

**The Generational Development of Mayan Relationships:
Women's Ever-Changing Roles as Wives and Lovers in a
Highland Maya Community**

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Abstract

The union of marriage between man and woman and the creation of the family unit has always been the most fundamental basis of society. During my field research work in San Antonio Palopo, I attempted to gather information from various sources in order to discover what marriage entails in this particular highland Maya community. I planned to investigate the courting and dating rituals leading up to marriage, if such rituals even exist, to gain insight on how romantic relationships between men and women function in the community and whether or not such relationships typically lead to marriage, to explore the motivations for and basis of marriage within the community, and to learn about manners in which marital issues are dealt with, if they **are** indeed dealt with. Through speaking with women of different ages in the community, I hoped to understand the gender roles assigned to women through exploring their positions as wives and lovers. Furthermore, I wanted to see what marriage means for women in San Antonio: Does it mean partaking in a relationship of mutual respect and love? Does it simply entail an economic union? Or is it a combination of various exchanges?

Introduction and Goals of Study

A wise professor once told me, “Not every culture is as willing as the United States to base the foundation of something as important as marriage on the whimsical feeling of romantic love”. This saying is essentially the essence of my project: I aim to discover just *what* that foundation for marriage is in the traditional Maya community of San Antonio Palopo. I was initially inspired to focus my research efforts on matrimony because of the marital situation between my host-parents.

Cristina, my host-mother, is a hard-working, inspirational women. She rises at the crack of dawn each day to wash the dishes, chop wood to have *lleña* for the fire, prepare breakfast for her large family of five young children, and perform various other household chores. Throughout the rest of the day, Cristina's work never ends: she prepares lunch, washes more dishes, walks her young children to and from school, and prepares dinner. In her spare time, Cristina travels to the nearby communities of

Panajachel and Sololá to sell shampoos and creams for extra income. She is always the first to rise in the morning, and the last to go to sleep at night.

Quite contrarily, Juan Carlos, Cristina's husband, spends most of the day sleeping. A terminal alcoholic, Juan Carlos is unable to hold a job and therefore contributes virtually nil to the family's income. After witnessing this unbalanced relationship between hard-working Cristina and her non-contributing spouse, I was very curious as to why she remained married to him. As a young American woman, I have been brought up in a society where divorce is extremely common, and I could not imagine why Cristina had not decided to divorce her husband. I figured that I would never be able to understand their union if I looked at the relationship from only an outsider's perspective. I decided that I needed to delve into the community of San Antonio women in an attempt to view marriage through their eyes.

My research goals for this project were to discover why people married in the community: Did people date and then make their own decision to marry, or were marriages arranged? Was marriage expected of people in the community, or were many people single late into life? Was raising a family a normal inclination for married couples, or did many people abstain from having children even if they were involved in a long-term romantic relationship? Finally, if couples encountered marital problems, were they encouraged to act upon these problems and solve them, or to conceal and hide them? I felt that seeking the answers to such questions would allow me to better understand what purpose marriage serves in the community, whether it be a practical, arranged union, a romantic union, an economic union, or possibly a combination of all of the above. I also hoped to draw upon the cultural aspects that influenced marriage in the community, such as socio-economic status, education, women's rights awareness, employment, etc. I aimed to apply what I learned from my research and information obtained from various interviews to the situation in my household in order to better understand the seemingly strange dynamic.

Methodology

Given that my intent was to gain insight on various relationships within the community to better understand the roles of women and basis of marriage, my population sample included any female of any age group. I aimed to speak with at least a handful of women from each of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generations in order to compare and contrast older marriage customs and rituals with those of the current era. My information was typically obtained through interviews, varying from casual conversation to semi-structured. In casual conversation, I would simply take mental notes and attempt to record what I remembered to the best of my ability at a later time. Unstructured interviews included a few random questions to prompt answers from my respondent, but generally had no specific form. The information obtained from such interviews provided me with general insight into people's lives, beliefs, and personalities. The majority of my interviews took on a semi-structured form, in which I would set up a meeting time with my respondent. We would meet in a casual setting, such as a house or *tienda*, and I would ask a set of pre-made questions prompting certain responses about specific information that I aimed to elicit.

My first interview experience was with Cristina over a family meal. I began by asking her a bit about her life and her story, and as soon as I stopped asking questions, she began talking. After a while, I had her life history, including invaluable information about her relationship with her husband and her parent's marriage. I noted that the best technique to use with Cristina was active listening, simply making it apparent that I was interested in all she had to say without piping in too often. I did not even try to write down what she was saying while she was speaking, in order to let her speak openly and freely without interruption. After dinner, I would grab my notebook and rapidly jot down as much information as I could remember.

Outside of conversations at my home-stay, I had little trouble finding women that were both willing and eager to talk with me. There seemed to be several “hot spots” for meeting women: *tiendas* and pick-up trucks. I had several interviews with woman working in textile *tiendas*. I would enter such

shops and act interested in the product sold. Conversation between the shop owner and myself would ensue quite naturally. Sometimes I would purchase something from the *tiendas*, sometimes not. Another great place that I found to meet women was on the pick-up trucks heading out of San Antonio to other nearby communities. I met a few women by simply sitting next to them on these pick-ups and talking a bit. I noticed that women in both settings generally approached me and began asking me questions about myself and what I was doing in San Antonio. After a bit of casual introduction information, I would explain my research project and ask the women if they were interested in being interviewed. Almost all women responded positively. I would ask what time and day worked into their schedule, and I would return to the designated meeting spot at that time for a semi-structured interview.

To some of these interviews I brought a voice recorder in order to allow the conversation to flow more naturally, without having to deal with the interruption of writing down each response. I asked each interviewee if they felt comfortable being recorded, and only one woman responded negatively to the idea. To other interviews I brought a notebook and pen, and simply wrote down information as the women responded to my questions.

I created pre-made sets of questions for married and unmarried women: one set of questions dealt with married life specifically, and the other dealt with the prospect of marriage for unmarried women. Often times conversations would take on a course of their own, leading to conversations about things other than just marriage, such as family life, hobbies, employment, etc. Depending on how responsive and engaged my respondent was, I would sometimes decide to ask their opinions on subjects such as divorce and general happiness in marriages within the community. If I was feeling very comfortable with my interviewee, I would ask if she considered her relationship/marriage to be a happy one. I would ask if her boyfriend/partner/spouse treated her well. In order to elicit such sensitive information, I would first reveal personal information about myself. I would describe my relationship with my boyfriend a bit, talk a bit about my parent's relationship, so on and so forth. I found that this tactic greatly improved the response rates of my interviewees and helped the women I interviewed to

feel more comfortable in opening up to me.

Relationship Terminology: Married or Not?

One large misconception about couples that share a home and life together in San Antonio is that every such couple is a **married** couple. In my first several interviews, I asked my respondents if it was common for boyfriends and girlfriends to live together before marrying. Several women, including Nicolassa, 14, and Sandra, 28, responded that people “*never* live together before they are married.” I thus assumed that this was truth, and I figured this made sense because San Antonio Palopo seems to be a very traditional Mayan community. But in a later interview with a middle-aged woman named Francisa, I was shocked to discover that she was not married to her partner. Assuming that she was a married woman because she has three children and shares a home with the father of these children, I mistakenly asked her what her “husband” did for work. She quickly corrected me, saying that she was not married and only lived with Santiago, her partner. I asked her if it was common for women to live with men and have their children even if they were not bound by marriage, and she told me that yes, this is very common. She went on to explain that when men and women move in together, the community incorrectly assumes that they are married to one another.

After Francisa revealed this new information to me, I decided from then on that I would ask all the women I interviewed whether they were married to their partner or only *unida*, joined. Several women of the 1st generation with whom I spoke said that they were not necessarily married to their partners, even though their union was arranged. For example, Manuela Pérez and her husband (now deceased) were at first joined only by a civil union. It was not until after they had begun their lives together and moved in together that they were officially married in the San Antonio Catholic Church. When talking about her life with her deceased partner, Juana Pérez-Pérez explained that they were never formally married, rather they were “*solo unido*”. Rosario Sicaján, 40, and her partner never got married formally, yet she chooses to call him her *marido*, a word referring to husband. They share a house, a family, and a life together.

After gathering information from more and more women in the community, it seemed that there existed a large variation of married and unmarried couples living together. I spoke with women that formally married in the Catholic *Iglesia*, women that had civil unions, women that claimed the title of being married even without actually having had a formal wedding, and women that simply moved in with their significant other.

Marriage in San Antonio: Transition from *Anteriormente* to Present Day

One of the first observations I made during my interviews with women was their usage of the word *anteriormente* when describing the lives of their parents and/or elders of the community. Often, women would describe a certain marriage ritual or activity that happened *anteriormente* but not anymore. “*Cosas han cambiado de anteriormente*” was a recurring statement made by several of the women with whom I spoke. I decided it was my task to figure out when this shift from *anteriormente* to present day took place, or if it simply meant any time before now. In order to do so, I set up interviews with women who appeared to be 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation in order to assign certain marriage customs to certain time periods, thus allowing me to track gradual change over the years.

Relationship Patterns of 1st Generation Women

As I sought out elderly women from the community to speak with, I encountered one great obstacle: the majority of elders in San Antonio Palopo speak little to no Spanish. Many of them never learned to speak anything other than their native language of Kaq'chikel. This fact certainly made it difficult for me to approach elder women and explain in casual conversation my interest in interviewing them. Fortunately, with the help of some of the Spanish-speaking younger generation women, I was able to find several elderly women that spoke Spanish well enough to carry on a conversation. Although sometimes the Spanish was quite broken and difficult to interpret, I did end up having some wonderful interviews with these women. My information for this 1st generation of women

and their marriage customs comes from not only the direct source, the women themselves, but also from accounts of 2nd generation women who spoke to me about their parent's marriages.

During one of my first interviews with Cristina, we talked a bit about how marriage worked for her parents. She informed me that her father and mother did not know one another before they were wed. She explained that in order to marry a woman during her parent's time, men had to ask the parents of any women in whom they were interested for that woman's hand in marriage. In the case of Cristina's father, he visited the family of his spouse several times, offering gifts of tobacco and alcohol to the parents as an offering for their daughter's hand. He was denied twice by the father of his spouse before he was finally accepted and welcomed by the family on his third visit. When I asked how Cristina's parents met and what made her father decide he wanted to marry her mother, Cristina responded that her father did not actually know her mother before marrying her. He had only seen her from a far and decided that she was the woman for him. She explained that in her parent's time, it was extremely rare that men and women spoke before marrying one another, stating that “*la vida fue muy duro,*” or life was very hard. She said people did not have time to get to know one another before marriage because they were always busy working and finding food. María Pérez, one of Cristina's sisters, also said that “*...anteriormente,* people married without even knowing one another.” The result of this lack of leisure time resulted in arranged marriage, which was practical and efficient. Rosario Sicaján, a 40 year old woman of the community, informed me that her parents had an arranged marriage as well.

As noted by Ana María Juárez, “In their [Maya] subsistence economy, the union of women and men was economically efficient and essential” (Juárez, 2001: 137). Olga Pérez-Pérez, a 32 year old woman with whom I spoke, reiterated this point when she spoke of her parent's arranged marriage: She used the word “*negocio*” when describing the way her parent's relationship worked. She recalled that her mother was always preparing food for the family and her father was always working outside the house. He only returned home for meals and to sleep. She also said that even when he was at home,

her father and mother never made time to *platicar*, or chat and visit with one another. Their relationship was evident of the fact that Maya marriage was the institutional structure within which gendered labor was practiced, an economically based arrangement between families (Juárez, 2001: 136).

During the childhoods of the elder women of the San Antonio community, it seemed that education was not yet a priority. Of the few 1st generation women I was able to have a personal interview with, two of them were completely uneducated, while the other woman had gone to school for only a brief two year period. When I asked these women why they did not receive an education, or why in one woman's case she studied for only a limited amount of time, the responses were always very similar: Most families did not have the means to send their children to school. If a child was in school, it meant that they were not working and not adding to the family income. Working was not the responsibility of only the parents, but of each member of the family that was physically capable of working. Because women were not expected to receive an education, it made sense that they marry young, move in with their husband and, in many cases, his family, and begin her own family economic unit. Of the three elder women I spoke with, two of them moved out of their homes to begin their own families at the age of 15, and the other at the age of 23. The woman who did not get married until she was 23, Juana Pérez-Lopez, also did not have an arranged marriage because her father passed away when she was around the marrying age. Because her father was unable to arrange a marriage for her, she had to seek out her own spouse, which could be cause for her considerably “later” marriage in comparison to the other two women.

Throughout my interviews with women from this generation, I attempted to investigate the “quality” of marital relations. After speaking with several women, I learned that it was tradition for newly married women to move in with their *suegros*, or their spouse's parents. The women with whom I spoke described this arrangement as difficult and unpleasant. During my interview with Juana Pérez-Lopez, she told me that she had moved in with her *suegros* after marrying her husband, only to move out three short months later due to maltreatment from her mother-in-law. According to a study done by

Evalyn Michaelson and Walter Goldschmidt, the conjugal tie between man and wife acts as a threat to the relationship between mother and son. When living in close quarters, this uncomfortable relationship of jealousy and rivalry seems to be heightened, often causing women to move out of their new home in order to return to the home of their own family. In five cases in Michaelson and Goldschmidt's study, villagers claimed that quarrels among women were the greatest single factor causing joint family households to break up (Michaelson and Goldschmidt, 1971: 341).

Besides being confronted with less than ideal living situations upon marrying, I got somewhat mixed responses about the quality of relationships from 1st generation women. Manuela Pérez, 62, spoke somewhat fondly of the simplicity of her arranged marriage. She said that she and her husband got along just fine because they were both ready to get married. Her parent's arranged her marriage for her, seeking her spouse from a family with whom they were good friends. Manuela married when she was 15, and the couple began having children the next year. She described her marriage as uncomplicated, explaining that she and her spouse were both busy working and raising kids without much time to idly chat. When I asked her if there were many people that had marital troubles during her time, she responded saying that, if both the man and women were in agreement about getting married, there "weren't any problems". Cristina, my host mother, also spoke positively of her parent's arranged marriage. She claimed that they "never fought", and that her father treated her mother very well. She told me that her father claimed to had fallen in love with her mother before they were even married, although he had only seen her from a distance and never spoken with her. Cristina's grandparents had arranged the marriage between her father and her mother.

On the contrary, unhappy relationships certainly existed. The marriage between Juana Pérez-Lopez and her husband is an example of a marriage gone awry. After Juana's father passed away in her youth, she decided to seek out a spouse in order to begin a family with someone. After spending half a year together, she married Elari in the Catholic Church of San Antonio. She described their marriage as painful and difficult. Elari was apparently an alcoholic and was therefore not able to bring in a steady

income or help with child raising. She said he was a “bad husband,” and claimed that she stayed with him because she wanted to wait until her children grew. Ironically, he left her for another woman after they were married for 35 years. When referring to Elari, she used the term *mi esposo*, and explained to me that although he had left, they were still married by law, preventing him from ever being able to legally marry his new woman. I asked her why she didn't divorce him, and she responded saying that since Elari had left and was happy with another woman, she could not expect him to come back and get a divorce. She said she does not plan to re-marry because she does not want to.

Juana's situation inspired me to look into divorce and/or separation amongst people of her generation in order to understand societal norms of the time. I wondered if Juana's disinterest in remarrying was reflective of a time in which people typically did not need to consider remarriage because divorce and/or separation may not have been commonplace. In one of my first interviews with Cristina, I asked her if divorce was common or acceptable in her parent's time. She responded no, it was not common, explaining that women had to *aguantar*, or support, their husbands even in the face of abuse. María Pérez supported this statement, saying that before, women didn't leave their husbands even if they were being treated poorly because women did not know their rights. I asked her why women did not know their rights before, and she explained that women learn their rights through education. She went on to say that education for women has only recently become popular in San Antonio, and therefore, women have only recently been able to learn their rights enough to defend themselves against abuse.

As I have previously explained in this paper, San Antonio marriage among the first generation women with whom I spoke was arranged in order to create practical and efficient economic ties between families. Women typically married young and began having children, and education did not seem to be a priority. Rather, beginning a family and taking care of the household was a woman's designated focus. Without education, women clearly relied heavily upon their working spouse for support. Divorce was obviously not an option for most women during this time, since doing so would result in the woman and her children being left without a source of income. This created a cycle which fostered abuse and

maltreatment of women, leaving them nearly completely dependent upon their husbands for support.

Indeed, until recently, Guatemala's Civil Code allowed men to restrict their wife's employment:

The husband can oppose the wife's dedication to activities outside the home, as long as he supplies what is necessary for the support of the same. . . . Once procreation starts with the birth of the first child, the woman must understand that her mission is in the home, and except for very special circumstances she must not neglect her children under the pretext of personal necessities or the desire to aid her husband (Smith, 1995: 736).

This belief that women were subject to their husbands' wants and needs has been proven shockingly apparent in the personal stories of several women I spoke with. Juana Pérez-Lopez endured an abusive, unhappy relationship in order to raise her family. Even after her husband left her, she has still not considered remarriage. Rosario Díaz, a 2nd generation woman, explained that her father was a severe alcoholic and that his disease depleted the family's income. Even so, her mother never left his side as she struggled to raise the family.

2nd Generation Relationships

Juana Pérez-Pérez, a 60 year old woman with whom I had an interview, seemed to reflect the changing face of relationship patterns between 1st and 2nd generation women. Of the 1st generation women I spoke with or received information on, she was the only woman that did not have an arranged marriage, instead marrying for love. She was also the only woman who had another relationship with a different man after her first partner passed away, and the only woman who managed to live with two different men without every being formally married to either one. Her relationship history is an example of the changing dynamic of San Antonio Palopo relationships throughout the years.

The women of the 2nd generation turned out to be the largest population sample with whom I was able to speak. I was also initially inspired to focus my energies on this topic of relationship and marital patterns within the community because of the marital relationship of Cristina, a 2nd generation

woman. After putting together my research and results from women of the 1st generation, I felt I was better situated to begin dissecting Cristina's seeming willingness to stay with her non-contributing spouse. I assumed that, as before, divorce was still uncommon in the community and not looked upon favorably. But when I asked Cristina about divorce in the community, she gave me an answer entirely different than I expected. She told me that divorce is not at all common in San Antonio because doing so requires people to hire a lawyer, which is beyond the financial capabilities of most. I then asked her what, if anything, happened if couples were having marital troubles. She described a place in the community called the *Juez de Paz*, a civil justice center specializing in familial civil issues where both men and women can go to speak with a *Juzgado*, or judge, about their marital troubles. She explained that if problems proved to be serious enough, the *Juzgado* could choose to grant couples a month or two long trial separation period in which they were supposed to work toward solving their issues. If the issues proved too great or irreconcilable, the *Juzgado* would sign an *acta* granting the couple permanent separation. Cristina informed me that this process was free of cost, and for that reason, couples chose this route over divorce. I asked her if there were any other difference between separation and divorce, and she told me that when couples *se separan*, or separate, they no longer live together, but if they do reconcile their issues at a later time, they are still legally bound to one another and can therefore move back in together if so desired. Under the circumstances of a separation, couples are not allowed to re-marry. Contrarily, divorce grants complete legal separation of a couple and allows for remarriage.

The act of separation seemed to be quite common and acceptable in San Antonio. Alícia, an 18 year old, informed me that while virtually no one in the community divorces, plenty of people choose to separate. Mikaela, 15, also told me that separation is very common, and that couples sometimes separate as quickly as several months after getting married. She also said that it seems to be that men are the ones who leave, while women are left with the house and are responsible for raising the children.

I was very intrigued at the drastic change between 1st and 2nd generation ideals about separating and divorcing: 1st generation marriages proved to be stable, with little to no rates of separation, while the 2nd generation seemed to accept and partake in separation frequently. As I sought to appoint a reason to this drastic change, I began asking women how they felt about the idea of separation and why they thought it was becoming more popular for their generation. Although answers to these questions varied a bit, I received one alarmingly common response: Women were becoming more educated, and were thus becoming more aware of their rights. Because women were becoming more aware of their rights, they were more likely to leave an abusive or “bad” spouse.

I had an incredible interview with María Pérez, the *maestra* of Social Studies in one of San Antonio's two schools, concerning women's rights and women's increasing ability to walk away from abusive relationships. We got to talking about her relationship with her husband Vincente, and she explained that they have a very happy, healthy relationship of mutual respect. I asked her why she believed she was so lucky to have found such a wonderful partner, and she replied saying that, because *she* knows her rights, her husband does too. She went on to say that many people in the community do not have very happy relationships because women are unaware of their rights. I asked her what the relationship was between knowing one's rights and having a healthy relationship, and her response was very moving: She said “education is the key to knowing your rights as a women”. Without education, women “always have fear of men” because they are unaware that women and men are equals. In such situations, women assume that their positions as wives and mothers constrict them to household work, such as cleaning, washing clothes, and preparing food. It becomes a vicious cycle in which women are confined to the home, and men become the sole providers. She said “when women don't have professions, they are more susceptible to maltreatment,” because their husbands do not respect them, hence creating a culture of *machismo*, or sexist male chauvinism.

María explained to me that as education has become more popular, more women have been able to learn their rights. I found out that in *Quinto*, or fifth grade, in *Formación Ciudadana*, students learn

about women's rights as a part of the curriculum, evidencing the increasing importance of the subject. She also mentioned that *talleres*, workshops on women's rights, were becoming more and more popular in San Antonio. I was so fortunate as to accompany María to her monthly Women's Reunion, which took place in the *aldea* of *Aguas Escondidas* on Lake Atitlán. I learned that these monthly meetings are titled *comisión mujer* and have female representatives from each of the communities within the Departamento of Sololá. During the meetings, the women gather together and select a theme for the day, including themes such as sexual reproduction, mental health, well-being, etc. At the meeting I attended, the focus was on celebrating *el día de la mujer*, an international day celebrating women. I found it very encouraging that such women's groups had been created and that so many women were active in such groups. It seemed obvious that women were being encouraged to go out into their communities and surrounding communities to educate, be educated, and learn about their rights, thus accounting for higher levels of self-respect and awareness amongst the women of the lake.

Olga Pérez-Pérez is a perfect example of a woman who places great priority on education. She chose not to get married young in order to complete her studies in San Andres, only to continue her studies in Panajachel, ultimately graduating from school there. Olga met her husband after she had completed her studies and moved back to San Antonio. But they did not rush into marriage and family life: Olga said they dated for three years before marrying, and decided even after they were married to wait until they were completely ready to have children. She explained the importance of working hard and earning sufficient amounts of money before having children in order to prepare oneself for properly raising a family. She and her husband married when they were 30 years old, and have been happily married now for two years. They are still waiting to start a family.

Rosario Sicaján, a 40 year old woman and head of our home stay program, proved to be a wonderful example of the effects of increasing women's rights awareness in San Antonio. She explained to me that her relationship with her partner Santos is “different” than a traditional San Antonio relationship. They are not married, but they share a home, a family, and a life together. She

informed me that although Santos proposed marriage to her, she denied him because she did not want to focus all of her energy on a man. Rosario made it explicitly clear time and time again throughout our interview that her life was her work, and that she had never intended to get married because she is extremely independent. She only decided to move in with Santos after explaining to him that she was independent, and needed a partner that would respect her strength and work ethic. She said that at first he was upset because she would not marry him, but after a while he accepted the situation and decided that living together as *amantes*, or lovers, not as husband and wife, was alright.

I was very impressed with Rosario's strong sense of self-awareness and respect, and I asked her how she came to be so self confident and informed. She told me the story of how her parents did everything in their power to get her educated, and that she in turn made many sacrifices to put herself through University. Rosario attributed her knowledge and awareness of women's rights to both her education and to her parents, whom she called her role models. She explained that women learn their rights not only through being educated, but also through the examples they have in their families and in their friendships. She said that education is fundamental in the sense that being educated means having the ability to read and write, in turn allowing one to express needs and feelings. But she also said that education means being able to understand and attend workshops and talks about women's rights. According to Rosario, "Women need to learn from other, more educated women" in order to fully learn their rights. She informed me that she often attends and partakes in various women's workshops that come to San Antonio because she finds it extremely important as an educated women to share her knowledge with the women in her life. I found Rosario to be a inspiring example of how women, through education and working together, have been able to learn and understand their rights, in turn becoming more confident and able to live their lives in accordance with such rights in even the most intimate aspects of their lives, such as romantic relationships and marriage.

2nd Generation Single/Not Married Women: By Choice or by Chance?

Although the bulk of my research focused on the relationships between men and women in San

Antonio, it was sometimes the single or unmarried women of the town that provided me with the most helpful information. Their opinions and views on relationships helped me to further understand how dynamics of marriage and romantic engagements have been evolving and changing throughout the years.

I encountered Sandra, 28, one day as I browsing around in her textile shop. We got to talking, and she agreed to an interview. She appeared to be a woman in her late twenties, so I asked if she was married. She replied saying no, but she has a *novio*. Sandra explained that she does plan to marry this partner, but not for quite a while yet. I asked her if she had children, and she laughed, saying that she obviously does not have children because she is single. This was evidence that it is clearly not societally acceptable nor is it common for single women to bear children out of wedlock. Sandra said that she had dated numerous other men before her current boyfriend, but explained that she chose not to marry them because they were not mature enough to continue having a serious relationship with. I found this exciting, as she was obviously demonstrating her right as an independent, conscious women in her choice to select a suitable partner. I asked her why she had not married her current boyfriend yet, and she said that she had waited to even consider marriage until she had her own house and until she had been able to provide for herself. Now that she owns and runs her own textile *tienda*, she said she is ready to consider marriage. Sandra paints a picture of the incredible development of the transformation that women have made in San Antonio from marrying off young and bearing many children to planning out their lives in accordance with their goals and dreams.

Manuela Martín-Pérez presents an even more drastic example of the growing movement of women that place greater importance on their work than on their romantic pursuits. At the age of 25 years old, Manuela has never had a boyfriend. I asked her whether or not she has had suitors and expressed interest from the men in her community, since is quite a pretty young lady, and she said yes, that she has had a lot of interest. But to no avail: Manuela has no desire to have a man in her life because she says her work is her biggest priority. Manuela's father died at a young age, and ever since

she has grown accustomed to working and earning her own income. She explained to me that she dreams of earning enough money to leave San Antonio in order to travel around and sell her work (textiles). Manuela said that she has seen too many girls marry at extremely young ages, resulting in unhappy marriages with large amounts of children. She said she finds her life pleasant just as is, without the complication of involving a man. What a drastic change from the institution of arranged marriage.

3rd Generation: The Future of San Antonio Relationship

In an attempt to track the continual development of relationships in San Antonio, I looked to the generation of teenagers. I spoke with several young women and men of this age category, asking them about romantic relationships and pursuits amongst themselves and members of their peer groups. I discovered that the term *salir con* is the equivalent of the Western term “to go out with,” slang used to describe dating or courting.

The first young person I spoke with was a 16 year old male named Enselmo. In casual conversation, I asked him some questions about dating and the concept of *novios* amongst his friends and himself. He told me that he did not have a girlfriend, but many of his friends did. We began to talk a bit about courting rituals and norms, and admitted that when it comes to dating, there is a double standard that exists: Girls, he said, typically have much stricter rules enforced upon them, while boys experience virtual freedom. I did notice this dynamic during my time in San Antonio: Every night after the sun set, young boys would roam the streets in small to large groups, gathered around on street corners hooting and whistling and making small talk. I saw little to no women outside past dark, and if so, they were walking home from work or from a friend's house, never lingering in a group with friends. Nicolassa, 14, also mentioned the existence of this same double standard- girls with stricter rules in regards to dating, boys with little to no rules. When I asked her why she thought this double standard existed, Nicolassa gave me a very interesting reply. She said “boys and girls are not equal,”

and that is why there is a double standard. I found this reminiscent of past beliefs about the roles of men and women, with men providing for the family and having the freedom to work outside of the home, while women were literally, according to Civil Code, constricted to household work.

I asked Enselmo about his plans for the future and whether or not he envisioned himself marrying one day. He said that yes, he planned to marry, but to have a small family that he can easily support. On a similar vein, Mikaela, 15, explained that her reason for not wanting to marry young like many of her friends (who married at the ages of 15, 16, and 17) was because she planned to continue studying and working simultaneously until she completed her studies and had earned a substantial amount of money with which she could support a family.

Amongst the young people of this generation with whom I spoke, I noticed a recurring awareness of the difficulties of raising a large family. It seemed that economic consciousness was heightened: Teenagers were making a direct correlation between family size and ability to support a family, unlike before, when having a large family seemed to be considered a plus because it meant more children to work in the fields and add to the family income.

Conclusions

After interviewing both women of the 1st generation and the daughters of such women, and after drawing upon information from various academic articles, several trends seem consistent within the 1st generation era relationships: Women typically married young, partaking in marriage unions arranged by their parents or arranged by their spouse's family. Marriages were arranged for efficiency and in order to create economic ties between families, not for love and sexual attraction, although these two factors were certainly likely to develop throughout the couple's life together. Marriages ranged from simple civil unions to celebrated Church ceremonies. Women typically were married off at young ages, and in doing so received little if any education. Children were typically born quite soon after a couple got married in order to begin the family economic unit. The household dynamic was that of gendered labor,

in which woman typically bore children, performed various household tasks, and prepared food for her family and husband. Men typically worked outside the house in agricultural work as the main financial providers for the family. Because of this interdependency, divorce was uncommon. The majority of eldest generation unions were relatively free of domestic violence and generated enduring relationships(Juárez, 2001: 134). But if it did exist, abuse against women was more likely to be tolerated due to lack of education and reliance upon their spouse for income. These seem to be the defining characteristics of relationships between men and women of the 1st generation of San Antonio.

Women of the 2nd generation seem to have a view of relationships largely influenced by the availability of higher levels of education. As the economy of San Antonio has shifted from that of subsistence farming and agricultural work to a more capitalist and industrialized community (most likely the result of encroaching tourism into the area), education has become more important and more common for young women. Life is not focused so much on working and marrying young, but on receiving an education in order to prepare oneself for the work world. Such developments have been reflected in the many women's rights committees and workshops that exist in San Antonio. Also, women seem to be waiting to marry until they have chosen a partner based on love and compatibility, and in turn are waiting to have children until they are older. This generation seems to be the transition period from arranged, simplistic unions to unions based on choice and love, on the premises of self-respect and decision making. Furthermore, plenty of women from this generation are choosing to refrain from romantic pursuits whatsoever in order to focus on their education and work, evidence that women are not placing as much emphasis as before on depending upon their spouses for income and support. Cristina ultimately revealed to me that she was very displeased with her husband's lack of contribution to the family, and she informed me that she was considering separating from him. This new wave of women's rights movements had clearly opened Cristina's eyes to the possibility of deciding against a continued union with her unsatisfying spouse.

The 3rd generation of young teenage men and women seemed to reflect the heightened

consciousness of choice in romantic and marital relationships, the importance of receiving an education and finding a career before marriage, and the difficulties of raising and successfully supporting a large family. It seemed that this generation was geared toward marrying only after they had earned a substantial amount of money and found secure, stable work to support their families.

During my time in San Antonio Palopo, I learned so very much from so many wonderful people. I was extremely impressed and moved by the warmth and openness that I received from my respondents and fellow San Antonians. With their willingness and help, I was able to track the change and development of romantic and marital relationships throughout three generations of San Antonio women. I conclude that marriage for 1st generation women was an uncomplicated, practical, efficient, and necessary arrangement, aimed to strengthen kinship networks and to create an economic unit of gendered labor between man and women. As a result of Western influence, including increased education and a shift from agricultural based economy to that of capitalism, most likely onset by the boom in tourism, women of the 2nd generation have begun to exercise more liberty in their marriage unions, shifting from practicality and gendered labor to marriage by choice. As a result of increased education and women's rights awareness, women of this generation seem to be seeking out partners that both love and respect them, and with whom they have relationships of mutual respect and support. The 3rd generation also seems to build upon ideals of the 2nd generation, and they seem to possess a mature outlook on waiting to marry until education and stable careers have been obtained. I was very impressed by the amount of information I was able to receive through casual conversation and semi-structured interviews with members of the community, and I am forever indebted to the people of San Antonio Palopo for their immense support and encouragement with my project.

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