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**THE STUD, THE VIRGIN, THE QUEER, AND THE SLUT:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TEENAGE SEXUAL IDENTITY IN
THREE BRAZILIAN COMMUNITIES**

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THREE BRAZILIAN COMMUNITIES***

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1) INTRODUCTION

Brazil is known worldwide for its music, soccer, carnival, and beautiful semi-naked women on the beaches. Portrayed by the international media as an exotic and erotic country that seduces and inspires foreigners, artists, and scholars, Brazil is perceived as a stereotypical tropical paradise (Page, 1995). But are Brazilians really sexually liberated? Or do they get a bad reputation if their sex-related behavior is considered inappropriate?

Reputation is one of the biggest concerns during teenage years. As teens try to build an identity and be accepted in a group, they are always wondering what others may think of them. More important than “What do they think of my new haircut?” or “What do they think of my bike?” is “What would they think of me if I did ‘this’ or ‘that’?”. Despite the fact that male and female teens sometimes do the same “this” or “that”, the reactions to what is done are completely different. For instance, the *machista* culture tends to reinforce and stimulate male initiative and conquests. Boys are taught early in life to be assertive and determined. Girls, on the contrary, tend to be encouraged to maintain a more passive attitude, be it in terms of school achievements, career aspirations, or interpersonal relationships (Orenstein, 1994). The message is ambiguous -- boys are expected to be studs whereas the girls’ biggest fear is to be considered sluts. Thus, there seems to be a gender component in the construction, maintenance, and loss of good reputation among teens. In some cases, males and females face opposite situations -- what is perceived as good for boys does not necessarily lead girls onto the same kind of social reaction and acceptance. Thus, reputation among teenagers appears to be not only gendered but also closely related to attitudes towards sex and sexuality.

Sexual reputation has a twofold definition. First, it is “constituted in discourses through which power is exercised over young people” (Holland et al, 1996: 258). Thus, it is through reputation -- and the threat to ruin it -- that peer and social control are effectively exercised. In addition, reputation is also constituted “as ‘truths’ of masculinity and femininity in relation to which young people discipline themselves and their bodies” (Holland et al, 1996: 258). In other words, teen sexual identity and reputation are shaped and restricted by what is considered normative or acceptable male and female sexual behavior.

The literature on Brazilian reputation in the 1950s and in specific regions in 1991 seem to suggest that males and females have two choices: males can either be studs or queers, whereas females can either be virgins or sluts. Is this the case for teenagers from distinct socioeconomic backgrounds in three diverse locations in Brazil in 1996/97? This paper presents the perception of changes and differentials in the way male and female teenagers construct, maintain, and lose their reputation when two generations are compared -- today’s teens and mothers of teens. More specifically, the paper shows how teenagers in three Brazilian communities construct, maintain, and lose their reputations when they date and become sexually active. A comparison with what mothers of teenagers have to say about the same topics -- both about their teenage children and about themselves at that age -- suggests changes as well as the coexistence of different perceptions of normative sex-related behavior in different regions of Brazil.

The paper is organized as follows. In item 2, I review the literature on reputation in Brazil. In item 3, I describe my focus group data and how they were analyzed. I discuss the findings regarding dating practices and virginity in item 4 and finally present some concluding remarks in item 5.

2) LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual freedom and promiscuity dominated the beginning of the colonization of Brazil (Freyre, 1956). Marriages among white males and female native Brazilians (*indias*) were more for political than sexual reasons. It was common for a white male to marry the daughter or sister of a native chief in an attempt to establish a better relationship with the natives in general (Candido, 1951). The sexual freedom observed among white males and native or African-origin females did not apply to domestic life. The patriarchal family was described by Candido as being

composed not merely of the married couples subordinated to the [white] chief but included the *household* – that is, the servants, the retainers, the slaves, and the children of all, from whom were recruited the occasional mistresses and the concubines of the white men, and among whom lived the children born from such unions (1951: 299-300).

In the nineteenth century, boys were transformed into men very early in life. For instance, Freyre (1956) describes the male pride in having syphilis, which would be the ultimate proof of his sexual activity. If males were encouraged to have sex as early as age ten, females were “brought up in a strict patriarchal atmosphere [and] lived under the stern tyranny of their fathers -- and later under the tyranny of their husbands” (Freyre, 1956: 418-9).

The Brazilian family in the 1950s was witnessing a transformation of the patriarchal structure with the decadence of the father as the leader of the family group (Candido, 1951). Courtship and recreation changed with female labor force participation, offering males and females more opportunities to be together more frequently.

Female virginity was a requirement for marriage, despite the growing number of young females who were having pre-marital sex. There were very few options for those who lost it. Males were expected to manifest and reinforce their virility. One of the ways to do that was the “sexual bravado,” through which

Men are accustomed to boast, with or without a basis, of their energies in this respect and of the success they have with the women, the faithful husband being frequent who, nevertheless, affects the pretension of being a Don Juan. The chaste man as an ideal type is practically non-existent, contrary to the situation in other cultures. (Candido: 1951: 310-1)

More recently, Muraro (1996) was probably the first scholar to conduct a thorough investigation of sexuality in Brazil. Her research, carried out in 1980, attempted to unravel the relationship between body, gender, and social class. Although her focus is on female sexuality,

Muraro interviewed 1269 females and males -- the bourgeoisie and middle class of Rio de Janeiro, the industrial wage laborers of São Paulo, and the peasants of Pernambuco -- using an innovative research design -- open-ended questionnaires that allow the interviewee to freely state his/her opinion without being restricted to pre-coded responses. Muraro's results point out striking socioeconomic class distinctions, suggesting that both males' and females' perceptions of their bodies and sexuality vary according to their socioeconomic background. In the urban areas, certain taboos such as virginity and abortion have disappeared, as well as the traditional pattern of double morality -- the dissociation between love and pleasure. Thus, wives search for both love and pleasure. Male supremacy and marriage as the ultimate goal in life are no longer accepted in urban areas, yet both are found to be the norm in rural Pernambuco. The middle class rejects the norms imposed by the bourgeoisie, which is entirely focused on pleasure, beauty, and consumption. The changes in gender roles experienced by the middle class are credited to the greater access to information (Muraro, 1996).

Parker's (1991) study of sexual culture took place in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo -- urban centers where, according to the author, more diversity is likely to occur. Yet he reminds the reader of the impossibility of analyzing the sexual meanings of Brazil due to the country's complexity. Instead, Parker suggests a study of sexual meanings in Brazil. He claims that there are several sexual meanings or possibilities operating in different socioeconomic classes and regions of the country.

According to Parker, the hierarchy of gender is what defines different possibilities for males and females within the system of sexual meanings. Resting on the patriarchal tradition, females are raised within prohibitions and repression whereas males are brought up to fully exercise their manhood. The social expectation that surrounds males forces them to "score" and make use of their insatiable sexual appetites. Despite Parker's concern with generalizations and his awareness of class and regional differences in sexual meanings, he believes the hierarchy of gender is not very distant from the patriarchal model described by Freyre (1956) and Candido (1951).

Kaufmann's (1991) ethnographic work in Alto Vera Cruz, a *favela* (shanty town) in Belo Horizonte, state capital of Minas Gerais, also relies on the ideology of gender to understand family formation and fertility. According to her, males and females are offered restricted and dualistic sexual categories. Females' destiny seems to depend on virginity -- those who keep it have a chance in the marriage market whereas those who lose it are sentenced to life in the *rua* (street)¹. In a sense, Kaufmann argues that females are either virgins or sluts. Males' destiny lies on passivity and activity -- the active male is the *machão* (macho, stud), whereas the passive male is the *viado* (queer), irrespective of his sexual preference. Yet Rito (1993) suggests that virginity is considered something from the past among middle- and upper-class teens in Rio de Janeiro.

Chaves (1994) discusses a new behavior that has completely changed courtship among teenagers -- teens just stay together, acting as if they were girlfriend/boyfriend, but have no commitment. Her study of middle- and upper-class teenagers in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte suggests that this type of relationship which appeared in the eighties attracts, seduces, and corrupts individuals to the extent that it offers immediate and non-committed pleasure. If this kind of rationale stimulates the *ficantes* (those who *ficam*) to *ficar* with as many partners as possible, it is also

¹ For an anthropological discussion of *casa* (house) and *rua* (street), see DaMatta (1991).

true that male and female *ficantes* face different consequences for the same act in terms of reputation. For the male, *ficar* with more than one female in one night suggests he is a stud. For the female, the same behavior is not well regarded among males and may ruin her reputation.

3) DATA & METHODS

The qualitative data analyzed here are drawn from the transcriptions of thirty-six focus group meetings with teenagers 14 to 17 years of age, and mothers of teenagers of distinct socioeconomic backgrounds. The meetings were conducted by the author² between September 1996 and January 1997 in three sites: the city of *Montes Claros*, state of Minas Gerais; *Vila Feliz*³, a *favela* (shanty town) in the city of São Paulo; and *Macambira*⁴, a village in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Norte. The idea was to contrast three different settings: a large metropolitan area, a mid-sized city not very close to or directly influenced by any metropolitan area, and a small community in the Northeast -- the poorest region of the country⁵.

Montes Claros is a rapidly growing mid-sized city of 250 thousand inhabitants⁶ in the northern portion of the state of Minas Gerais. Its economy is based on cement and biomedical industries, as well as grazing, sugarcane, and commercial forestry for industrial fuel. The Catholic Church is very strong in Montes Claros and is part of the city's cultural traditions.

Vila Feliz is the second largest *favela* in the city of São Paulo, with an estimate of 32.5 thousand inhabitants. It is surrounded by a very upscale neighborhood where the upper-middle class lives in mansions and highly guarded skyscraper condominiums with a view to the *favela*. The two worlds are separated by an avenue and meet when the *favela* inhabitants "cross the border" to work in the rich neighborhood as security guards, nannies, cooks, cleaning ladies, personal drivers, gardeners, and other domestic workers.

Macambira is a village of two thousand inhabitants⁷ located off the coast in the Sertão do Seridó, an arid region 190 miles from Natal (the state capital) and 15 miles from Caicó (the fifth largest city of the state with approximately 50 thousand inhabitants). Embroidery, a predominantly female occupation, is Macambira's main economic activity. The city hall is also an important source

² As a methodological experiment, Sandro Andrade Batista conducted a male group in Montes Claros and Antonio LaPastina conducted two male groups in Macambira. For more details, see Miranda-Ribeiro, 1997.

³ Following the anthropological tradition to assure that participants will not be identified, the real name of the *favela* will be omitted.

⁴ Once again, because of confidentiality problems, the real name of the village will not be used.

⁵ It is important to note that my work was part of a larger research endeavor called "The Social Impact of Television on Reproductive Behavior in Brazil," a multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary project involving researchers both in the US and in Brazil. The principal investigators of the main project are Elza Berquó (NEPO/UNICAMP), Vilmar Faria (CEBRAP), Emile McAnany (Santa Clara University), Joseph Potter (The University of Texas at Austin), and Eduardo Rios-Neto (CEDEPLAR/UFMG). Therefore, the sites were chosen according to the needs of the main project.

⁶ According to the 1991 census.

⁷ According to the 1991 census.

of employment. Despite the adverse weather conditions, agriculture is another option of employment for males. Due to the lack of good opportunities for males, temporary migration takes place frequently⁸.

The participants' socioeconomic class was defined according to ABIPEME criteria. Widely known and used by the commercial media industry in Brazil⁹, it takes into account the existence and the number of certain appliances and some characteristics of the household, as well as the education of the head of the household¹⁰. Each item contributes to an overall index that increases as the number of items existent in the household and the education of the head increase. According to the number of points the interviewee scores, he/she is classified into classes ranging from A (higher) to E (lower). In Vila Feliz and Macambira, the definition of upper and lower income had to be flexible and adapted to the reality of each community. Thus, I used measures of relative wealth – teens classified as class C were considered upper income, vis-à-vis teens classified into classes D and E, who belonged to the lowest income group.

The focus group outline included vignettes from *O Rei do Gado* (The King of Cattle), the 8 o'clock Globo Network *telenovela* which aired between June 1996 and February 1997. The vignettes portray everyday life situations such as family relations, divorce, infidelity, domestic violence, father figure, female initiative, virginity, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, abortion, condom use, drugs, and alcohol. Participants were asked to talk about each of the vignettes both in terms of the telenovela story and their own lives, in an attempt to identify what teenagers and mothers of teenagers think about each of the topics. The data analysis compared generations, socioeconomic background, and region of the country.

⁸ For a more detailed site description, see Miranda-Ribeiro, 1997.

⁹ Despite the criticisms that involve this criterion, I decided to apply it because of its wide use and acceptance.

¹⁰ The items included in the ABIPEME criteria are: radio, television set, car, living maid, refrigerator, bathroom, VCR, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, dishwasher, microwave oven, and CD player. In addition, it also takes into account the education of the head of the household.

TABLE 1
Focus Group Discussions

where	when	who			how many groups	type of recruit.
		age	sex	socioec. status		
Montes Claros, MG	Sep.1996	14-17	F	lower income	03	school
		14-17	M	lower income	03	school
		14-17	F	upper income	02	school
		14-17	M	upper income	02	school
	Jan.1997	14-17	coed	lower income	01	native
		14-17	coed	upper income	02	native
		14-20	coed	drug users	01	ethnog
		14-17	F	dropouts	01	native
		14-17	M	dropouts ¹¹	01	native
		14-18	F	teen mothers	01	native
		adults	F	lower income	01	native
		adults	F	upper income	01	native
	adults	F	Catholic	01	ethnog	
Macambira, RN	Oct.1996	14-17	F	lower income	01	school
		14-17	M	lower income	01	school
		14-17	F	upper income	01	school
		14-17	M	upper income	01	school
		14-17	F	Caicó girls	01	native
		14-17	F	dropouts	01	native
		14-18	F	teen mothers	01	native
		adults	F	less educated	01	native
		adults	F	more educated	01	native
Vila Feliz, SP	Nov.1996	14-17	F	lower income	01	school
		14-17	M	lower income	01	school
		14-17	F	upper income	01	school
		14-17	M	upper income	01	school
		14-17	F	dropouts	01	native
		14-18	F	teen mothers	01	native
		adults	F	lower income	01	native
		adults	F	upper income	01	native

4) FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1) Dating

According to the picture drawn by mothers from all social groups in all three sites, dating was quite different when the mothers of teenagers were teenagers themselves. It was strictly supervised and there was not very much they were allowed to do in terms of physical contact with their boyfriends -- which does not mean there was no such contact. Dating was, in the past, the natural

¹¹ This group was dropped.

path to marriage which, many females believed, would free them from their authoritarian fathers. Thus, marriage tended to happen very early in their lives. Yet freedom was not always the consequence of getting married. As one mother reports, her husband is as authoritarian as her father was and, instead of freedom, she has moved from one prison to another. Her experience is exactly the same Freyre (1956) reports to be the case for nineteenth century Brazil, when females moved from the “stern tyranny of their fathers [to] the tyranny of their husbands” (1956: 419).

In the past, you dated to get married. (Catholic mothers, Montes Claros)

The other day I was talking to my aunt, she said she dated 12 years with commitment. She said he [the boyfriend] never hugged her, never kissed her. (More educated mothers, Macambira)

I married very young and also with my first boyfriend. I started dating him when I was 13 and I married when I was 16. So, I married to have more freedom, because in my house it was very much like a very closed system. I didn't go out, I didn't have any freedom. So I thought that, if I married early, I was going to have more freedom, and all that. It ends up, you know, with you going to another prison. (Upper income mothers, Montes Claros)

But lately people are getting married with this conviction that, if it doesn't work, they break up. This is what I think.

Not in the past [when it was different]. First people dated (...) and [then] married the first boyfriend.

They got engaged before they got married.

Nowadays the person is pregnant when [he/she] gets married. (Catholic Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

As the female teens from the Catholic Private School mentioned, dating today is completely different from what it used to be. In fact, nowadays there is more than dating or having a steady relationship. *Ficar* (to play around) has become a very common behavior among Brazilian teens. It means staying together and acting as boyfriend/girlfriend but with no commitment. It may involve one or more actions such as kissing, hugging, cuddling, petting, and having sex. If a couple *fica* together one night, it does not mean they are going steady. The explanation of what *ficar* is comes from females teens in Vila Feliz and Montes Claros.

Ficar, if you *fica* only one day, you *fica* with a guy and all that.

Kiss and hug.

Kiss and hug. If you want more things, a lot of people do them.

Paula: A-ha.

But then you *fica* and the next day you continue friends with him. But there are some people who start to *ficar, ficar, ficar, ficar*, until they are going steady.

Paula: Really?

Really.

But it's very different from going steady. (Upper income female teens, Vila Feliz)
You shouldn't *ficar* with someone that you like because *ficar* isn't the same as going steady.
It's not.

Ficar is *fica*. You *fica* when you feel like it.

From *ficar* comes going steady.

I think, you should always *ficar* with a boy without the intention of *ficar* with him again. [You should] *ficar* for the fun of it. This is how it works out fine.

I also think like this. I say, "I'm going to *ficar* with him only once."

Ficar for the fun of it that I mentioned [before] is [something] like you felt like, you felt attracted, you felt like *ficar* with him, you *fica*. But "Oh, no, I don't like him! I'm not going to go steady with him, I'm not going to spend a month with him." I may end up liking him. But it's like I say, love comes with companionship. (Secular Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

Other evidence that suggests the difference between *ficar* and going steady is the fact that *ficantes*, especially males, do not necessarily care about beauty or the physical appearance of the other. The important element in *ficar* is just having fun. When asked about characters in the telenovela they would like to date, marry or *ficar*, many teenage participants state they would *ficar* with characters they would not necessarily go steady with or get married to.

Paula: And with which character from [*O Rei do Gado*] would you *ficar*? If you weren't interested in going steady, just for *ficar*.

With the Senator's daughter.

Oh, she's too ugly!

But it's only to *ficar*! (Secular Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

This same group of males in Montes Claros notices regional differences when it comes to *ficar*. According to them, *ficar* in Montes Claros is different from what happens in Belo Horizonte (the state capital), where this behavior is perceived as more common. The idea is that Belo Horizonte is more liberal and permissive.

Paula: Is it common what Lucas is saying? A boy goes to a party [alone] and *fica* with several girls, even if he has a girlfriend?

Very common.

Yeah.

Paula: And the opposite -- the girl going to a party [alone] and betraying her boyfriend [*ficar* with someone else]?

[It's] common too.

Paula: Really?

Yeah.

Here in Montes Claros this doesn't happen that much, but in those other capitals it's very common.

[It is common] from both parts. There are girls here who have boyfriends and, when the boyfriend travels or goes to the farm, she ends up *ficando* in the city.

In Belo Horizonte [the state capital], when they [females] have an opportunity, they *ficam*, you know?

Paula: Even if they have boyfriends?

Even so. (Secular Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

Ficar has become so common that even mothers of teenagers know what it is. Yet some of them fear this kind of behavior because of its link to promiscuity.

In our time it wasn't like this, in our epoch we first touched the finger like this, then we held the whole hand, [but] nowadays, no, [they] go to the party, hug and kiss, then, [they] *ficam* with that one, and then, [they] go to another party, the hug and kiss, things just keep growing, and this thing of *ficar* ends up in the [sexual] act itself. (Catholic mothers, Montes Claros)

(...) this defiling that happens when one *fica* with one, and with another, and with another (...) (Upper income mothers, Montes Claros)

As Chaves points out, *ficar* has consequences. Male and female teens who *ficam* around are called *galinha* (chicken). Although the adjective is the same for both, the meaning and the implications are gender specific. A male *galinha* tends to be applauded, praised, and envied by most of his male peers, whose main concern is to score. Yet there is resistance, as some males do not agree with the fact that they should be concerned with *ficar* with as many females as possible.

Antonio: What if the guy sleeps with many women, does he get a bad reputation?
Oh no.
No.
The crowd thinks that...
The crowd keeps saying you're a stud.
That he's the stud, this and that, that he's the best.
He's a womanizer.
Womanizer. I think this is very wrong.
Because he can do all this and get a reputation he's a stud. But on the other hand he may have gotten a disease doing it. (Upper income male teens, Macambira)

Despite the approval by his male peers, a male *galinha* may be rejected by females, especially the ones thinking about a more steady relationship. A male *galinha*, then, would not be a girl's first choice for a boyfriend.

To say that a boy is *galinha*, for him it's a compliment, but to say that a girl is *galinha*, then, I mean, it's humiliation, you know?
But I don't think it's beautiful, I don't think it's beautiful at all for the guy to say "I get a lot of women! Last night I got three!"
I think it's ridiculous! (Secular Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

The guy, I mean, if the guy *fica* with ten [girls] in one night, the next day he will be the stud. The girl will be the *galinha* all at once. All right I'm not going to say it's right for the girl to *ficar* with a lot of guys in only one night, but it's also not cool for the man to stay with many women in one night. (Upper class female teens, Vila Feliz)

That's what impresses me. I tell my male friends that men are (...) we live in a *machista* world -- men can get thirty [females] in a day, but if the woman stays with one for one day and with another one in a month (...) people talk about it.

And if he gets the thirty [females] in one day, that's when it's very good for him.

Then he defines his image [*faz o filme dele*].

No, but I don't think it's like that. (...) I wouldn't go steady with a guy who *fica* around, who's *galinha*.

It's true that this guy (...) you become afraid [of him].

Yeah, not that much, he's not such a big deal, but the girl fears going steady with a guy like that. (Catholic Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

The female *galinha*, on the contrary, is rejected by both males and females, who tend to disapprove of that type of behavior from a female. The most prevalent view is that a female *galinha* is more often "used" by males just to *ficar* and have fun but is rarely chosen for a more steady relationship.

Paula: What happens to a girl who gets a bad reputation? What happens?

No one *fica* with her anymore!

And the boy who wants to go steady with her, (...)

Then the people, who relied on her, they even lose it [trust on her], you know?

Sometimes she goes out on the street like this, if there's a group of guys and she walks by, they say "Look [at] that one, they've had her!" (...)

Paula: And does the reverse happen -- the male getting a bad reputation?

No!

No, only the woman. (Medium Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

Paula: Do you think the guys run away from girls like this [*galinhas*]? Or do they like this kind of girl?

He knows she's easy, let's put it this way, so what does he want? [He wants] to have a taste. "Everybody had some [taste], I want to have some too!"

But then.

Then, bye and bless you!

Men don't like easy women. I think that, if she accepts it very easily, they say (...) "This girl *fica* with every man (...) why would I want her?" (Evening Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

As the previous quotes suggest, peers play a very important role in the construction, maintenance, and loss of good reputation. Their comments, true or not, may change the way a teenager is perceived by the rest of the group. The teenagers themselves recognize the power and the importance of their peers' opinions and even the pressure they suffer to behave in certain ways. In some cases, peer pressure is very explicit and friends tell friends what they should do or not, or who they should be with or not.

Yeah, the guy many times follows his friends too.

Yeah, many times the friends brainwash him. (Lower income female teens, Vila Feliz)

I began to go steady with a guy. The first week everything is fine. The next week the guy turns to you and says “No, it isn’t working, it’s over.” Why? Because of his friends, his friends say (...) “This girl is no good, she’s not worth anything, you’re going to be the big cuckold.” That’s why they break up [with you] before either one of them ever knew if it was going to be cool, if it was going to work or not. (Dropout girls, Vila Feliz)

Gossip is another way through which peers influence behavior. More important than the fact is the version of what allegedly happened. Thus, teens are often scared because they know their reputation could be ruined by what is said about them. Not unusually what is said did not actually happen. Gossip happens not only in small villages as Macambira but also in larger settings as Montes Claros and Vila Feliz. Yet it is usually perceived as not happening as much in larger cities because of their size. However, gossip seems to be related not to the size of the community but to the size of the group (peers, family, neighbors) with whom the teenager interacts and on whom his/her reputation depends. This group is usually not very numerous even if the teenager lives in a large metropolitan area such as São Paulo.

The people here have this problem, they bother too much with other people’s lives. Many times the thing didn’t happen and they tell other people about it without knowing [for sure]. (Caicó girls, Macambira)

Paula: And how is it? Here in Montes Claros, is it common to see everybody talking about everybody else?

Any city has it.

No, but I think in the capital [of the state, Belo Horizonte] it’s not as frequent.

It’s not as frequent because [the capital of the state] has more people in it. (Secular Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

Gossip affects not only teenagers but also adults¹². The mothers of teenagers also complain about being “watched” by neighbors. Despite the fact that gossip affects different generations, females seem to care more about gossips than males.

She [the female] thinks “What’s going to happen to me afterwards?” “What are my friends going to say?” “What are my neighbors going to say?” [Males don’t care.] (Secular Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

¹² While in Macambira, I provided the population with food for thought because I stayed in Antonio LaPastina’s house. One of his neighbors, an old lady, confessed she was always watching the house. During a focus group meeting, one female teen even used the fact that I was a guest at Antonio’s house as an example when we discussed gossip.

All I know is that my life is pretty much looked after there, in the street where I live. But it's only because of this daughter that I have, you know, people are very curious. "Has Fulana arrived?" "What time did Fulana arrive?" "Has she left?" Even when she goes (...) "She's going", you know, Paula, "She won't come back today." People speak just like that. I don't mind. I don't care. (...)
I don't depend on anyone to survive. (Lower income mothers, Vila Feliz)

The *galinha* behavior among males is an example of a type of behavior influenced by peer pressure. Males have to prove their status as a macho and, therefore, are expected to score. To keep up with the expectations and the pressure, male teens frequently lie about their success with women and their sexual conquests, suggesting that Candido's (1951) idea of "sexual bravado" is still very present. Again, more important than the fact *per se* is what is said about it.

It impresses me. I think it's childish of him, you know, you *fica* with a guy and you know he hasn't done anything to you, and he tells everyone that he touched this and that, he did this and that. I think it's horrible. (Catholic Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

[Many times boys] talk about the girls, what they did to them, and they tell everyone [afterwards]. Many times [they tell others] things they haven't done (...) (Caicó girls, Macambira)

In addition to the fact that males are praised for and rewarded by their male peers for having numerous girlfriends or female partners, there is another piece of evidence that links male reputation to sexuality. It is recognized that males would have their reputations ruined by engaging in homosexual relationships, as suggested by Kaufmann's (1991) duality *machão* versus *bicha*. In other words, males are either studs or queers.

Oh, to get a bad reputation like this, go out with another woman like this, people don't say anything, but you know, I think that, to get a real bad reputation he's got to have intercourse with another man, I mean, I think he gets a bad reputation with that. (Upper income male teens, Macambira)

The bad reputation is if you become gay. (Medium Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

Resisting a female *cantada* or flirt tends to be a reason to be considered gay. According to the machista culture, males are not supposed to say no to a female if she takes the initiative. Males are usually in charge but, if a female "offers herself," a "real macho" is never supposed to refuse the "offer."

And when the guy doesn't want [a girl who offered herself to him]. If you don't want [her], you're a queer. (Lower income female teens, Vila Feliz)

The girl asks you to have sex, you know. Then, if you don't go, you're a queer, if you go, you can, like, get her pregnant, you know? If you don't go, you're a queer, and she spreads the word. (Lower income male teens, Vila Feliz)

Participants also point to drugs and alcohol as reasons for having a bad reputation. Although participants in the three sites suggest that teenagers in general drink too much, alcohol seems to be a problem particularly in Macambira, where the lack of leisure alternatives and male job opportunities seem to increase the preponderance of male drinking. It is important to note that the law that forbids minors to drink alcoholic beverages is not reinforced. Any teenager can buy a drink anywhere in the country. In Vila Feliz, drugs are the main reason for males having a bad reputation.

Paula: What about men? What do they need to do to get a bad reputation?

Sniff.

Paula: Really?

And smoke pot. (Upper income females, Vila Feliz)

Antonio: When does a man get a bad reputation here?

When he has sex with a gay man, when he smokes pot.

When he steals.

When he gets drunk in the *rua*.

When he drinks. (Lower income male teens, Macambira)

[If] the guy's addicted to crack. (Dropout girls, Vila Feliz)

In the case of female teens, what do they have to do in order to get a bad reputation? According to some participants, not very much. In addition to *ficar*, things such as staying out until late, smoking, or talking to males may ruin a girl's reputation.

Paula: What do girls here need to do to get a bad reputation?

Ficar with more than one [guy] in one night.

Paula: Really? Then she gets a bad reputation for sure?

[She] gets a bad reputation like, *namoradeira* [someone who dates too much], it's not like she's going to get a bad reputation like those women.

Yeah, [you males] "Take care with that one! That one is peppy, that one does this and that." (Caicó girls, Macambira)

Ficar with a lot of young men.

Paula: Really?

Yes, or date married men. (Dropout female teens, Montes Claros)

Paula: What does a girl here in Montes Claros need to do to get a bad reputation?

Ficar with everyone. (Private School teens I, Montes Claros)

Paula: What do women need to do here to get a bad reputation?

Ah, go out with a lot of men from here.

Go out with many men.

If you go out at night.

Simply if you get home (...) after midnight.

Yeah, after midnight, and if you wear short clothes.

If you are talking to a bunch of men.

If you *fica* with more than one.

Even if [you *ficar* with] only one. (Upper income female teens, Vila Feliz)

Women who go to the dance salon are seen as bitches. [Women] who smoke lose points with them [males]. If she is talking with a group of guys, she loses points with them. If she walks in the *rua*, doesn't work, doesn't go to school, if she smokes, if she likes going to the dance salon, she is a bitch, a whore. If she talks to boys in a group, she's a whore. It's like this. (Dropout female teens, Vila Feliz)

The voices of teens and mothers of teens suggest that dating practices have changed considerably in the three communities. Instead of dating in order to get married, today's teens have the opportunity to try different boyfriends and girlfriends. In addition, they have the chance to experience the intimacies of a dating relationship without any kind of commitment. This relatively new kind of behavior called *ficar* has become very popular among teenagers in the three communities but carries consequences for the reputation of those who engage in it. Despite the fact that both males and females who *ficam* around are called *galinhas*, the male *galinhas* are often praised by male friends whereas female *galinhas* are despised by both males and females. Yet there is resistance and some teenagers fight against the established norms.

4.2) Virginit

Sexual activity may or may not be a consequence of dating. What happens to teen reputation as teenagers become sexually active? Although dating has become more liberal, virginity still has a central role in constructing, keeping, and losing good reputations. Yet males and females tend to face opposite requirements as boys are encouraged to have sex whereas girls should refrain from it. Nonetheless, the voices of the teenagers indicate some changes in the way virginity (or its loss) is usually perceived and reinforced.

4.2.1) Female Virginit

In the past, losing one's virginity could ruin a young female's dream of wearing a white wedding gown and walking down the aisle. As some mothers in Vila Feliz report, a young woman could even be returned to her family if the groom only found out about her "condition" after the

marriage -- as if he had bought defective merchandise. Virginity was, at that time, the female's main asset to succeed in the marriage market. In many cases, if a male "messed with" a female, he had to marry her.

Paula: As how was it in your time, this thing of virginity?

Ah, it was something very important.

Paula: Really?

I know a case from this time, the young man, you know, he took the woman and gave her back to her father. (...)

He gave her back to her parents because [she wasn't a virgin anymore].

The parents didn't say anything, you know?

Maybe, but I think that even in our time the women gave themselves. (Lower income mothers, Vila Feliz)

Paula: And how was it when you were young? How was this thing of virginity? Was it important or not?

I thought so.

It was very important.

It was important.

Paula: Really? And at that time was it common to marry virgin or not?

Of course!

Yes, it was.

Only the virgins could wear a wedding gown.

Paula: Really?

Yeah.

I remember that. (...)

Paula: And in the past, what happened to a man who took the virginity of a woman? Did he have to marry her?

He had to marry her.

He had to marry her.

They forced him to marry.

(...) marriage in the police station. (Less educated mothers, Macambira)

Today, virginity is one of the biggest concerns of mothers of teenage daughters who participated in the focus group meetings. Although they recognize things have changed and virginity is not as valued as it used to be, most of the mothers still wish their daughters would marry as virgins. Some mothers even go further, and assert that virginity is the main asset a female ought to have if she wants to have a good marriage. Marriage is, in many cases, still perceived in a very traditional way in which the male patriarch seems to be the owner of his wife, as if, again, she were just merchandise. Thus, she better be "brand new" and not "used."

If my [daughter] gets to the marriage as a virgin, I think it's very important since I didn't. I didn't want her to do the same.

(...) But I wanted, wished she married virgin. The man who gets a virgin, he's more...

[He] has more love, [he] is more secure, [he] knows she was only his. And when [a couple] marry and [she] is not a virgin anymore, when there's a fight, there's always an excuse "When I married [you], you weren't a virgin, this and that." Then if she was a virgin, she says "I've never been a woman of any other man, I was only yours!" There are these problems.

The marriage lasts longer. (More educated mothers, Macambira)

(...) there's a short story that says, you get to a store to buy a doll and there's the one the salesman shows you, I mean, "she is like this, look at her hair, she works like this, she walks this way," and then you say "I'll take the doll." The salesman wants to wrap that one up, but you say "no, I don't want this one, I want one in the box." Then, the young man, he likes the outgoing girl, the peppy girl, he likes the girl that is found in every place, he likes the girl who shows her body, but when he chooses a woman to marry he'll want a new one. (...) He'll want one that her little toy is new because (...) many today only want that, as I say, the expression I use is this, "break the toy." When the little toy is broken, is not working anymore, they, they want a new one. So, keep your little toy for you. When it is time to use it, to break it, do it with responsibility, and to say it was worth it, not to cry for the rest of your life because it didn't work out." (Catholic mothers, Montes Claros)

There is some controversy involving female virginity. Some mothers defend the idea that virginity is not the most important asset for a single female anymore. Yet most of them dream of their daughters being virgins when they get married.

I have a 14 year-old daughter, I tell her "Look, my daughter, every wealth of the world is in what you have there."

Nowadays this doesn't exist anymore!

It doesn't exist anymore!

For me you're not going to be worth anything (...) because every person that looks at you, every man that looks at you will only think of one thing. (Upper income mothers, Montes Claros)

Paula: Did you dream of your daughters marrying virgin?

Ah, I did.

I [still] do.

I do.

I dream [of it]. (Upper income mothers, Vila Feliz)

If most of the mothers of teenagers in the three sites tend to be in favor of virginity until marriage, there are regional differences when it comes to what teenagers think about it. Teenage participants very often referred to regional differences when arguing about various subjects. Their perception is that, in the state capitals or other larger cities, the attitudes, ideas, and behaviors

regarding sex are more permissive than the reality in which they live. The ones who live in large cities perceive smaller towns have different realities. Other studies have shown that the perception about the importance of virginity is not uniform and may depend on socioeconomic background and region of the country. Kaufmann (1991) suggests that poor females from Alto Vera Cruz, a *favela* in Belo Horizonte, still value virginity as an important asset. Rito (1993), on the other hand, claims that middle class teenagers in Rio de Janeiro consider virginity something from the past. Among the many regional differences pointed by participants in the group discussions, one very extreme example was given by a female teenager who studies in Caicó. She told the group that, in big cities, parents drop their children off at motels and pick them up hours later, as if motels were a shopping mall or any other place where teens go with friends to have fun. If this particular perception of regional differences is exaggerated and unrealistic, there are nevertheless some real differences in the way teenagers perceive virginity. Yet there are more similarities than one might expect.

More than believing that sexual activity among teenagers is largely accepted in big cities, some female teens in Macambira perceive virginity as being a source of good reputation for them and, at the same time, a source of bad reputation for those who live in larger cities, where it would be considered “bad” or maybe old-fashioned to be a virgin. Yet these teens recognize that “the times are changing” in Macambira. Although some would like to be virgins when they get married, others claim they know many girls who do not care about virginity.

Paula: What does a young woman have to do here to get a bad reputation?

Ah, here in Macambira, if a girl is going steady with a young man for more than a year, people get suspicious of her.

Paula: Really? What do they think she is?

[They] think she’s not a virgin anymore, that she’s already [slept with] him a long time ago. (Lower income female teens, Macambira)

(...) because out there it’s like this, the girl who’s virgin is slandered. Here she’s not, who has sex here, has sex with anyone, is the one who’s slandered. There’s this difference. (...)

(...) especially out there, because here it’s not like this. [Out there] there are men who slander the girl just because she’s a virgin. (...)

Paula: How is it here?

We value virginity a lot.

Paula: Really?

But it’s also changing. The times are changing. (Caicó girls, Macambira)

Paula: Would you like to marry as virgins?

I would.

I would.

I would.

I have a cousin who couldn’t care less. (Lower income female teens, Macambira)

Despite the fact that they live in a big city, some males in Vila Feliz also refer to another reality that is different from theirs -- the region of origin of several families who live in the *favela*, who are migrants from the state of Pernambuco. According to them, virginity is still a requirement for marriage in Pernambuco, which it is no longer true in Vila Feliz. Yet virginity is related to the religious ceremony of marriage. Some females consider it “ugly” or inappropriate for a non-virgin to walk down the aisle. Their views bring to mind the old patterns described by mothers of teenagers in the beginning of this chapter, of a time when only virgins could dress as brides.

[It's] normal, in the world this [losing the virginity] is normal. [But in] Pernambuco, if the girl is not a virgin anymore, she doesn't get married.

Paula: Really? Only if she's a virgin?

Only if she's a virgin. (Lower income male teens, Vila Feliz)

If it's ugly for a woman to marry like this, not being a virgin, imagine with a big stomach like this! [pregnant] (Lower income females, Vila Feliz)

I think that the woman who marries using a veil and a garland, a virgin, the right man that she chose, it's pretty. (Young mothers, Vila Feliz).

I had this dream of marrying a virgin, all [dressed] in white. (Dropout girls, Vila Feliz)

However, there is controversy surrounding the loss of virginity in Vila Feliz. Some female teens would like to keep it until marriage because they believe, like their mothers, that virginity is their only asset and a source of honor; some claim it is normal to lose one's virginity; others think the only drawback of losing it is regret -- what if a female teen has sex for the first time and later regrets it? Some of them also believe that losing the virginity may have serious implications for a female's reputation.

Paula: Do you think virginity is something important?

I do.

I think so.

I do.

Some girls say this is stupid, but I don't think it's stupid.

I don't think so, either. (...)

I want to marry like that [virgin]. (...)

I think it's normal.

It's normal.

But if [one] can [keep it].

Paula: What's normal? I lost it.

To lose one's virginity. (...)

I think like, it's a honor for the girl [to be a virgin when she marries], it's something very beautiful, and for the father, too. It's very beautiful. It's very beautiful.
The only thing we have is our virginity.
It's the most important thing we have, I think. (...)
If you lose it you're a *galinha*, you're this and that. (Lower income female teens, Vila Feliz)

Paula: Do you think virginity is important?
I don't think so.
It depends. If you give yourself to a person and you don't regret it later, then it doesn't matter. But if you do it and regret, then it must be difficult. (Upper income female teens, Vila Feliz)

The relationship between reputation and virginity is also clear in Macambira and Montes Claros. It seems to be common to hear "bad things" about girls who have lost their virginity. As one female teen from Macambira explains, virginity goes beyond the physical aspect of a broken versus an intact hymen -- virginity is, for many, a synonym for good reputation.

Virginity is not only a hymen that exists, it's also our reputation, many times. Because the woman who, like in that case, the woman has sex and doesn't value herself, she gets a bad reputation. (Caicó girls, Macambira)

Each thing has its own time. I think a woman should wait a little bit. (...) For me, virginity, I mean, mine, at least, I hope to lose only after marriage.

Paula: Really? What about you?

With the man that I love.

Paula: What about you? Do you think it's important or not?

I think it is.

Paula: Really? Why is it important?

Because here for a young lady to have a name [meaning good reputation], she has to be virgin. (Lower income female teens, Macambira)

Paula: (...) let's talk about virginity. What do you think [of it]? Is it important nowadays, or not? What do you think?

I'm still in favor of virginity.

Me too.

But I don't think you should avoid sex. I think if you see that the person loves you, and you love the person, then it's right [to have sex]. But I'm favor of virginity.

I'm [in favor] too.

You have to think what may happen. (...)

Many times men say "Ah, it's no problem," you know, [they say that] when it's a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. But when it's time to get married, they're going to chose a woman that's virgin. The ones that aren't, they won't chose them.

That's it. Men like virgin women more than those who have already [lost their virginity] (...)

You give yourself to a man, then he doesn't value you at all, he says bad things about [defames] you. It's not worth it.
You have to choose the right man, because there are many boys too, who say "I've had that girl over there." Than you become *mal falada* [with a bad reputation].
And [he] tells [everybody] everything he did with her. (female teens at Private School teens II, Montes Claros)

It is interesting to contrast what female teens think about the male teens' perception of female virginity with the males' own opinions. While most of the females believe males would prefer a virgin when it is time to get married, not all the boys agree with that. In fact, some of the male teens who participated in the focus groups do not really care about virginity. For many of them, rather than virginity, promiscuity is the main reason for concern.

Antonio: Should the girl marry virgin or not?
Ah, I think it's either way.
But before [in the past] she had to get married as a virgin.
But the most correct thing is for the girl to marry as a virgin.
Yeah, I also think that.
The most correct thing for the woman is to marry virgin, but for the man it's either way. (Upper income male teens, Macambira)

Paula: And for marriage, what would you [prefer: a virgin or a non-virgin]?
If she is a young lady worth respecting, and if she respects me [it doesn't matter].
Paula: It doesn't matter that she's not virgin?
It doesn't matter.
Paula: What about you? You, Bernardo, would you prefer a virgin or it doesn't matter?
It doesn't matter. (Lower income male teens, Vila Feliz)

In the past, people [females] lost their virginity with people they loved. But not nowadays.
Nowadays, I think this doesn't matter. (Catholic Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

For me it doesn't make any difference.
It depends on love. (Secular Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

Paula: Do you think the woman should remain virgin until marriage? Or you think she should [have sex] before marriage? Should the first man [in a woman's life] be the husband or not?
If the person is dating a guy and she likes him very much, even if it's not for marriage (...) I think if she feels like it [having sex], there's no problem.
(...) this doesn't mess anything up. Nowadays there's no such thing. My mother said that the most beautiful thing was a woman to be virgin when she got married, also be religious, but nowadays no one is [like that]. (...)

But it doesn't change anything. (Medium Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

Paula: And do you think a woman should keep herself for her husband? Should she keep her virginity until marriage, or not?

I think she should.

Paula: Why do you think so?

Losing the virginity before marriage, I think it's ugly for them [females].

Paula: Really? Why do you think it's ugly? Do you think it messes things up or not?

No, it doesn't mess anything up, but if she keeps it, even better.

Paula: Do you agree with Carlos?

I agree, but (...) we have to see both sides. It's not only her, but him, too. It's not only her who's wrong, but him too.

I think she should (...) If she is to give herself to anyone, she has to discover the right person and not give herself to just anyone, because many men out there (...) I'm a man, I know (...) And they want to take advantage of the girl, have fun. [They] stay with her, everything is fine, then [he] doesn't want to know [about her]. (Evening Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

No, I don't think [virginity] is that important.

Paula: You don't think so?

I think this taboo is over.

No, but I think society still thinks [virginity is important]. I think society still believes [that]. But we don't. (males in Drug users, Montes Claros)

Some males have become more flexible in terms of accepting and some times even encouraging females to have sex before marriage. However, some of them in Montes Claros still consider virginity important. More than that, some males belittle females and compare them with merchandise, following the old *machista* pattern from their mothers' generation.

Paula: Why do men want to marry virgin women, what's the reason?

(...) It's like a car that smells like new.

But then you find out it's used, it was previously crashed (...) (male at Private School teens I, Montes Claros)

Paula: Would you [males] prefer a virgin or a non-virgin to marry?

male: Yeah, a virgin.

female: Men think "Ah, this one belonged to another guy." They don't like it. They abuse her, but to marry one that was abused, they don't want.

female: (...) They say "This one belonged to someone else, I don't want [her]." (Public School Teens I, Montes Claros)

You sit at a restaurant table and then an ex-boyfriend of hers [your girlfriend] is staring from the other side, and you're all concerned knowing that the guy has slept with your woman, your woman, his ex-but now yours. It's very embarrassing. (male at Private School teens I, Montes Claros)

Males are not the only ones who would rather marry a virgin young woman. Some females in Montes Claros also think that they should keep their virginity until marriage.

A young lady should never sleep with [her] boyfriend before they are married. This is what I think. (Dropout girls, Montes Claros)

I think it's beautiful when a young lady is virgin.

Paula: Why do you think it's beautiful?

Ah, I don't know, because she's keeping herself for the person she wants. (female at Drug users, Montes Claros)

I have an old fashioned way of thinking. I, for example, I want to marry as a virgin, because if it's with that man that I'll marry, that I want to spend the rest of my life with, so it's with him that I want to lose my virginity because many times when the woman doesn't marry as a virgin, and because of some stupidity, some fight, he [the husband] throws on her face "Ah, but when I married you, you weren't anything, you weren't a virgin." It's something embarrassing for a woman. (Low Public School female teens, Montes Claros)

However, despite the fact that the society of Montes Claros is said to be Catholic and conservative, there are some groups within this society that challenge the idea that virginity should be kept until marriage. In addition to the drug users, some females believe that gender differences in this realm should not exist -- females should have as many rights as males when it comes to sex. One female teen reports the contradictory pieces of advice she gets from her mother and her aunt -- the former hopes she keeps her virginity until marriage whereas the latter regrets she did so and encourages her niece to have sex before marriage. Another female teen says she wants to have other sexual experiences besides the one will have with her husband. Some females from the Catholic Private School think females should have sex whenever they feel ready -- even if that happens before marriage. The quotes suggest that, despite the fact that Montes Claros is a conservative city, some -- both teenagers and adults -- already accept sex before marriage and encourage it.

Paula: And [what about] virginity? What do you think of it nowadays? Is it updated, outdated, is it over (...)

It's outdated. Virginity is not -- how do you call it? -- it's not in fashion anymore.

Here there's still some of it, but in bigger cities such as, I think, São Paulo, Rio [de Janeiro], in these places people [who] I know, there were people from there, a guy from São Paulo, he says "Look, if I have to choose between a virgin and another type of woman, an experienced woman, I prefer the more experienced." (Young mothers, Montes Claros)

Like Mariana was saying, I don't think everybody has to marry virgin necessarily, I don't want to have had only this experience with my husband for all my life, I don't think that this [virginity] is important. (female at Private School teens I, Montes Claros)

There are girls who think they are ready; if she's with the right person and doesn't want to get married now, I think she's right.

I'm also not against it [losing the virginity before marriage].

Me neither.

I think like, when you think that your time has come, that you're ready (...) not in my case, because I think I'm not ready for this kind of thing.

I think like that, too.

Me too.

So, if you think you're prepared, so you have to look for a person you want. But, I'm not prepared. I don't think this is the right time, I still have a lot to learn, I don't know if it's going to happen, but I intend to marry as a virgin.

I also think like that.

I don't. (...)

(...) But I don't say "I guarantee I will [marry virgin]."

Me neither.

I think the flesh is too weak.

(...) I don't intend to marry virgin.

Me neither.

I don't. I don't know, I can, for example, I can (...) during adolescence fall in love with a person, be in that pretty moment (...) and if I think I'm ready I will [have sex], of course! (...) I may not marry him and but if in that moment I think that it's good, that I like him, that it's the moment.

That the moment is right.

So I think it doesn't matter [to lose the virginity before marriage] (Catholic Private School female teens, Montes Claros)

My aunt comes to me and says "If you have to marry as a virgin, for God's sake, don't do that, because I lost all my life waiting for a man, then when I found one, (...) My mom says "Oh, my daughter, you have to marry virgin, because it's important, this and that." So it's like this -- one side wants me to marry virgin, the other side doesn't, you know, I don't need to be virgin. But what I think is that I don't give too much importance to it. To marry virgin would be good, but if I liked the guy before I got married, if I liked another guy, if it happens, I don't know. (female at Private School Teens II, Montes Claros)

(...) if the woman has the obligation to keep herself [her virginity] for after marriage, I think the man [does], too. (Evening Public School females, Montes Claros)

The voices of teenagers and mothers suggest female virginity is still important although not crucial as it used to be one generation ago. Some still think virginity is an important asset, yet others believe that premarital sex is acceptable for both males and females. Despite the diversity in opinions, I did not hear anyone agreeing with Rito's teens in Rio de Janeiro that virginity is old-fashioned or something from the past. Thus, what is considered normative regarding virginity in the three communities is still far from the liberal perception that upper-class teens in Rio de Janeiro have about the subject.

4.2.2) Male Virginity

So far I have reported extensively about female virginity. What about male virginity? In general, male virginity seems to be not well regarded and a source of bad reputation, especially among males. Male virginity is perceived by many as a failure to prove manhood and to perform according to the expected. If female teens are expected to refrain from sex, their male counterparts are encouraged to seek it out. Thus, most males lie about their real "status" if their peers are sexually experienced or if they believe they are above the age at which they consider male virginity to still be accepted. It is interesting to note how certain males think of a certain age after which virginity would no longer be acceptable. Females also recognize the fact that males feel embarrassed and lie about their virginity.

[They] say they aren't [virgin], you know, [they] say they aren't. There are some friends of mine who say they aren't virgin, but they are.
For me, I think they are ashamed to tell the truth.
They are ashamed to say they're virgin.
Paula: Really? Why are they ashamed?
Ah, [because] (...) his friends are going to pick on him. (Upper income male teens, Vila Feliz)

The friends pick on him [if they know he is a virgin]. They say he's a queer. (Catholic Private School male teens, Montes Claros)

Most of them just want to be the best, [they] say they aren't virgin only to lord it over [their peers], do you understand? Most of them. (Medium Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

Paula: Is there an age, for you males, in which the boys generally loses his virginity, or there isn't [such a thing]?
About 14, 15. (males at Public School Teens, Montes Claros)

In my house there's a guy, I think he must be 19 years-old. He says he's still virgin, but there's a lot of jokes [about him] in the neighborhood, when he walks down the street people call him *brasileirinho* (little Brazilian). Because there's that movie, The Last Virgin American and they put this nickname on him, the last virgin [little Brazilian]. There was a time he came to me and said "I'll pay a woman to take my virginity, just to shut these people up." (...)

Paula: So do you think it's a shame for the man to be a virgin?

I don't.

I think it is!

For both the man and the woman, it's so beautiful to say they are virgin. (Evening Public School female teens, Montes Claros)

(...) if all the guys that hang out with him aren't virgin, and only he is. He tells everybody he isn't, even being [a virgin].

They think they're going to get something with that. (Upper income female teens, Vila Feliz)

Some male teens seem to have freed themselves from the "dictatorship of virility" and not only respect but commend those who admit they are virgin. Others believe males should also wait for someone special to lose their virginity with and should not necessarily be sexually experienced when they get married.

I think it's much more human, much truer, [if] he comes and says "I'm a virgin, I'm 18 and I'm a virgin, I've never had sex," than those kids who are 14 [and say] "Man, I had sex with a girl yesterday." (male at Drug users, Montes Claros)

He can be looking for someone special for his first time.

Yeah, [someone] only for him. Not to be with *raparigas* [easy girls].

Antonio: So, how do you think the first time for a young man should be?

Ah, it should be (...) he is (...) the girl likes him, he likes her too. (...) Not any [girl] who comes, calls [you], and you go. I think there must be something, he likes her, or she likes him.

Antonio: Do you think a young man should marry as a virgin or [what]?

Either way.

Either way, for me it doesn't matter. But always, it's good to think a little before getting into these things. (Upper income male teens, Macambira).

Sandro: What about male virginity: is it good or bad for the man to be virgin?

[You] have to know how to respect this in him. If his time hasn't come yet, [if] he's waiting for his turn to come, [you] must respect it. (Low Public School male teens, Montes Claros)

Despite the advances in trying to narrow the gender gap in terms of what is accepted and what a bad or good reputation means, there are hold-outs such as the following group in which females still believe the man is in charge, reinforcing patriarchy.

Paula: Would you like to marry a virgin man?

No.

Paula: You wouldn't?

No.

Paula: Why not?

Because generally in a relationship men are almost always [in charge], that's why (...) It's not only in the relationship, it's in everything, the man (...)

Paula: Really? Do you think men are dominant in everything?

Women have started to grow a little bit, but men still [dominate]. (females at Private School Teens I, Montes Claros)

The quotes presented in this section suggest the perception of male virginity has not changed very much if compared to how things used to be. Males are still expected to “score” and the ones who do not conform tend to lie, making use of Candido’s sexual bravado. Yet some teens reject the old pattern and believe males and females should have the same options when it comes to virginity, i.e., that males should also have the chance to keep himself for someone they care about.

5) CONCLUDING REMARKS

Focus group data offer evidence of the links between reputation and sexuality for both male and female teenagers, as well as persistent gender differences. Both females and males in Montes Claros, Vila Feliz, and Macambira perceive their reputations as closely related to the way they behave (or not) sexually. For instance, girls lose their reputation and are called *galinhas* for *ficar* with more than one boy in one night (and sometimes for *ficar* with just one), whereas boys score points with their peers for that same behavior -- same action, different reactions, double standards. Male reputation is also connected to sexuality. As opposed to girls, boys are praised for and rewarded by their male peers for having numerous girlfriends or female partners, in spite of the female rejection of male *galinha* behavior. Yet males could have their reputations ruined by engaging in homosexual relationships, drinking too much, or using drugs.

Dating practices have changed considerably in the three sites when two generations are compared, and *ficar* seems to have become a very common behavior among teenagers in the three sites. The relevance of female virginity has also changed, although some still consider it important. Male virginity is still despised by some but respected by others.

Although the construction, maintenance, and loss of good reputation have changed between the mothers’ generation and today, there are certain aspects that remain the same. Despite the changes that have occurred, what is normative about reputation in Montes Claros, Vila Feliz, and Macambira today is not completely different from what used to be normative one generation ago. Similar to the 1950s in Brazil and in line with Parker’s and Kaufmann’s studies of sexuality in the beginning of the 1990s, the norm in terms of sexual identity seems to rely on the dyad “the stud and the virgin,” whereas the dyad “the queer and the slut” is feared and rejected by teenagers and their mothers.

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