, who still live in Oxkutzcab. According to Ines, having her family in her *pueblo* is the most important reason she returns at least once a year. When I asked her if she feels happy to be with her children and grandchildren in San Francisco, she replied,

I would like to have my whole family together. Half of my heart is in Oxkutzcab and the other half in San Francisco. Before I left Oxkutzcab, I used to take care of my granddaughter while my daughter was working. After my husband passed away, I felt very sad. One of my sons insisted on having me in the United States. He used to ask, "What are you doing there? My father is gone and we're here." Once I got the U.S. visa, I flew to San Francisco. It was very difficult for me to leave my little girl and my daughter, but at the same time, I was very happy to be reunited with my four sons. Today, I cook for all of them and keep an eye on my grandchildren while my son and daughters-in-law work. I like taking care of my grandchildren.

Single and separated women who migrated in the 1990s and the early 2000s set out to migrate to San Francisco by persuading their older immigrant siblings and older sons. Three women I talked to said it was difficult to get support from their male relatives. Fathers, brothers, and sons in both Oxkutzcab and San Francisco opposed their female relatives' desire to migrate. Male relatives discouraged women to

migrate because crossing the U.S.-Mexican border was very dangerous for women. Immigrant men told their female relatives that finding jobs in San Francisco was very hard. In their attempt to deter women, men also said that women had to pay rent and live in crowded apartments with lots of men. Despite all these objections, single and separated women have migrated. Certainly, the main reasons women migrate internationally were economic. But perhaps most importantly, their desire to get ahead and build a future for themselves and their families was at the core of their decision.

For instance, in 1999, Rocío was 21 years old and went to San Francisco with the help of her older migrant brother. Her father opposed Rocío's wishes because of the dangers she could face at the border. Despite this, Rocío went to *El Norte* arguing that she was old enough to take care of herself. She was convinced that she could earn good money in San Francisco and come back to Oxtutzcab to open a convenience store. The fact is that she had a terrible experience while crossing the U.S. Mexican border, just as her parents had told her. Today, she is working in San Francisco and her life has taken new paths. She does not plan to return to Oxtutzcab because she does not see a better future for her new family. I discuss later in the article how she has become a very successful entrepreneur.

Like single women, separated women have experienced less support from their male migrant relatives in the United States. In 1996, at the age of 38, Verónica came to San Francisco under the aegis of her older son and one of her brothers. At the beginning, both opposed Verónica's wish to migrate, but in the end they financed Verónica's trip, paid the *coyote*, and found her a job at her brother's workplace. Her sister Ines, who had arrived two years earlier, provided her with housing and food. When I asked Verónica how and why she had come to San Francisco, she replied,

My husband left me with four children. When that happened, I left my in-laws' and went back to my parents' house. I began to work very hard to support my four children. On weekdays, I worked in Merida in domestic service. When I had some savings, I bought a truck. I began selling fruit between Merida and Oxtutzcab. In 1995, I got sick and had to have surgery. I had to pay private hospitalization. That was very expensive. The fruit business was good. But after I recovered, I didn't have money and couldn't continue to work. My job was very physical. The doctor told me that I was expected not to do heavy work. In the fruit business, I had to drive the truck and carry boxes of fruit. That's why I decided to come to California. What else could I do in Yucatán? My only son, my sister, and my brother were here [San Francisco]. I thought that I was going to be much better off if I worked in the United States. You know, even if you work hard in Mexico, you don't get what you deserve.

One day, I made up my mind. I told my daughters that I was going to California. I didn't tell my migrant son and my brother because they were against it. When I got to Tijuana, I just called them. They were very surprised to hear from me. I asked them to lend me some money to pay for the *coyote*. I didn't have enough savings to cross. At that time, it was very expensive to cross the border. It cost US\$1 300. Anyhow, when I arrived to San Francisco, my son and my brother were very mad at me. They told me that crossing the border was too dangerous. They were very concerned about my safety because they didn't know the *coyote*. But thanks be to God, they help me get here. When I arrived, I went to live with my sister Ines because my brother and son lived in a crowded apartment with lots of *paisanos*.

Throughout the 1990s, Yucatec Maya migration to the United States increased significantly. With the development of migrant networks, they arrived in various regions. Those from the village of Oxkutzcab migrate to San Francisco and Portland (Fortuny-Loret de Mola, 2009); those from Peto go mainly to San Rafael (Barenboim, 2013); those from Kaal, to Dallas, Texas, and the San Bernardino Valley, California (Adler, 2004); and those from Kiní, Ucí, Hoctún, Chumayel, Dzoncauich, and Tecantó, to Los Angeles (Chávez Arellano, 2014; Solís Lizama, 2014; Solís Lizama and Fortuny-Loret de Mola, 2010). During the 2000s, Yucatec Maya migration continued to increase. Yucatec Maya men and women migrated from different regions of the Yucatán Peninsula to new destinations in the United States. Currently, Yucatec Mayas work and live in San Francisco, San Bernardino, Thousand Oaks, Santa Rosa, Los Angeles, and San Rafael in California; Las Vegas, Nevada; Baltimore, Maryland; Dallas, Texas; Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; and Washington state.

An important pattern to mention when describing Yucatec Maya female migration between 2000 and 2012 is that young women came to San Francisco when they married a Yucatec Maya migrant man. Among the women I interviewed, I found that four out of six were determined to migrate with their husbands to the United States. As children, they had seen and experienced how men and fathers left their children and wives. For instance, Guadalupe points out that her father migrated to the United States in the 1980s when she was six years old. At the beginning, he would return once in a while. Every time he came back, her mother got pregnant. In the end, her mother was left with seven children and she had to figure out how to get by. When her father left for the United States to work, he sent money to her mother. However, as time passed, he stopped sending remittances and Guadalupe's mother found out that her husband had remarried in California. As the other three women I talked to said, "it has been common" that in their families and the community at large, married women with children are left behind. Lewin Fischer (2012) has documented that many Yucatec Maya women are left behind with their children. But he has also noted

that many women who migrated to work at some point within the Yucatán Peninsula or have migrant husbands working in the peninsula or in the United States prefer to stay at home instead of accompanying their migrant husbands. The reason is that women do not want to be away from their children, as newly married migrant women told me. Without a doubt, just as it is hard to have a husband away, it is difficult to leave your children behind. Based on their own experience, Guadalupe, Alicia, and Sandra were determined to migrate with their migrant husbands because they wanted to be with them and raise their children together.

This new pattern of migration is embedded in the transformations of gender relations between young men and women. For various generations, Yucatec Maya men have migrated nationally and internationally to provide financial support for their families. In contrast, some women have stayed at home to comply with familial roles: taking care of children and the domestic sphere. As mentioned by the migrant women who participated in this study and by scholars such as Lewin Fischer (2012), married men used to decide the destiny of their families, especially that of wives. Wives were supposed to stay at home, that is, in their villages. Sometimes, women lived with their fathers-in-law while their husbands went to the United States to work. As young women pointed out, even today, some men do not allow their wives to migrate. Nonetheless, for some younger women, these experiences have been essential for breaking this pattern. As Guadalupe explains,

When I decided to get married I had a very clear idea of what I wanted: to marry Jose and have children. However, I didn't want to experience what so many women have experienced in my family and my village. Their husbands went to *El Norte* and left them behind. Women had to educate their children alone. Fathers were always absent. I didn't have that mentality. In those days, I told my fiancé, "If you want to marry me, you have to take me with you." I also told him, "I'm not going to stay here by myself; no way." For me, it was very hard not only to see how my mother struggled to feed us and send us to school, but also to be raised without a father. I can tell you that my brother-in-law came to San Francisco to work and left his wife and children in Oxnokutzcab. That's not fair.

Lewin Fischer (2012) has made important contributions to our understanding of the negative impacts of international migration in marital and family relations in the Yucatán Peninsula. Women and children who have been abandoned by their husbands or fathers, respectively, experience depression, anxiety, sadness, and loneliness. Married women left alone have had to deal with their children's financial, schooling, and health needs as well as their frustration and demands about the absent father. These findings resonate with what Yucatec Maya migrant women told me about their

decision to migrate. They think wives and husbands should be together. As parents, they also must do everything they possibly can to raise their children together.

Women who have decided to migrate with their husbands or reunite with their relatives in California have had to learn at least two things. First, they have had to negotiate marital gender roles as they relate to family relationships. Secondly, as mothers and fathers, they have had to learn how to integrate economically and socially into U.S. society to support their families. In what follows, I compare the demographic characteristics of Maya immigrant men and women to discuss gender differences in the social and economic processes of integration and the ways that these processes have shaped family and marriage relationships.

GENDER, WORK, AND SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Since the late 1980s, thousands of women around the world have joined international migration flows. Castles and De Haas (1998) have described this global phenomenon as the feminization of international migration. At present, we can distinguish two global migratory patterns worldwide. First, women from Third World countries have been emigrating to First World countries. Second, female migrations worldwide have been from South to North. For the sociologists Hondagneou-Sotelo (2003) and Sassen (2003), since the late 1980s, the labor market for women has restructured globally, with significant consequences in their lives. Women who live in rich First World countries employ immigrant women from poor countries. Generally speaking, the latter have low levels of schooling. In the receiving countries, they are seen as women of color and have few opportunities for social and economic mobility. The relationship between these native and migrant women is deeply rooted in the functioning of the global economy, the restructuring of global labor markets, and global consumption patterns. As Ehrenreich and Russell (2004) demonstrate, the global division of labor shows that migrant women from the Third World do care, service, and domestic work for rich women of First World countries.

In global cities such as San Francisco, immigrant men and women have precarious jobs. They constitute a set of cheap, exploited, invisible workers. Specifically, upper-middle-class men and women employ lower-class immigrant men and women to satisfy their labor, familial, consumption, and leisure needs. These unskilled migrant workers occupy the lowest strata of the U.S. labor system, receive the lowest wages, and cannot rise to higher positions to improve their working conditions and wages (Levine, 2002). The kind of work done by Yucatec women and men in San Francisco coincides with the behavior of the global labor market. As unskilled workers, Yucatec

Maya men and women do jobs “involved in the operation and implementation of the global economic system” (Sassen, 2003: 118). For instance, the majority of the Yucatec Maya men I interviewed work as restaurant employees as dishwashers, prep cook, lead cook, and kitchen manager (Barenboim, 2013; Muse-Orlinof, 2014). A few are employed as janitors, construction workers, carpet cleaning maintenance technicians, bakers, public bus drivers, or chauffeurs for private clients. One of the 11 men I talked to mentioned that he complemented his wages working on the weekends as a musician within the Yucatec Maya community. Another said that he and his wife own a restaurant that serves Yucatec food. Those who are restaurant employees work in fast food companies as well as hotel, international, and ethnic restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Table 1
MEN’S JOBS

Men’s Jobs in Yucatán		Men’s Jobs in San Francisco	
No Wages	Paid Work	Informal Sector	Formal Sector/Paid Work
Family farming (subsistence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction work - Ice cream vendor - Tailoring assistant - Hat maker - Pedicab driver - Civil engineer 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restaurant employee - Janitor - Construction worker - Carpet cleaning maintenance technicians - Baker - Bus driver for public transportation or chauffer - Musician - Restaurant owner

An important fact to mention and compare here is the type of work these men did in Yucatán, that is, before they migrated to California. Ten of the eleven men worked in peasant subsistence farming. As teenagers or young marrieds, they helped their families produce corn, mammee, avocado, and citrus crops for domestic use as well as for small-scale sale in the supermarket. One of the 11 men I talked to had a college degree. As he indicated, when he was a child, his family migrated to the city of Mérida for economic reasons. He grew up there and became a civil engineer. For several years, he worked building freeways for the Yucatán government until he was fired. In Oxtutzcab, these men had other kinds of jobs while they worked in the countryside. One of them worked as a tailor’s assistant and another as a traditional hat maker. Two others worked as a pedicab driver and an ice cream vendor. Those who were economic migrants within the Yucatán Peninsula worked as construction workers in the hotel industry (see Table 1).

As for immigrant Yucatec Maya women, I documented that 4 of 18 interviewees work outside the home and 14 at home. Those working outside the home have taken jobs in the service and domestic sector, in non-profit organizations serving the Latino and Maya communities in the Bay Area, and one as a restaurant owner. The 14 women who work at home sell goods such as Tupperware, jewelry, clothing, perfume, and beauty supplies. One is a masseuse. Among these 14 women, 4 prepare Yucatec food at home, selling it daily to Yucatec men. In San Francisco, it is very common to find an entire restaurant kitchen crew of Yucatec men receiving “Yucatec food” at their workplace. During my fieldwork, I saw dozens of men eating in these women’s dining rooms. I was told that on special occasions, particularly on weekends, these women sell Yucatec food for family and community events within the Yucatec Maya community. They prepare Yucatec food such as *panuchos*, *cochinita pibil*, *poc chuc*, *pollo pibil*, *salbutes*, and *recaudo negro*, among other dishes.

One may wonder why most of the Yucatec Maya women of this study work at home in contrast to what we know about other female immigrant workers in global cities. My findings indicate two things. First, according to Yucatec Maya women, the husbands do not want their wives to work. One woman told me in an interview that she wanted to work when she arrived to San Francisco to contribute to the family finances and have some economic independence. However, when she talked this over with her husband, he said, “Isn’t what I earn enough? I don’t think you need to work. Do you need something?” For this kind of Yucatec man, married women should remain at home and do women’s work: childrearing, preparing meals for the family, and housework.

Second, some young migrant couples with children have decided and negotiated what women should do. That is, women should stay at home to take care of their children. This approach may sound very similar to the former: those women stay at home because men want that. Nonetheless, the rationale behind this idea is that mothers should be in charge of the social reproduction and care of their family. To be precise, for these young couples, it is very important that mothers take care of their children. For instance, mothers mentioned that they like to take their children to school, to take care of them if they get sick, to cook for them, and to take them for walks or just play. Perhaps most importantly, for these fathers and mothers, children must not be alone. Six couples with children stated very clearly that mothers should take care of their children. The neighborhoods where Yucatec Maya immigrants live in San Francisco are dangerous and violent. As they said to me, Yucatec men, women, and children have been victims of crime, generally experiencing insecurity, robberies, vandalism, racial discrimination, anti-immigrant sentiments, and witnessing drug trafficking in public places. This is why some fathers and mothers have decided that

mothers should take care of their children personally. Fathers do not mind that they have to work double or triple shifts to cover their family living expenses.

As mentioned above, complete extended families have reunited in San Francisco. Six of eighteen female interviewees are grandmothers. Five live with their children, and one resides with her cousin. When their children have to work, grandmothers care for their grandchildren. This includes taking them to school, preparing their meals, and watching them until their parents pick them up after work. I think that, despite the economic struggles and disadvantages these immigrant families have in San Francisco, they have brought to the fore the value of family and negotiated gender relations between men and women. All female immigrants who work at home do important care work for their families, and men value that. Also, women feel satisfied because through informal work they make some money for themselves and for their families as well. As one of them said, "It's good to have your own money. You can buy things you like and somehow help your husband. In addition, it's good not to depend solely on your husband's wage." A grandmother told me, "I like to sell food at home because I can make my own money. I don't have to ask my sons for it. I'd rather have my money to buy my things. For example, I like to go dancing with my girlfriends and play in the casinos."

As mentioned above, Yucatec Maya men and women from Oxnard have worked in the restaurant industry. Because of the job experience Yucatecans have gained in this sector, a few have opened Yucatec restaurants in the Bay Area. In 1965, one pioneer migrant man from Oxnard opened a restaurant named Tom's. Don Tomás Bermejo's descendants still run it today, and it continues to serve Yucatec food. In 2007, a couple I interviewed opened a Yucatec restaurant in the Mission District. Today, they employ Yucatec migrant men and women in the kitchen and service areas. The owners say opening a restaurant has been a huge challenge. Although both have experience in the restaurant industry, they have had to learn how to manage their own business and staff. Nowadays, the restaurant is oriented toward the U.S. American market as well as Yucatec migrants. It is part of an emerging "ethnic niche." In 2012, I ate in five Yucatec restaurants in the Mission District, all of which are run by Yucatec migrants.

An important factor to highlight here is the type of jobs Maya immigrant women did in Yucatán. As shown in Table 2 women have done various kinds of remunerated traditional work. At home, they worked as seamstresses and embroiderers. They were specialists in making traditional Maya dresses called *huipiles* as well as hammocks and traditional palm-leaf hats. In addition to housework at home, women did agricultural work. To increase family income, they also sold backyard chickens, turkeys, and pigs.

Table 2
 WOMEN'S JOBS

Women's Jobs in Yucatán		Women's Jobs in San Francisco	
At Home	Outside the Home	Informal Sector, at Home	Formal Sector, Outside the Home
- Family farming (subsistence)	- Working in a tortilla mill	- Sales:	- Administrative assistant
- Selling and raising backyard chickens, turkeys, and pigs	- Domestic work	a) Tupperware,	- Babysitting
- Sewing	- Selling traditional clothing	b) jewelry	- Elder care
- Embroidery	- Administrator	c) clothing	- House cleaning
- Hammock making	- Bank teller	d) perfume	- Cleaning services in department stores
- Dying cloth	- Elementary school teacher	e) beauty supplies	- Classroom teaching assistant
- Making traditional hats		- Preparation and sale of ethnic food from home	- Book sales
- Housework at home		- Spa masseuse	- Restaurant employee
			- Restaurant owner

In the experience of Yucatec Maya women, the discussion on gender, work, and socioeconomic integration has taken place in a specific historical context. Between the 1990s and 2000s, Yucatec Maya migration into the United States increased significantly. This coincided with the feminization of migration movements around the world as well as with the feminization of Mexican migration (Galeana de Valadés, 2008). As stated above, ten out of eighteen women in this study arrived in the 1990s and four in the 2000s. Two arrived at the end of the 1980s and one in 1968. At present, 17 women are mothers; 2 are U.S. citizens, 3 are U.S. residents; and 14 remain undocumented. Among the latter, one is an undocumented 1.5-generation teenaged girl who arrived with her parents in 1999. See Table 3 to correlate migratory status among immigrant men and women at the time of my fieldwork.

Table 3
 MIGRATORY STATUS (2012)

Sex	Undocumented	U.S. Resident	U.S. Citizen
Female	14	3	2
Male	6	2	3

Yucatec Maya men have migrated to the United States for a number of reasons: economic, social, and cultural. The 11 men I interviewed migrated in first of all for economic reasons. All of them came to work to the United States because of poverty

and the lack of paid employment in their community of origin and well-paying jobs in the Yucatán Peninsula. Two of them arrived in the 1970s, three in the 1980s, three in the 1990s, and four in the 2000s. The most recent migrants are teenagers, who stated that they also came to California out of curiosity and for adventure. At present, 10 of these men are the main providers for their families in San Francisco. And just one is a secondary provider, who sends monetary remittances to his family in Yucatán. By contrast, 15 of the 18 women of this study came to the United States via family reunification and three for work.⁶ At present, most of these women take care of their children and depend on their husbands' wages, although they generate some income from informal work. By the time of my field research in San Francisco, 14 women were married; 2 were widows; and 2 were separated from their husbands. Widows and separated women work outside the home. One of the widows is a woman in her early thirties. Before her migrant husband passed away in San Francisco, she was a housewife and took care of her only child. At present, she has three jobs in the service sector.

Following the work of Papail and Robles Sotelo (2004), I think that the development of migrant and family networks, the existence of second-generation Yucatecans, the number of years that immigrants and their foreign-born children have lived in the United States, and changes in migratory status provide a good context for assessing the extent to which immigrants and their children have integrated socially and economically into the United States. As described above, all Yucatec Maya immigrants arrived to San Francisco through family networks, and particularly, most women migrated via family reunification. Twenty-five immigrants have children, some born in Mexico, others in the United States, and some with children born both in one and the other. The immigration status of the Yucatec Maya immigrants of this study is important to mention. It varies and is related to the immigrants' time of arrival in the United States and changes in U.S. immigration law. Five of the thirty immigrants are U.S. citizens; five are U.S. residents; and twenty are undocumented. Two of the five U.S. citizens became residents under the 1986 amnesty program (IRCA), and then became U.S. citizens. Three women and two men are U.S. residents. Fourteen women and six men are undocumented. According to undocumented Yucatec Maya women and men, they are waiting for the immigration reform to regularize their migratory status. All of them told me that they have considered becoming U.S. residents and then citizens.

Those immigrants who have U.S.-born or undocumented children have made use of welfare benefits. As shown above, all Yucatec Maya female and male immigrants

⁶ This research may not be "representative" of all Yucatec Maya international migration experiences; however, it shows important trends in Yucatec Maya migration into the United States.

have relatives or children in the United States. None of the married couples has children in Yucatán. Most of these immigrants live in nuclear families and a few in extended families. At present, it is not clear for many if they will return to Mexico in the long run; however, all of them are certain that in the short term, they will stay in the United States to provide security and a better future for their families. For Yucatec Maya immigrants, it is very important to regularize their migratory status to be able to stay legally. All of them are waiting for the immigration reform. I should highlight that these female and male migrants have lived an average of about 20 years in the United States. This is an important fact because twenty-five immigrants have raised their children and grandchildren in San Francisco, be they documented or undocumented. As I mentioned before, immigrant fathers and mothers want their children to stay in the United States because they do not see a better future in Mexico.

FINAL REMARKS

In this article, I have shown that Yucatec Maya migration into the United States is not a recent phenomenon. However, although it is not representative of the *Bracero* era (1942-1964), it has increased significantly in the last three decades. It is important to mention that in Mexico the second largest group of indigenous people is the Yucatec Maya. Unfortunately, at present, the Yucatec Mayas may also represent the second or third largest group of indigenous Mexican immigrants living and working in the United States. The *Asociación Mayab* reports that there are between 20 000 and 25 000 Yucatec Maya living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The State of Yucatán Institute for the Development of Mayan Culture (*Indemaya*) estimates that 50 000 Mayas are now residing in Los Angeles and 25 000 in San Francisco.

As I have argued throughout this article, gender matters in the process of economic and social integration. Based on the discussions of how the restructuring of the global economy has reorganized the sexual division of labor on a global scale, I have shown that Yucatec Maya immigrant men and women have entered the U.S. labor market in the care, domestic, and service sectors.

In this study I find that a patriarchal family system underlies the gender order, and gender organizes migration for women and men, marital relationships, and the division of labor in immigrant families. At the beginning of Yucatec Maya migration into the United States, married and single men migrated first, followed by women. All of the Yucatec men of this study came to California for economic reasons, while most women arrived after they married an immigrant man in Yucatán or via family reunification in the late 1990s and the 2000s. As discussed above, women who married

immigrant men and women who migrated via family reunification had to put an end to men's patriarchal authority and power to migrate. That is to say, in Yucatán, married men or fathers used to decide the destiny of women and family: women and children should stay in the homeland. The women of this study pushed forward gender change in marital and family relationships.

In San Francisco, Yucatec Mayas have integrated into the United States but at the same time have retained family values and unity. In nuclear families, men continue to be the main providers and their participation in family activities is confined to outdoor tasks and leisure activities with children. Housework and care are women's work. Here it is important to point out that married couples have agreed that women should stay at home to take care of their children and do housework, although women told me that they would like to work outside the home. The questions here are: 1) Why do men not do care and housework and stay at home? and, 2) Why do some men continue to question women's desire to work outside the home? Following the work of Melgar (2017), Pérez Ruiz (2015), Rosado y Rosado (2009), and Villagómez Valdés (2010), I suggest that within the framework of the patriarchal family and in the context of migration, immigrant women continue to be expected to be wives, mothers, and housewives and men to be the main providers. It is not strange that these married women are economically integrated in informal work. This allows them to take care of their children and make some money for themselves to have certain economic independence. Undoubtedly, migration has brought changes in gender, which includes gender flexibility in couples, while at the same time gender has maintained some constraints for women, as argued by Menjivar (2003).

In this article, I discussed female-headed households. In contrast to married women, my findings indicate that single women with children work outside the home and are the main providers for their families, be they in Yucatán or in San Francisco. Like married male workers, who work two or three shifts to support their families, these women work two shifts and do informal work. Both are exploited and their work benefits a social and economic system based on labor and social inequality. Divorced and separated women make use of family networks: grandmothers, sisters, and aunts help them take care of their children in Yucatán or San Francisco.

In looking at the ways in which the ideas of family are changing globally, Padilla et al. (2007) suggest that we might be witnessing "people deliberately using love both as an ideal for which to strive and as the means through which they constitute their families" (p. xv). Over the course of my research, I heard over and over that family (of any kind) is very important and that married men and women or single women with children should do their best to be together in the same place. Of course, for single women this has other implications. In this article, I have not intended to offer an

image of an ideal family. Rather, my goal has been to bring to the fore the significance of family as a manifestation of love and as a site for social transformation of gender relations in the experience of a specific group of Yucatec Maya immigrants in San Francisco.

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