

International Institute of Social Studies



A journey of silences and encounters

The story of a scholar indigenous strategy to counter sexual violence in Mexico

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

CNTE	Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación/National Coordinating Committe of Workers in Education
CRC	Convention on the Rights Children
CY	Children and Youth
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
IEEPO	Instituto Estatal De Educación Pública de Oaxaca
INEGI	Nationb
LGE	Ley General de Educación
LGDNNA	General Law on Children and Adolescents
S-22	Sección 22
SEP	Ministery of Education
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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Abstract

In recent years, international organizations have stressed the need to collect accurate information that grants a better understanding of the situation faced by

children and adolescents. That approach has been challenged by feminist theories in order to open spaces for local knowledge that can not fit in the mainstream development

This research is a journey of encounters. The encounters result of the analysis of a practice to counter sexual violence against indigenous children in Oaxaca, Mexico. Using a postcolonialism feminist approach I got into the set of practices that give life to a particular strategy promoted by the indigenous education system which has been working in the mixe region.

To observe how this strategy is implemented in the field brought a lot of insights that counter the approach used in the mainstream childhood studies. Throughout this research the insights will be explore to give voice to other knowledges.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research is an autoethnography focused on a practice that break the silence of mainstream development theories. First, it challenges the use of statistics and information systems to comprehend the magnitude of violence on children and second, it questions the universal use of the children's rights approach. The use of a postcolonialism feminist theories in this research allow to recognize other ways to deal with childhood studies.

Keywords

Keywords separated by commas

Chapter 1 Where my journey starts

1.1 The encounter between an economist and a development student

Five years ago, when I started to work at UNICEF as an expert on information about children and youth (CY), I noticed two gaps: the first was the gap of information related to violence against CY; the second gap was related to the absence of the local context where the children were growing. I detected a need of going beyond understandings on violence a mere statistical representation and solely defined by legal frames.

It is true that since the Mexican State ratified the Convention on the Children Rights (CRC) in 1990, there has been notable progress in the fulfillment of the children's rights (UNICEF 2010), especially after the enacted of the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGDNNA) in 2014. As a data expert working for UNICEF, I faced the challenge of building strong arguments based on statistical data that could support the recommendations to incorporate a children right's approach in the generation of information collected and in the design and implementation of social policies in the country. As result of the incorporation of children's approach to the statistics instruments, Mexico can presently guarantee the fulfillment of children's rights (UNICEF 2010).

In recent years, international organizations have stressed the need to collect accurate information that grants a better understanding of the situation faced by children and adolescents (Finkelhor and Korbin 1988, National Research Council 2012, Orjuela and Naranjo 2012). It is assumed that, national and local governments would be able to demonstrate their compliance with the international agreements signed to protect children. I actively participated in discussions with the National Institute of Statistics (INEGI) and with the Interinstitutional

Groups¹ specialized in socioeconomics statistics, to support the incorporation of the children's rights approach.

Mexico, as an upper-middle income country², is a good example of how statistics can incorporate a children's right approach. For example, the multidimensional approach to measure poverty that has been recognized for incorporating a complete frame of children's rights³ (UNICEF 2014) Another example is the National Government Census that has included a disaggregation for age⁴, gender, type of violence experienced, and other characteristics that permit a comprehension of the situation of children and adolescents in conflict with Mexican Law. More recently, the National System of Information on Children and Adolescents⁵ established in the LGDNNA become the official reference to monitor the enforcement of children's rights by the Mexican State. However, despite the

¹. The Interinstitutional Groups are a multidisciplinary team integrated with ministries of government and some invited agencies of the UN. Their main objective is to analyze from different perspectives a particular topic identifies as a priority in the national agenda. The analysis and recommendations of these groups are taken as support for the revision of social programs and policies. They also have a strong component of statistical analysis that in the last years has helped to improve the quality of information generated in the country.

² According to the World Bank, Mexico is a country of upper-middle income. UNICEF and other international NGOs defined their role according to it. In Mexico, the role of UNICEF has been more advocacy and recommendations in specific areas such as protection, education and social policies based on the evidence of accurate information. The classification of the countries can be found here: <https://data-helpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/378834-how-does-the-world-bank-classify-countries> and <https://datos.bancomundial.org/pais/mexico> consulted on October 12, 2017.

³ Since 2010, UNICEF and The National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL, *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social*) have been working on a methodology to include a child's rights approach in the measurement of poverty. The results are available every two years according to the official disposition of information produced by the INEGI. This joint effort has represented a turning point in the use of quantitative methodologies with a rights approach. http://www.coneval.org.mx/InformesPublicaciones/Paginas/pobreza_y_derechos_sociales_ni%C3%B1os_ni%C3%B1as_y_adolescentes_2010-2012.aspx consulted on October 18, 2017.

⁴ Age and sex, are very important variables in the analysis of protection systems for children and adolescents. The inclusion of that information and its corresponding non-inclusion in the Census of Government assured the continuity of information and thus the monitoring of the situation of those in conflict with the law but also it is a manner to monitor the institutional answer and the coherence between the theory, the law- and practice.

⁵ The National System of Information on Children collects all the information related to children in the country. Its creation was mandatory after the establishment of the LGDNNA. <https://www.infosipinna.org/> consulted on October 2, 2017.

efforts of the government and other stakeholders, collecting information about violence against children is still a challenge.

Although it is known that violence is part of the risk faced by children, violence only ‘exists’ for policy makers if it is reported to the legal mechanism and becomes part of the statistics. Unfortunately, the difficult nature of violence against children limits the reporting of cases and, when official statistics exist, they rarely reflect the context faced by children in households, schools and in communities ((Schneider 1996, Petersen et al. 2014, Finkelhor and Korbin 1988). In the case of sexual violence, recent surveys have shown that violence is a subject that belongs to a private space. However, households as a ‘private’ sphere are not a direct arena of action and other resources and strategies need to be considered to ensure spaces free of violence for children (INEGI 2016).

Through my experience working with data from a children’s rights approach, I was aware that sexual violence against children was not an issue that can be resolved through statistics and legal norms that homogenize the concepts of both concepts: violence and children. Thus, I decided to focus this research paper on an alternative way to view sexual violence against children in which I can explore the from my own embodied knowledge and perspectives, as an economist, an indigenous and formally educated woman that grew up seeing the teacher’s resistances in Oaxaca through her mother, the challenge of this topic.

I remember that any time I suddenly mentioned something related to sexuality at home, I was immediately silenced by my parents, especially if I had done so a in public space. My mother explained menstruation and the changes that as a woman I was about to experience during adolescence, but she never talked to me about the risk of sexual violence. I used to hear in church, at school, mothers of my classmates, and in isolated comments, that virginity was the most important value for women. If women lost it, they no longer had worth. How could a little child lose her virginity? What is virginity? When I approached my relatives with these kinds of questions, they looked at me in askance. Sexuality was then

an issue displaced to biology and counseling classes. In both instances, the approach was limited to the biological aspect and reserved to the psychological changes occurring during adolescence and, the risk of getting pregnant during adolescence; but sexual violence was not a topic in any of these courses. The most interesting thing to me continues to be that sexuality was an "obscure" issue in which children and adolescents are viewed as spectators instead of principal actors.

I grew up surrounded by a lot of prejudices surrounding sexuality; while I was maturing, I discovered a variety of stories of sexual abuse experienced during the childhood and adolescence of people very close to me. A common factor I detected in those stories was a lack of awareness of what exactly had happened and why because most of them recognized the sexual abuse long after it happened when there was a definition to name it, or by recognizing the effects of having had such an experience. Perhaps there is not a specific concept to define what I understand now, as a woman that left her community in Santa María del Tule a long time ago, what sexual abuse is. The problem with defining sexual abuse of children is to understand that the definition used by the law, epidemiological and social policies need to be broadened enough to encompass the diversity of children and the context in which they live.

This was the first path along the way of this research.

I will never forget when I shared with my supervisor, very convinced and eager, that I was interested in analyzing sexual violence against children. She looked at me and immediately said: "Perfect, you got a topic! Which part of the problem will you analyze: the political problem, consequences on children, the institutional answer, the justice system? Where? When?" Then she asked me if I was really sure? I said I was, although I confess I didn't know how challenging it would be.

For me, after an exhaustive review of theories and legal definitions, sexual violence against children could be understood as a journey surrounded by the silence that starts to break while walking. This journey, while deeply personal, has effects on the individual and community life, and it could start during childhood or adolescence. The silence implies the reluctance and resistance of the parents, teachers and a society as a whole, to talk openly about sexuality and sexual violence. This silence also involves a series of misunderstandings about sexuality; the silence could be converted into ineffective actions implemented after an episode of abuse. This silence is, as some participants of surveys recognize, the fear to talk and to act (ENDIREH 2016). The silence could represent an attempt to safe-guard the honor of the families. I have come to realize how powerful silence can be through my embodied knowledge in this research. That is to say, this silence is an element present in the statistics – just 1 out of 10 cases is denounced due to fear, a lack of confidence in the justice system and ignorance as to how to proceed in case sexual abuse is presented⁶-. Even before I started this research I had heard a lot of histories covered by silence but during the time I spent during the communities I listened again the most famous phrase of my grandmother “*calladita y quedita you are prettier*” (silent and still/passive) referring to the attitude to sexuality and sexual abuse.

Through the development of this research I began to understand that silence is an element present in statistics and in the stories, as I have personally experienced. Keeping this in mind and also the different perspectives with which sexual violence might be analyzed, I undertake this research as an exercise that privilege the practice. To be more precise, I focused on practices of prevention of sexual violence in indigenous schools in the mixe region of Oaxaca. My intention is not, as I had been my professional habit, to evaluate the strategy, or to measure its impact, and much less to criticize it. My main objective is present the strategy and describe the elements that make it operate in a particular context, as is the Mixe region. I want to break the silence behind the data to listen a local practice experience in order to understand how the knowledge can be constructed to open the floor to different approach that can offer alternatives to understand

⁶ National Survey of Dynamics of Households Relationships (ENDIREH) 2016.

sexual violence against children. I want to break the silence through the listen of the stories of parents and teachers facing a strategy that put in front of ‘communality’ the individuality of children’s rights. I want to break the silence through the recognition of my positionality.

Additionally, I want to notice the encounters I found in this research process. I define an encounter as the process in which two different opposite approaches or perspectives meet each other, challenging the other. And finally, and not least important, I want to share how I had to face the results of this research as an encounter that has challenge myself.

This last point was for me, the most unexpected. My supervisor and I took a lot of time discussing sexual violence in the indigenous context and she always challenged me to flip the coin. But I believe the most important of her comments was that this research, following the feminist approach, is clearly not about the changes I observed in the children with the strategy of prevention. Rather it is about acknowledging how I had changed after this research. In order to reflect on both issues, I follow a general guiding question:

What are the key characteristics of the Mexican indigenous teacher’s strategies to counter sexual violence against children and adolescents?

1.2 A first meet with The Procuraduria

During the last years, the insistence of international organizations such as UNICEF and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed to protect children’s rights in Mexico have achieved actions to protect children against violence. As part of those actions each local legislation has established specific protocols aimed at combating violence in households but also in schools and in

public spaces⁷. Forums dealt with violence with the participation of the international community which participated. Specific surveys were undertaken⁸ and campaigns directed to children and young people were launched. Even so, sexual abuse continues to be unknown territory for authorities, policymakers, parents, teachers, and tutors of children.

I discovered the *Procuraduría* -Procurement Office- by serendipity. After I decided on this research topic, I started to look at the strategies implemented by the government of Oaxaca focused on indigenous children. However, I did not find a strategy that I considered an effective strategy. For me, effective means that it has as its main objective the prevention of sexual violence against children and that it can be maintained along a specific period of time. This implies that the strategy includes human and financial resources for its continuity. Finally, an effective strategy should show the results over time, attesting to its effectiveness. All these elements assure the continuity of the strategy and as many authors have mentioned, continuity is the means to assure a real impact on children (Finkelhor 2009). Probably my challenge was to find a strategy focused on indigenous children. Where could I find it?, I wondered.

My mother, who has been a rural teacher for more than thirty years, suggested I think about the indigenous teachers that I had known. Then, I remembered Maira, the teacher that I had met in the First Encounter Against the Discrimination of Girls and Teenagers (*Primer Encuentro contra la Discriminación de Niñas y Adolescentes*) organized by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in the State of Oaxaca and other NGOs (UNICEF 2015). During that encounter Maira and I shared our experiences related to dealing with violence in schools from our own personal experiences. She spoke from her practice in the communities and

⁷ The LGDNNA enacted in 2014 established as an obligation of each State and municipality the design and implementation of mechanisms to protect children against violence -including sexual violence- and also the promotion of a peace culture in schools and the places where children are developing.

⁸ ENIM is the name given to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Mexico. This survey was undertaken for the first time in Mexico in 2015. It contains health, nutrition and violence indicators for children and women. It is an example of how the country has followed the recommendations made by UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/ENIM_KFR.pdf consulted on October 18, 2017.

I from my experience as an expert analyzing data. I felt comfortable because although we had different backgrounds, I identified with her as an indigenous woman also concerned with the risk indigenous children face in schools and in communities where they live. We continued to be in contact through social media and some months ago I just asked her if she knew strategies to prevent sexual violence in indigenous communities. Serendipity comes in when Maira told me that she has been working for more than five years in Mixe community schools on the promoting the prevention of sexual violence.

Then my journey of encounters started. I organized some Skype calls with Maira, which I presented enthusiastically to my supervisor. As always, she focused my attention on how this research would challenge me. First, because of the methodology she suggested I use and second because this is an analysis that put a practice in the center. To be more specific, the set of practices created by Maira Manrique, as procurator in the Mixe region, to counter sexual violence. She has incorporated what I identified as ‘indigenous-Mixe’ and local elements to handle it. This exercise is aimed at understanding how this strategy was built and how it is working through its practice, how it operates as a local strategy and if it could challenge a model of education in which the idea of protection is promoted through a children’s rights framework. It is an encounter which occurs in a place of resistance: the school, where some characteristics such as traditional laws and community structure *exacerbate* sexuality and sexual violence. And as I learned during the process, it is about how I was dealing with my own encounters.

1.3 The compass of this research: positionality

“Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with the usual assembly of feelings, failings and moods. All of these things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher”. (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p. 157)

Positionality is a contribution to social sciences from the feminist introduced in the 70s as an element that allowed researchers to become aware of the importance of their subjectivity in the research process. This subjectivity is always presented in the definition, collection and interpretation of data and consequently affects the results of the research (Code 1991, McEwan 2001). That means that researchers are not assumed to be neutral in the production of knowledge. Feminist scholars have recognized the positionality as a way to remove inherent effects of the researcher on the results. (Stanley and Wise 1983) Thus, a researcher's positionality of the researcher and her/his relationship with the field establishes the lens used for the researcher to understand the field. (Gouldner,1971).

Situating knowledge is fundamental for feminist research methodologies. This is important because the results of the research are closely linked to the researcher (Haraway 1988). This approach is taken from Donna Haraway (1991) and Sandra Harding (1991) who establish that the production of knowledge is determined by its origins and consequently it is not possible to assume a universalism for the results (Harding 1992, Haraway 1988, Stanley and Wise 1983). Knowledge is therefore partial and specific. Situating knowledge is understanding how my positionality influences the knowledge that resulted from the research. It means that as a researcher I am aware of my position when I describe the results.

I did not use to think too much about my positionality because I never hesitated in work in a indigenous community in Oaxaca. However, this is the first time I openly recognize my positionality. I used to envision a social problem through methods that demanded the rigor of the 'scientific method'. That implied establishing a distance between the researcher and the topic researched that is achieved using statistics and models that guarantee objective results.

Thus, I look at myself: an indigenous woman educated as an economist and working for more than five years using quantitative analysis to support social

policies in favor of children, now assuming the responsibility of carrying out this present study from a postcolonialism feminist approach.

1.4 Can I be an agent of knowledge just because I am?

My mother was a teacher and I grew up in a context marked by one word: resistance so when I was a child I spent a lot of time in teachers' meetings or in protests against the government, most of them in which teachers were demanding better education. Teachers in Oaxaca are characterized for maintaining a critical position against the national model of education, and in particular, the Teachers' Union in Oaxaca is known as a resistance movement against the policies and actions promoted by the federal and local governments. When I moved to Mexico City 16 years ago, I followed the teachers' movement through my mother's comments and the news. They were always portrayed as unable to understand that children needed to go to school as part of their rights. In fact, the teachers associated with the Teacher's Union (S-22) had a bad reputation because their resistance was thought to have a negative impact on children. I remember that every year I stopped classes due to the start of protests by teachers. Teachers literally left school to organize activities in Oaxaca City and in Mexico City to demand an education based on the local conditions of students and teachers. The demands changed over time and recently the resistance is against the implementation of the so called New Educative Model. The protest is a critique of attempts to homogenize education at each level, which assumes that children are the same independently of the context in which they live and the sociocultural and economic conditions they face (PTEO-DGEI 2012).

Thus, I started my encounters. First of all, I recognized that my purpose since the beginning of this analysis was to explore methodologies which are different from what I was accustomed to using. Second, being inexperienced in the use of other methodologies, I didn't know where start. I just returned to my favorite place to change my economic spirit, my supervisor's office, and I started to doubt that the only approach was the use of data. Was that possible? Even though I consider myself an eclectic economist, I couldn't imagine other ways. I

confess that although I had been seduced by anthropology and sociology for a long time, I was not familiarized with these disciplines' approaches to the topic of sexual abuse. Can I be an agent of knowledge just because of who I am? After a lot of discussions with my supervisor, we agreed on an approach to knowledge and a methodology: an autoethnography and autobiographical approach embraced by the postcolonial feminism theories.

Chapter 2 Opening a new umbrella to understand sexual abuse: feminist approach

2.1 Postcolonialism feminist approach and childhood studies

As I said before, this research is about practice. It is framed upon feminist post-colonial theory and is supported in critical feminist understanding of positionality and situated knowledges. I understand postcolonialism as the critical review of how the histories of the countries that have been colonies have been told. Although the analysis of the strategy is not directly focused on children, the strategy is, hence an entry point to know about the situation of children participating in the strategy and identify some elements of the analysis for understand the limitations of the access to protection for indigenous children (Kehily 2009). Although I use a postcolonial feminist approach (McEwan 2001, Haraway 1988), I keep the recommendations of scholars working in the context of children developing (Nieuwenhuys 2013). It is possible because feminist use an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and research. This is the case of postcolonial Feminist and childhood studies that insist in the variety of ways in which “the knowledge could be constructed and reconstructed in relation to time and space, age, gender, ethnicity, etc” (Alanen 2011) (147). In the case of childhood studies, that implies that “what has long been ‘hidden’ and naturalized in children’s lives could now be seen as socially and historically constructed, therefore always also ‘political’” (Alanen 2011) (147). I use this idea to get an image of children more contextualized to the characteristics in which children are living, taking into account the structures resulting from the coloniality. By coloniality I understand the persistence of colonial arrangements presented in our ‘modern’ capitalism system, even the colonial structure had disappeared (Mignolo 2007).

I mentioned before that this analysis is looking for encounters. This is another commonality between postcolonial feminist and childhood studies. Nieuwenhuys has mentioned that encounters produce some challenges as to the way children’s characteristics and the problems they faced should be addressed in one way (Nieuwenhuys 2013). This way is the model based on the ‘north’ model. The use of postcolonialism feminism becomes indispensable as a critique to the

traditional model of knowledge generation but also as an opportunity to understand that social policies aimed to children should take into account what assumptions inform the ideas of a 'child' is used for those policies.

My mother refers to me and herself as women in resistance. I confess that I daily discover what she means. Going deep in postcolonialism theories I understand that despite having grown up surrounded by a traditional understanding of life, half Zapotec, half Mixtec, I also acquired the idea that we (indigenous people like me) are looking for development. I moved from my community because in order to improve my life conditions I needed to become an educated woman. Through my Bachelor's Degree, I learned an 'approach' to measure poverty and understand social problems affected 'disadvantaged groups' like indigenous people, women, and children. To be honest, although I participated in class to say that that model cannot be implemented in Oaxaca, I usually understood it as the way it should be. In a way, I was colonized. However, from my trench, I have tried to conciliate my indigenous knowledge with the models I have learned at school. For example, any time I presented data related to children, I suggested considering the fact that numbers are not a synonym of real life.

I use postcolonial approach in this research to be critically award of the assumptions informing the idea of children and sexual violence against children traditionally framed in a Eurocentric view. Although this is not a broad field in childhood studies, I follow the idea of those scholars who believe this approach could open spaces for those who, like me, "are named 'subalternes'"(Nieuwenhuys 2013)". This is the case of the indigenous communities in Mexico that for a long time have been speaking but not listened and represented in the national agenda. In the case of indigenous children, there are a variety of subjects that could be considered as backward. For example, child marriage as part of the cultural system in some communities or the labor children do in the field and the consequences to their development or the place children have in the community are others. It would be unfair to punish the theories of child development to privilege a Eurocentric approach because those theories were developed in a way parallel to the time of colonialism. Then the concept of children attended to the rising development model (Nandy 1984) where only the

enlightenment by Europeans could lead the children, as the colonized population, to 'development' (Burman, 2008; Cannella and Soto, 2010).

I recognize that after I had been working with children's rights, it became a challenge to take a postcolonial approach to analyze how a strategy to prevent sexual violence in indigenous schools on the one hand, challenges the traditional idea of what a child is in a particular context and on the other, is an intervention that uses children's rights and unintentionally reproduces a Eurocentrism. Postcolonial approach for me could function to criticize an aspect that from my personal and professional experience, has not been explored: the adoption of children's rights through the implementation of the law and the use of indicators without considering the dynamics presented in the communities, rural or urban, they inhabit.

During the time I worked for UNICEF, I noticed the efforts of advocacy made by each area of the Office in order to really achieve the fulfillment of children's rights for all Mexican children. The idea of this fulfillment was based on the CRC and the international recommendations made to the federal government. All the recommendations were offered through reports that included the available information in the country. As a result, the country, or the UNICEF office could act to help improve the life of children. I believe that the most important attempt was the active participation of UNICEF in the establishment of the LGDNNA at the federal and local level. The law represented a turning point in the way children are conceived of in the public agenda because it implied that the State was obliged to construct specific mechanisms to assure the well-being of all children in the country. But going back to the critique of postcolonialism, that the LGNNA takes most of the guidelines established in the CRC should not be forgotten. That means that the homogeneous model of childhood is the reference from which the needs of Mexican children are drawn.

There is not enough evidence about how the colonial encounter affected the lives of children in the South and in the North, especially indigenous children. Nevertheless, that is the richness of children studies from a postcolonial feminism perspective might lay. Finally, the concepts related to childhood are not static. Postcolonial perspective becomes a challenge to review the understandings of development and the fact that there is not one childhood. I mean,

the CRC is not the panacea to protect children, especially not indigenous children.

According to postcolonial scholars, childhood is an unequal and situated encounter, so the critiques should be addressed to the different fields of intervention such as legal, psychological, pedagogical, educational, etc., instead of focusing on the sociological or anthropological aspects (Viruru 2005) in order to produce a more eclectic analysis that allows for the recognition of the frontiers of childhood and the dynamism of these concepts. That is where postcolonial feminism theory can be embraced through positionality and other resources.

2.2 An economist can be an ethnographer

Ethnography is probably the most famous research approach used by anthropologists. It has been used to describe a culture unknown to them, the object of their research, and it became a useful approach not only for them but also for sociologist that has used it to understand mostly marginalized social groups. (Goffman, 1968; Whyte, 1955). Ethnography has taken an important role in the research of children due to its assumption that children are active actors that build their own space through the relationships they construct in the space modeled by adults (Denzin 2013, Kehily 2009).

Also, ethnography forces the researcher to leave the adult-centered perspective to embrace a perspective in which children are subjects able to influence the environment around them. (Edmond 2000). Contrary to the methods I formerly used, ethnography does not demand one prove a 'test' hypothesis, or that one look for the variables that determine sexual violence in this case. Instead of that, ethnography is an invitation to be part of the field and as my supervisor warned me: "be ready for surprises". Thus, ethnography becomes a way to learn about the sociocultural, political and economic dynamics of the group to be analyzed (Kapoor 2017, Denzin 2013) In the case of children, they turn out to be the guides and the researcher, the apprentice. (Edmond 2000). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) My purpose for using ethnography is not to establish a general theory about the prevention of sexual violence against indigenous children, but rather to describe how the strategy works in a particular context such as the Mixe's. I want to share how a series of encounters are happening through the position of children's rights and the traditional organization of Mixe communities. Although

there are a variety of ways for making observations, and that it is possible for the researcher to move from one method to another along the research (Hessler, 1992), I want to declare myself an active observer from the beginning of this process but most importantly, I acknowledge myself as a researcher that has been shaped by this search.

When I planned to go to Oaxaca, I assumed my role as a full participant, not only of the activities of the *Procuraduria*, but also of the personal activities of the person responsible for the *Procuraduria*. I agree that although it is a way of improving the quality of my observations, I recognize the limitations of my condition of being alien to the daily dynamics of the *Procuraduria* and also to that of the children, parents and teachers in the communities (James *et al.*, 1998). I interacted with children as a participant in all the activities of the *Procuraduria*. I did not expect that most of the children, teachers and parents assumed that I was a teacher and that that assumption would create a comfortable space for them and of course for me. I spent the days walking in rough terrains, eating what parents offered us and listening carefully to their stories. I never said that I was a researcher. It is not common for ethnographers to be covert but in this case (Naples 2003), the Procurator suggested I not say so because of security reasons; the conflicts among communities on the one hand, and the structural conflicts in the school zone on the other. Mixe communities are also characterized by their initial hermetism with outsiders. By not declaring myself a researcher but rather as an indigenous woman from Oaxaca, even if I do not speak the Mixe language, opened a space to develop relationships with children, parents, teachers and in some cases with local authorities (Emond, 2000)

My starting point in this research is the idea that it is not possible to homogenize the concept of children, as well as the experiences and practices they face in their daily lives (Grisso 1992). My challenge was to be neutral with my observances and avoid any prejudice of what I saw or heard (Fine and Sandstrom 1988). I believe my role of active observer worked because I had previously established, though unintentionally, a friendship with Maira (the procurator). This

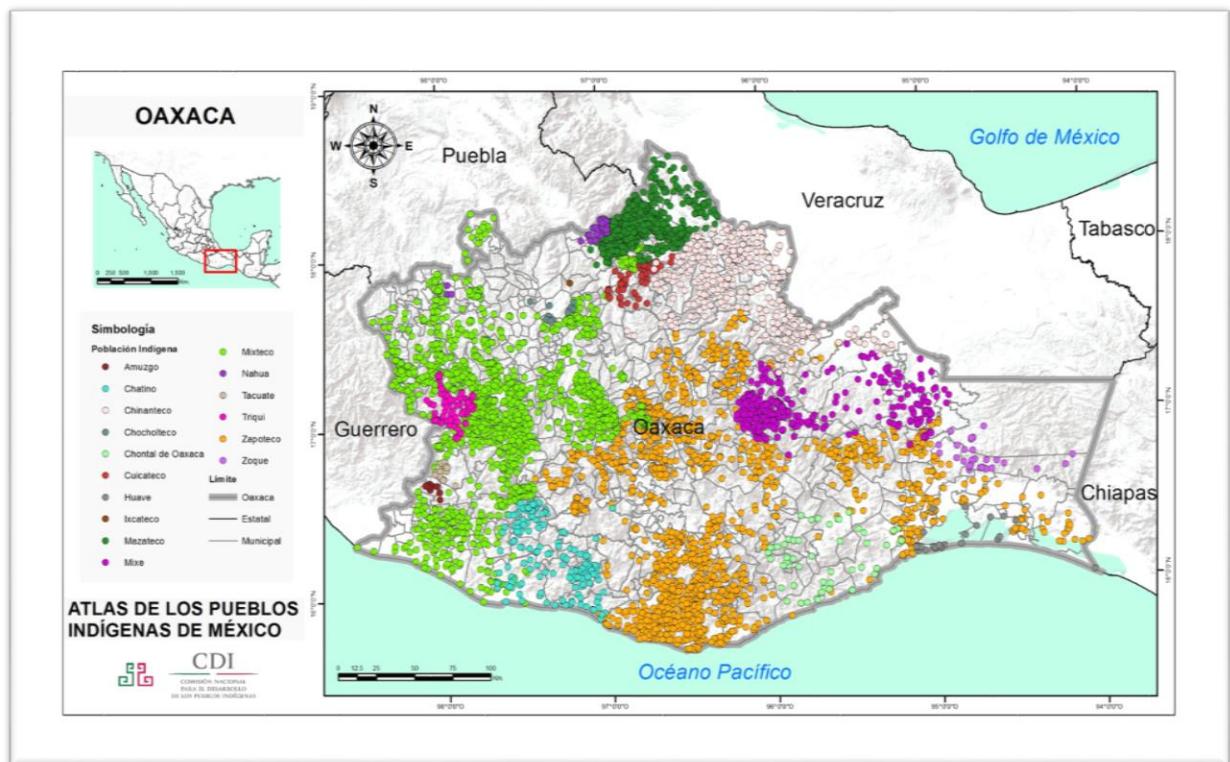
relationship opened the doors first with the participants of the dynamics: students and teachers, and afterwards, with parents and some local authorities. They assumed I was a teacher, perhaps because I look like a teacher. I use similar clothes and I don't have a different attitude. My idea about an ethnographer was limited to the use of a notebook, the famous field notes and field dairies (Lofland & Lofland, 1984) that became my treasure. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973)

Chapter 3 I was born in Oaxaca

3.1 The beginning of the route: Oaxaca

Oaxaca is one of the 32 states of the United Mexican States. It is located in the southwestern part of the country and it has been characterized by its cultural diversity, as more than 16 indigenous groups live there, including the *Mixteco*, *Amuzgo*, *Triqui*, *Chocho*, *Lixcateco*, *Popoloca*, *Nahua*, *Mazateco*, *Cuicateco*, *Chinanteco*, *Mixe*, *Zoque*, *Huave*, *Chontal*, *Zapoteco*, and *Chatino* (Figure 1). According to the last census (2015), Oaxaca has a population of 3.9 million of people. 52.4% are women and 47.6% are men. 65.7% of them have declared to be indigenous due to the way they live and, 32% reported speaking an indigenous language. The indigenous population represents 14.4% of the national population (INEGI 2015). The diversity of ethnicities made of Oaxaca a complex entity where the so-called customary legal system (recognized as local forms of self-governance) co-exists with the state legal and institutional system established by the Mexican Federal Constitution.

Map 1. Map of the principal indigenous populations in the state of Oaxaca



Source: National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), Mexico, 2017.

In the State of Oaxaca, as in the entire country, violence against women is defined in the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence.⁹ This law defines violence against women as: “any action or omission, based on gender, that causes women psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic, or sexual harm or suffering, or death, in both private and public spheres” (General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence 2007). In the case of violence against children, it is defined in the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGDNNA)¹⁰, the first legal framework in the country that aims to legally protect children and adolescents. Oaxaca was one of the first states of the Mexican Republic to adopt it and the state's own local law derives from it¹¹.

⁹ http://www.summit-americas.org/brief/docs/Law_on_access_to_a_life_free_violence.pdf accessed on 30 August, 2017.

¹⁰ <http://www.leyderechosinfancia.mx/ley-general/ley-general-pdf/> accessed on 2 September, 2017.

¹¹ Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents from Oaxaca <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2xbaDWKi3Jlbm0tNHFRdlZyczA/view> accessed on 2 September, 2017.

Sexual violence against indigenous children and adolescents is a multifaceted issue that cannot be addressed without considering the characteristics of the context in which such violence is happening and, the way in which power relationships are constructed and deconstructed in different periods of time (Gelles RJ 1975, MacMillan 1998, Belsky 1993). As I declared initially, I do not want to use data to analyze sexual violence, though I use it to set a context to recognize the magnitude of the problem.

According to the last National Survey on Dynamics of Household Relationships¹² (ENDIREH 2016), 7 out of 10 women older than 15 years old, had experienced violence by their partner who is usually the principal aggressor, while 4 of every 10 women declared that the violence they suffered was sexual violence. Sexual violence is the most frequent aggression in communal spaces: the streets, parks and on public transportation; 34% of women had suffered intimidation, harassment or sexual abuse (ENDIREH 2016). Following this trend, it is not surprising that 25% of women who had attended school had experienced some type of aggression, 11% of them reporting sexual violence (ENDIREH 2016).

The state of Oaxaca occupies first place at the national level in situations of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment¹³ and sexual abuse in the schools (ENDIREH 2016). 38% of the cases registered in schools were related to sexual violence. Almost half of the cases were perpetrated by a male classmate and 11% by a professor (ENDIREH 2016). In the case of sexual violence which

¹² The ENDIREH is a periodical survey established as an official statistical instrument to collect information related to violent experiences: physical, economic, sexual, emotional and patrimonial, faced by all women older than 15 years, in the different spaces they develop their daily lives: schools, public spaces, work space, etc. The last ENDIREH incorporates questions related to sexual abuse in childhood. Link: <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/proyectos/encuestas/especiales/endireh/2016/> consulted on September 23, 2017.

¹³ Harassment differs from sexual harassment because the first does not include sexual aggression against the victim. It could be represented by actions that hurt the victim, such as verbal or physical injuries but in both cases, sexual intention exists (General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence 2007)

occurred in households, sexual violence is usually perpetrated by uncles and cousins (ENDIREH 2016).

Also, sexual abuse reported to the public prosecutor's office has shown that this kind of violence has mostly affected the population younger than 15 years of age. In the case of indigenous women, the last Survey on Health and Rights of Indigenous Women (ENSADEMI 2008) showed that 7% of them had experienced sexual abuse during their childhood. Also, 10% of female adolescents and 5% of men declared had been faced with sexual aggression. Related to that data, public officials in Oaxaca have recognized that sexual violence happens particularly in schools and very recently it was an established protocol for schools¹⁴. But until now the channel to deal with this kind of violence has been through national campaigns focused on teen pregnancy, most of them in Spanish, the country's official language, and local campaigns by NGOs working in the city of Oaxaca. In both cases, the work focuses on the mechanism of effectively reporting the aggression (State Development Plans of Oaxaca 2004-2010 and 2010-2016¹⁵).

3.2 The school: a space of resistance

“Violence in schools frequently is undetected and it is seldom understood that schools can be venues for sexual and psychological abuse, or verbal taunting that makes children feel uncomfortable, such as in the case of sexist jokes” (UNICEF 2011:56). Teachers do not always know how to recognize violent situations, nor how to deal with them, thus violence becomes invisible or normalized. The role of teachers is fundamental due to the opportunity they have to identify and act

¹⁴ https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/251976/Protocolos_Oaxaca.pdf consulted on October 16, 2017.

¹⁵ State Sustainable Development Program 2004-2010 Accessed: September 9, 2017: http://transparencia.finanzasoxaca.gob.mx/pdf/marco/Plan_Estatal_de_Desarrollo_Sustentable_2004-2010.pdf, State Development Program 2011-2016 Accessed: September 21, 2017: <http://www.jefaturadelagubernatura.oaxaca.gob.mx/index.php/monitoreo/ped> and State Development Program 2016-2022 Accessed: September 21, 2017: <http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/PED-2016-2022-Oaxaca.pdf>

upon violence (Smallbone et al. 2013). An efficient strategy to combat violence should include a space for discussion between students and professors. Listening to the different actors involved in conflicts, keeping in contact with parents and community will make it possible to reduce hostile school environments (UNICEF-SEP-CIESAS 2009).

Scholar violence is defined in the Law of Education of the State of Oaxaca, as “the active or omitted practice in the school environment of physical or emotional force, a degree of threat or material action against any member of the school community, which produces physical or emotional injury that affects personal and social development¹⁶. However, sexual violence is not explicitly included as a form of violence in this law and hence no actions are mentioned that aim to protect students. In 2015 the Local Law of Children and Adolescents and recently, the protocols to prevent sexual abuse and harassment in the schools of Oaxaca were established¹⁷.

3.3 Education for indigenous communities: the DGEI

To understand how sexual violence could be addressed in indigenous schools in Oaxaca a look at the educational system is necessary. The Department of Indigenous Education (DGEI) was created in 1978. Its main objective was to incorporate the indigenous population to the national education as a way to integrate them into the national project of the state. That means that through education, the Mexican national government initiated a mechanism of integration of the indigenous to the national public agenda. The indigenous model was needed because as a result of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and despite the pluricultural composition of the country, the education model had been based on the use of Spanish as the official language. However, in the 1930s the Department of Indigenous Affairs recently created, promoted the creation of an Assembly of Philologists and Linguists to promote the use of the different indigenous languages

¹⁶ Chapter VI, article 85 established some rules to build safe spaces in the schools. Link: <https://sep.gob.mx/work/models/sep1/Resource/9db15657-4ea9-47fe-9fe6-4a6181040a2c/oaxaca.pdf> consulted on October 12, 2017.

¹⁷ This protocol is part of a National Program for School Life promoted by the Ministry of Education: https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/251976/Protocolos_Oaxaca.pdf consulted on October 4, 2017.

in the formal education in indigenous communities along the country¹⁸. The activities preceding the creation of the DGEI were, the first National Indigenous Congress "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" (Chiapas, 1974) and The National Indigenous Congress (1975), but above all, the strong indigenous teacher activists that become the main vehicle for promoting bilingual educational services around the country. The principal demand of the teachers was the recognition of the nation as multicultural and the need to promote and preserve the traditional values of the indigenous communities. Thanks to the demands endorsed by teachers during the 80s, bilingual-bicultural education was recognized as a pillar of indigenous education. Despite that, most of the attempts both in promoting an indigenous approach in the education model and in integrating the indigenous population to the national model promoted by the Mexican State did not have the expected results. That can be seen in the low rates of performance and attendance of indigenous students, the persistent levels of poverty of these children and their families, and their lack of opportunities to continue in the formal system of education or in the labor market.

Education for indigenous and non-indigenous children is offered at different levels according to age: initial education¹⁹, and basic education composed of pre-school, elementary school, junior high school, and high school for all indigenous children. The DGEI has built a system of boarding schools (*albergues*) to provide education to the indigenous population who due to difficulties of access cannot attend in their own communities. Through the DGEI, the Ministry of Education in Oaxaca has been providing education to indigenous communities. However, the presence of the Teachers' Labor Union (S-22) has represented continual conflict, which has defined the dynamics of not only the educational model, but also of the protection of students in school environments. In that sense,

¹⁸ The Assembly had as its objectives: to train teachers to work in indigenous communities, to prepare textbooks in the corresponding indigenous languages and the use of alphabets to incorporate the indigenous written languages.

¹⁹ According to the Article 25 (I), Education Law of Oaxaca, initial education is education services offered in Child Development Centers, day care centers and similar institutions. In the case of indigenous communities, the purpose of initial education is to strengthen the language, the culture and identity of the children.

each of the regions of Oaxaca²⁰ has built an alternative locally based education model based on a national program which also includes the local characteristics of the communities' language, organization systems, customary laws and so on. This local adaptation is, in practice, a form of resistance to the national plan for education.

3.4 A history of resistance: The National Coordinating Committee of Workers in Education

The Teacher's Labor Union (SNTE) was created in 1943 as a corporative agreement with the government (Hernández Navarro 2011). As this organization became an ally to the political system, in 1979 the National Coordinating Committee of Workers in Education (CNTE) was founded as a movement to counter the internal policies implemented by the SNTE. In 1981, the CNTE obtained the directions of the sections in Chiapas and Oaxaca and finally, of Mexico City.

The CNTE's Section XXII (S-22) of Oaxaca, has remained as an example of resistance against the SNTE, federal and local government, political parties and other political actors for more than 30 years (Hernández Navarro 2011). I have been familiar with the activities of S-22 since I was a child: street mobilizations, marches, roadblocks and the stoppage of classes teachers started every year on May 15th (Mexican Teachers' Day). The group of unionized teachers has been characterized by the high level of coordination in comparison to other sections associated with the control of the Executive Section Committee that allows the control of material and organization resources (Hernández Navarro 2011). However, the resistance is linked to the school days lost, which is another factor related to the coordination of the democratic system to elect representatives that are basically centralized organs of decisions at the General Assembly (Hernández Navarro 2011). Additionally, S-22 had exerted strong pressure to counter any reform proposed by the local and federal government.

²⁰ Oaxaca has eight regions according to its ethnical background: Cañada, Costa, Istmo, Mixteca, Papaloapan, Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur, and Valles Centrales.

In 2006, the S-22 and the State of Oaxaca unleashed one of the most critical moments of their relationship. This time the conflict escalated with the participation of the civilian population²¹. Since then the tension between S-22 and the Ministry of Education has increased, and it has had consequences for the students because the classes are continually being halted due to the lack of solutions of agreements between the SEP and S-22 but especially because the DGEI has established a studies program they consider relevant to the life of students in their communities (PTEO-DGEI 2012). As the official institutions do not recognize their methods, there is no budget, nor agreements about what is necessary for indigenous schools. Additionally, the resistance has failed to participate in all kinds of evaluations or censuses. Therefore, accurate information about the situation of schools and children attending is not available.

Despite the struggles, I believe S-22 has played an important role as an advocate of indigenous education in Oaxaca. Thanks to its strikes and demonstrations, the DGEI has survived state budget cuts and political wars, while the bilingual education model has been preserved in the State. The formalization of this model called *Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca*²² (PTEO) has been promoted as an answer to the National Education Reform promoted by the Ministry of Education. Their demands have included the inclusion of indigenous language in the curricula, the training of teachers and the resources to preserve and respect the cultural of the indigenous communities inhabiting the State of Oaxaca.

3.5 The Mixes from Oaxaca

The fact of being indigenous has been a factor of exclusion for children; most of the communities they inhabit are characterized by highly marginalized conditions: 7 of every 10 children live under conditions of poverty (UNICEF 2015); poor conditions of health: 3 out of 10 children present chronic malnutrition (ENSANUT 2012); restricted access to public services: 12.8% of households have no access to plumbing, 4.4% do not have electricity and 13.9% of households have dirt floors. Related to educational services, 94.4% of the children

²¹ <https://nacla.org/article/oaxaca-commune-struggling-autonomy-and-dignity>

²² <http://indicadopolitico.mx/images/pdfs/cuadernos/pteo-2012.pdf>

between 6 and 14 years of age attend school (SEP). Due to the conditions of the communities where they live, the access to quality services of education and health is deficient. This is a very general picture of the context faced by indigenous children in Oaxaca. This is my entryway to start to understand sexual violence in Oaxaca.

The Mixes who call themselves ayuuk jä́ay that means “people of flowery language” and, the language they speak is known by them as ayuuk. I perfectly remember the stories my father told me about the Mixes. He told me that they had never been conquered by the Spaniards. He, as a Zapotec, taught me that Mixes are indomitable, very respectful of their ceremonies and the symbols that they managed to maintain after the Catholic religion become part of their culture, as for example the idea that they are descendants of King Condoy. I always was surprised by how they resist this intervention to their traditional system of organization and beliefs as the syncretism that I noticed through their diverse artistic and cultural manifestations. For me, half Mixtec and half Zapotec, the Mixes are one of the most mystical cultures of Oaxaca. I sometimes understand this mysticism as hermeticism and distrust of sharing with outsiders. Before I get to that, that was my general idea about the Mixes.

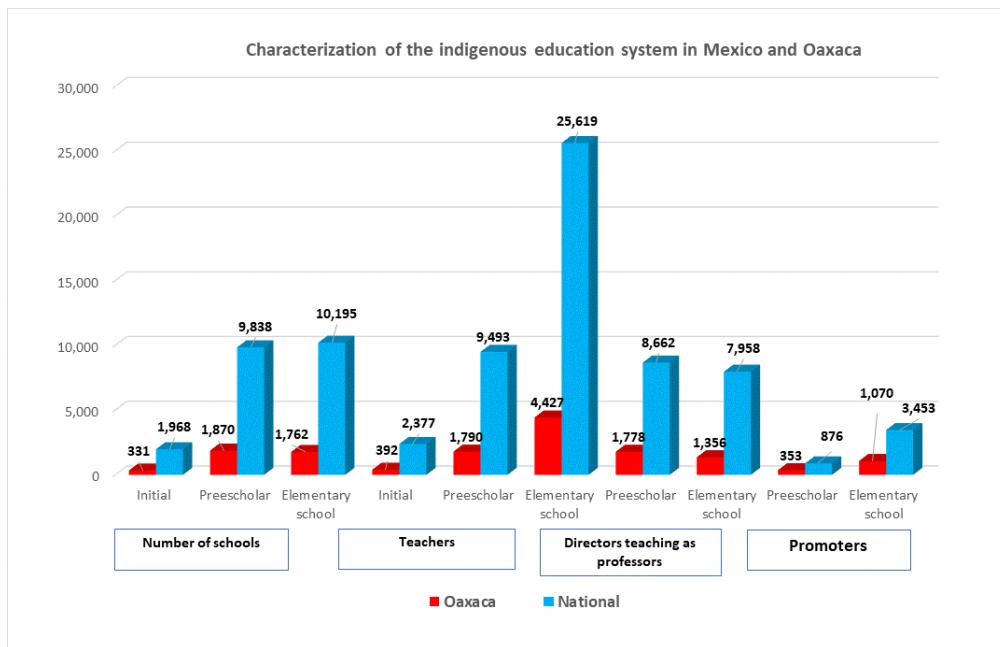
The Mixe area is located in the northeastern part of the state of Oaxaca. It is composed of 290 communities and localities distributed in 19 municipalities, covering a surface of 4 668.55 square kilometers. Despite the fact that these municipalities are grouped as a particular cultural and geographical region, they have different customs, gastronomy, economic activities, artistic manifestations and even language. There are three different kinds of Mixe language according to the location of the communities: high, medium and low (Lipp 2010). Most of the territory is difficult to access due to the mountains that cover the region and the lack of roads. According to the DGEI, there are 114 preschool buildings where 175 teachers educate more than 4,300 students. At the following educational level, elementary school, there are 88 buildings, with almost 11,000 students attended by 459 teachers. Meanwhile, 54 *telesecundarias*, junior high schools with televised educational programs, and 5 general high schools are also included within the education system of the region.

Chapter 4 The Procuraduria

4.1 A general presentation

Due to the spread of the discourse on children's rights across Oaxaca, the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), and the S-22 promoted an area to work with children and their families on that topic. This area was the *Procuraduría de la Defensa de los Derechos de los niñas, niños y adolescentes indígenas* (Called **Procuraduria** from now on). Since then, the Procuraduria has been an unofficial channel to address the cases of sexual violence experienced by indigenous children and adolescents in the indigenous schools at the initial and basic level in the State of Oaxaca

Figure 1. Characterization of indigenous education system



Source: My own elaboration based on the Statistic System of the DGEI, 2016-2017

Through a set of different activities, the Procuraduria works in each school at the basic level of the indigenous system of public education. The basic level includes initial education²³, preschool education²⁴ and elementary or primary schools²⁵. The strategy is not a simple one. Since its beginning each school region²⁶ has implemented its own approach and method according to the needs and interests of the students and communities. This research will focus on the understanding of preventive practices related to sexual abuse in the schools pertaining to the Mixe school zone.

Figure 2 shows a general view of the distribution of schools, teachers and promoters that are the base to support the activities of the Procuraduria in all the state. I add the national numbers of the indigenous schools to show that in most cases Oaxaca represents almost a third of the indigenous national system.

²³ Although it is not established as mandatory, the General Law on Education established that the Mexican State should promote initial education as a way to strengthen the physical, cognitive, affective, and social development of the children under the age of 4 years old. It includes services oriented to parents or tutors related to the education of their children. (Arts. 9, 16, 39, 40 General Law on Education: https://www.sep.gob.mx/work/models/sep1/Resource/558c2c24-0b12-4676-ad90-8ab78086b184/ley_general_educacion.pdf, consulted on Jun. 10, 2017)

²⁴ The preschool as mandatory level of education in the country has been one of the most recent changes to the General Law on Education. This level is part of the basic education offered by the State and it is organized in three academic years. The main objective is to prepare children with the correspondent skills to start the next level of education. (Arts. 4, 9, 12, 29, 37 General Law on Education: https://www.sep.gob.mx/work/models/sep1/Resource/558c2c24-0b12-4676-ad90-8ab78086b184/ley_general_educacion.pdf consulted on 10 Jun, 2017)

²⁵ The primary or elementary level of education is part of the basic education system established by the State as mandatory. It consists of six school years, in which students need to be pass successfully to continue to the next course, with a minimum age of 6 years for children begin this level. (Arts. 4, 9, 12, 29, 37 General Law on Education: https://www.sep.gob.mx/work/models/sep1/Resource/558c2c24-0b12-4676-ad90-8ab78086b184/ley_general_educacion.pdf, consulted on June 10, 2017)

²⁶ A school zone is a territorial demarcation that works as a cluster of a determined number of schools. Each school zone has a supervisor who is responsible for the administrative, pedagogical and logistical activities to assure the optimal operation of the schools pertaining to this zone. The National Education System established this division in order to build a link between the schools: professors, students, and the objectives of the national education policies (SEP and Arnaut 1998).

4.2 The beginning of the Procuraduria

The PROCURADURIA DE LOS PUEBLOS was established in 1921, the same year in which the Mexican Revolution ended, and the Ministry of Education was created. The PROCURADURÍAS operated in all the country as part of the National Agrarian Commission. Its mission was to support the communities that need help in the process of endowment and *ejidal* (communal) land restitution and other agrarian problems. When a specific Agrarian Department was created (1934), the PROCURADURIA continued working. The department included activities such as the creation of boarding schools for indigenous youths. The PROCURADURÍA had two main objectives:

- a) To elaborate a socioeconomic, cultural and political understanding (mapping) of the indigenous communities
- b) To legally defend the patrimonial, political, management interest of the indigenous communities

In 1969, the Department of Indigenous Affairs became the Directorate General for Community Development and the PROCURADURÍAS became PROCURADURÍAS of indigenous rural communities (Procuradurías de Comunidades Indígenas Rurales). In 1971 the PROCURADURÍAS were absorbed by the Direction of Education in indigenous areas and its objectives were slightly shifted to focus on indigenous education. In 1978 the PROCURADURÍAS were incorporated as part of the DGEI with specific human and financial resources to continue its operation.

During the 1980s, the educational services in Mexico were decentralized from the federation, a reform that implied that the basic level of education was turned into a responsibility of each State. Thus, PROCURADURÍAS were part of the DGEI through the Ministry of Education in each local entity. Since then the number of PROCURADURÍAS has been changed according to local needs. Nowadays in Oaxaca, there are 24 distributed throughout the state.

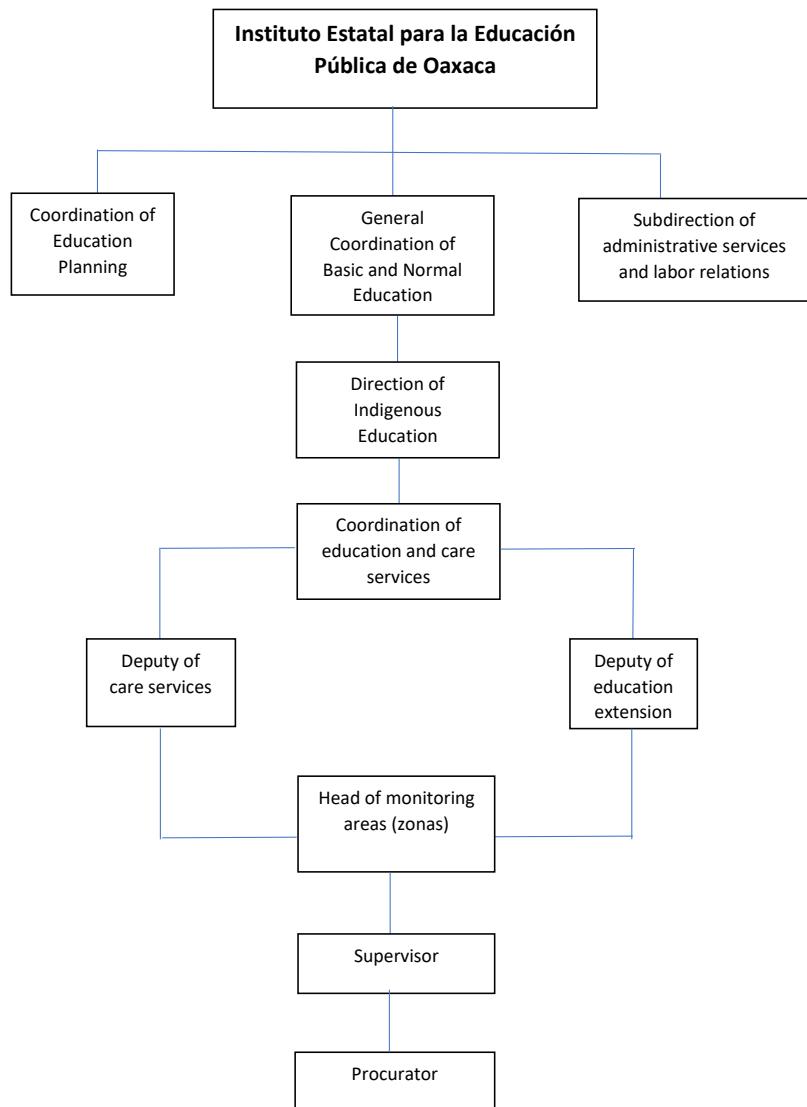
In 2001, the students in the basic level and initial level were established as the target population and the main objective was to promote, defend and protect children's rights among students in the public system. This promotion includes the participation of students, teachers and parents through the implementation of actions aimed at avoiding and eliminating conditions and circumstances that

limit their full development (proposal of document PROCURADURIAS in Oaxaca). The main figure of the PROCURADURIA is the procurator.

The procurator is responsible for coordinating, in conjunction with the institutions of the DGEI and municipal, state and federal authorities, the activities to promote human and children's rights. The procurator functions as a link between the educational needs of students and the community but also as a link between the SEP and other institutions that work in defense of children's rights, such as the State Attorney-General's office, the Supreme Court of Justice, Civil registration office, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous Attorney's Office, the legal area of the local Ministry of Education (IEEPO), the legal area of the Teachers' Labor Union (S-22) and the National Commission of Human Rights.

The procurator does not have a specific agenda because it is made to fit local needs. It does have general guidelines to work on its objectives. The guidelines were designed by the DGEI in coordination with the S-22 for the purpose of reflecting the needs observed in indigenous schools. The Procuraduria annually presents a plan of activities and a budget to cover each of said activities. As a public servant of the SEP, all procurators are appointed to fulfill and enforce its legal frame. The procurator is also empowered to apply actions and administrative sanctions in case an offence is committed. Figure 3 shows how is established the structure and coordination from the IEEPO. Theoretically, the Procuraduria has a Procurator, a technical and services assistant and at least one promotor.

Figure 2. Structure of the PROCURADURIA



Source: own elaboration based on the guidelines of the Procuraduria-DGEI
2001

4.3 The Procuraduria in the action field

I clearly understood that the goldmine in field work is in my notes. I shouldered the task of observer by myself, but I didn't want to be the kind of observer that my mother hated when she was teaching. She told me that she felt that she was in a production or in an experiment where the object under analysis was she. Thus, I decided to be discrete with my notes and every night I wrote what I remembered about the day. But the days I spent in the Mixe mountains, I was not only an observer, I talked with parents, children, teachers, authorities and

also to the people I found along the way. The result of that is presented in this section.

4.3.1 Maira: the procurator

As I mentioned previously, my encounter with Maira was unexpected. From the moment we met in a Forum organized by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in Oaxaca, we found a lot of commonalities. However, our relationship was based on the messages we exchanged on Facebook. The organization of this journey was an adventure because we did not have a personal relationship. She was always open to my ideas and she gave suggestions even before the field trip. Since I was reading about ethnography and the recommendations of postcolonialism feminism theories, I didn't want to be a spectator during the visit. Also, I didn't want to be the image of a western researcher. It could occur, and I knew from the first conversation with Maira when she said "I thought you were the kind of woman that pretends to be indigenous just because you were born in Oaxaca." She also told me that she "viewed me as an intelligent, educated and powerful woman who spoke English". As a result of her opinions of me she decided, even before our first formal encounter, to invite me to a party. And I went.

I met Maira and her mother at a party to celebrate the end of the school year at the community high school. She was there as the godmother of a male student. I noticed that I was the subject of a variety of glances. Her mother looked at me and told me "I know that you are a friend of Maira's". I just smiled. "Dona Chanita" became a very important person on the trip. She offered me a place to sleep in her home. She fed me most days and she shared the stories about her experiences as an indigenous teacher. And she would not accept anything in return. She told me that she believed I was a good woman since our first conversation.

I knew Mixe communities because one of my uncles got married there. I spent a lot of days during my vacations and I knew from those experiences that they are mystics, respectful and lofty people. A land conflict occurred between two of the biggest municipalities just before my trip and I remember that characterization of the Mixes. Initially, I was afraid because I was obviously an outsider as seen by my physical aspect and my ID, but I just followed the instructions

of taxi drivers and people I met on route and at the end, I had a variety of stories of Mixe people that I heard in the path. I was advised just not to publicly say anything related to the conflict between the communities.

When I started this research, I did not know that Maira had been procurator for more than five years. Also, I didn't know the importance of her work in a region as a Mixe woman. Maira is an indigenous woman. She speaks Mixe and Spanish. She was elected to work as procurator, which was surprising to her because only three years before she had started to work as an indigenous teacher. Why was this strange for her I asked? "Because, the indigenous system of education in Oaxaca is based on merits" she told me. To gain this position, it was necessary to serve as a teacher in a group for at least ten years. Maira had got her position as a teacher from her mother, who inherited her 'plaza' or appointment. This way of transferring an appointment is a major setback among members of the Teachers' Union. However, she gained respect from peers, including teachers, supervisors, students' parents, as well as from students as a procurator of the Mixe zone.

The position of procurator lasts two years, and after that it is renewed through election by the teachers. The case of Maira is unique because when her position was supposed to be renewed, the National Teachers' Movement against the National Education Reform prevented the renewal process. Then, elections were postponed and finally the electoral process never happened. Thus, she continued working. This unexpected continuity allowed her to go deeper into the implementation of activities in schools and to understand how the cases of sexual violence could be addressed through school action. She became an activist teacher in favor of children's rights with an interest in sexual and reproductive rights.

Through her more than 200 visits to schools, she had found that the problem with sexual abuse is, as I mentioned before, unspoken. And this silence is, according to Maira, the result of both the social structure of the communities and

perhaps, as she said, “a consequence of the way in which sexual violence is addressed by the legal system”.

In order to arrive at this conclusion, Maira implemented a “mailbox system” during her visits to the schools and a process aiming to break the silence. First, Maira talked to the students about their bodies, the importance of taking care of them and the risk situation boys and girls can face when a different person invades their intimate space. By intimate space, Maira meant the space reserved for the children’s privacy. That was not always logical for children who share the space at home with siblings, parents and are accustomed to using public spaces. But she was persistent in transmitting to the children the fact that their bodies are a space worthy of respect and any action that did not make them feel comfortable in this space, needed to be shared.

After these conversations in schools, Maira invited the students, to share their thoughts in writing. Through their letters, Maira realized that the risk of sexual violence was closer to the children lives than she could imagine. I was given the opportunity to read the letters, and I also realized that children were in need of a trusting environment to talk about their sexuality and the sexual violence they face not only in school, but lamentably also in their homes and their communities.

4.3.2 Lessons learned on the road

The first year Maira started her visits, she detected a case in an elementary school in Santa Cruz Condoy. The physical education teacher abused a boy. She learned of this through a workshop in which she explained “the correct names of the parts of the body”. A little boy called his anus “encanto” (charm), in a funny and worried way. Maira asked his classmates and they confirmed that the physical education teacher used the word in reference to this boy’s anus.

Maira tried to find out all the possibilities of action against the teacher but she found that the boy’s parents and the physical education teacher were related via “compadrazgo” (godfathership). Compadrazgo is a strong link among adults, commonly through baptism. Godparents are chosen by the adults in which children do not have a say. Maira tried to convince the boy’s parents to start a legal process but they refused because of the *compadrazgo* and because they were

afraid of the community gossip about the boy that would result. When she denounced the case to the educative authorities, she received threats by the area supervisor and her car was vandalized.

After this experience Maira talked with the coordinator of the DGEI and he offered a specialized training for Maira and for the psychologist working in the area as a solution. Meanwhile, the teacher was protected by some educative authorities, although later he was removed from the school, but not prosecuted. The parents accepted to send the boy to a therapist and Maira decided to continue working on strengthening the prevention strategy recognizing the complex limitations under which she was working.

Initially the main objective of the Procuraduria was to report cases of sexual violence and to guide the victims to begin a legal process, but after this case, she focused on prevention strategies. Maira told me, “the problem is that I didn’t know the legal process and usually the situation requires immediate action and the communities demand not the law system but instead the traditional law of the own community”. Then she focused on prevention, taking advantage as her background as a psychologist and the knowledge she had about children’s rights.

Chapter 5 From the notes of an economist doing ethnography

We started the route in Tres Arroyos in the region called high Mixe. The schools there belong to the zone of Yacochi, despite the fact that the distance between both communities is huge, and they do not speak the Mixe language, they are grouped like that. It was the first time Maira visited due to the director of the preschool level not accepting a previous visit. Maira included the participation of the Preschool Technical Advisor (Asesor Técnico de Preescolar) on the visit and she came with her daughter, a 7 year old girl. The visit started on Monday so we began the trip the day before. Maira had warned me about the difficulties getting there but I never imagined that route: first we traveled to a safe community where Maira was able to leave her car. Once there we waited for a van that only passes once a day to take us to the entrance to the community. If one is lucky, then you can get a ride, though we could not at first.

We eventually got the van and once there, we met the director of the school and the other teachers. She told us that they took the same route every Sunday. What I observed on the van was that the teachers were a community: they talked and sang; they laughed about the difficulties of going to the communities every week and they shared the things they bring to the communities. Most of them are young. Of course, I sang with them. I could not avoid being part of that because, though I knew I was an observer, I felt super identified with them. I knew the traditional music they were singing and I remember the trips I took with my mom when she was a teacher. When we eventually stopped, I discovered that we were in the middle nowhere. It was night and there were no lights around us. Maira had warned me to bring a lamp but still it was so dark. No one came for us, so we walked for almost two hours: the director, a teacher, the advisor and her daughter, Maira and I. No one exhibited fear, though once the visit to the community ended, each of us confessed that it had been really scary. Some meters before the community a van approached us and we were lucky to get a ride. It was the president of the Parents' Assembly. He was responsible for helping us during our visit because the director had mentioned our visit to the parents. Thus, we received food and were offered a place to sleep for three days.

No one was charged any money because what we were offered was part of the parents' organization.

The activities started in the preschool during the morning. The school had two groups and the director is one of the teachers. Maira brought all the material she needed with her and prepared a series of activities with the advisor. She also asked for the teachers' help to promote the participation of the children. The first group was composed of 20 3 and 4 year-old boys and girls who mostly spoke Chinanteco. Maira started with songs helped by the advisor. Then she introduced the kids to two wood figures, one female and one male where the children recognized each part of their bodies and started to sing. The activity was confusing because most of them do not understand Spanish and despite Maira having integrated mothers who took care of them, the children just reacted to the dance activities. However, I noticed that the children did not respond to the activities until mothers came to them and said the words for their genitals in Chinanteco.

The second group was composed by children who were a little older, 5 and 6 years old, and the activity worked better. Maira used the wooden bodies and the children recognized all the parts. She explained the importance of knowing their bodies and of taking care of them. I noticed that she never used the word children's rights or anything similar, she just mentioned examples of daily community life and the children were able to follow her explanations. She mentioned, for example, taking care of others while at the river, when taking food to parents who were in the field, while helping grandmothers cook, etc. Later, after the courses ended and lunch time was over, it was sundown and time for the parents' meeting.

The parents had been informed about the meeting two weeks before. It was announced through the megaphone used in the community and they attended on time. I surprised when I saw the school room was almost full by not only mothers but also fathers. I was surprised because in my experience working in microfinance in indigenous communities around the country, most of the workshops attendees were women. I also assumed that because the workshop was related with education of children, most of the assistant would be women. Maira

told me that “in small communities, if the schedule was free from field activities, both parents attended the workshops”. In fact, both women and men conform the Parents’ Association in order to attend to the needs of their children. Maira also commented that “being part of the Parents’ Association is a post that counts as public service. It is not mandatory to be a part, but it is important for the political organization of the community and for the respect persons thereby acquire in the community”.

Maira’s approach was to ask them about their daily activities in the field and how they deal with worries and feelings of been afraid. My initial assumption was that this was a difficult activity because for me it is not common to talk about any kind of feelings in public and definitely not about sexuality. However, one of the men described how difficult it was for him to go the field every day and be subject to natural risks. Another man commented that he was afraid of not knowing how to protect his children in case something happened to them. Mothers mentioned that children now recognize dangerous situations because grandmothers talked to them at home and because older children repeat the knowledge to the younger, just as their mothers pass it on to them. Maira again did not use concepts such as children’s rights but she directed the activities to thinking about the need to protect children individually. She talked about the importance of recognizing emotions to create a more inclusive environment for children. The activities focused on the parents’ participation. When the participants seemed to be more at ease, Maira explained the importance of protecting children and she linked it to sexual violence and the consequences it had for children. The definition she used for sexual violence was the one established in the Oaxaca State Law, so she finalized describing the legal process and the channels to hear children. Parents mentioned they did not know the mechanisms because many times the cases were kept undisclosed to outsiders.

The elementary school of Tres Arroyos is not part of the indigenous system of education, so it is not part of Maira’s mandatory route. However, the relationship with some of the teachers and the request made by professors opened the door to work with the students of the last grades and with the teachers. The

activity used for students was very similar to the pre-school group. The participating students, who were between 10 and 12 years old, were very active during the workshop. I was amazed when I entered the classroom and noticed that it was completely full of images and sentences about what adolescence is, the risk of ETS, the biological differences between men and women and also about the importance of gender role awareness on the life of the community and, about preventing violence, not just sexual. The workshop was very active but also challenging for Maira, who managed to relate the students' questions to biological, emotional, physical and social explanations about sexuality, while offering to create a mail box in which they would be able to write their doubts, questions, and suggestions to her. While I was observing the activities, I noticed that the groups' young teacher was also an observer. In the short time that I had to talk to her, I learned that she was from a nearby community and that she had personally experienced the lack of opportunities for adolescents. She had gone to high school because her parents encouraged her going to another community. She studied in a system that allowed her study to be a teacher and work. She traveled every fifteen days to Oaxaca City to attend school and during the week she worked in Tres Arroyos. Even though she does not have a permanent contract, her salary covers her basic needs. The teacher let me know that most of the participants in the session would not be able to continue on to the next level of education because there was not high school in Tres Arroyos and to go somewhere else implies a high economic cost for parents.

The last activity in Tres Arroyos was with teachers of both preschool and elementary school. All of them were very young, probably less than 30 years old. Maira organized an open-air activity in which we started by saying hello to the others with our voices then with our hands, feet, and other parts of our body. The activity started to get funny, but I noticed that it was a way to say that we started to feel uncomfortable touching each other just to say hello. The activity ended and we shared our thoughts about it. All the participants were raised in the Mixe culture; they explained that touching a different body, especially of the other sex, is not common. They learned that bodies are private, unless you get married but even then, it is not a topic to discuss publicly. Something that caught my attention was that despite that, the two men participating asked, as part of

the reflection period, why each of them felt nervous and in a way excluded because women did the exercise along with them. This question generated a discussion among the teachers about how they were educated and how they learned to differentiate men and women and on how they included these elements in their classes.

After this activity, the participants were invited to enter the classroom where Maira talked about the kind of risks children can face in school and also in their households and the community. She mentioned the kind of harassment and the legal procedures when harassment happens in school and at home. Teachers mentioned their lack of knowledge about how to recognize and react to the cases of sexual violence but also mentioned that they had learned that it was useful to talk to the parents. I would now like to connect these comments with the role of the parents during our visit.

The parents in the community were organized to offer us food and a place to sleep. All the community was aware that we were there for three days. Maira and the advisor, an elder and well-known teacher in the community, explained to me that this is very common in most of the communities and the parents commonly participated closely in the activities organized by teachers. Teachers, they explained, are as important as the priest of the church and their voice is very important in the organization of Mixe communities. The community takes care of the teachers just as the teachers care for the children.

The return from Tres Arroyos was also an adventure. There is only one way to leave the community. On market day in the nearest community a van transports merchants and we took that van in the early morning. After two hours and a half we were in Záratepec and we started the return trip to Totontepec where we rested and got ready for the next visit. The visit to Tres Arroyos was the most complete in the journey because it included activities with children, parents, and teachers. But also, it was the first time Maira was visiting as Procurator and given the characteristics of the isolated community, which lacked basic services such as electricity and water, made it a remarkable experience.

The second community school we visited was less isolated and had electricity but the socio-economic conditions were very similar. Most of the route is very difficult to access; the inhabitants speak Spanish but they prefer Mixe (I

noticed that because they used Spanish when they talked to me and after, they spoke Mixe); the conditions of the households are precarious since not all households have access to water or sanitation services; most of the families get their earnings from the products they cultivate and sell in the local market and from the social programs supported by the government.

Metepec, the second community on this journey, was an integrated school and Maira had visited it sometime before. Her work was accepted because one of the teachers argued that Maira's activities needed to be followed up in order to be effective. Maira started with entertaining activities in which children gained some confidence. After that, she used images in the room of a naked girl and boy and asked children to name each part of the body. All of them knew the names including the genitals but they used different words in Mixe. Then Maira started to talk in Mixe and children started to laugh. I did not understand but the teacher explained that the genitals are named according to their biological function in Mixe.

Apparently, children were more comfortable talking in Mixe about their bodies because they learned that at home with grandparents and other members of the family. I was surprised of the high level of participation. Some of the students refer to Maira by her name and reminded her about the last time she was there.

The second activity was aimed at the oldest children: 10 to 12 years old. They received Maira with a familiar attitude and followed the activities related to the changes observed during adolescence. The majority used Mixe words to refer to genitals and two of them asked Maira about what might happen if they fell in love and wanted to have sexual relations. As Maira knew their families and her mother worked in the same school, she started to talk in a comfortable way with them. She established a dialogue in which the attitude of students seemed to be relaxed which allowed students' to be open about telling stories about their home life. Contrary to the case of Tres Arroyos, Metepec has electricity and that means access to television programs but also to the internet. The comments outside of Maira's program were related to the issues of contraception, homosexuality and ideas about sex happening only when people are married. Maira tried to help them with some of their doubts and invited them to write in the

mailbox created before. The box had been active because the letters are privately read by the teacher and if she cannot resolve or address something, she consults Maira.

Chapter 6 Characterization of the strategy implemented by the Procuraduria

Through the fieldwork I can recognize some elements that allow the strategy of the Procuraduria works in the field. First, the strategy of prevention is not isolated. To consider that I mentioned that first, sexual violence is framed in a complete strategy of promotion of the children's rights. It become predominant to talk about sexual violence due to the cases and risk situations found during the first years of implementation. The cases are not limited to children because as Maira told me, "sometimes during the dynamics, parents and teachers recognize themselves as had been faced sexual violence". Second, the Procuraduria is theoretically part of the structure of the School Zone in Ayutla and it is formally inscribed in the organization of the DGEI. It interacts with other areas as the Psychology area and the Technical Training areas. Third, I know, after my participation in general Assembly of indigenous teachers that the Procuraduria is a fundamental element in the proposal that indigenous teacher had prepared to counter the recent education reform proposed by the federation. Thus, the Procuraduria is a strategy included in the general structure of DGEI and in a way, that can assure its continuity.

Another element to characterize the Procuraduria is that despite of is an intervention that had taken children's rights approach to prevent children about sexual violence, it is a rooted plan that use local elements to function. These elements include the use of language (mixe) that approach Maira with other teachers and school authorities in the region. Besides that, it is inserted in the practices of the community such as Parents Organization and Local Assemblies where decisions involved children are taken. All these elements could be grouped in the 'comunalidad' (communality).

The communality is the conjunction of elements who define the life of individual in the community. These elements include the relationships among persons and with the environment linked to the social, cultural, spiritual and ecological elements present in the community (Díaz et al. 2007). According to that,

the knowledge is built through the interaction of all these elements. Communal-
ity can just be understanding through the practice in daily life. Thus, it is possible
understand why individual rights are difficult to get as a priority and conse-
quently to implement in the children's life. Mixe communities are based on com-
munality principles that they put in practice through the organization of families
(Díaz et al. 2007). That is the space where the individual built an identity. A
family is not defined just by the legal or social union, family is a solidarity organ-
ization in all aspects of life. The space created for families is the first place to
acquire knowledge by using mother tongue. The conjunction of families become
communities that defined their social, political and cultural organization and this
space is flexible (Díaz et al. 2007). Thus, local characteristics define the nature
of the strategy.

Thus, the conjunction of local elements aligned with the power relation-
ships presented in the communities has defined the trajectory of the Procuradu-
ria in a space of resistance, the school.

Chapter 7 The encounters of a student of development

7.1 Methodologies

When I decided to leave home, I was 17 years old. I had decided to study economics because I was tired of listening in the news and in the political discourses that Oaxaca faces a lot of social and economic problems and therefore it is necessary to ‘modernize’ it. I spent five years learning about the mainstream economics -neoclassical and Keynesian economics- in which quantitative methods (scientific method) were the frame to understand socioeconomic problems. It was a resistance career. I never believed at all that one of these models can really explain the environment in which I grew up. However, the last ten years I had been using data to explain social problems, one of the most challenging has been children’s rights.

I became a bridge between quantitative analysis and the social problem to be analyzed. I visualized myself crossing this bridge, but I never did it until I now. This autoethnography reflects my economist background such as my experience working in UNICEF. Beyond data analysis, I got through a field work experience that challenged my conception of the ‘objectivity’ in the scientific method. Through this journey I detected cases of sexual abuse that surely are not part of the official statistics, exposing the need to instrument actions to protect children. I also dismantled my assumptions of using data to conceptualize the magnitude of social problems. I confess that for many days I tried to find the hypothesis I wanted to prove. It was my own process of resistance, but not everything is my fault; it is the mainstream idea I learned that if a phenomenon cannot be measured, it doesn’t exist and it is not possible to improve a situation. At the end I believe that this feminist approach helped me to see the complete picture. I got different voices of the strategy. I listened to the stories of parents, teachers, and children and thanks to that I appreciated the different context in which sexual violence is happening.

7.2 Children's rights and 'communality'

The strategy promoted by the Procuraduria has embraced children's rights to build a campaign that protect children against violence. For me, a partisan of children's rights, was perfect. I personally embraced the CRC as an umbrella that protects children in any context. However, this journey made me a witness to unexpected ways to conceive prevention against sexual violence beyond the CRC. As most of the critiques of the universalism recognize, "Children have universal needs, but the socio-cultural context within which a child grows is also critical to their development. If this is not taken into consideration, the CRC could rightly be accused of imposing neocolonialism in a human rights ideology" (Esteva and Prakash, 1997).

From my notes I recognized that children have gained confidence to talk about their bodies with their teachers and parents. That does not mean that they stop to feel embarrassed to discuss it or that they stop to make jokes -especially adolescents- but they are 'incorporating' a new perspective to see it. For example, the use of the mail box has created a new form of communication between students and professors and it has been successful in creating an environment that promotes confidence and protection for students. I believe that including the rights approach to sexuality and sexual violence has been positive for them. It is a way to break the silence. It could be also another form to establish relationships among peers, teachers and students and parents and children.

However, I also recognize from my own indigenous background that the incorporation of this approach can shake the way that indigenous children and adolescents conceive sexuality and protection. If they receive this shake, their families and communities also would suffer the effects of it. Teachers and parents share to me that they used to talk about sexuality but not in the way children are learning now -with the Procuraduria-. Most of them know the risk faced by children, although they refer not using don't use the 'appropriate' language, they said. I stress the word appropriate because they used that word as if this new approach would be the one and the best approach. I cannot describe the sounds in my head while I was listening that. The teachers that shared with me their journeys recognized that for them to talk about human rights and children had

not been easy. Although the promotion of children's rights was preceded some years ago by discussions about what human rights are and it involved a lot of discussions for the local traditional authorities and teachers, the reactions after the activities related to children rights and sexual violence have generated confusion in children and parents. For example, while I was participating in the workshops parents questioned to Maira, why they need to open an 'intimate' space for talk with others. And some mothers commented that they know children could be in risk and they advertised to children in their own way—*a su manera*—but they do. A father also said that he is not sure that "this 'modernity' rights cannot resolve the problems of sexual violence if the justice system don't attend other problems they had". Also, many of them ask if they were wrong in the way they had been deal sexuality with children.

But one of the most noticeable conflict I notice was the idea that children have rights without obligations. How this will be possible if in the traditional system is through responsibilities that are being acquired the 'rights' was one of the questions I listened. These obligations acquired since childhood define their participation in the community and the respect of the individual and their families. In the same line, an active professor told me that other sensitive topic is children labour. For them it is common to take the children to the harvest and sometimes it implies the absence of the children in the school. Teachers recommended to respect the right to be educated but at the same time, they understand that to be educated for mixe children is also know the harvest cycles.

I can recognize that it is not possibly to put both approach, CRC principles and the traditional way to understand children in mixe communities, in separated box. It is important to establish politics of recognition that assure the protection of the individual -children- in the context where they are formed (Stavenhagen 2008). My own reflections of what I observed, made me aware that the structures in which it is carry on the prevention of sexual violence are not enough. The protection could really work if the state structures react to the scenarios of violence children face in the school and their communities.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This research has been a series of encounters. In these encounters I was guided by my positionality as a woman educated in the traditional neoclassical economy, student of development but above all as an indigenous woman that grew up in a culture of resistance. I admit that this positionality inspired me to go to the Mixe region in Oaxaca.

During the days I spend in the communities, I confirmed that mixes people has maintained a syncretism between the traditions heritage by their ancestors, in their own words: “the wisdom and knowledge they acquire from the King Condoy, and the tradition they get from the catholic church”. I believe that this ability to be flexible, has allowed to open spaces for, despite of limitations, the strategy implemented by the Procuraduria can works. Personally, the Procuraduria is a good starting point that can generate a real space of protection for children but its challenge its continuity. The continuity would be assured by two elements: the support of the Ministry of Education through the financial and human provision of resources and the reactions and response to the strategy by the communities. That means, the flexibility of the community to take the aspects of both, the CRC and the traditional system of organization of mixes communities where children are protected in a better way. Thus, the best interest of the child could be modeled at the real context in which children are developing.

Through the activities I witnessed that both, men and women are disposal to participate in the protection of their children. This protection based on the elements offered by the Procuraduria also includes the relation children have with the environment and social structures in the community. Parents are open to discuss and recognize how their ideas about sexual violence contrast with the ideas exposed in the CRC. They are aware of the risks children face in the school and in their households and they trust in teachers to create a better space for children. Through institutions as Parents Assembly, parents participate in the construction of a protection system for their children. Thus, the Procuraduria is not an isolated strategy. It is strengthened in the work of teachers, ATPs, parents and local authorities but it demand the support of the Ministry of Education and the S-22.

Sexual violence is not a topic to discuss in public, but this silence could be broken through the mail box open to children needs or the workshops in which parents share their ideas and doubts about protect children. The silence is broken through the incorporation of a children's rights approach in the dynamics of teachers and through the way in that children had started to share their doubts among peers and to be aware of the risk environments they can face not only in schools. The image of Maira has also help to break the silences among teachers and authorities. The strategy is powerful because of her mixe background and her activism as a teacher and as part of the community. Although the strategy is framed in a non-indigenous concept as children's rights, it is implemented in the margins of the mixe culture. The prevention as an action to contraries the silence of the sexual violence works because it has been taking local elements as above-mentioned.

My position as observer was not to judge any position. But I believe that a revision on traditions in light of the CRC -understanding CRC as a mutable element – could offer a better understanding of how to prevent sexual violence. Through my path of the field work, I also realize that I share similarities with mixes, but I cannot speak up for 'others'. As the teacher that introduced me the concept of communality, I would not have been able to grasp this concept had I had not lived there by myself.

This is the first time I used a postcolonialism feminist approach and a autoethnographic methodology so most of the times I get lost. The encounters I found during this research made me felt overwhelmed and more confused about what I want to do. My supervisor as a good Jiminy Cricket invited me for more humbleness to avoid the assumptions that I could offer a solution for the sexual violence in the mixe mountains because I am supposed to have deeper knowledge about it due to my background. I was advised to be prepared for the surprises and I really get it.

For me, the most important finding of this research paper is: the recognition of my positionality. That means the shift in my cosmovision and understandings

that has allowed me to come back to my indigenous roots and realize how they have always shaped me. This self-encounter has taken me back to the remembrance of my intrapersonal factors which are the people that surrounded me back in Oaxaca, specifically, my mother who was a rural teacher for almost thirty years. Her position as an indigenous and resistant woman within our cultures embracing modernity through different forms encouraged me to go beyond my own perspectives and travel to expand my cosmovision. Here, I am acknowledging that I belong to indigenous roots within a culture of resistance and that traditional methodologies are not the only way of understanding problems. At the same time, I am an economist that firmly believe in the importance of children's rights as a framework to protect children. That is positionality, the gift that feminist gave me these days.

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