

Young men and abortion: the male perspective on unplanned pregnancies

Homens jovens e aborto: a perspectiva masculina face à gravidez imprevista

Hombres jóvenes y aborto: la perspectiva masculina ante un embarazo imprevisto

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Abstract

This is a social-anthropological study that situates abortion as an event inscribed within the broader framework of heterosexual sexuality, gender relationships, contraceptive and reproductive control. Its objective was to reveal the network of social relationships that engender negotiation and decision-making processes surrounding the interruption of unplanned pregnancies and the manners of carrying out abortions based on narratives on the affective-sexual, contraceptive and reproductive trajectories of women and men from different social classes and generations. The focus of this article is young men's position in the face of pregnancy and abortion. We adopt a relational gender perspective in order to analyze the phenomenon. The empirical material comprises 13 in-depth interviews with lower- and middle-class men aged between 18 and 27 years living in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The complexity of the power relations established between the couple, their family members and friends engenders different possible outcomes with regard to male participation in the event: after-the-fact awareness of the abortion, due to not having been consulted; consensual participation in pregnancy and abortion-related decision-making; disagreement between the couple, with the woman's decision prevailing over the man's objections; the woman's decision being coerced by her partner. Male participation in the sphere of reproduction and abortion is a gap in the scientific literature that must be confronted. To take on the tension that abortion creates between genders, between female reproductive autonomy and male responsibility, is a central task for those who research the subject in the social sciences and health fields.

Abortion; Sexuality; Contraception; Unplanned Pregnancy; Gender Identity

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Introduction

Men's participation in the sphere of reproduction and abortion has been a gap in the scientific literature ¹. There is a sharp gender hierarchy, in favor of men, which prevails in the Brazilian society, producing all kinds of restrictions, from the silencing experienced by many women to physical violence itself. Subjects such as the division of domestic and reproductive labor, child care, contraception and abortion have been assumed by much of the population to be "genuinely" feminine. It was not for nothing that, during field work for this study, the search for male participants to discuss contraception and abortion was considered strange by men and women. Particularly, men's participation in the study involved confusion regarding the inclusion criterion itself – "men who have been through an abortion event". This often led to a surprised question: "but men go through abortion events?". This association seemed unusual.

Breaking with a conception that is highly diffused and naturalized in common sense views, of a certain biological order that defines bodies, sexes and places within the reproduction of human life and, as a result, social responsibilities and attributions that are differently distributed within a binary gender matrix (male/female), has been a daily epistemological, political and ethical challenge ^{2,3,4}. Thus, addressing the subject of contraception, unplanned pregnancy and abortion based on men's narratives expresses the effort to understand diverse nuances that are instilled in heterosexual affective-sexual relationships, with regard to the many resources mobilized by men and women when negotiating, making decisions and effecting sexual, contraceptive and abortive practices. Revealing the power asymmetries between genders and classes, representations of femininity and masculinity, material and symbolic resources that are called upon to face an unplanned pregnancy is a fruitful path for understanding social practices between specific groups.

To reflect on dimensions of reproductive labor, within the framework of sexual and reproductive rights, based on a relational and situational gender perspective, requires effort. On the one hand, there is the feminist premise of the unwavering defense of a woman's right over her own body; on the other, the strongly emphasized discussions, especially since the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (Egypt, 1994), which affirm women's autonomy and reproductive self-determination, but also call for men to be included and for a greater male participation in reproduction. These premises impose tensions on the dimension of women's and men's rights with regard to reproductive rights ⁵. The relational dimension is inherent to discussions of heterosexual reproduction. To take on the tension that abortion creates between genders, between female reproductive autonomy and male responsibility with regard to conception, contraception and the decision whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term, is a central task for those who research the subject from an anthropological perspective in the social sciences and public health.

Recent studies discuss the occurrence of unplanned pregnancies ^{6,7}. This is a common phenomenon in many regions of the world, showcasing social, regional, gender and racial or ethnic inequalities in poorer countries. Other studies have addressed the practice of abortion among women in Brazil ⁸, as well as the considerable suffering involved in the search for care in the country's public hospitals following an abortion ^{9,10,11}. In addition to risking their lives and health in clandestine practices in order to have abortions under highly unsafe conditions, the criminalization and illegality of abortion lead young women, mostly poor and black, to loneliness, stigma, illness and death. Although the practice of abortion occurs across all social classes, regions, educational levels, races and religious beliefs, the profile of the women who have abortions shows them to be, for the most part, young, with low educational and income levels, black, brown or indigenous, living in the Northern, Northeastern and Central Regions of the country ⁸.

For those who work with the subjects of sexuality and contraception within a relational gender perspective, the contingency of pregnancy over the course of men and women's reproductive practices is tacit ¹². There are many difficulties surrounding contraceptive practices over the course of one's life ¹³, from regular and free access to contraceptive methods, the clinical follow-up of users of hormonal methods, the availability of a mix of methods that enables their adequacy with regard to life cycles, occasional or stable partnerships, health and income conditions, (non)existence of children, partner's profile (cooperative, violent), etc. These circumstances, not always predictable or guaranteed for all women, make the choice of, and adherence to, contraceptive methods very restrictive. Thus,

episodes of contraceptive discontinuity, that is, interruptions in the use of methods, due to the factors mentioned above, are common, which makes women vulnerable to pregnancy^{14,15,16}. Accepting this discontinuity as a recurring phenomenon that can be part of sexual practices makes addressing it easier, through longer-duration contraception, emergency contraception or even abortion.

Given this panorama, this article discusses the male perspective in the face of unplanned pregnancy and of the decision to have an abortion among lower- and middle-class young men aged 18 to 27 years living in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Methods

The study *Heterosexualities, Contraception and Abortion* (HEXCA) is a social-anthropological study based on in-depth interviews carried out using a standardized semi-structured guide with the following topics: sociodemographic data; origin and family composition; educational and work trajectory; affective-sexual trajectory; contraceptive practices; and pregnancy and abortion events. It was coordinated by the Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights (CLAM), of the Social Medicine Institute of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (IMS/UERJ) and was carried out between 2007-2010 in the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region^{17,18,19,20}. The study was approved by the IMS/UERJ Ethics Review Board and used an informed consent form for all participants (no participant refused to sign it).

There were 58 participants (30 women and 28 men) who were selected based on a quota criterion according to social class (lower and middle classes), sex and age group, and with at least one abortion event in their biographical trajectories. Subjects belong to two age groups, given our interest on addressing different stages of the affective-sexual trajectory: the beginning of the sexual career (18-27 years) and the end of women's reproductive period (40-49 years).

Contacts were established using informal sociability networks. Field work was arduous due to the inherent difficulties of a study that addresses an intimate, delicate and, above all, illegal subject. Men were more resistant to giving interviews; the women's quota was filled more easily. The subject was considered to be strictly feminine and many of the men we contacted stated that the issue did not concern them, or that it was a subject about which they had nothing to say. In some cases, potential informants justified their refusal to participate in the study by saying: they were not sure if they had gotten their partners pregnant; or that they were unsure whether or not their partners really had been pregnant, since they did not closely follow the episode; that they only knew of what had happened later and had no details to offer; or that, though a partner had "lost a baby", they were not sure whether or not she had had an abortion.

Interviews were carried out in places chosen by participants: in their homes, in the researcher's home, close to their workplace, at a university. We sought to ensure the privacy and the confidential nature of the meeting. Researchers were around 30 years old with a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences and a graduate degree in Collective Health or Social Anthropology. Most participants were interviewed by a researcher of the same sex – with the exception of those who requested otherwise. We chose fictitious names in order to guarantee the anonymity of the accounts; however, the social indexes are truthful.

The focus of the article is the empirical material resulting from young men's narratives regarding the abortion events they experienced. In the analysis, we considered the theoretical-methodological premises that guided the investigation: the biographical perspective with a retrospective approach of sexual, contraceptive and reproductive trajectories; gender and generational perspectives, combined with subjects' stratification by social class; the inscription of abortion within the broader framework of the couple's exercise of sexuality and contraception, related to unplanned pregnancies. We also considered the types of romantic partnership (occasional or with a bond between the pair) and other factors involving material, inter-subjective and sociocultural circumstances of the decision-making process, which usually includes the family members and friends of those involved.

In factual terms, we can perceive this article's approach as a problem, insofar as one can highlight the partiality of the male perspective or even a partial view of the event, whether because they did not effectively participate, or because of the nature of a procedure that occurs in another body. However,

our choice has a positive dimension: it is this partiality that interests us, in the search of a reflection that includes the task of considering abortion in its relational gender dimension, highlighting men's role in decision-making processes, even if through a lack of knowledge or of effective participation.

Results and discussion

Participant profile

In the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region, we interviewed 13 men aged between 18 and 27 years, eight from the lower classes and five from the middle classes, with at least one abortion episode in their biographies. The class position was analyzed through a varied set of indicators, such as income, place of residence and parents' educational level. Although there was considerable social mobility in the lower classes due to educational, and, eventually, income upward mobility, we considered that the social origin and the place of residence remained significant elements in shaping a certain ethos and worldview that configure social belonging.

Among the lower-class young men, four are brown, two are black and two are white, while among the middle-class young men four are white and one is brown (self-classified according to the categories adopted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) – white, black, brown, yellow and indigenous). Most participants (10) are from the State of Rio de Janeiro. Likewise, most (10) stated they do not follow any religion, one identifies as Catholic and two as Protestant, all from the lower class quota.

Among the lower-class young men, three were in stable relationships, in a constituted family, one was separated, and four were single, living with their families of origin. Three of the middle-class young men were single (two were living alone and one with his family of origin), one was separated and another was married.

All middle-class participants attended University education (three had graduated, two were students). Among the lower-class participants, two left school at the Elementary School, two have an incomplete Secondary School, one completed his Secondary education, one had an incomplete University education and two were studying at public universities at the time of the interviews. Most were engaged in some form of payed work, except one lower-class young man who was attending university and did not work.

The five pregnancies that took place among the five middle-class participants ended in abortions. Among the eight lower-class young men, there were 18 pregnancies, of which 11 ended in abortions, 5 in live-born children and 2 in miscarriages. Given the specificity of the phenomenon of abortion in the male perspective, in which it is not unusual for men not to learn of abortions that take place within occasional partnerships – as explained in the accounts of the women interviewed for the study –, one may assume that the number of pregnancies with which they were involved may be bigger.

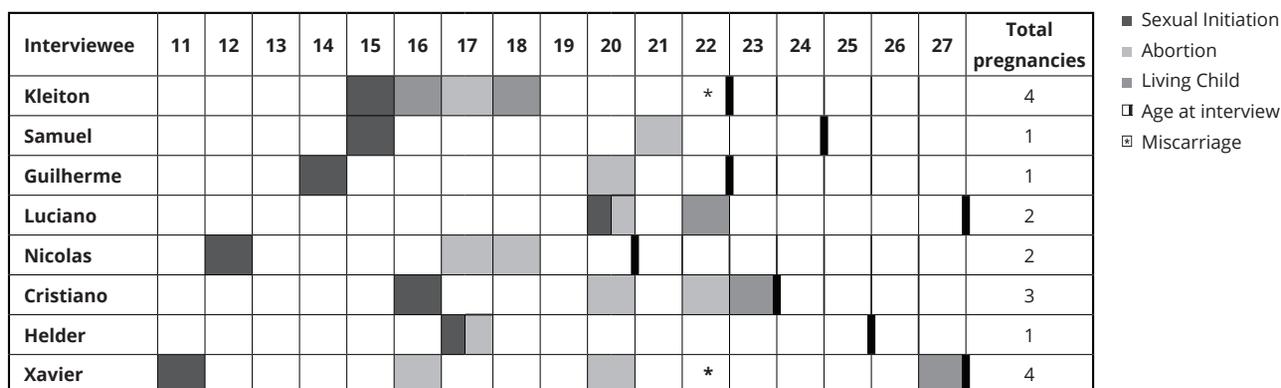
Social insertions and outcomes of reproductive events: a necessary relationship

The analysis of reproductive events according to social insertion is central when considering young men's different trajectories regarding abortion and pregnancies that were carried to term, as can be observed in Boxes 1 and 2. The middle-class young men had a single abortion in their trajectories, with no exceptions, and there were no other pregnancies up to the moment of the interview. Among the lower-class young men, the colors associated with the events show more complex reproductive trajectories: among the 8 participants, 3 had had two abortions in their trajectories; in another register, 4 were already fathers (half of the group).

This points to, at least, three questions: (i) the clear delay of paternity among middle-class young men; (ii) despite the different value of fatherhood, which seems more pronounced among the lower-class young men, something related to masculinity values¹⁸, there is a less evident willingness to carry the first pregnancy to term – note that all living children in this group were born after the participants had experienced an abortion; (iii) lower-class young men comprise the group most subject to the

Box 1

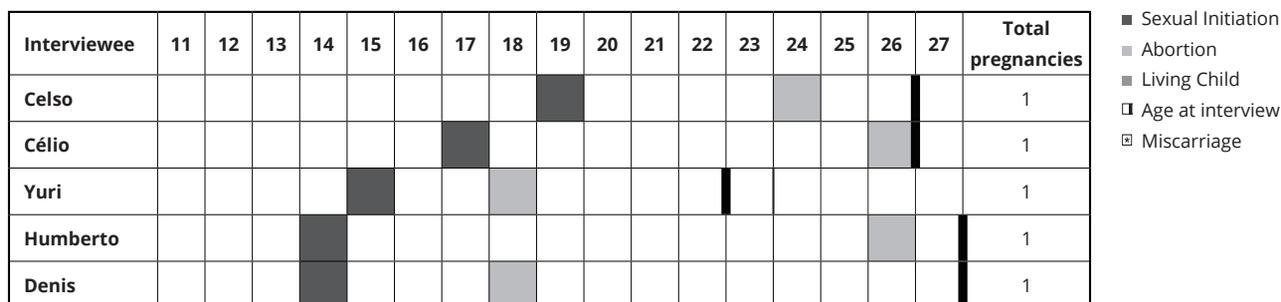
Sexual initiation, abortions and living children, according to age, in the trajectories of lower-class men aged 18-27 years. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Source: study *Heterosexualities, Contraception and Abortion* (HEXCA), Brazil.

Box 2

Sexual initiation, abortions and living children, according to age, in the trajectories of middle-class men aged 18-27 years. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Source: study *Heterosexualities, Contraception and Abortion* (HEXCA), Brazil.

vicissitudes of pregnancies and abortions, precisely the group with the least autonomy for undergoing abortions in safe conditions, despite their illegality.

There is a trend regarding the lower-class informants: that of a relative dislocation as to the value of fatherhood as a fundamental aspect in constructing masculinity, a subject that seems to us to be intimately related to discourses on life projects. However, when faced with their partners' pregnancies, there was a general trend, in their narratives, of desiring the child, opposing abortion and agreeing with the criminalization of abortion. Generally speaking, we can affirm that there is a lower willingness for immediate fatherhood among lower and middle-class young men (though more pronounced among the latter), though the values related to abortion are radically different. The situation is processed differently with regard to a second pregnancy, an aspect we will address further on.

Forms of male participation in the abortion decision process

The specificity and challenge of social-anthropological analysis consists of considering different social, normative and value injunctions in the discussion of an event that is relevant to the context of collective health and to the organization of public health care to women who choose to have an abortion, but also incorporates cultural and subjective elements that expose the fractures that the gender hierarchy produces in regular affective-sexual relationships. In order to organize common stances, to find recurring behavior patterns based on social class and gender markers, the analytical and classification exercise that follows runs the risk of reducing the complexity of emotions that frame the delicate moment of facing an unplanned pregnancy, especially among young men and women, at the beginning of their sexual and reproductive trajectories, without having reached financial autonomy necessary to marry. Here resides the unwavering intertwining between the young dyad and the network of friends or family members who co-participate in the reflection and decision-making process.

Thus, there were four distinct modes of male involvement or participation in the negotiation process between the couple and/or their family members which culminated in an abortion.

1) Lack of previous knowledge followed by learning of the event after the fact, absence of negotiation between the couple. Five lower-class young men and one middle-class young man were in this situation: Celso (middle-class); Helder, Luciano, Samuel, Nicolas (1st abortion) and Xavier (both abortions);

2) Consensual agreement between the couple in favor of having an abortion. There is a tension between a consensus (when both desire the abortion) and an agreement through concession. These are tenuous distinctions, but that answer for different dynamics and forms of expression between genders that do not collide, but emphasize intentionalities in opposite directions. In the agreement through concession, the partner gives in (despite wishing to have the child, or to “step up”, in the popular expression) in favor of the woman’s desire or decision, agreeing with the abortion. In the other group, the partners recognize the precedence of women’s reproductive autonomy and do not oppose the abortion. Four middle-class young men and one lower-class young man experienced this situation: Yuri, Denis, Humberto and Celio; Nicolas (lower-class - 2nd abortion);

3) Disagreement between the couple, with the woman’s decision in favor of having an abortion prevailing over the partner’s opposing position. In this category, the partner may or may not offer some form of support, without committing to the choice of having an abortion, made by the partner and her support network. Four lower-class young men are in this position: Helder, Cristiano, Guilherme and Kleiton;

4) The man imposes the decision in favor of having an abortion on his partner. There is less negotiation and more coercion, a male imposition of not carrying the pregnancy to term.

Two caveats are necessary. First, though present among other groups of informants in this study (especially among older men), we did not find any situation corresponding to the fourth classification among the young men. However, we retained it precisely to discuss what we interpret as a positive absence in the young generation. In other words, the fourth classification is mentioned, but not extensively discussed, because it is included in the list of possible arrangements and is profitable in comparative terms. Second, the same participant may be classified in more than one arrangement due to having had more than one experience of pregnancy in his biographical trajectory, with distinct decision-making processes and outcomes in each one.

In order to address the complexity of relational dynamics and their respective outcomes, some elements will be extracted from the accounts so as to illuminate the tensions, conflicts and disputes between genders related to unplanned pregnancy and abortion.

Lack of previous knowledge and absence of negotiation between the couple

Celso is the only middle-class participant who fits this profile. At the time of the interview, Celso, who is a historian, was 26 years old, unemployed and receiving financial assistance from his parents. At the time of the event, he and his girlfriend were aged 22 and 20 years, respectively, and were studying film at a private university. The abortion took place at the end of a two-and-a-half year relationship. Though he agreed with the choice of having an abortion, he complained of having been excluded

from any participation and from the provisions, including financial, for the procedure: *"I wanted to have [had] a voice in the situation"*. His partner was accompanied by a friend and an aunt to the clinic.

This type of situation was far more common among the lower-class informants, being present among 5 of the 8 young men. Nicolas (20 years old, single, white, living in the Maré favela, high school student), despite wanting to be a father (*"I'm being man enough to 'step up'"*), the pregnancy ended in an abortion without his knowledge, because his partner was allegedly taken to a clinic, pressured especially by an aunt who payed for her studies. His girlfriend's family did not want her to have the child. He recounts it thusly: *"I had accepted a child, I thought I was going to be a father, and then out of the blue I learn that they killed the fetus before anything else could happen, so I didn't really like that subject and we stopped discussing it..."*. Nicolas is one of the participants who experienced different situations regarding abortion: on the second time in which a pregnancy occurred (with the same partner as in the first abortion), the couple reached an agreement with regard to the pregnancy's outcome. The pregnancy occurred when they had been dating for one year and three months. They were separated, though trying to get back together, when the partner told him her menstruation was late. This time, the two agreed on the abortion, carried out at a clinic, once again paid for by her aunt, but with money that Nicolas would pay back in installments, *"because abortion at a clinic, there's no such thing as credit cards, there's no such thing as paying in installments, it has to be paid upfront, and it's expensive"*.

Samuel (24, lower class, single, white, studying philosophy at UERJ) also experienced a similar situation, recounting that his partner, whose family lived in São Paulo, pressured her to have an abortion. She terminated her pregnancy in that city, far away from Samuel, who lived in Rio de Janeiro. He states that, if it had been his decision, he would have had the child, although he acknowledges that the fact that he was unemployed at the time may have weighed on his partner's decision.

Xavier (27 years old, lower class, single, brown, worked as a watchman with an outsourced contract) experienced two abortions in two different relationships, without being consulted in either case. In the first, when he was 16 and his partner was 22, she used herbs (sponge cucumber, cannabis) and a "rinse". The partner later told him that she could not have a child with *"a boy who hasn't even graduated yet"*. The second pregnancy in his trajectory happened 5 years later, within the context of a stable partnership. The abortion occurred in the second trimester, through use of misoprostol and later curettage at the hospital, with the help of a friend who loaned half the money. He learned of the fact only at the hospital, from the doctor who treated his partner post-abortion. Xavier was hurt because they had already bought clothes for the baby. His partner's grandmother and sister were aware of the abortion and supported her. Xavier stated he was vehemently against abortion and that he supported its criminalization.

Agreement between partners

In this second classification, though the agreement may have been reached through concession, the ratio is inverted: the narratives of 4 of the 5 middle-class participants are present. In three, we find cases of consensual decisions: Yuri (22 years old, middle class, white, studying computer sciences at UFRJ), Denis (27 years old, white, middle class, graduate degree, owned a small publisher) and Humberto (27, middle class, white, Master's degree, worked in public service with a temporary contract). These are three cases of abortions carried out in clinics described as safe, also with the support and awareness of family members. In turn, the agreement through concession can be illustrated with Célio's case (26 years old, middle class, single, brown, studying law at UERJ): although he wanted to be a father (*"if the decision were up to me..."*), he fully supported his partner in her decision to have an abortion, paying for the procedure and accompanying her to a clinic in the south zone of Rio. As with the other cases of middle-class young men, Célio mentioned a political attunement with feminist demands in order to justify his stance: *"(...) I wanted something else. But that's not how life works. Life isn't how we want it to be. In my political stance, I'm not the one who decides, and we're not the ones who decide, it's just her"*. In this case, we emphasize what we have termed an agreement through concession, that is, he gives in and accepts the abortion because he defends women's prerogative on this subject – as Denis emphasized: *"it's her body!"*.

Generally speaking, fatherhood does not impose itself as an immediate aspiration for this group of middle-class young men. All agreed with their partners' decisions, either also being in favor of having

an abortion or leaving them free to choose, based on a stance that defends that the decision regarding the outcome of a pregnancy belongs to women.

Disagreement between protagonists

With regard to the third form of male participation – disagreement between the couple, with the woman's decision in favor of having an abortion prevailing over the partner's opposing position, with or without his help –, we found no cases among the middle-class participants. However, this form of disagreement, in which the male partner is aware of the pregnancy, was present in half of the lower-class informants.

It was common for lower-class young men to state they were opposed to abortion in general terms and also opposed to the abortion they experienced specifically – this same kind of stance was also observed in a study on Colombian men ²¹. This may even have led them not to support their partners' decision, as in the case of Kleiton (lower class, 22 years old, doorman), who, at the time of the interview, had been in a stable relationship for six years. While using the pill, this pregnancy was the result of a “screw up”, since she allegedly took the pill but “*it hadn't had an effect yet*”. Kleiton's partner acquired misoprostol from a friend and the abortion was followed by a curettage. Kleiton claimed not to have given any support. He claimed not only to be opposed to abortion, but in favor of its criminalization, even for the exceptions established by law.

It is possible that the common position, among lower-class young men, of opposition to abortion explains the disagreement between the couple. However, in some cases, this disagreement did not lead to a lack of support. Though against the abortion, Helder (25, single, black, studying social sciences at UERJ), Cristiano (23 years, single, black, working as a street sweeper) and Guilherme (22 years old, white, working at a copy shop) supported their partners in some way, either directly buying misoprostol or providing the money for it. Guilherme's case is peculiar: at 20 years old, he experienced a pregnancy he did not desire within a parallel relationship to his main, stable relationship. He gave his partner BRL 200,00 and left the decision to her, saying “*either you buy the medication [Cytotec] or you start to buy baby clothes*”. His partner, aged 19, who already had a child, argued that she did not want to cause her first child to suffer, since she would not be able to care for both.

Cristiano, in turn, bought the misoprostol himself, in the same illegal commerce network that sells pro-sexual drugs. From that point onward, the information in his narrative is unclear: he believes his partner took the misoprostol, but it did not have the intended effect, so she sought out a clinic to have an abortion. The informant showed a lack of knowledge regarding the process, manifested his opposition to abortion in general terms and agreement to arresting those involved – he stated that his Christian upbringing had given him the idea that abortion “*is not from God*”.

Disagreement between the couple and male opposition to abortion can also be referred to the important role that pregnancy plays in publicizing male virility, especially in the first pregnancy events, in the trajectories of young men who are still consolidating their male identity. It is also through this perspective that the frequent outcome of later pregnancies becomes more intelligible. In other words, the gender norms that confer immense value to the dimension of “stepping up” in the trajectories of lower-class young men help to understand why the most common outcome in subsequent events is of carrying the pregnancy to term. It is as if the young man cannot, once again, evade “taking on responsibility” in the reproductive process, under pain of putting his identity as a mature, virile man at risk ²².

Another element that frequently permeates men's narratives, despite the proposed classification: at many moments, they mentioned their partners' opposition or a certain insecurity regarding the relationship itself or their social condition. It is as if they revealed some of their own suspicions with regard to the motives that led their partners to have an abortion, whether or not they were in agreement: at the time of the abortion, they were unemployed, or were younger, or still at school. In fact, the female narratives from this study present many dimensions that interact in the decision to have an abortion, with an immense weighing of the type of partnership and its qualifiers and gender expectations ^{13,23,24}.

We did not find, among the young men, the modality of partner coercion, in the sense of a non-negotiated imposition (unlike what happens in the group of participants aged between 40 and 49

years). In this generational segment, though there may not have been an attunement with the idea of female reproductive autonomy or support for the termination of a pregnancy, there were many possible modalities of negotiation. When a voice was not heard, it was male, in situations in which women, for different reasons, did without their partners' support in the decision to have an abortion.

Final thoughts

Addressing the subject of abortion from a male perspective means seriously considering the tensions and social contradictions that permeate the decision-making process regarding an unplanned pregnancy in Brazil. Although the differences between social classes, which also express racial and educational inequalities, greatly dictate discussions surrounding the event and its possible outcomes (carrying the pregnancy to term or terminating it), the tensions between genders are equally integral to the negotiation and inclusion/exclusion process surrounding abortion.

This is why it is indispensable, in our view, to address the subject from a theoretical gender perspective. On the one hand, this means addressing something that does not dissipate, that always underlies, and is latent in, social gender relationships, that is, a more individualist, Western view that defends women's precedence in the decision-making process regarding an unplanned pregnancy and possible abortion, also in alignment with a reproductive rights perspective that proclaims women's reproductive autonomy. On the other, there is a dyad, immersed in affection and kinship relationships, that imposes a more relational understanding of social phenomena and that, in turn, claims male participation in the event, making men responsible for (non)contraception, pregnancy and position-taking in the face of fatherhood or its refusal through abortion. For sure, the debate regarding abortion is feminist, by betting on the political premise of women's right to their own bodies, but must not be feminine: men may be included in the reflexivity that is inherent to the subject.

We must return to the fact that the dispute between genders that surrounds the abortion decision-making process is not restricted to the dyad, but reaches mothers, mothers-in-law, aunts, sisters, cousins, friends, who, by taking the side of a certain outcome, in agreement with the man or the woman, are protagonists, along with the young couple, of the conflicts, dialogues, or supports needed for making an abortion possible. Networks of affection, obligations and commitments are part of the narratives, the decision-making process and the viability, be it of abortion or of carrying the pregnancy to term. Especially in the case of the young men we have analyzed, less endowed with autonomy, the decision seems less individual, and the abortion was not present as an isolated dimension.

Political articulations in the southern hemisphere, in an alliance with the Vatican, have led to a great reversal of the achievements of the past few decades in Brazil, with regard to the formulation of public policies that affirm sexual and reproductive rights. In the Brazilian Congress, there are a number of proposals that seek to ban abortions under all circumstances, annulling the three legal exemptions that exist in the country for legal abortions – risk to the pregnant person's life, pregnancy resulting from rape and anencephaly –, as well as to ban the distribution of emergency contraception in the Brazilian Unified National Health System. Resonating a broader debate, in the international context ^{25,26} the discussion surrounding abortion is, currently, indispensable in order to oppose the rising moral and religious conservatism that plagues the Brazilian State, compromising its secularism ^{27,28}.

Contributors

E. R. Brandão, C. S. Cabral, R. L. Azize and M. L. Heilborn are responsible for conceiving the article, writing, interpreting and analyzing the manuscript, and respond for its exactitude and integrity.

Additional informations

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Resumo

Trata-se de investigação socioantropológica que situa o aborto como evento inscrito no quadro mais amplo do exercício da sexualidade heterossexual, das relações entre gêneros, do manejo contraceptivo e da reprodução. O objetivo da pesquisa foi evidenciar a teia de relações sociais que engendram processos de negociação e de decisão em torno da interrupção de gestações imprevistas e formas de realização do aborto, com base em narrativas sobre trajetórias afetivo-sexual, contraceptiva e reprodutiva de mulheres e homens, de diferentes classes sociais e gerações. Neste artigo, o foco recai na posição dos homens jovens diante da gravidez e do aborto voluntário, adotando-se uma perspectiva relacional de gênero para se analisar o fenômeno. O material empírico reúne 13 entrevistas em profundidade com homens de 18 a 27 anos, de camadas populares e médias, residentes no Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. A complexidade das relações de poder estabelecidas entre o casal, seus familiares e amigos engendra distintos desfechos possíveis em relação à participação masculina no evento: ciência do aborto a posteriori, na medida em que não foi consultado; participação consensual na tomada de decisões frente à gestação e aborto; desacordo entre o casal, prevalecendo a decisão feminina, a despeito do parceiro; constrangimento por parte do parceiro na decisão tomada pela jovem. A participação masculina no âmbito da reprodução e do aborto tem sido uma lacuna da literatura científica a ser enfrentada. Assumir a tensão instaurada entre gêneros na questão do aborto, entre autonomia reprodutiva feminina e responsabilidade masculina, é uma tarefa central para os que pesquisam o tema nas ciências sociais e saúde.

Aborto; Sexualidade; Anticoncepção; Gravidez Não Planejada; Identidade de Gênero

Resumen

Se trata de una investigación socioantropológica que sitúa al aborto como un evento inscrito en un cuadro más amplio del ejercicio de la sexualidad heterosexual, de las relaciones entre géneros, de la gestión contraceptiva y de la reproducción. El objetivo de la investigación fue evidenciar la tela de relaciones sociales que engendran procesos de negociación y de decisión, en torno a la interrupción de embarazos imprevistos y formas de abortar, basándose en narraciones sobre trayectorias afectivo-sexuales, contraceptivas y reproductivas de mujeres y hombres, de diferentes clases sociales y generaciones. En este artículo, el objetivo se centra en la posición de los hombres jóvenes ante el embarazo y el aborto voluntario, adoptándose una perspectiva de relación de género para analizar el fenómeno. El material empírico reúne 13 entrevistas en profundidad con hombres de 18 a 27 años, de capas populares y medias, residentes en Río de Janeiro, Brasil. La complejidad de las relaciones de poder establecidas entre la pareja, sus familiares y amigos, engendra distintos desenlaces posibles, en relación con la participación masculina en el evento: conciencia del aborto a posteriori, en la medida en que no fue consultado; participación consensuada en la toma de decisiones frente a la gestación y aborto; desacuerdo entre la pareja, prevaleciendo la decisión femenina, a pesar de su pareja; restricciones por parte del compañero sentimental, respecto a la decisión tomada por la joven. La participación masculina en el ámbito de la reproducción y del aborto ha sido una laguna en la literatura científica que debe abordarse. Asumir la tensión instaurada entre géneros en la cuestión del aborto, entre autonomía reproductiva femenina y responsabilidad masculina, es una tarea central para quienes investigan este tema en las ciencias sociales y de salud.

Aborto; Sexualidad; Anticoncepción; Embarazo No Planejado; Identidad de Genero

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