

The Pocomam men: traditional weavers from Palín, Escuintla

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Resumen

El género masculino es considerado superior al femenino, y en las sociedades que así lo perciben se ha creado una violencia machista que parte del orden patriarcal contra la mujer y afecta también a otros sectores de la sociedad que han sido discriminados y minimizados. En la mayoría de los estudios de arte textil se ha privilegiado el género femenino, pero es importante mencionar que los estudios de género deben ir más allá del rol de la mujer en la sociedad, también deben incluir temas de integración de los hombres en actividades normalmente feminizadas. Por lo tanto, se presenta un artículo que aborda la cuestión de género a través de un enfoque etnográfico, utilizando herramientas de investigación como entrevistas semiestructuradas para revelar la perspectiva de un grupo de hombres tejedores sobre sus experiencias, para lograr los objetivos propuestos de estudiar las diferentes apreciaciones de los propios tejedores, y también recorrer el camino de la investigación con antecedentes que sean capaces de reconocer la influencia de la tradición oral en el oficio de tejedor. Ya que la misma tradición también ayuda a crear modelos de enseñanza, a construir un sistema sexo-género.

También es necesario indagar sobre género en arte textil palineco y finalmente analizar la relación entre la práctica del tejido y los conceptos de masculinidad.

Palabras clave: Género, masculinidad, tejido, tradición.

Abstract

The masculine gender is considered superior to the feminine, and in societies that perceive it this way, a macho violence has been created, based on the patriarchal order against women, which also affects other sectors of society that have been discriminated against and minimized. In most textile art studies the female gender has been privileged, but it is important to mention that gender studies should go beyond the role of women in society, they should also include issues of integration of men in activities normally feminized. Therefore, an article is presented that addresses the gender issue through an ethnographic approach, using research tools such as semi-structured interviews to reveal the perspective of a group of male weavers about their experiences, in order to achieve the proposed objectives of studying the different perspectives of the weavers themselves, and also to walk the path of research with background that is able to recognize the influence of oral tradition in the weaving trade. Since the same tradition also helps to create teaching models, to construct a sex-gender system.

It is also necessary to investigate gender in Palineco textile art and finally to analyze the relationship between the practice of weaving and the concepts of masculinity.

Keywords: Gender, masculinity, weaving, tradition.

Introduction

Gender roles are categories that permeate various areas of the lives of individuals and are related to social class, culture, age and nationality, to name a few. The distribution of these that marks a society or group arises from a worldview specific to each community, establishing a hierarchy of power. In general, the male gender is always above the female and in societies that establish this, sexist violence has been generated that arises from the patriarchal order towards women and also affects other sectors of society that have been discriminated against, minimized and excluded because of it. It is easier to understand if one takes into account that these situations can occur in the different contexts in which human beings live.

It is important to realize that any human being who expresses ideas, thoughts, particular ways of being or occupations outside of those established by a patriarchal system is vulnerable to being criticized, judged and excluded by this hierarchy. Regardless of the fact that it is a privileged position compared to the rest of the population, it is not easy for men to identify how they exercise their masculinity and what is understood about the concept of masculinity, what are the behaviors, characteristics and occupations and how these affect or benefit their interpersonal relationships and individual personality. This highlights the need to involve the different sectors of society in gender discussions that should lead to fairer relations, since it is not just about mentioning the subject, but about contributing ideas from academia to involve the general population in making visible the different expressions of the new masculinities, thereby influencing new generations in order to avoid exclusion and discrimination.

This article sought an approach with a group of men who weave traditional clothing from the municipality of Palín, Escuintla. Weaving is usually associated with an activity exclusive to women in the town, in which the use of a traditional weaving technique is highlighted and in one particular case a methodology created by one of the weavers. Viveros (2007) mentions that in most research on textile art the female gender has been privileged, but it is important to mention that gender studies must go beyond just the role of women in society, they must also include issues about men, integrating them into roles that are socially considered feminine.

Understanding masculinity and how it interferes in social relationships supports the need to recognize and support the processes of discussion of gender issues. For this reason, an article is presented that addresses the issue of gender through research with an ethnographic approach, using research tools such as semi-structured interviews to learn the point of view of a group of male weavers with the purpose of knowing their experiences in producing textile art.

Along with the research, this project also achieved one of its objectives: to relate oral tradition with the weaving trade, interweaving the concepts of tradition and masculinity. That is why the approaches presented to achieve the proposed goals are: to investigate various points of view of the weavers themselves, as well as to accompany the path of study through antecedents that can identify the influence of oral tradition on the weaving trade; to expose the issue of gender in Palineco textile art and, finally, to analyze the relationship between the practice of weaving and concepts of masculinity. This is why the methodological framework of this study addresses epistemological descriptions of new

masculinities, which allows to support its use, guided by qualitative research tools designed and applied from the intimate spaces of the creators' homes.

This ethnographic study, as mentioned by San Román (2009), seeks to obtain first-hand information by applying techniques that allow us to understand the context of intercultural relations for a better understanding, so that the main interest is focused on the traditional male weavers of the municipality of Palín, Escuintla. It begins with the understanding that people have or express about the practice of weaving, a trade that has been culturally recognized as an exclusive task for women. This allows us to recognize the current importance of not classifying trades by gender, since, as will be explained later, it rethinks the vision that exists about the so-called men's and women's trades.

In this way, there is also a recognition of the ancestral knowledge of the community preserved in the oral tradition, as commented by Moreno et al. (2019) when referring to the fact that the transmission of knowledge takes place in communities from childhood, which promotes the development of culture in all its manifestations. This same tradition also helps to create teaching patterns by building a sex-gender system. Throughout the history of the formation of social groups, it cannot be denied that there has been a division in the trades or activities related to gender. These elements represent a discussion to understand new roles in the daily activities of a community.

It is therefore imperative to consider the obstacles that human beings have had to overcome in a patriarchal system. For this reason, this article focuses on the role that men should have in their current social context. And the fact is that social practices in many cases are

learned in a family nucleus led by mothers, who teach their children the trades that can help them develop in the future. These teachings can be linked to promoting traditions, as can be seen from a very particular saying in the Palineca community that says: "men to the cornfield and women to weaving" (García, 2022). The above can give an indication of how the roles that must be fulfilled are instilled from the intimate home. At this point, tradition, using orality, sets the necessary guidelines for the formation of the members of a family.

From the above lies the importance of the research that tried to generate an approach to explain how the masculine is constructed or perceived in the community, analyzed from a sex-gender system without leaving aside its constant appearance of tradition in men, giving importance to recognize those adaptations that arise from the trades that are not socially associated with the masculine.

These transformations are linked to the influence that mothers have had on the development of their children, which is why it was possible to identify a group of men who broke the established norms and managed to give their opinions and life anecdotes to make known their concerns and experiences in the profession that is generally associated with women.

Thus, this research investigates the relationship of new meanings that are being given in practices by the male gender in activities that years ago were considered exclusive to the female gender. As Hernández and Gonzáles (2016) mention, this type of thinking aims to identify that ideas, representations and beliefs based on the existence of activities specific to men and women are still considered. Ideas that in some cases they are transmitted and

reinforced in people thanks to the same tradition.

The weaver men

The approach to the topic of male weavers begins with a review of articles related to masculinities in the last decade, raised mostly from a general view of the topic and from the perspective of the male weavers themselves regarding how the changes that social realities have had, at a global level, end up influencing the behaviors that characterize masculinity.

The above aspects allow us to present this study as an approach to the relationship of various masculinities gathered around the same practice, that is, traditional weaving in the municipality of Palín, creating a dialogue with the gender discussions due to the rupture they pose, not only in that weaving is an activity carried out only by women, but also in their affirmation that tasks should not have gender. In this way, this research addresses not only a traditional activity but also the re-signification that Palín men give to this practice, initiating the interest of imparting knowledge of weaving in a space in which the various masculinities are the protagonists, leading to the participation of a group of men in their own spaces, which could give rise to other topics to address relating gender studies and traditional culture.

Previous research

In previous studies on masculinity, how it is understood and how it changes over time, there is a notable lack of research focusing on how men themselves construct, understand and present their masculinity, as most approaches are drawn from the fields of psychology and health, leaving aside studies from other social sciences. Many of them focus on the social structure of the men, who hiding their feelings

can somatize their problems, with research focused on understanding the reasons that make men express themselves mainly through their physicality. That is why, as a basis for this study, the study carried out by Carlos Colina (1986) in his work entitled *Los Tejedores de El Tintorero* was used. This work provides an overview that shows the work of men in important textile activities in the popular and traditional culture of the communities, thereby opening the door to analyze male work that has been made invisible. Relating the theme of culture and textile art, the study carried out by Juan Antonio Urbeltz (1991) entitled *La Luna y Los Tejedores* was analyzed, which relates a traditional activity, the theme of gender and tradition, through compilations of myths related to the symbols that male weavers capture in their work. The contributions of Cherri M. Pancake (1993) are also taken into account in her article entitled *The gender border reflected in the studies of indigenous weavers: the case of Guatemala*, questioning gender borders from an ethnographic perspective by analyzing the work carried out by men in activities that are recognized as belonging to the female gender. As works related to the subject, the contributions made by Carmen Ramos Escandón (2000) were found in her article *Gender differentiation in Mexican textile work in colonial times*, where she carried out a historiographic study on traditional textile work in Mexican territory and how social and religious elements interfered in the tasks assigned according to the gender of the inhabitants of the different populations analyzed.

Previous studies help to build and guide the methodological path to follow in the research carried out, such as the work carried out by Laura Susana Teves (2011)

in her research *The ethnographic study of textile activity as a contribution to the characterization of the way of life in the town of Molinos and its area of influence (Salta Province)*. This work addresses the results of ethnographic research focused on the analysis of a traditional textile activity, focusing on textile production from the domestic sphere, the trajectory of the male weavers and their social organization, and also carries out a reconstruction of the production circle. It also explains the methodology used in the presentation of the data, including observation techniques, interviews and collection of field work reports. It is imperative to mention the work carried out by María Camila Díaz García (2020) in her study *Weaving masculinities by unweaving roles: Experience of the El Costurero de la Casa collective: men who weave*, which also served as a basis and guide for the development of this article on issues of gender, textile art and masculinities.

Research related concepts

In order to meet the objectives, it is necessary to understand a wide range of concepts of the practice of weaving and its implementation by men, which will allow the analysis to be enriched with the gender perspective proposed in this study. At the same time, it is important to analyze other concepts related to masculinity and oral tradition.

Gender

It is important to know the difference between gender and sex. The latter is based on the biological and anatomical differences of the human body, which lead to breaking the limits of binary division. On the other hand, gender refers to what is socially constructed and the relationship it establishes with a symbolic order,

where ideas, descriptions, representations, attitudes and social values come together in the face of intersections or oppositions that come not only from the masculine and the feminine. Such a concept is referred to by Marta Lamas (2018) in her work *Gender: the cultural construction of sexual difference*, giving an explanation to understand the difference between the terms mentioned.

This work aims to create a debate about gender, but recognizes that most societies still see expressions that should be presented in the category of each subject only as feminine and masculine, with certain parameters that dictate the behavior and thoughts of individuals in public places, and their relationship with their work, their family and their social group.

According to Alicia V. Rubio (2017), gender is a learned trait, that is, one learns to be a man or a woman, and not part of biology, with the characteristics that each society may demand from subjects, constructing socially accepted roles.

These traits are transmitted from childhood, since behavior is taught to boys and girls through play and cultural stereotypes, focusing more on activities that correspond to the family organization, in relation to the gender reflected in their context, as explained by María Jayme Zaro (1999). According to this understanding, in a conservative context, girls seek to focus on the reproductive and caregiving roles expected of them in the community, while boys prepare for the role of provider of economic services.

Therefore, it is possible to see the influence at an early age in the family and social context on the behavior of individuals and in the construction of their identity, this explanation is taken from the work carried out by Serrano

Micaela (2021), accepting that we live in a society that only recently began to understand the changes that tend to generate struggles, caused by historically isolated, marginalized and excluded human groups. In one way or another, they recognize the limits of the patriarchal system, whose actions provoke certain situations despite the preservation of the patriarchy and the clear influence of the family in the formation of the subjects.

To exemplify the above text regarding changes in the inclusion of gender issues, it can be mentioned that the United Nations Organization (UN), in some of its proposals, raises the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the design of projects and public policies that seek to include men in discussions of gender equality where they are recognized, prevailing emptiness or simplicity when they are included in these policies, they are presented superficially or through stereotypes where instead of being the center of inclusion, they end up as marginalized victims, as explained by Line Bareiro and Lilian Soto (2016) in the report on *Gender equality through public policies in inclusive states within the framework of the 2030 agenda*. The above leads to question how these projects have been developed so far, and we recognize that they are important in the discussions on other variables such as textile activity and masculinity or ancestral knowledge in the memory of men.

The above leads us to question how these proposals have developed today, recognizing that they are important in discussions on gender issues. The above allows us to think about how some changes occur in the perception of some men about their masculinity, which is why it is necessary to know the testimony of men and their feelings on issues of employment or marriage, to mention a few elements. To

understand the concepts, it is necessary to know the interpretation of the same men, especially those who are dedicated to textile art on the subject.

Masculinities

This concept is understood from the theoretical proposals of Robert W. Connell (1997) in his work *The social organization of masculinity*, identifying four main types of masculinity, comprising groups that can be structured with elements that allow them to relate to each other, which are:

- Hegemonic masculinity: reacts to the legitimacy of patriarchy, the predominance of white men and participation in the public sphere.
- Submissive masculinity: men with non-heteronormative gender and identity orientations, who belong to the LGBT community more.
- Masculinity by inclusion: these are men who understand themselves as heterosexual without using normative models of hegemonic masculinity, carrying out behaviors that conform to patriarchal postulates that they legitimize through learning or social pressure.
- Marginalized masculinity: identifies social, economic and demographic differences considering the characteristics that rank them. Criticisms are presented of these types of masculinity to the extent that they are submissive, excluded and marginalized.

They are defined as a difference from hegemonic masculinity, which for some authors can be seen as a symbolically represented set of norms dominant social groups, integrated into

the fabric of many disciplined, everyday social routines. On the other hand, the difficulties that may arise when trying to define hegemonic characteristics of masculinity are considered, resulting from possible variations not only from one society to another, but also from the influence of the elements. It is necessary to consider clarifying the contextual factors that currently surround this category, which is why it is difficult to make comparative concepts about male hegemony with male gender roles, which is a very important aspect to analyze in theory. It is not about roles, but about an ideal model of masculinity, which may not fit the socially acceptable male model.

This allows for opening debates on how different disciplines have come to understand the elements that characterize masculinity, thus providing the means for an attitudinal and discursive understanding of the topic.

Traditional weaving

This study addresses the issue of weaving from a cultural practice carried out by most male weavers in a private setting, which in most cases, according to the interviews, has an economic purpose. The expression of culture through weaving is allowing the visibility of the male gender in this practice and opens a space for dialogue about traditional Palineco weaving and the way in which the general public perceives it.

As for the practice of knitting in private, two elements can be understood in the development of this activity. The first is the vision with which knitting is understood as a socially feminized task, and the second is formed by the variables that make men dedicate themselves to this trade being aware of the socially imposed roles. Acquire this understanding that promotes

the free participation in all areas of life has an intention that is strongly related to the way people think about how the world works since they are formed in front of the roles of each subject that will ultimately affect their context.

To understand the above, it is necessary to quote Professor Magdalena Benito (2022), a traditional weaver from the municipality, who commented:

Previously, women dedicated themselves exclusively to weaving to obtain their own clothes, the most special fabrics were used only by the brotherhoods, but over time this tradition has been broken, because weaving, out of necessity, has left the intimate space of homes to become a local economic activity, allowing anyone to acquire a fabric regardless of whether it is from the brotherhood or not. (M. Benito, Personal communication, June 22, 2022)

The above testimony allows us to understand not only that textile work was an exclusive task for women, transmitted from generation to generation, but also how weaving went from being a task carried out in response to a basic human need such as clothing, to becoming a commercial activity in the social context of Palín, Escuintla.

To this we must add the comment made by teacher Rosario Benito (2022), who commented:

We learned to knit from our mother. The first step is to observe. The girls are glued to their mothers to learn. The first step in the learning process is to make a napkin, but there are many more things that must be understood, such as symbols, colors and uses of the pieces of traditional clothing. (R. Benito, personal communication, June 22, 2022).

Teacher Benito highlights that it is the girls

those who are at the mothers' side and are responsible for transmitting the culture, focusing again on a practice exclusively for the female gender.

However, it is possible to understand that as job opportunities are scarce in Palín, the male gender begins to break the barriers established by society, being able to observe that, although men are increasingly interested in carrying out this work that historically and socially has been awarded to women, there is a considerable number of men who have dedicated themselves to textile art in recent years, who gave their testimony to understand the work they do within the community.

This male group of weavers breaks with the stereotypes of a practice that society has kept far away as a work activity, being influenced by modern currents of inclusion and gender equality, as Jairo Cruz Rodríguez comments (2022):

I learned out of necessity. Knitting is a mathematical system that requires a lot of skill, and I learned it from my mother-in-law, who explained to me some symbols, shapes and techniques to start knitting. Besides being a skill that can become a trade, that's why I decided to learn to support my family. (J. Cruz, Personal communication, June 29, 2022)

Mr. Cruz's testimony allows us to understand that weaving brings together various cultural and social elements and that, apart from this, it can be considered as a trade that allows for personal and family development. Cruz breaks with the socially established when carrying out an activity associated with women.

A more thorough understanding of textile art, and in this case of the practice of traditional weaving, makes three important visible aspects:

that nowadays it can be said that this activity has no gender; doing the weaving in a private way, that is, almost hidden, away from public sight and knowledge, and, finally, the relationship that the weaver creates with art and how it manifests itself in his reality.

Oral tradition

Societies and human groups are in a constant state of reflection between the change necessary for survival and the preservation of traditions. Hence the importance of preserving, valuing and transmitting culture. It should be noted that most of the literary works of antiquity were possible thanks to the accumulation of knowledge transmitted from generation to generation through oral tradition, in addition, many fairy tales were preserved thanks to oral transmission. The importance of resorting to oral tradition is precisely that it is a natural element of human beings, a reference to ancestors, a link between the modern and the historical. Without oral tradition there would be no transmission of knowledge, so the use and dissemination of traditions, warnings, advice, laws and customs, among other things, are key to the survival of the human species. As explained by Marisela Jiménez (2017) in her work *Oral tradition as part of culture*, this study supports the importance of preserving and studying this cultural phenomenon.

The so-called oral tradition is part of the cultural identity of the nation and has been preserved despite changes in time and space. When members of a family or community gather to share the real life of their ancestors, they not only tell the past, but they interpret and update it at the time of telling it. In this ritual, the word that tells is transformed into the need for memory. (need to know more about the origins, life and nature, the secrets of initiation

of various professions and past events), in the great desire to remember. Oral tradition transmits the consciousness, not of individuals, but of a community; not personal experiences, but a legacy that has become collective over time.

As Pellegrini (1997) explains, there are various anonymous manifestations that are transmitted through oral tradition from generation to generation, which forms the oral tradition, an important part of the cultural identity of a community, and this allows some cultural phenomena to remain despite time and space. This is why oral tradition is recognized as the responsibility of transmitting structures, ways of thinking and expressions of local identity. In the case of oral tradition and weaving, they have a close relationship as mentioned above, the practice of weaving is transmitted from generation to generation and, although there are no current manuals on how to weave, it is thanks to oral tradition that the technique used by traditional weavers survives.

The universe of study

The universe of study was identified as a group of traditional male weavers from Palín, Escuintla, who with their testimonies opened a debate on the practice of traditional weaving. At first it was difficult to identify them, since, as previously mentioned, they weave in private spaces, away from public view, so it was a complicated task to identify potential collaborators. The interest in focusing this study on the subject of male weavers initially arose from the way in which some female weavers approached the subject in a previous investigation carried out during 2021. In this investigation, a debate was opened in which it was proposed to overcome the division of labor, That is, not to condition the work by the old

belief that jobs must have gender, according to the heteronormative system. That is why a descriptive section was used, since it allows the creation and analysis of variables that can influence the construction of the group through the practice of weaving, its transformations and how they affect its context. Added to this is the observation that, through weaving, men have the opportunity to find a path to their economic development.

The methodology used in the research

For the present study, the epistemology of modern gender studies was used as a starting point, since it is possible to identify through it the behaviors dictated to the subjects in a social context in relation to gender and sex. In addition to this, those methodological concepts that determine relationships with activities or roles to be developed are included. Within this epistemology, it is inevitable to mention the work carried out by Judith Butler (2007) in her work on gender, stating that subjects are constituted through norms established by the community where they reside, determining their function within society. Despite being immersed in specific social and cultural realities, subjects have the ability to change through self-criticism and the evaluation of the behaviors they are taught, according to how they understand themselves and how they want to express themselves. Gender theory is not only about recognizing the influence of the environment on human beings, but also their ability to decide whether or not to change their way of expressing themselves.

Instruments to achieve the objectives

The present investigation fulfilled the proposed general objective which was: to collect

testimonies of traditional male weavers from Palín, Escuintla, through interviews. This instrument sought to find out how men understand the concept of weaving

from their individuality, adding to this the intention of investigating some aspects such as the influence of oral tradition in textile art and also understanding gender relations in the Palín context. As Laura Díaz (2013) explains: the interview is a research technique used mostly in a qualitative approach that collects data, since it allows a conversation with a specific purpose and not just everyday talk. These conversations sought to open a space to understand how the practice of weaving by men is born and developed.

The influence of the current context

The security measures generated by the health emergency called Covid-19 forced some people to choose to carry out other types of economic activities to ensure their well-being and income. This was another key point for some people to start exploiting

their creativity by looking for new job opportunities, as Jairo Cruz Rodríguez commented:

I lost my job during the pandemic. I was knitting as an alternative activity to my profession. When I ran out of income, I came up with the idea of making masks with traditional designs, which I was able to sell through my social networks. That helped me cope with the quarantine and I also found out that other men started with the textile activity, since this allowed them to work from home. (J. Cruz, personal communication, June 29, 2022)

From the above it can be seen that, despite the vicissitudes, human ingenuity is always present to overcome any crisis, as commented by Mr. Rodríguez, who currently continues to dedicate himself to textile art as his main job.

The following table identifies the data provided by male weavers for the interviews:

Name	Age	Profession	Civil Status
Byron Lobos	19	Student	Single
Carlos Lobos	32	Trader	Married
Carlos García	32	Trader	Single
Jairo Cruz	32	Weaver	Married
Deivis García	22	Student	Single
Felipe Santiago	62	Weaver/Carpenter	Married
Max García	58	Weaver/Historian	Married

Source: own elaboration.

Brief description of Palín

The research was carried out in the municipality of Palín, department of Escuintla, which is located 33 kilometers from the capital city. This municipality was recognized as such in 1839,

forming an independent district together with Amatitlán and Villa Nueva. Today it is an independent municipality belonging to the Poqoman linguistic group. Organized into four main neighborhoods: San Lucas, San Antonio, San Pedro y San José.

For the research, male weavers were identified with the invaluable help of the House of Culture of San Cristóbal Palín, Nim paat Toob'al. This collaboration was fundamental in carrying out this research because most of the male weavers carry out this work in the privacy of their homes, which in some cases can complicate the study process, as previously mentioned.

Palineco textile art

The fabric not only supports the warp, but also society. And, as a metaphor, this is the perception of the weavers about their work. Understanding the production of textile art as an activity that is gradually moving from the private to public spaces leads to direct analysis to identify the benefits and obstacles that the weavers have faced and how it affects the life of each informant, the feelings it evokes and how each one became a weaver.

In this regard, the informants agree that weaving is specific to each person, each individual adds or uses a particular technique to weave, revealing that there is no single way to approach it, as with any investigative process there is no factor that is definitive and directly associated with the realization of textile art. That is why an ethnographic approach can be applied in this study, which allows for inquiring into ways of feeling, particular skills of the weavers, manual techniques for weaving and highlighting the opinion of the weavers on the practice that has socially feminized the work, the conceptualization focused on this craft and the opportunities it offers, which include the realization of exploring creativity without losing the identity of the Palineco people. Finally, note that weaving is learned through oral tradition, although there is now a secondary level study center that promotes the learning of traditional weaving in the municipality of Palín.

When talking about weaving, it should be mentioned that the informants shared their point of view about the perspective of their work and how it has affected their lives since they have dedicated themselves to this activity. For example, there were significant changes in their daily lives, as mentioned by some who, despite having a formal profession, found in the art of weaving a path that they have followed to seek their personal development. Some work as high school graduates, teachers or construction foremen, but they have established weaving as their main occupation, to which is added the diversity of attitudes, interests and ages. One aspect in particular is the opportunity that men have to return to their Poqomam Mayan roots, as a vindication of what had previously been excluded.

This leads to four main ideas:

- The unexpected creation of a collective that allows other men to find work in weaving.
- Opportunity to raise awareness among other social groups so that it is not seen as a bad thing to dedicate oneself to this work because one is a man. Breaking the barrier of making textile art in private and taking it to public spaces allows us to recognize the skill that weavers have in creating unique pieces with a personal touch.
- In the economic factor, weaving has allowed weavers to find a space for productivity that allows them to develop personally.
- Culturally speaking, weaving allows men to recognize and reaffirm its roots for continue to be part of the identity of the Poqomam people.

Another significant aspect is the influence that oral tradition has on textile creation, since it is thanks to this that weavers have replicated cosmogonic shapes and figures in each of their textiles.

The above allows us to understand the close relationship that exists between the economic, social, cultural and identity factors of traditional Palineco weaving, carried out by male weavers, thereby opening new spaces for dialogue and discussion for future research projects, whether with an anthropological, social or gender perspective.

The weaver men and their context

Assimilating the information gathered about the work of the male weavers and the barriers they have had to overcome has been fundamental in the research, as Carlos García mentions:

My father told me that men should use the hoe and women should weave. Since i was little i watched my mother weave and i liked it, but my father said that this was not a job for me, but when i was older i had the rebellion to contradict my father and begged my mother to teach me to weave, since I watched her from a young age it was very easy for me to learn. (C. García, Personal communication, February 20, 2022)

Mr. Garcia's words show how parents, by tradition, impose the roles that their sons and daughters must follow within their homes. Some have had to overcome this way of behaving, as the interviewee mentions, to dedicate themselves to what they like. This experience also shows how his beginnings in the textile practice were. Carlos' story continues:

Thanks to doing what i like, i have earned a place of recognition within the community. Nowadays, my work and the quality of it are

recognized. People seek me out and, because of my knowledge of traditional Palineca clothing, they ask me to accompany the indigenous representative of the town in different protocol activities, and they also invite me to help the ladies of the brotherhood in the placement of the Tun. (C. García, Personal communication, February 20, 2022)

The previous fragment of the interview with Mr. García is an example of how men are gaining a space of local recognition, and little by little they are included in activities that were intended only for women, such as the case of placing the ceremonial ribbon known as Tun.

It is important to note that the ribbon called Tun is a piece of textile approximately 15 meters long, which is placed on the heads of women and designates a special place within the brotherhood. According to oral tradition, this element is a reference to a protective nahual related to nature and in many cases associated with the snake, a pre-Hispanic connotation that is linked to Gucumatz. They are also vehicles through which celestial bodies, such as the sun and stars, cross the skies. In this regard, Nohemi Vicente commented:

The Tun is a ribbon worn by the women members of the brotherhood and wound around the long hair of the women. This ribbon was not produced here, it was brought from other places and sold within the community. This element distinguished a woman's position within religious activities, but is currently used by the Daughter of the People, the indigenous representative of the community. (N. Vicente, Personal communication, September 19, 2002)

The previous narration describes that said piece was important for its symbolism and within the community did not weave. To obtain it they depended on external merchants, that is why the following testimony is important for the

investigation and arises from the textile work of Mr. Felipe Santiago Cojón, who commented:

i watched my mother carrying the Tun, because she received the brotherhoods here in Palín several times. i noticed that she bought that piece from other merchants who brought it from far away, but i noticed and with my thoughts I began to see how it could be woven so I could make it with my own hands. (F. Cojón, Personal communication, September 19, 2022)

The above fragment shows what was previously mentioned in the case of the creativity of the weavers. Don Felipe saw an opportunity to make an important textile piece and thereby gain a place of recognition within the community. Today, Don Felipe is recognized as the Weaver of the Ribbon (Tun) and some say that this ribbon is original to the Palineca clothing, that others are similar but are not the ones that the grandmothers used. To make this item, Don Felipe devised his own method based on tables and numbers to recreate the traditional ribbon, with which he has worked for 40 years in the making of an important piece loaded with ceremonial symbolism. Another aspect is the rescue of a fundamental element in traditional clothing, thanks to the work of a man who with his work has preserved an important component of the community. It is possible to observe that for the male weavers their main objective is to preserve traditional clothing, also recognizing that they have been adapting to the needs of a demanding market, that they promote manual labor and above all that the public finds a second option, not only from the hands of female weavers, but also that they find pieces made by male hands. As Deivis García comments:

i learned to knit and it has helped me get ahead. i am 22 years old and I started when I was 16. The first thing I learned was a small napkin (a

rectangular woven fragment). Then i started with larger pieces, respecting the traditional figures. But over time, people asked me to change the color. For example, the traditional thing is a white background, but people asked for another color, like yellow, maybe because they liked the color of the clothing of another town. i can't say no; it's my job and if I want to sell, i have to adapt to people's tastes. (D. García, Personal communication, May 20, 2022)

Another element that can be read within the research is the opportunity that weavers have to adapt their knowledge to the tastes of the people who request it, some can adapt colors, others can adapt elements such as lions or peacocks within the fabric, which are not traditional for clothing, but by popular taste are being incorporated into the different fabrics.

On the other hand, it is evident how discussions about gender and masculinities arise, in which the influence of their work as weavers on the thinking of other people is recognized. This does not deny that in intimate spaces weavers do not question themselves how much society expects of them and question their own masculinity, but they reaffirm that everything revolves around the textile work they do and that without thinking about it they have been involved in gender issues that initially went unnoticed, as Carlos Lobos mentions:

i learned to knit thanks to my mother (Margarita Lobo) who taught me. At one point, she questioned teaching me. She said that only women knitted because that's how she learned it, but over time she saw that I had the ability and began to teach me. She was surprised by the ability i showed. At first, i knitted alone in my house, i didn't like telling people what I did, but little by little I have started to tell people, especially at university. Some people are

surprised but at the same time they motivate me to keep going, saying that any job is worthy. (C. Lobos, Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

The above reinforces once again the importance of carrying out this type of activities in public spaces, thereby opening up debates on the work of male weavers and thereby addressing the issue of gender in occupations that are generally associated with women.

One of the ways in which male weavers have begun to show themselves in public spaces is through social networks. On these virtual platforms, it was possible to verify that several of them have pages on the Internet where they show their work, as Byron Lobos comments:

When I saw my brother learn to knit, I was encouraged too. In a short time I learned to knit and with this I helped my wife, since she is a well-known knitter in the municipality. Then, to show my work, I opened a page on the social network, with this I began to show my work, people began to like my knitting and above all they were surprised that it was a man who knitted it. (B. Lobos, Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

The testimony of Byron Lobos shows how the male weavers of Palín, Escuintla, have indirectly begun to question socially learned patterns, both on a personal and family level. They have begun to break the barrier of performing the art of weaving only in private spaces, bringing their craft to be shown in public spaces. With these actions they have begun to put aside negative comments, focusing solely on weaving as a source of personal and family development.

During the field work carried out, a group of male weavers was not found. The men dedicated to this trade have done it individually, learned thanks to the oral tradition that has been

passed down mostly from mothers to sons. Possibly, and without thinking about it, this group of men has started a new tradition and it is not ruled out that in the future groups of male weavers may be formed within the community.

Men knitting themselves

The fact that Palineco male weavers do not have a specific space to discuss gender and masculinity does not mean that these issues cannot be explored in depth through actions that overcome barriers established by society itself. Indirectly, the recognized activity of men who dedicate themselves to weaving invites others to question themselves and people outside of them have made them question how they present their masculinity, opening a space to implement research methodologies and techniques that address how men themselves understand their own masculinity, as well as the issue of sex-gender assumed by a heteronormative system.

The male gender and the fabric

It is important to emphasize that this research initially sought only to identify a group of male weavers. During the course of the research, other important issues to be addressed came to light, such as the redefinition of socially feminized weaving structured according to the patriarchal system. This same system has questioned the work of men who dedicate themselves to this activity, associating negative comments from some people who see it as wrong for a man to dedicate himself to weaving. As mentioned below:

Men have a very strong energy, knitting also has energy, that is why when two strong energies come together things go wrong, that is why sometimes the pieces made by men turn out badly, the energies must be balanced because

otherwise the balance is broken. This break can affect people's houses in different ways, and it does not look good if a man knits. (Anonymous, Personal conversation, March 22, 2022)

The above shows how some people view the practice of weaving by a man, mixing traditional beliefs with personal opinions. The management and use of energies is very present in the Mayan worldview and under this perspective it is affirmed that everything has life, from stones to people. This same way of seeing the world in turn shows the individual thought that emphasizes that it is frowned upon for a man to weave.

This allows us to understand why there is rejection, although the inhabitants of the community themselves are not able to explain it clearly. There is a direct thought of domination in the way gender roles are constructed in a society, which are dictated by tradition and an established system accepted by human beings, with the main objective of maintaining order within the same society. It should be considered that, due to the temporality of the research process, which was between the months of June and September 2022, it was not possible to delve deeper into the perception that male weavers have about their masculinity in order to be able to classify themselves according to the models proposed and compiled by Carlos Lomas (2003) among the weavers themselves, since, as previously mentioned, there was no approach with a significant group, obtaining a small sample due to the difficulties of identifying other men who are dedicated to weaving, as several still prefer to remain anonymous. The group that was accessed can be classified as marginalized masculinity, since they have been excluded from the full recognition of the community, they have also suffered from a lack of job opportunities that

have forced them to look for other work options in trades outside those normally accepted, thereby adding another element of discrimination for being indigenous. According to the classification proposed by Lamas (2003) and Cornell (1997), the result obtained so far allows us to visualize not only the exclusion of weavers from accessing public spaces without fear of being questioned, but also everything that breaks with what is normally accepted by a system that, knowing the work to which they are dedicated, makes them objects worthy of being judged, criticized and questioned. As was evident throughout the study, third parties directly questioned the work of the weavers and their decision to dedicate themselves to the trade of weaving, thereby reinforcing that gender responds to the norm of instructing subjects in the behavior that should be considered correct according to the social context observed so far.

The above lines can be seen as stating that a patriarchal system has historically been responsible for marking the construction of the human being within society. A man must be strong and dedicate himself to jobs that require strenuous physical effort, while weaving, being a sedentary activity, is not seen as a good thing for men. As Norma Blazquez Graf (2012) explains: in all social spaces, a behavior determined by the male and female gender is expected, determined by a system that affirms the relationships between the genders, thereby adding a structure that includes social class, sexuality, beliefs and age groups. This allows understand how being a man does not prevent they are subordinated by a system of domination that dictates how they behave within the social group. These norms allow us to see how men who dedicate themselves to weaving are frowned upon for breaking away

from the roles established for the male gender. But there are men who resist this established hierarchy, as explained by Mara Viveros Vigoya (2016): when we talk about men's resistance to social change, we can refer to various individual and collective everyday behaviors that men perform to break the norms established by gender roles. This allows us to understand that the weavers of Palín, consciously or unconsciously, have broken the norms dictated by a system and have opened a path for change in the social structure.

It should not be forgotten that, despite the social context in which they live, many women are responsible for motivating men to dedicate themselves to the work of weaving, as seen previously, some men were students of their own mothers, who were the beginning of breaking the established norms, with their teachings and decision to transmit the tradition not only to their daughters, but also to their sons, including the ancestral knowledge of weaving. As Margarita Lobos explains:

My son told me he was interested in learning to knit, he saw how I taught my daughters. At first I didn't want to because I thought knitting was only for girls, then I decided to teach him with a small knitting sample, I thought "he's not going to finish, he's going to get desperate and give up", my surprise was that he finished in less time and I saw that his hand was walking (expression to refer to a skill) now I see that he likes it and I feel proud of him. (M. Lobos. Personal communication, June 28, 2022)

From the above it can be seen that the female gender considerably influences build the Differentiation between roles. Rejection of the structure established by society may be manifested, giving rise to new ways of constructing gender roles within the family and masculinity..

The study carried out with male weavers does not aim to create power hierarchies with reference to men invading the spaces won by women; on the contrary, it seeks a new form of work equality. It also aims to open a space for questioning themselves about how a system has limited the possibilities of subjects, affecting behavior, restricting spaces and their gender relations. In most interviews carried out with weavers, there was no interest in addressing gender issues, but they do agree that in the weaving profession there may be a way to impact those imposed limits.

Unweaving masculinities

Hegemonic masculinity responds to the expectations of any society, as Nicolas Schongut Grollmus (2012) refers, that is, it allows aspects of behavior that are well accepted by the community, arguing that gender roles are learned as subjects grow and develop interests. As Deivis García mentions:

Parents tell you what to do, usually they tell you to continue with activities like going to the cornfield, working hard, earning money to help with expenses. I didn't like that, I was more interested in weaving. (D. García, Personal communication, July 15, 2022)

The above may lead us to think that there may be two types of masculinity: the first, that formed by parents in the privacy of the home, and the second, that chosen. The above is a very widespread idea that needs more space for discussion, but it can be seen how the weaving men of Palín, Escuintla, have contradictory spaces, where on the one hand they are denied the opportunity to choose if they are not allowed to oppose parental wishes, and on the other hand, if they risk continuing on a different path, they may face strong criticism from the community.

Byron Lobos comments as follows:

Sometimes I prefer to knit outside of public spaces because society can be very complex, some people see it as a good thing, others see it as a bad thing. At home, since my mother and sisters knit, they are interviewed, sought out and recommended for their work. In my case, this is the first time that someone has approached me to interview me. This can be positive, since I can show my work, but it still surprises people to see that a man is dedicated to knitting. (B. Lobos, Personal communication, June 15, 2022)

As Byron Lobos tells it, his decision to dedicate himself to weaving can contribute to receiving criticism and not all of it is positive. For this reason he prefers to remain anonymous, because he says that sometimes, when people from different media have come to do reports, investigations or studies, they have preferred to speak with his female relatives, leaving him aside and thus making his work invisible.

With the information gathered, this research can rethink the concept of new masculinities that may not have emerged in the current era, perhaps they have been present for some time now, but have remained hidden for fear of negative criticism. This is why there is a need to continue investigating issues of masculinity and the construction of its spaces.

It is also worth mentioning that, although the men interviewed do not know theoretical concepts of masculinity, they are aware that their work may be questioned. constantly for carrying out a trade that is associated with women. They are also aware that remaining anonymous allows them to be calm, without receiving questions. Seen directly, male weavers allow the opportunity to question what is understood by masculinity and rethinking the concept itself will depend on

each man, since unravelling concepts established by a system allows for weaving other paths, as Jairo Cruz refers to:

I like knitting, it gives me the opportunity to support my family. I am grateful to my mother-in-law, who helped me. Her name was Agustina Moscut. Thanks to her teachings, I have a new way of earning a living. I don't pay attention to what people say about me. What interests me is my work. The rest doesn't matter. Knowing how to knit doesn't make me any less of a man. (J. Cruz, Personal communication, May 20, 2022)

Allowing male weavers to express themselves helps to demonstrate that the teachings established by society can change, as expressed by Mr. Cruz, who is married and father of a daughter. Perhaps the greatest contribution that the weavers are making is that through their individuality they are able to confront and refute sexist comments. In doing so, they will be weaving their own masculinity while continuing to contribute to local development. It can be concluded, then, that without thinking about it this group of weaving men has started a fight against stereotypes raised by a socially established system.

Discussion of results

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the construction of a more just society free of gender-based violence through discussion and debate. It aims to make visible other paths that go beyond the established order, and in no way seeks to deny that, in history, women have borne the brunt of issues of exclusion and violence and are the ones who have been most vulnerable due to the hierarchical order. Thus, the LGBT community should not be excluded, but it is considered of most importance to analyze gender issues in order to avoid further injustices in minority social groups. In the end,

it is the constant search of human beings to live together in harmony and equality. Achieving this is difficult without the help of all sectors of a community, which is why it is necessary to carry out and promote more studies on gender, since it is recognized that most of the violence comes from a hegemonic system.

Therefore, the need to work as a society on issues of discussion about masculinity is recognized, thereby allowing us to influence new spaces for gender studies. It is also appropriate to recognize the difficulties that these proposals face, since some sectors of society may resist change. However, these changes can be promoted in different ways, such as having identified a group of men who break with established norms, making their work visible. Based on the above, this research agrees with the theoretical concepts of Lamas, (2018) on the construction of gender in social groups. By breaking established norms, the models constructed and accepted as normal within the community are questioned.

Another topic to be discussed is how male and female models have been learned since childhood, agreeing with Serrano (2021), who states that the family is the fundamental pillar for building gender models accepted by society, which are transmitted from generation to generation thanks to oral tradition, which in this case will not only transmit ancestral knowledge but will also continue models of behavior normally accepted by the community..

To do this, it is necessary to continue analyzing gender epistemology, which allows us to better understand how social groups are constructed and how they build their behavioral models, continuing with what Blazquez (2012) proposed in the search for theories that can break with the norms established by society, seeking new

spaces for analysis and gender studies to discuss ways of exercising and understanding masculinity. Within these lines, we cannot leave aside the contributions that the weavers themselves are making without considering it previously, because with their work they have initiated a way of seeing how tasks or jobs do not have exclusive gender. This activity has broken the barrier of teaching only for women, and it has been possible to involve men in this work, thanks to the oral tradition, which is transmitted by adult women who share their ancestral knowledge with the new generations. In the topic of oral tradition, it is important to emphasize that not only women transmit the knowledge of weaving, they also exchange knowledge about symbolism, worldview and techniques for using the backstrap loom. This article did not dedicate many pages to the discussion of oral tradition, since the central theme was masculinity seen from the perspective of the weavers, which opens an opportunity to address more topics in future research.

Conclusions

1. The influence of feminist epistemology is recognized in this article, which allowed us to identify the capacity that subjects have to create changes in social groups by gaining spaces that have previously been invisible.
2. This article cannot claim that there are new masculinities, according to theoretical references it can be said that there are other ways of expressing masculinities. On the other hand, a structure can be identified in terms of masculinity issues, understanding that there is not only one and according to theoretical references, four types can be classified.

3. There are also two types of paths regarding issues of masculinity: the first is the one that is normally established and morally accepted, and the second is the one that is outside the control of a hegemonic system.
4. This article presents the need for a more in-depth analysis of male weavers and how they are questioned for choosing a trade for which they are skilled and talented, including the social criticism they would face if they leave the private spaces of their home workshops to which they are accustomed to carry out their work.
5. It is also important to mention that the men interviewed did not generate any dissatisfaction, possibly because throughout the interviews conducted the interview format was not rigidly structured, which allowed the men to express themselves as freely as possible..
6. Regarding the objectives proposed in this article, it can be mentioned that traditional weaving itself allows male weavers to create new parameters for their study and analysis, and thus question the concept of masculinity. Although they themselves cannot conceptualize the term, their work provides significant information for creating new epistemologies on gender.
7. Finally, the approach with each of the weavers generated a space for dialogue that allowed for the creation of links for the realization of this article and future research proposals.

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Figure 1. Jairo Cruz Rodriguez



Figure 2.
Jairo Cruz Rodriguez
in the process of weaving



Figure 3.
Jairo Cruz Rodriguez weaving on a backstrap loom.



Figure 4. Jairo Cruz Rodriguez counting the threads to weave.



Figure 5
Jairo Cruz Rodriguez
Feeding the tissue



Figure 6.
Felipe Cojón traditional weaver



Figure 7.
Felipe Cojón showing her own methodology for knitting.



Figura 8.
Felipe Cojón in the process of weaving



Figure 9.
Deivis García and the urdimbre



Figure 10.
Deivis García in the process of weaving

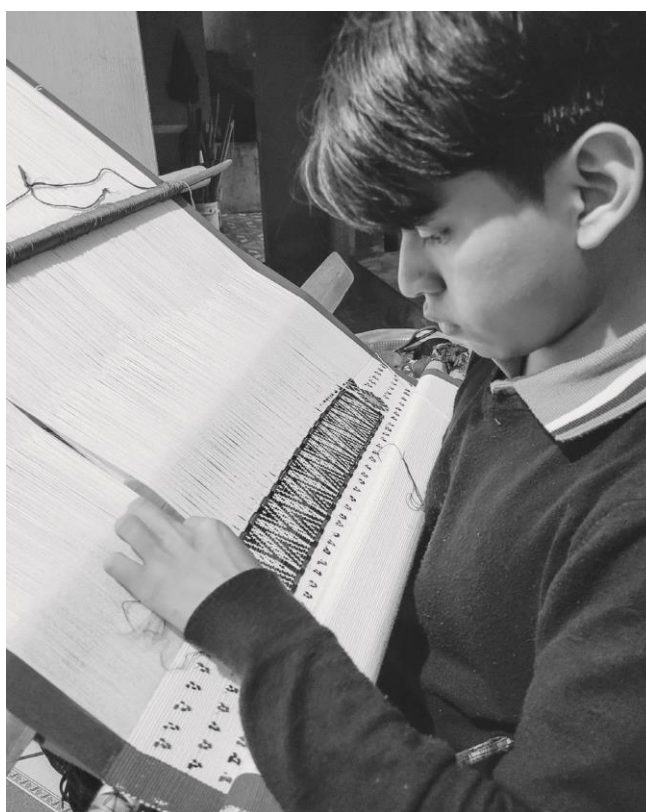


Figure 11.
Carlos Tubac Lobo



Figure 12.
Carlos Tubac Lobo in the process of weaving



Figure 13.
Carlos García traditional
weaver



Figura 14.
Byron Tubac Lobo



Figure 15.
Byron Tubac Lobo
in the process of weaving



Figure 16.
Byron Tubac Lobo



Figure 17.
Jairo Cruz Rodriguez 2



Figure 18. Carlos García in the process of weaving



Figure 19.

Carlos García counting threads for knitting



Figure 20.
Carlos García wearing traditional
Palineca clothing

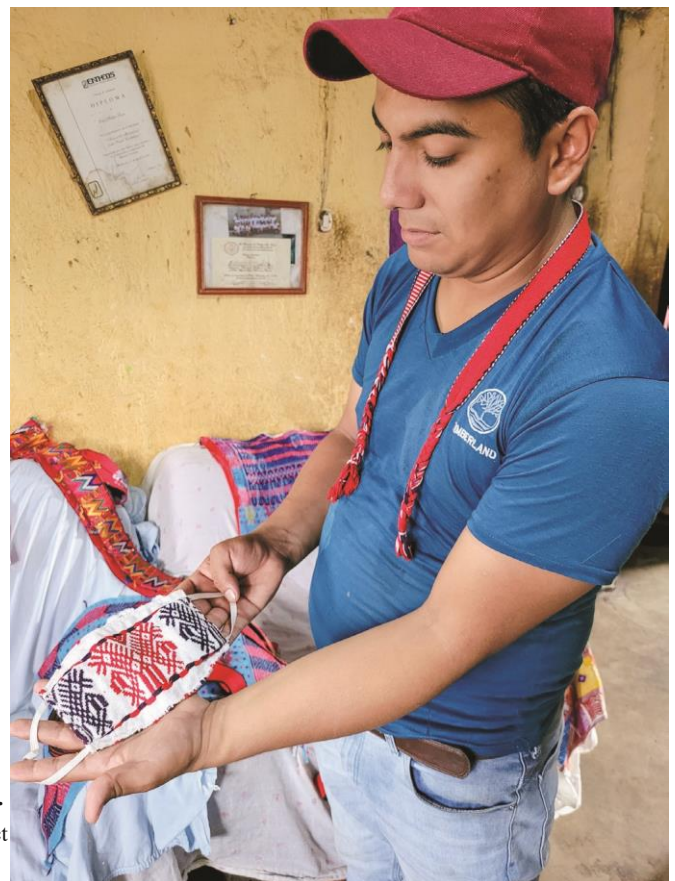


Figura 21.
Jairo Cruz Rodriguez showing a product
derived from traditional weaving

