

From the Editors N.22

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Featuring sixteen articles and one book review, this issue of *Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad — Latin American Journal* offers to its readers a wide array of reflections and research by scholars from different Latin American countries (Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina), or who, situated in North America, address gender and sexuality issues in the region.

In addition to the articles submitted to the Journal's regular flux, this issue includes one more thematic dossier, on *Masculinities*. Organized by Francisco Aguayo and Marcos Nascimento, guest editors, the articles in that section were peer-reviewed according to the Journal's rules. The guest editors offer a detailed presentation on the outcomes of two decades of studies on men and masculinities in Latin America, addressing their main challenges and accomplishments. In general, the articles in the Dossier revisit "classic" topics in that line of inquiry (violence, the sexual division of labor, homophobia, etc.), articulating a critique in intense dialogue with feminist perspectives. Together, they highlight the ethical, political, and conceptual tensions underlying the notion of patriarchy, while they emphasize relationality, multidimensionality, and diversity, or—more concretely— a plurality of male Latin American experiences. What is at stake, evident in this reading, is the very meaning of studying men as gendered subjects.

The other seven articles in this issue, as well as the book review, are in striking counterpoint with the ones aligned in the Dossier. From different theoretical and methodological perspectives, they all address crucial aspects of women's sexual and reproductive lives—menopause, menstruation, sexual pleasure, abortion, pregnancy—and the way those aspects have been regulated by the sciences of sexuality, as shown in Patricio Simonetto's paper; or in nation states' public policy, in Tabbush, Díaz, Trebisacce, and Keller's piece. Focusing on Argentina's recent political context, Tabbush and colleagues offer important elements to think about the vicissitudes of the process of affirmation of sexual and reproductive rights in the continent. On the one hand, comparing the implementation of the equal marriage, gender identity for transgender persons, and right to abortion agendas in that country, they delve into the differential or unequal way in which those rights are upheld. On the other hand, they describe the ways in which that process differs significantly from that occurring in the so-called Global North.

An instigating example of the regulation of female bodies by science is found in the ethnographic piece by Feltrin and Velho, who explore how menopause is "treated" in a Brazilian teaching hospital. The authors show, in the intermingling of medical, psychological and pharmaceutical discourses on menopause, "visions of the female body as ill, problematic, or sinful". In the opposite direction, Felitti explores how the social meanings attributed to menstruation (generally negative, as the ones of menopause) are impacted and altered by anticapitalistic discourses,

concerned with the preservation of the environment. The author discusses, particularly, the way such discourses give positive meaning to menstruation and menstrual blood, incorporating them in new products designed to contain them (*cloth pads, and menstrual cups*), considered ecologically “correct”. This, in turn, points to the potential of its use to become an obligation, making women responsible for the preservation of the planet.

Several articles in this issue, besides making vital analyses of representations and discourses on female sexuality and women’s health, provoke reflections on the particular methodological challenges this sort of research faces. We observe that social practices vested by moral judgements, or criminalized, call for sensitive, recursive, complementary empirical approaches. In the case of practices that are the target of moral judgements, Cerón Hernández’s analysis illustrates how experiences and meanings around pleasure are shared differently, depending on the different methodological devices used (discussion group and oral history), revealing the social and individual tensions linked to the incorporation of ideas of sexual equality among university women. Engaging the task of attending to representations of and discourses about female sexuality, Felitti manages to reconstruct, using participant observation in both market and activist locations, representations and perceptions around menstruation among middle class women in Buenos Aires. Surely, these works lay relevant foundations to relativize sexual experiences and their implications, both socially and from the point of view of sexual and reproductive health as well.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the article by Gallego Montes and Aguirre, on the one hand, and by Milanez and colleagues, on the other, address female narratives of homoerotic initiation, and of abortion, that is, they also reflect on rather sensitive issues in women’s sexual and reproductive itineraries, since each issue, in its own way, challenges social conventions which juxtapose femininity, heterosexual desire, and maternity. Gallego Montes and Aguirre elaborate about the emergence of desire and sexual initiation among women with homoerotic practices, a terrain which, while less explored, is crucial to women’s sexual health (Barbosa & Koyama, 2006). The analysis of sexual itineraries using quantitative methods involving cohorts of different age groups reveals the permeability of those experiences to different social and historical contexts, each time more “precocious”, among younger women. Thus, the distinction between desire and sexual practices allows to identify relevant generational differences regarding the weight of heteronormativity, vis-a-vis the possibility of expression of homoeroticism at the beginning of sexual careers.

In turn, Milanez and colleagues revisit the discussion on abortion and unwanted pregnancy, using research conducted with puerperal women in Brazil’s

Unified Health Care System (SUS) in an important metropolitan region. The authors utilize a population approach to address Brazilian women's narratives, and discuss the complex ethical dilemmas women face in the event of an unwanted pregnancy, as well as the social and moral issues involved in the decision to have an abortion. Both papers bring significant contributions to a reflection about women's sexual health, and to public policy seeking the promotion of women's health.

Likewise, the book review included in this issue revolves around abortion. Helena Lermen, with her considerations about the volume *Abortion research in Latin America and the Caribbean: a renovated agenda to inform public policy and advocacy* (Ramos, 2015), highlights evident gaps in the production of knowledge about the issue in the region, when therapeutic abortion (when the woman's life is at risk) is criminalized in only seven countries. Therefore, the difficulties and obstacles for an accurate survey of abortion experiences and their implications to female itineraries, given the criminalization and social censorship built around them (Diniz & Medeiros, 2012; Heilborn et al., 2012).

As it is well known, the zika epidemic underway in the region and its association to a congenital syndrome have raised multiple questions regarding the protection of sexual and reproductive rights, namely: access to safe and adequate contraceptive methods, the offer of quality prenatal care, and the legalization of abortion. Surely, we face a regional scenario evaluation and potential renovation of the public discussion on the issue, as well as engagement in research seeking to promote adequate responses to women's necessities and decisions, based on human rights.

In sum, the works presented in this issue of *Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad* contribute to the study of Latin American masculinities, and bring relevant elements from female universes to contextualize sexual experiences, while discussing their social implications in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

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