

From the Editors N.25

Sérgio Carrara

Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Instituto de Medicina Social
Departamento de Políticas e Instituições de Saúde
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

> scarrara1@gmail.com

Silvia Aguião

Centro Latino Americano em Sexualidade e Direitos Humanos - CLAM
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

> saguiao@gmail.com

Claudia Mora

Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Instituto de Medicina Social
Departamento de Políticas e Instituições de Saúde
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

> claudiamoraca@hotmail.com

Copyright © 2017 Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad – Revista Latinoamericana. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

This number of *Sexuality, Health and Society* presents the dossier “The disturbing body: social movements, body and authority”, with an introduction by its editors, the Brazilian anthropologists Maria Claudia Coelho and Ceres Victora. The number also contains instigating works from Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil that explore significant dimensions of the debate on sexual rights through themes such as consent in sexual intercourse, sexual initiation and its mechanisms of socialization, and the limits of individual autonomy in self ascertaining gender identity. Diverse perspectives inform the authors, including human rights, feminism, demography, and anthropology. These approaches offer both analytical and empirical contributions to debates on the missteps, tensions, and connections between a rationalist concept about the human person—usually embedded in law and court decisions - and concepts emanating from the social experiences of subjects in particular cultural and historical contexts.

The article by Rojas Cabreras et al. is based on an Argentine demographic research—the 2013 National Survey on Sexual and Reproductive Health—focusing on the data about sexual initiation reported as being “voluntary” by the interviewees. By approaching the event conventionally known as “the first time” from a generational perspective, the authors suggest some advances taking place in the last 40 years, especially those related to the adoption of prevention measures against sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies. They offer analytical hypotheses for understanding the higher proportion of “voluntary” sexual initiations reported by men as compared to those reported by women. These experiences are influenced by the context and the characteristics of the relationship in which sexual initiation takes place, as well as the values and social expectations of each generation that affect men and women differently.

Also examining sexual initiation, Reis & Ribeiro’s article analyses in-depth interviews with young people from different economic backgrounds in the city of Belem, capital of the Brazilian state of Para. Inspired by the concept of “sexual scripts” (Gagnon & Simon, 1973), the authors explore the sexual trajectories of both men and women, heterosexual and homosexual. They highlight, among other aspects, how the role played by the family and the way people move through different spaces in the city (re)produce gender and sexuality practices and conventions. The article adopts an intersectional perspective, also discussing the processes through which the imaginaries and experiences related to race/skin color and class are mutually built.

By analyzing a California state law created to address sexual violence in schools and approved in 2014, Perez problematizes the apparent opposition between sexual violence and consent, indicating a gap between the judicial logic and the dynamics of private relationships. The author considers the implications

of “affirmative consent”, a concept forming the basis of the Californian law, for discussions about sexual liberty in Latin America. Building on narratives from Mexican university students, the notion of consent as founded in rational decisions is revised in light of subtler dimensions of sexual-affective relationships. These are informed by a practical sense or body language which, in the dynamics of conjugality or dating, determine how and when sexual intercourse might occur. The instigating discussion on the “blind spots” of the law suggest, according to the author, that consent and desire ought to be considered as distinct notions, although related. The formal expression of consent, central to legally ascertain sexual violence, must be revised because the decision to engage in intercourse is subjected to power relations. Emphasizing the visibility of desire would help to deconstruct representations of women’s unrestricted acquiescence in erotic-affective relations, and to perceive the limits of judicial tools in interpreting sexual violence contexts.

The analysis of the dissonances between juridical discourses and the wants and experiences of individuals is also present in Lima’s article about several Brazilian State Court decisions from 2000 to 2014 made in response to requests by trans people for the rectification of the category “sex” in their legal documents. In several instances, the individual autonomy to ascertain their own gender identity was denied by the magistrates under the pretense of protecting future partners of trans people from being deceived, or, in Brazilian judicial language, to avoid that an “essential error of person” occurs. As Lima’s analysis reveals, underneath these arguments lays a reasoning that essentializes gender conventions and sets heterosexuality as the norm. This logic also preserves traditional social representations in which terms transsexual, *travesti* and transgender people are perceived as deceitful, fraudulent, and therefore, dangerous.

Although equally relevant from the point of view of sexual rights, both França’s and Ranniery’s articles do not directly address judicial discourse to the same extent. Addressing issues such as conjugality, maternity, and sexual violence, França’s analysis of sex work moves away from the immediate level of rights to the affective-sexual lives of prostitutes living in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, capital of the Minas Gerais state. The author develops an analytical perspective unifying that which the law usually discriminates—sex charged by prostitutes and the “uninterested” sex of wives and/or girlfriends—but also ascertains the place of sex workers in the symbolic and moral universe of those women who, like them, belong to the Brazilian urban working classes.

In a paper written in essay format, Ranniery explores the trajectory of queer theory in the Brazilian field of Education, the theory’s “official” point of entry in the country. The analysis is based on “empirical suggestions” collected from theoretical productions in this area, especially regarding the discussion of cur-

riculum. To the author, even if imprecisely and contradictorily, queer theory was incorporated as a synonym of “gender and sexuality studies”, contributing to the consolidation of these themes as legitimate subjects of research and reflection in Education. In this regard, Ranniery suggests that, taken as synonym of gender social constructionism, queer theory criticism related to ontological binarisms—subject/object; nature/culture; or homosexuality/heterosexuality—sometimes loses its meaning. The complexity of the subjective formation processes that take place in schools is erased when they are taken as homogeneous mechanisms for reproducing sex and gender hierarchies that depend on qualified and authorized professionals to be contested. And the idea that there are “stable and appropriate forms of teaching” gender and sexuality is simultaneously preserved. In a time when several Latin American countries are assaulted by criticism opposing the so-called “gender ideology” and its adoption in schools, Ranniery’s paper contributes to a more sophisticated reflection freed of simplistic and reductionist antinomies.

References

GAGNON, John & SIMON, William. 1973. *Sexual conduct: The social sources of human sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine Books. 316 p.