Significance of the mass media in mid-higher education and university indigenous students inmigrated to Monterrey

Significaciones de *mass media* en preparatorianos y universitarios indígenas emigrados a Monterrey

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Abstract

The recent but intense flow of indigenous migrants to the Mexican border state of Nuevo León has made this region the primary recipient of Mexico's indigenous migrant population. Based on the hypothesis that the entry of indigenous youth into high-school and university education has a marked effect on the transformation of their ethnic identity, we examine the uses that these indigenous students have for certain mass media and the meanings that they award to such media. Using a qualitative method and in-depth interviews, we analyze how the different uses and meanings of film, television, and radio symbolize the process of identity transition for these youth who have migrated to Monterrey. Similarly, we identify how the "level of education" and "ethnic group" variables have a significant explanatory weight in interpreting these identity-construction processes.

Keywords: significance, mass media, high-school education, higher education, indigenous migrants, identity.

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Resumen

El reciente pero intenso flujo de migrantes indígenas al estado fronterizo mexicano de Nuevo León, ha convertido a esta región en la principal receptora del país de población indígena. Partiendo de la hipótesis de que el ingreso de estos jóvenes indígenas a los niveles educativos medio-superior y superior incide marcadamente en el proceso de transformación de su identidad étnica, hondamos en la comprensión del uso y significaciones que

estos estudiantes indígenas dan a ciertos medios de comunicación de masas. Desde un enfoque metodológico cualitativo, a partir de la realización de entrevistas en profundidad analizamos cómo el uso y significaciones diferenciadas del cine, la televisión y la radio simbolizan en muchos sentidos el proceso de transición identitaria por la que pasan estos jóvenes emigrados a Monterrey. Asimismo, identificamos cómo las variables "nivel de estudios" y "grupo étnico" tienen un importante peso explicativo para la comprensión de estos procesos de reconstrucción identitaria.

Palabras clave: significación, mass media, Educación Media Superior, Educación Superior, migrantes indígenas, identidad.

Introduction

The recent but intense flow of indigenous migrants in Mexico from states such as San Luis Potosí and Veracruz to Nuevo León (Olvera, Doncel and Muñiz, 2014) has made this area the country's primary recipient of the indigenous population (CDI, 2011). This population is notable for not only its quantitative significance but also its cultural diversity. For example, Nuevo León is now home to speakers of 56 different indigenous Mexican languages (Estrada, 2010). The challenge of social and cultural adaptation among the new inhabitants of the Monterrey metropolitan area can be examined on various levels: political, social, cultural, economic, and educational.

We believe that the realm of education constitutes an ideal space in which to conduct a socio-anthropological analysis that attempts to account for the form and direction of these processes of social interaction and integration (or segregation) because it is in this space that the individual confronts the acculturation process in the most controlled and profound manner.

Given the scant attention paid (politically and socially) to the inclusion of the indigenous population in higher education and the major obstacles in terms of access to these levels of education, we decided to limit our analysis to those indigenous migrants who have successfully entered high-school education (known in Spanish as *Educación Media Superior*; EMS) and higher education (*Educación Superior*; ES) in Nuevo León. Based on the hypothesis that entry into higher education substantially affects the transformation of the ethnic identity of indigenous migrant students, we propose an ambitious project that seeks to analyze processes of identity construction for these students based on five agents of socialization: family, community, school, the work environment, and the mass media.

Our decision to concentrate on these five agents of socialization is supported by the empirical research on the influence of these agents on identity construction. On the one hand, the role of families and school in identity construction (whether social, ethnic, gender, or class) is essential for understanding the spaces in which the phases of primary socialization develop (Berger and Luckman, 1993). These two agents, at times separately and other times together, have been analyzed in a range of empirical studies (for example, Echavarría, 2003; Mieles and García, 2010).

Adding the work environment, a space considered not only for its impact on identity construction but also with respect to the elaboration of Moscovici's social representations (1961) in certain professions, is recommended by the findings of a previous study on the integration of indigenous high-school students in Nuevo León (Olvera, Doncel and Muñiz, 2014).

According to the survey performed for that socio-educational study, 64.6% of indigenous students stated that their primary activity was work. The majority of the remaining 35.4% stated that studying was their primary activity but that they also engaged in work-related activity. Thus, in this case, the influence of the school environment cannot be fully understood without considering the influence of the work environment.

Similar reasoning is used to justify our leap from an analysis of the family to an analysis of the community. Social anthropologists have demonstrated that the community and the family are deeply interconnected in many indigenous communities in the Americas. A good example of the way in which the links between community and family can be studied holistically, even among indigenous youth who migrate to urban areas, can be found in the research of Mónica Chávez (2013).

Finally, the mass media and their role in the construction of ethnic identity have been widely studied by researchers, communications analysts, and anthropologists in Latin America (Doncel, 2016).

The increasing number of studies that seek to understand how American indigenous peoples use or are used by forms of mass media primarily focus on two basic concerns: first, the ways in which indigenous people are stereotyped and the stereotyped images are internalized by mixed-race mestizos (Nahmad, 2007; CDI, 2006; Muñiz, 2013; Moreno, 2010); second, the utilization of modern mass media by indigenous people to represent their own identity or as a tool of political struggle (Espinosa 1998; Esteinou, Chavez and Peniche 2002; Cisneros, 2006; Castells, 2003; Flores, 2005; Zamorano, n.d.; Baca-Feldman, 2016).

Certainly, all the agents of socialization considered here as explanatory factors in processes of ethnic-identity reconstruction should be considered together while awarding each factor its due weight. In this sense, Smith refers (directly or indirectly) to each of the agents we consider in the following passage:

> The formation of ethnic identity is a multidimensional and dynamic process in which the integration of ethnicity in perceptions of the self depends on a) sociocultural aspects, such as social status, structure, size, and organization of particular ethnic groups, as well as inter-ethnic relations within society; b) the immediate context such as family, school, area of residence, and peer groups; and c) inter-individual factors linked to personal identity, including the particular development of cognitive and emotional capacities, personal inclinations and tastes, and self-esteem (Smith, 2002, p. 79).

We begin by providing initial findings that correspond to the phase of this research that addresses the role of the mass media. More precisely, to achieve the general objective of analyzing the symbolic distance that mediates between ethnic self-identity for students and the representation of indigenous Mexicans conveyed by the mass media, we begin with an in-depth analysis of the use and meaning of certain forms of mass media among indigenous students in higher education who have migrated to the Monterrey metropolitan area.

To achieve this objective, we have chosen a qualitative methodological focus and employ one of the tools of ethnographic research: in-depth interviews. These interviews were performed in September and December 2014 with students enrolled in the qualitative research methods course for communications majors in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universidad Regiomontana.

The script of the in-depth interviews was arranged into thematic sections that address each of the different forms of mass media considered, with a final section on the issue of identity. More precisely, following a set of questions regarding the consumption and enjoyment of the mass media in general, questions were posed regarding the use and meaning of television, films, radio, social networks, newspapers, and advertising. The responses analyzed in this article are those that concern the forms of media utilized by the interviewees and the meanings awarded to these media forms as expressed by the interviewee or deduced from the interviewee's responses by the researcher.

The interview script was administered to 29 informants selected based on a consideration of the following variables to ensure a sufficiently diverse sample: level of studies (high-school or university), type of high-school education (general or technical), field of study, enrollment status (enrolled, dropped out, or graduated), age, gender, and ethnic group. The sample was intentional rather than probabilistic, which according to García (1995) is most appropriate in anthropological and ethnographic studies on small populations, about which the researcher possesses broad subjective knowledge. In addition, our strategy approximates quota sampling because the researchers themselves determined the number of cases with given characteristics that sufficiently represent the studied population (García, 1995). Thus, the 29 interviewees reflect many diverse characteristics (e.g., male and female, high-school and university students, different ethnic groups).

The high-school students were analyzed separately from the university students based on the *a priori* consideration that adolescence is a phase of life during which identity construction becomes a central problem of personality, which is constructed largely based on comparison with one's peers and in a certain sense the rejection of the self (Díaz, 2006). That is, processes of identity construction during these two stages of personal development are necessarily different. (As we will observe throughout this article, this consideration can begin to be corroborated *a posteriori*). This separation, which is directly related to age, resulted in interviews with nine high-school students who were 18.1 years old on average and with 20 university students who were 26.4 years old on average.

Regarding the variable of gender, as in the case of the university-aged interviewees, women are overrepresented and represent two-thirds of our informants. However, in terms of this variable and the remaining considered variables, the sample is sufficiently heterogeneous to permit us to state that our sample was as diverse as the population it attempts to characterize. Thus, our sample included informants from public and private institutions, from general and technical high schools, with different enrollment statuses (current, graduated, or dropped out), and in different disciplines (e.g., social sciences, human sciences, engineering, economics and business, health sciences).

The distribution of our sample according to ethnic group deserves mention. Among our informants, 76% were Náhuatl (48%) or Tének (28%). Given the ethnic diversity we note at the beginning of this introduction, these groups might at first appear overrepresented. However, the sample reflects the ethnic composition of speakers of indigenous languages in Nuevo León in 2010 (INEGI, 2010), which were primarily Náhuatl (66%) and Tének (18%). Our informants also included members of other ethnic minorities in Nuevo León (specifically, Mixteco, Mixe, Tzotzil, Mazateco, and Totonaco).

To delimit our study's scope, we required all subjects to meet the following criteria: to have completed at least one semester of study at one of the considered educational levels (to allow sufficient time for the process of school adaptation to be internalized), to attend or have attended a school located in Monterrey (where more than 90% of the state's population is concentrated), to have migrated from an indigenous community (and thus to represent an authentic ethnic identity reconstruction process), and to be indigenous. The last item reflects a basic difficulty of a study whose primary objective concerns the subjective construction of identity: what is an indigenous person?

Because we hope to respond to this question at the end rather than the beginning of our broader investigation and given the methodological imperative of defining in operational terms whom we will consider indigenous (and thus a member of our study population), we have decided to initially employ objective criteria that are difficult to interpret. These are the criteria used by the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples [*Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas*] (CDI, 2011), which considers to be indigenous all those who speak an indigenous language (we add the condition that it be a mother tongue), live or have lived with relatives who speak an indigenous language, or have lived in a community of indigenous origin. One of the most subjective criteria we could have selected, ethnic self-identification, presented a serious challenge. Using it would require us to exclude from our study population all those who do not consider themselves to be indigenous, which would prevent us from investigating an essential predicament for the indigenous population of Nuevo León: the negation and consequent concealment of ethnic identity.

This article is structured in five clearly differentiated sections. After the introduction, we discuss our project's theoretical foundations, which are characterized by interdisciplinarity and the centrality of the symbolic interactionist perspective. The third section offers a review of studies performed in Spain and Latin America that address the problem of ethnic identity and the mass media. The fourth section presents the findings of our investigation and focuses on the use and meaning of several particularly relevant forms of media in this context: film and video, television, and radio. Finally, in the last section, conclusions are presented.

Theoretical approach

The theoretical approach that provides the epistemological basis of our research combines the multidisciplinary fields of social anthropology, the sociology of culture, and social psychology. Social anthropology provides a methodological approach that suits the study of small human communities as well as theoretical and conceptual foundations that enable us to carefully examine social identity and the particular dynamics of intercultural contact (whether vicarious contact through the mass media or direct contact in the educational realm of socialization).

Our focus is processes of ethnic-identity construction determined by the underlying culture of origin and the host society through mass communications. In addition, we understand cultural exchange as based on symbolic communication. Thus, our study adopts an epistemological approach informed by the symbolic interactionist paradigm.

This paradigm, which has a significant presence in anthropology and social psychology, has been primarily developed within symbolic anthropology. Symbolic anthropology, which was proposed in its cultural version by Clifford Geertz and in its social version by Victor Turner in the mid-1960s, proposes that culture not only resides in the inter-subjective dimension but is also embodied in public symbols through which subjects communicate their vision of the world and their values (Ortner, 1984).

Given the essential link between the construction of ethnic identity and the subjectivization of culture (or the process of acculturation), we are interested in highlighting the focus proposed by Geertz, from whom we adopt the classic definition of culture:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 2005, p. 20).

We derive the view of culture as an essentially dynamic phenomenon from Geertz as well as from Berger and Luckmann, who explain the triple dialectic process of internalization-externalization-objectivization in the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1993). This perspective, which views culture not solely as a coercive force that confronts a passive subject, coincides with our concept of identity in times of globalization, i.e., identity understood also as an essentially dynamic, changing construct. Stuart Hall presents identity in a similar manner and one which originates in Foucault's idea of a displacement of interest from the cognizant subject toward the preoccupation with a theory of discursive practice (which does not imply the abolishment of the subject but its reconceptualization):

> There has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of «identity» […] The deconstruction has been conducted within a variety of disciplinary areas, all of them, one way or another, critical of the notion of an integral, originary, and unified identity […] In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with

another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the "naturalism" of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed – always «in process» (Hall, 2011, p. 13, 15).

Hall's proposal represents a key reference point in cultural studies from a critical perspective. However, our analysis departs from the idea that even today, ethnic identity is based on an area of intersubjectivity that is to a certain point objectivizable (Giddens, 1993), despite the extreme flexibility required by the inevitable dialectic tension between tradition and modernity. Frederik Barth explained this type of ethnic belonging 40 years ago. We believe that his view remains valid for contemporary Mexico:

> Ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are constructed. Interaction in such a social system does not lead to its liquidation through change and acculturation; cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence (Barth, 1976, p. 10).

Therefore, our understanding stems from a strictly relational concept of identity inspired by the research of interactionists, such as Goffman (2004) and his dramatic focus. As Charry suggests, "Although Goffman does not speak of identity per se, he considers it in terms of selfhood as a product of the acting person in social situations" (Charry, 2006, p. 200). In this way, we wish to emphasize the bi-directional process of identity construction and therefore of social identity. In addition, we note that cultures are living things that are constantly being recreated thanks to the performative power of the social actor and despite the coercive power exerted on them by culture.

Empirical background

Interest in the relationship between the mass media and the construction (or destruction, reconstruction, or deconstruction) of ethnic identities among Latin American native peoples has been increasing since the end of the last century. For example, a 1998 study by Espinosa analyzes the use of the mass media for political purposes by indigenous groups in the Peruvian Amazon, focusing on three ethnic groups during different historic moments. Specifically, Espinosa discusses the role of radio in ethnic-identity construction and the creation of representative political organizations among the Shipibo, ties forged with the State through television and redefining the concept of national identity in a context of armed conflict among the Asháninka and the Aguaruna, and the use of the internet among the Asháninka. The author's main conclusion is that the use of these media makes indigenous communities more visible and enables them to pursue political action in different public spaces (Espinosa, 1998).

Espinosa's study and most of the scientific literature on this phenomenon adopt political confrontation as their point of departure, i.e., the ideology of the domination of indigenous peoples by a homogeneous and undefined mestizo society and the logic of reclaiming native identity and culture. In this sense, in Mexico, the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas motivated a series of studies that walked a fine line between scientific texts and political activism. A number of these articles referred to unsatisfied claims of access and the appropriation by indigenous communities of certain mass media (Esteinou, Loera and Peniche, 2002) or the essential role of the media in reclaiming indigenous identity, understood as social struggle and emancipatory movements in the face of structural marginalization (Cisneros, 2006).

Many studies on the use of mass media by indigenous communities focus on a form of media with which we are also particularly concerned in this article: film (or video).[2] This focus—whether centered on new styles of filmmaking, the indigenous gaze, or film as a reproducer of stereotypes of this group—is largely the result of a boom in indigenous film and video in Latin America (Castells, 2003). Thus, we find studies that range from an ethno-methodological reflection on the role of local filmmaking in a Mayan community in Guatemala that is undergoing a process of social and cultural reconstruction after civil war (Flores, 2005) to research on the potential for indigenous filmmaking to challenge stereotypes, spread languages, or assert political demands (Castells, 2003).

Similarly, Nahmad (2007) reflects on struggles of power, domination, and resistance through the visual representations of Latin American indigenous peoples in film productions in three contexts: 20th century Mexico, the 1960s in Bolivia, and contemporary film in various Latin American indigenous communities. As Nahamad explains, the dialectic tension between hegemonic representations and those created by indigenous people is transmuted into the arena of identity construction, both for the indigenous people and mestizos:

> Since the invention/conquest of the Americas, the image and representation of indigenous people has meant a quarrel over identity, not just theirs but also the other identities that they faced (those of the colonizers). In this new century, conflict is worsened because the creation of representations brings together disputes over the exercise of power. Thus, it is necessary to interpret both the images generated by indigenous people and those created about them as forms of the creation of meaning broadly related to political and cultural projects of identity production that often are in conflict (Nahmad, 2007, p. 107).

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[2] Given that many indigenous communities in this country do not have cinemas and the nearest cinemas may be too distant for locals to become accustomed to this type of consumption, video represents an alternative mode of communication. Video's ever-greater accessibility makes it increasingly utilized among young people in these communities (as creators and consumers). This fact is demonstrated by the interest in this form of media among communications researchers and anthropologists (many of whom we mention here). Therefore, although there are similarities between the use and meanings of film and video (as we will see in the results section), technical differences exist that make it advisable to distinguish between the two in our discussion.

This statement, which refers to the need to interpret the images generated by indigenous people and the need to carefully examine the meanings attributed to such images from an emic point of view, justifies basing our empirical research on the symbolic interactionist paradigm.

Many assessments and communication analyses have been performed in Mexico on the ways in which the population internalizes stereotyped images of indigenous people conveyed by the mass media. An example is the *"Percepción de la imagen del indígena en México"* ["The perception of the image of the indigenous in Mexico"] (CDI, 2006), which offers a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the way in which the mass media spread negative stereotypes of indigenous peoples and thus foment discrimination and racism among urban youth (particularly in Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mexico City). One of the study's key conclusions involves the process by which indigenous people are made invisible and the dichotomous perspective by means of which "indigenousness" becomes part of national pride while "the indigenous" are regarded with contempt.

A more complex study was performed in Nuevo León and entitled *"Medios de comunicación y prejuicio hacia los indígenas"* ["Mass media and prejudice against the indigenous"] (Muñiz, 2013). This study also aimed to analyze how urban youth (in this case in Monterrey) receive and internalize the image projected by the media of indigenous people. Here, again, we understand that this image has two facets: the historic indigenous people (nearly mythic representatives of essential national culture and identity) and contemporary indigenous people (who are associated with homelessness and social and cultural backwardness).

This type of study is innovative and considers the global problem in which "the media […] at best ignore the reality of these [indigenous] peoples or at worst contribute to the perpetuation of a negative and folkloric image that relegates them to marginalization" (Castells, 2003, p. 51). However, the study that most closely resembles our proposal is the doctoral thesis *"Procesos de comunicación/educación en contextos de diversidad cultural. Interpelación y reconocimiento en la construcción de subjetividad de jóvenes indígenas wichí en el Chaco Salteño, Argentina"* ["Processes of communication/education in contexts of cultural diversity: Interpellation and recognition in the construction of subjectivity among indigenous Wichí youth in Chaco Salteño, Argentina"] (Bustamante, 2013). We are specifically interested in the chapter in which Bustamente discusses:

> Tracking whether media consumption constitutes a space of interpellation and recognition; that is, on the one hand, to what extent and in what way the media interpellate indigenous youth (ethnic Wichí) in these communities and on the other if recognition is created and in what way (Bustamante, 2013, p. 326).

Although this study has serious shortcomings, such as superficial descriptions and a lack of analysis of the representations and identifications of the young interviewees (who were asked only three simple questions on the topic), it reaches conclusions that are useful to us in consolidating our own findings. For example, regarding the distance between the projected image and the image of the self, Bustamante writes as follows:

> These [Wichí] youth can recognize themselves in said media even though what is shown there does not at all resemble the landscapes, lives, or persons seen before us. However, even though there is a recognition of

> products in which one's own practices and scenarios do not appear […,] this distance between the lived and the televised is not innocuous, and it operates by devaluing the self in favor of dominant models of ways of life, beauty, etc. (Bustamante, 2013, p. 327).

That is, the interviewed Wichí youth identify with and "demonstrate evaluations, adhesions, and practices in which it is possible to observe recognition in the face of the interpellations of television" (Bustamante, 2013, p. 337) in the face of a deformed image of themselves, which in this case causes a devaluation of the self and daily life.

To date, all of the studies that address from various perspectives the relationship between ethnicity and the mass media have focused on analyzing indigenous communities in their social and cultural context. Studies that consider the issue from the perspective of indigenous migrants in cities are rare. An exception is the study by Ros (2004). To train Guaraní rural-to-urban migrants in communications, Ros examines the "forgetting" of these indigenous people by the mass media and their consequent isolation from the rest of society. The "forgetting" of Guaraní migrants to which Ros refers also extends to institutional and academic contexts:

> Not only are they officially forgotten, they are forgotten by researchers who focus their studies on the places of origin of the migrants, which they considered more "pure" or "authentic"; forgotten by state-run and private development projects that also focus on places of origin and even attempt to discourage migration to the city; forgotten by municipal authorities […]; forgotten by other indigenous organizations that disparage and denounce the supposed "acculturation" of the urban Guaraní (Ros, 2004, p. 110).

The relationship between this forgetting, migration to the city, and the loss of ethnic identity is made explicit by Ros in words that highlight the determining role of the media (particularly radio) in combatting this process of forgetting and consequent processes of ethnocide:

> This reality has a notable effect on ethnic identity among migrants in the city. The loss of language or of territorial referents are indicators of a crisis in the definition of their identity […] To secure one's own culture means to disseminate it, to expand it, to make it plain even to those who attempt to ignore it and silence it. And for this purpose, the media and particularly radio, because of its capacity to reach far-off places where the indigenous population is found, are the most appropriate for strengthening one's own values (Ros, 2004, pp. 111-112).

Based on this review of the state of the issue, we can offer a twofold conclusion. On the one hand, we have a significant number of scientific analyses that indicate an increasing interest in an irreversible globalizing phenomenon that affects even the most peripheral minorities. On the other hand, given that our study is the only one that correlates the variables of ethnic identity, urban migration, mass media, and higher education, it can provide novel insights.

Uses and meanings awarded to the mass media

Among all of the interviewed students and accounting for the different criteria considered in the selection of our sample, we identified one variable that is particularly relevant for its explanatory capacity: educational level (directly correlated with average age). Thus, we decided to analyze the results by dividing our sample into two groups: high school and higher education.

Among the high-school students, nearly all of those interviewed reported frequent use of cellular telephones, the internet, and television, while none indicated that they read newspapers, and nearly none indicated that they attended the cinema or listened to the radio. In this sense, the response offered by Informant 1 appears typical for this segment of the sample: "[I use] all [media] except newspapers and radio. Reading bores me, and the radio is for old people. But I watch TV sometimes. I never go to the movies, but I always use TV and the internet" (Informant 1, November 15, 2014). At first glance, this account of media use appears to reflect more the logic of adolescents in a large city than the issue of ethnicity. However, upon closer examination, we find a nuance that escapes this explanation: all of the interviewed high-school students indicated that they never or nearly never attend the movies.

Among the interviewed university students, movies continue to be the least-mentioned form of media, although a number of students did report attending the cinema. Similarly, more than one-third of the university students reported reading print media, with greater or lesser frequency, and nearly half reported listening to the radio. Approximately half also mentioned cellular telephone use, and a slightly greater share mentioned watching television. As with the high-school students, the internet was mentioned most frequently (three out of four interviewees reported using it).

Returning to the high-school students, we note the nearly total absence of the habit of attending the cinema. This outcome contrasts sharply with broader patterns of media consumption in Mexico. According to the Mexican Institute of Cinematography, in 2015, Mexico "was among the top five countries with the highest rates of attendance at movie theaters … At the national level, total attendance was the highest in recent years, with 286 million tickets sold, 46 million more than in 2014" (imcine, 2015, p. 61). Analyzing the films offered in Monterrey, we found that one-third were horror films, whose audience largely consists of youth and adolescents, and that most of the dominant genres, such as superhero films and romantic comedies, are aimed at this audience. As in many large cities in Mexico, in Monterrey, attending movies is considered a common activity for local teenagers and thus an activity that should be analyzed if we understand the movie theater as a privileged space of socialization during adolescence. In this sense, attendance at the many movie theaters throughout Monterrey by thousands of adolescents in groups of friends or as couples represents a phenomenon greater than the mere consumption of a media product. It constitutes a socialization practice (Simmel, 2014) that, by favoring certain dynamics of interaction between peers and genders, contributes to a sense of belonging and ultimately identity (Konterllnik, 1999; Ayestarán, 1987).

However, of the nine high-school student interviewees, six unequivocally stated that they did not attend movies. In addition, two reported "sometimes" or "rarely" attending and indicated having seen movies not with friends but with family (i.e., siblings and/or cousins). Thus, this activity cannot be considered a socialization practice of the previously described type.[3] Only one of the high-school student interviewees reported attending the movies regularly, approximately once per month, with fellow students or friends from their religion-affiliated residence. Broadening the observation to the three university students under the age of 20 (because, as explained in the introduction, age is understood as a determining factor in our analysis in addition to educational level), we find identical results. Two of these interviewees stated that they never attend the cinema, while one reported going often to bring the children she babysits.

> Interviewer: Do you go to the movies?
>
> Informant 15: Oh yes, Miss Gaby always brings me.
>
> Interviewer: Really? Cool. How often?
>
> Informant 15: Sometimes we go a lot, like twice a month… because there are a lot of children's movies.
>
> Interviewer: So, you go with your boss and her children.
>
> Informant 15: Yes, because Mr. Alejandro doesn't like the movies that much… he waits until they come out and buys them to watch at home because he says he falls asleep at the movies. I would also like to [fall asleep], but I go with the children, and I stay awake.
>
> Interviewer: You don't go to the movies with your friends?
>
> Informant 15: No, because when would I? And I like the children's movies anyway. It's fine.
>
> (Informant 15, December 3, 2014).

In this interview, we can discern a factor that may explain why indigenous adolescents are not in the habit of attending the cinema: work. In this sense, the data obtained in our field study are unequivocal: only three of the 29 interviewees reported not working (i.e., three young individuals ages 15, 17 and 18 who live with their parents and devote themselves only to studying). This fact is qualitatively significant and corroborates the statistically representative data obtained in a previous study specifically on indigenous high-school students in Nuevo León:

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[3] In this connection, we would like to note two characteristics that we observed among our interviewees and their respective communities of origin. On the one hand, there is a clear tendency for indigenous students who pursue higher education to be single. The data here are impressive. In a sample with an average age of 24 and with individuals from cultures in which marriage generally occurs at relatively young ages, 26 of the 29 interviewees were single and childless. As we discuss elsewhere, this outcome suggests a relationship between the adaptive strategy of giving up on (or delaying) having a family to gain access to higher education. Linked to the frequency of relationships with close family members during leisure time is the tendency toward endogamy among many indigenous communities in Mexico. As explained by Carlos Serrano, director of the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas at UNAM, endogamous practices are generated particularly in the rural environment and in indigenous communities historically marked by their cultural, religious, economic, and/or geographic isolation. Serrano terms these practices an "expression of the defense of cultural identity" (Serrano, 2010, p. 4). Given the importance and complexity of these two tendencies, they will be addressed and analyzed in depth in future research.

A negative factor and a decisive one with regard to the possibility of finishing the course of studies is the migrant status of the majority of the indigenous students (92 percent), which implies urgent employment and economic needs (65 percent cite working as their principal activity) (Olvera, Doncel and Muñiz, 2014, p. 159).

The following interview again demonstrates the lack of free time required to attend the movies (the response here is identical to the previous one: "When would I?"). In addition, we can note a significant and lengthy response regarding the subjective experience of this practice:

Interviewer: So, do you go to the movies?

Informant 1: No, and I don't like it. It's really expensive, and the long movies bore me.

Interviewer: Oh, you've never been?

Informant 1: Like twice… and I don't remember. I fell asleep.

Interviewer: You don't watch movies?

Informant 1: When would I? No. I have other things to do.

Interviewer: What other things?

Informant 1: Work… and high school; even though it's useless, I go. And the children [I take care of]. No, just TV and cell phone. I don't like it…

Interviewer: Okay, at least tell me, what type of films don't they show that you would like to see in the theater?

Informant 1: Any, because they're dramas and boring. I don't like movies. I don't know what people see in them.

(Informant 1, November 15, 2014).

In this and many other responses, informants state that films viewed in the theater are "boring" or that they "fall asleep". These responses indicate a lack of motivation that in our interpretation stems from the perception of a practice that is considered foreign (because most indigenous people in the sample come from communities in which this activity does not exist because there are no commercial movie theaters). During fieldwork, we confirmed that Cinema Cuauhtémoc, a symbolic Sunday gathering place in Monterrey for indigenous migrants from other states in Mexico, is introducing the practice of movie-going among indigenous people of all ages (including adolescent friend groups or couples). However, many university-level interviewees stated that the site is more popular among workers than students. Therefore, it appears that receptiveness toward host-society practices does not suffice to compel migrants to adopt such practices if time and financial resources are lacking.

To say that the interviewees lack the custom of attending the movies as adolescents in their communities does not mean that these individuals do not possess other ways of collectively viewing films (which is ultimately what "attending the movies" entails).

Although most interviewees did not have a commercial cinema in their community of origin, local instances of spontaneous collective film viewing were reported. The social, cultural, and economic implications of this practice can be clearly observed in

statements by Informant 14, a female university student of Tének ethnicity from a small community in the Huasteca Potosina.

> Informant 14: There's no movie theater there… Well, there is, but it's super far away.
>
> Interviewer: There's no community movie theater there or anything like that?
>
> Informant 14: Sometimes at my house, we would make a theater because we had a little black-and-white TV. Because we were the only family with a TV, all the neighbors would come, and my mother made a business out of it because she would say "go and bring me some water"… and they would carry it from the well, "two buckets of water each," and they would all go, and then they could watch the program… I don't know, *El Chavo,* for example, stuff like that.
>
> Interviewer: And did a lot of people come?
>
> Informant 14: Lots… that little mini TV, until it exploded and nobody could watch [laughter]. Yeah, that's how it was…
>
> Interviewer: How many would watch? Twenty people?
>
> Informant 14: More or less. All little boys and girls.
>
> Interviewer: They would bring water and watch the TV.
>
> Informant 14: Uh-huh, and watch the TV.
>
> Interviewer: That's great.
>
> Informant 14: [laughter] Yes, my mom…
>
> Interviewer: What programs did you watch?
>
> Informant 14: Well, *El Chavo del Ocho,* for example, was on at that time, and that was cool. Then, later on, everyone was getting TVs, and… and… for example, those that bought TVs with video cassette would put on movies and charge the whole community, and that's how it went, but the TVs were tiny.
>
> Interviewer: And it was like the movies but on TV?
>
> Informant 14: Uh-huh.
>
> Interviewer: And… did people eat popcorn?
>
> Informant 14: No, no, no! [with surprise], not that, there was no popcorn…
>
> Interviewer: But it was a way to get together, right?
>
> Informant 14: Yeah, and… and it was, not like choosing the films, but there was just one movie they had, and if you liked it you could go.
>
> Interviewer: And nobody had the idea of starting a movie theater as a business?
>
> Informant 14: No, nobody had the idea.
>
> Interviewer: Or buying a projector.
>
> Informant 14: So far, no, they haven't started one [with surprise]… No, no, they haven't done that. Not even the high school had one! Well, at the high school that's nearby, they don't have a projector either. I mean, that would be a good business.
>
> (Informant 14, November 23, 2014).

This interview demonstrates the cohesive power of the small screen, a potential that arises with particular intensity in a culture whose collectivist conception of social life enables public space to transcend the domestic sphere, transforming it into a space

of primary socialization (in the Bergerian sense) for the youngest members of the community. In addition to strengthened community ties in this improvised space of socialization, we also observe the possible beginning of a system of service exchange, which becomes a commercial activity when members of the community with televisions or video-cassette players begin to charge others to use them.[4] This phenomenon invites us to imagine a possible symbolic socioeconomic structure for households capable of offering these services, which can enjoy prestige based on their possession of consumer goods that are considered exclusive in this context.

The same interview offers guidelines for analyzing the impact of the mass media on certain socio-cultural minorities. When our informant refers to the television program that was often watched, indirect reference is made to how that media product from the dominant culture played a role as an agent of socialization. In the interview, we also perceive how the act of attending the movies is re-signified and how the way in which this practice is performed acquires its own *raison d'être* (thus, the interviewee's surprise at the suggestion of bringing popcorn or using a projector, which would liken the practice to that performed in cities by mestizo society). The reason for this apparent resistance is unclear because our data do not enable us to determine whether this surprise is the result of a precarious financial situation or symbolic factors.

What we can highlight here is the differentiated meaning of the act of attending the movies in an urban, mestizo society compared with a rural, indigenous one. In any case, this custom is not static. Rather, it evolves at the same speed as information and communication technologies, such that new habits are generated that will have to be supported by new values and worldviews. As demonstrated by Bustamante's study on the Wichí in Argentina, this phenomenon is far from being limited to the indigenous migrants in Nuevo León. The following quotation refers directly to the re-signification of the practice of watching television among youth who no longer go to the forests and rivers as was traditional but instead gather around the television (which also re-signifies the domestic space):

> Young interviewees report watching television in two places: at their parents' homes (currently) and at school (in the past). Various authors observe that the Wichí have historically lived the vast majority of their lives outdoors and to the present day use their houses only for sleeping. In recent years, in the area of Pilcomayo Salteño, watching television and using computers have become new activities for those with access to them (Bustamante, 2013, p. 332).

The following interview with a university student from Oaxaca of the Mixe ethnicity illustrates how the media products that are collectively consumed do not always originate in the centers of economic and cultural power. Here, we find media being used to

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[4] The commercialization of the right to access certain audiovisual products through pecuniary mediation should not be viewed as an isolated custom. For example, it is observed among the Wichí of northeastern Argentina, although in this instance, the commercialization of these services favors inter-ethnic contact and enables certain mestizos to profit from indigenous clients:

> In that era, when there were no television sets in the communities, the places (where they gathered to watch television) were some store in the criollo towns or in school. The latter was common in forest communities where there was no electricity, such as Pozo la China. A criollo townsperson could charge 50 cents admission for each person who wanted to watch television. One interviewee recalled that 10 or 15 years ago, when she was a child, she was even charged 25 cents in school to watch television (Bustamante, 2013, p. 329).

recreate local culture and traditions. That is, a certain image of "us" is projected, which serves to strengthen identity (or at least certain aspects of community identity). Two more details of this interview should be noted: the active role of community members (including students) in the creation of media products and the relatively harmonious linguistic coexistence in the media sphere, which in certain instances prioritizes the Mixe language over Spanish.

> Interviewer: Is there a movie theater in your community?
> Informant 16: No, there's no movie theater. It's like if you want to screen a documentary, you gather the community and tell them you're going to show a movie on a certain date. It's up to whoever does it. But they get together and screen it.
> Interviewer: And do people go?
> Informant 16: Yeah, they go.
> Interviewer: So you're saying this is when there's a holiday or some special date. So, it's not very frequent?
> Informant 16: No, it's not. Because it has to be organized in advance.
> Interviewer: Did you go to these types of event?
> Informant 16: Yes, for example, on Christmas, the birth of the Baby Jesus.
> Interviewer: What other types of movie did they screen?
> Informant 16: Cultural activities… they would screen what was recorded or documentaries that students in the community made. Activities.
> Interviewer: Are they in your language or in Spanish?
> Informant 16: It depends on what's being screened. For example, the documentary is in my language, but the rest is in Spanish. Sometimes they have subtitles in Spanish.
> (Informant 16, November 4, 2014).

We should note that Mixe communities characteristically demonstrate a high level of concern for the education of their children and strong cultural pride (Comboni and Juárez, 2012). As a result of this concern for education, one of our key informants, the president of the Federation of Indigenous Students of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, states that the proportion of Mixe students in higher education is substantially greater than that of any other ethnic group.

To continue with our Mixe informant, in the following quotation, we observe how the linguistic coexistence to which we previously referred also occurs in radio.[5] In addition, the broader statement by this informant reveals how radio acts as an important element of the transmission and reproduction of language and culture for children, including

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[5] Again, the research by Bustamante on Argentina's Wichí helps us generalize our findings. In this case, we perceive the important role of radio as an agent of socialization in indigenous communities:

> As we previously noted, radio is a form of mass media that has been present for many years in rural areas, such as the Wichí communities of the Pilcomayo Salteño. This is facilitated by the accessible price of radio receivers, their small size, and the possibility of using them without access to electricity. Local radio content is predominantly music, rural messages, and information. With the exception of one program on Saturdays, the programming is in Spanish. Demonstrations of lack of trust by the owners of local radios are also common when messages are broadcast in the Wichí language. Generally, this type of message is not permitted (Bustamante, 2013, p. 330).

how such transmission and reproduction describe and highlight the consciousness of Mixe adults, who become agents of social control promoting native-language learning among their children (Comboni and Juárez, 2012). In this way, the Mixe are unlike certain ethnic groups that do not wish for their children to learn their language so as not to be stigmatized. An example that sharply contrasts with the case of the Mixe is provided by Informant 16. This informant was of Tének ethnicity. She describes how she was not conscious of her own identity until she migrated, when she left her community and was exposed to inter-ethnic contact for the first time:

> Interviewer: In your community, you mentioned that there are [radio] broadcasts in your language. These… are they news, music?
> Informant 16: A little bit of everything. Announcements, children's stories, music…
> Interviewer: And are they in Spanish?
> Informant 16: Yes, they're in Spanish… but the children, when they tell a story in my language, the children are so attentive. The adults don't pay that much attention, but the children do because at the end, they ask them what they understood, and each one gives their commentary.
> Interviewer: Is there a station that lets them talk, make an announcement…?
> Informant 16: Oh, yes, for example, there's a database, like an email, when… mmm… "I'd like to say hello to the González Vázquez family"… to a driver… "I'd like to say hello" and stuff like that, or congratulations, birthdays, dedications…
> Interviewer: But all this is on the internet…
> Informant 16: Yes, on the internet or Facebook, or the radio's webpage.
> Interviewer: Wow, great, you all are very up-to-date.
> Informant 16: Yes, it's mostly due to the young people. Because they have that consciousness about maintaining the culture, that it's not good to lose it because it's what our elders gave us… if you belong to a culture, you have to know how to maintain it. If I were to lose it, I would feel lost… I would seek it out, but you would know you already belong to a group.
> (Informant 16, November 4, 2014).

In this interview, we note the role of radio not only in spreading culture and reinforcing identities but also in reinforcing social ties through the personalized communication of community radio. The result is succinctly expressed at the excerpt's end, where our informant states, "If I were to lose [my culture], I would feel lost… I would seek it out, but you would know you already belong to a group." Here, we can observe the essential link between the subject and the group of reference as well as a fear of being swallowed by anonymity.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, we proposed examining the use and meaning of certain forms of the mass media among indigenous students in higher education who have migrated to Monterrey. We decided to focus our analysis on the media form that we

believe has the greatest explanatory power with respect to the media's influence on the construction or reconstruction of ethnic identity and the dynamics of intercultural interaction between indigenous migrants and the host society. To this end, we examined the uses of and meanings assigned to film, television, and video (all of which were understood as rituals of collective viewing) and to radio.

In our analysis, we placed particular emphasis on the practice of attending movies among adolescent high-school students. We viewed this practice from the perspective of the host society as an essentially urban, mestizo custom, a space of adolescent socialization, and an important element of the construction of social identity among Monterrey youth.

However, that indigenous migrants do not possess this particular film culture as practiced by urban mestizos does not mean that they do not assign a differentiated meaning to the act of attending movies. We have observed that the equivalent custom in indigenous communities is limited by the restricted availability of television. The custom of collective viewing on the small screen can be discerned from the analysis. It consists of a local practice in indigenous communities that affects various dimensions: social (serving a cohesive function and implying a space of primary socialization), cultural (placing value on the collective and a different configuration of the public and private realms), and economic (invigorating a practice that becomes an exchange of services and eventually business with pecuniary mediation). In sum, we understand "the movies" in the community of origin as a space in which community or ethnic identity is constructed.

Next, we examined the practice of attending the movies and its differentiated meaning among urban, mestizo society compared with rural, indigenous society as the expression of an intercultural disjuncture. In either case, in the city and in the communities, customs do not remain static over time. Rather, they evolve at the same speed as information and communications technologies. Therefore, we find that although they come from a highly different cultural context, indigenous students who migrate to Monterrey begin to exhibit signs of adaptation to an initially strange custom, particularly the students in higher education.

However, we observed that the few high-school students who attended movies in Monterrey did so in the company of close family members rather than friends. This behavior suggests a re-creation of the custom in a form that is oriented more toward endogamy (i.e., with individuals who share the migrant's place of origin) than exogamy (i.e., with mestizo and urban adolescents, who attend the movies in groups of friends and as couples). In this sense, even if the factors of work and income condition the incorporation of indigenous people into this custom, they do not suffice in explaining the resistance in its totality. Technology also affects the cultural practices described in the communities of origin, such that new habits are generated that would have to be supported by new values and worldviews.

As we anticipated and justified in the introduction, considering the variables of age and level of studies together has been essential in explaining the use of certain mass media. Thus, that young high-school students avoid using the radio, reading newspapers, and attending the cinema contrasts with the more frequent use of these media among slightly older students and university graduates. This outcome can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, a process of acculturation within the cultural context of Monterrey appears to commence by starting to attend the cinema. On the other hand,

a reinforcement of ethnic identity occurs in listening to indigenous-language radio, as mentioned by many university-level interviewees.

In addition to the variables of age and level of studies, based on the case of the Mixe community that we have documented, we can conclude that ethnic group and community of origin should be considered important explanatory factors for the construction of community or ethnic identity. In this sense, we have demonstrated that the university-level interviewees—who read more and are better informed than high-school students—have a greater awareness of their ethnic identity. The same is true if we compare the experience of our Tének informant with that of our Mixe informant.

In the interview with the Tének informant, we observed that the community of origin receives media content imposed by the hegemonic culture (although this content can be re-signified based on the cultural context). Therefore, we are faced with a group that experiences its ethnicity in an inconsistent manner. In this sense, as mentioned in the results section, a Tének informant explained that questions were never asked regarding her ethnic identity until she migrated out of her community.

In contrast, our Mixe informant explained that based on a well-developed ethnic consciousness (even more developed among university students in his community), his fellow community members are accustomed to creating their own media products, which reproduce their culture and traditions. A question that should be more carefully analyzed in a future component of this research project is that of the relationship between the awareness of ethnic identity and the greater number of university students among Mixe migrants. It appears that the fact that the Mixe create media, projecting a self-image that they feel is their own, plays an important role in strengthening ethnic and community identity. This function of strengthening identity has also been observed in the use of radio, which constitutes a noteworthy element of linguistic and cultural transmission that reinforces social ties through the interpersonal contact facilitated by community radio.

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