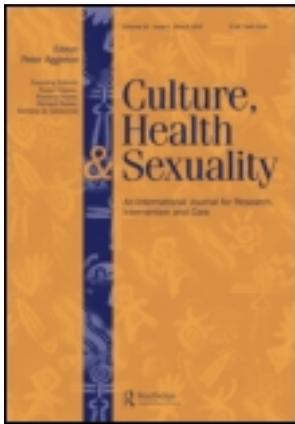


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Editorial Introduction

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Editorial Introduction

IASSCS at 15

Welcome to the IX Conference of the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society (IASSCS) in Buenos Aires. This special conference issue of the journal *Culture, Health & Sexuality* helps set the scene for the event, which coincides with the 15th anniversary of IASSCS' foundation as an international organisation committed to advancing work on sexuality, culture and society.

We begin this introduction with an overview of organisational history, highlighting the eight IASSCS conferences that have so far taken place: from the inaugural conference that launched the Association in 1997, to the most recent conference held in Madrid in 2011. Following a summary of highlights from the 2011 Madrid conference are three papers, each of which was presented at the last conference. The final section of this introduction consists of an overview of this year's conference, with a listing of conference abstracts on the theme: *Sex in the marketplace: What's love got to do with it?*

On behalf of the IASSCS Secretariat and Board of Directors, we welcome you to Buenos Aires and to the IX IASSCS 2013 Conference. May we take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the local organising committee and the academic programme committee in ensuring what we know will be another successful event.

IASSCS 15 years later: from conference host to international association

Following an initial conference in Amsterdam in 1997, IASSCS was created to globally strengthen research capacity in the social and cultural study of sexuality. As the Association's mission developed, it came to be informed by principles of social justice and human rights, with a focus on sexual rights and gender equality. Through biennial international conferences and regional meetings between 1997 and 2011, IASSCS supported the development and exchange of high quality research on sexuality between countries of the global South and North, both by encouraging junior researchers to work in the field and by creating new opportunities for research training and knowledge exchange. As a leader in this field, IASSCS is increasingly recognised as a convener of regional and global networks of researchers, policy makers and activists working on the social and cultural dimensions of sexuality in the pursuit of sexual rights and gender equality. The Association's Website (<http://www.iasscs.org>) serves as an important global reference point for international sexuality research and training.

Increasing conference attendance and membership enabled IASSCS to obtain international donor support for its programmatic initiatives. In 2007, this support facilitated a review, enabling IASSCS' members to reflect on the role of the Association and the position it had achieved internationally in the previous 10 years, to discuss the future direction of its programmatic, research and advocacy initiatives and to develop a strategic plan for implementation. A strategic plan was developed that led to the Association becoming an independent entity legally incorporated in Perú, with a Secretariat based in the Institute of Studies in Health, Sexuality and Human Development with support from the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia.

The strategic plan also provided for the design and implementation of a three-pronged programmatic approach, which defines IASSCS's mission: research dissemination; research development and training; and policy and advocacy. The Association's biennial conferences constitute IASSCS' primary dissemination activity. Over time, they have helped build a global network of scholars and advocates engaged in the study of the social and cultural aspects of sexuality. Research development and training takes the form of post-conference training workshops, the IASSCS Advanced Sexuality Studies Course and scholarship support to selected conference participants. More recently, the Association has initiated a small grants programme for junior scholars. Over the past 4 years, IASSCS has worked to strengthen its contribution to advocacy and policy concerning sexuality. The Association offers support to sexual rights advocacy initiatives seeking to influence state policies and programmes; encourages ongoing dialogue on future research priorities; supports advocacy for attention to sexual minority issue; and seeks to position itself as a reliable and accurate source of information for academic, government, research and media organisations.

The structure of IASSCS was further consolidated in 2008 by the adoption of a set of bylaws governing membership composition and governance. The Association is governed by a General Assembly, comprised of all Full Members, and by a Board of Directors consisting of five General Assembly Members representing five global regions: Africa; Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and East Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; North America and Europe; and Southeast Asia, South Central Asia and the Middle East. General Assembly meetings occur 'face-to-face' at least once every 2 years and the Association's Board of Directors is selected every 2 years by way of an election process aimed to ensure regional representation and guarantee new and effective leadership over time.

IASSCS conferences: 1997–2011

Each of the biennial conferences held over the past 15 years engages with what at the time were key themes in the social and cultural study of sexuality. Thus each of the conferences offers a 'finger on the pulse' gathering of scholars, researchers, practitioners and movement/policy advocates, providing a significant setting for the creation and strengthening of sexuality networks and coalitions across disciplines, professions and regions. Conference participants have represented diverse disciplines including anthropology, history, sociology, health policy and the humanities, as well as cultural, gender and sexuality studies. The first four conferences held in 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2003 were particularly crucial in solidifying the membership base, laying the foundations for realising the Association's mission and positioning the organisation as an international leader in sexuality research and advocacy. Since 2005, IASSCS, in conjunction with the local conference host institutions, has conducted short-term training events that take place immediately following the biennial conference. These post-conference courses have been offered in San Francisco (2005), Lima (2007), Hanoi (2009) and Madrid (2011) and have provided an important venue for participants to engage in ongoing theoretical and advocacy debates and political controversies regarding sexuality and gender, and to examine key issues and topics of research in sexuality, such as sexual and reproductive health, sexual identities and practices, social mobilisation around sexuality and sexual rights.

1997: beyond boundaries – sexuality across cultures. The first international conference on the cross-cultural study of sexuality and gender

The IASSCS's inaugural conference was held in July–August 1997 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and was jointly hosted by the Universities of Amsterdam and Chicago.

Scholars from anthropology, history, sociology, health policy and cultural and gender studies gathered to share their work and take stock of the international sexuality research field. Out of this discussion emerged a recognised need for an international forum to promote the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural study of sexuality. Plenary sessions focused on: sexuality research as cultural practice; culture and the new history of sexuality; sexual stereotypes as socio-political weapons in culture/ethnic relations; sex and colonialism; culture and sexual repression; the political economy of sex; and sex in developing countries – rethinking cultural studies after AIDS.

1999: sexual diversity and human rights

The Association's second conference was held in Manchester, UK, in July 1999. Hosted and organised in cooperation with the Department of Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University, it provided the venue for the launching of the Centre for Studies in Sexuality, Gender and Society within that department at the university. The primary question posed at this conference was, 'Is the right to choose and express sexuality a fundamental human right, as basic as the right to food and water or free speech?' In addressing this question, conference attendees focused on constraints to sexual choice and freedom and the relative meaning of these concepts. Advancing sexual diversity as a universal human right, the conference provided as an essential platform for researchers and scholars, who promoted through their work the right of individuals to sexual choice without stigma and repression.

2001: belief systems and the place of desire

The third IASSCS Conference was held in Melbourne, Australia, in October 2001 and was hosted by the University of Melbourne. The conference focused on how formal belief systems and ideologies – and the institutions that represent and promulgate them – control and create spaces for the expression of sexuality and gender identity, and how they give meaning to and marginalize desire and pleasure. Examining the tensions between beliefs and practice, the conference explored how individuals resist dominant ideologies in different social contexts, especially those of indigenous communities, given the regional focus on Asia and the Pacific at this conference. Sessions included those that focused on: how Western ideas and institutions shape colonial and postcolonial understandings of sex, sexuality and desire; the gendered nature of desire; the social construction of sexuality and masculinity; the way in which understandings of HIV/AIDS influence social responses and behaviors; the medicalisation of sexual function; and prostitution and public health in Australia.

2003: sex and secrecy

The fourth IASSCS conference was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2003. The event was hosted by the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa and The Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Held for the first time in the African continent, the conference provided a forum for participants to address issues pertaining to sexuality in a South African context and, more specifically, in relation to the broader cultural norms surrounding secrecy, silence and taboo and their connections to matters of sex and sexuality. The conference provided a forum for new

ethnographic work and theoretical insights from a range of disciplines, emerging from diverse social contexts in South Africa, a country experiencing rapid social transformation as reflected in fierce public contestations about HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence and homosexuality. Focusing on the social, cultural and historical dimensions of sex, sexual practice and sexuality, presentations explored issues of power, stigma and silence with the goal of understanding 'When sex is secret and why'.

2005: sexual rights and moral panics

The fifth IASSCS biennial Conference was held in San Francisco, USA, and was hosted by the US National Sexuality Resource Center and the Sexuality Studies Department of San Francisco State University in June 2005. Focusing on the rise of moral panics surrounding sexuality, the conference explored the need for sexual rights advocacy in response to the exaggerated spectre of moral/sexual threats as promulgated by conservative movements. Conference themes examined societal assumptions about and responses to moral/sexual panics, including the role of the media in depicting the controversies and contestations that resulted. An important focus lay in a critique of the media's tendency to bestow legitimacy on the efforts of conservative movements seeking both harsher laws and expanded surveillance of sexual expression/behaviours as effective responses to such perceived threats. Presentations included: an analysis of the role of the women's movement in debate on abortion law reform in Nicaragua; love, gender and HIV risk among male-to-female transgender people; the religious right's arguments against gay marriage in Australia; sexual objectification and the construction of whiteness in the gay male community; shifting strategies of normative control over sexuality in childhood; and sexual rights in the context of HIV/AIDS.

2007: dis/organized pleasures

The sixth biennial conference was organized in June 2007 in Lima, Perú. It was hosted by the Unidad de Sexualidad y Desarrollo Humano at the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, and was co-hosted by the Centro Latinoamericano de Sexualidad y Derechos Humanos at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The conference focused on sexual and reproductive rights activism in Latin America since the 1980s, and addressed key factors underpinning such activism, including tensions and challenges within the movements, the rapidly changing social landscape that such movements sought to confront and the traditional, inflexible normalising positions that they had to question. The conference provided a forum to critically explore contestations within sexual and reproductive activism, such as: the contesting of gender by the emerging transgender movement; the confrontation of traditional lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual activism by the emerging intersex movement; the debate pitting participating in versus critiquing HIV prevention within gay organisations; and the challenges resulting from the assimilation of gender equity discourse by regional governments as well as the recruitment of feminist leaders into government posts, without the resolution of longstanding feminist grievances. Four main themes characterised the conference: bodies/pleasures and wellbeing; revisiting sexual rights and new conceptual tools; sexual cultures in Latin America; and globalization, sexuality and the marketplace. The conference also hosted the launch of the *Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Law in Relation to Issues of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* in Latin America and the *Manifesto for an Inter-American Convention for Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights*.

2009: contested innocence – sexual agency in public and private space

The seventh biennial IASSCS conference was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, in April 2009 and was co-hosted by the Institute for Social Development Studies, the Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion and the Hanoi Medical University. The conference explored how cultural and political belief systems affect the ways in which sexual knowledge and practices are produced, situated and represented in society. This theme invited discussion of the interplay of sexual innocence and sexual scandal in the media, of sexual agency in the context of limited public knowledge and the development of sexual rights, human rights and sexual diversity in a post-colonial context. Plenary presentations included: 'Politics, media and controversy; Out of the boxes? Between boxes? No boxes? New boxes? – Reflections on Gender and Sexual Diversity'; and 'The Politics of Public Health With(out) Sexual Health'. Parallel sessions focused on: sexuality and cyberspace; scandal and innocence; activism, stigma and discrimination; sexuality, labour and migration; sexual policy, intervention and community mobilisation; sexuality, gender and the state; sexual trafficking; transgender and transsexual identities; sexual violence and health; sexual-economic exchange and transactional sex; heterosexual normativity and same-sex marriage; religion and sexuality; bodies, identities and medical discourse; HIV risk and prevention; genders and sexualities in Asia; cross-border sexual relationships in Asia; and sexual and reproductive health in indigenous communities.

2011: naming and framing: the making of sexual (in)equality

The eighth biennial meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, in July 2011 and was hosted by the Social Anthropology Department at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain. The conference explored factors encouraging and/or discouraging state support for discourses, laws and public policies that acknowledge sexual rights, promote gender equality and recognise and advance sexual diversity. The conference theme invited dialogue and analysis of the interplay between equality and inequality with sexuality, as represented by sexual identity, gender, class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual citizenship. In line with IASSCS's mission, the conference promoted links between researchers, academics, advocates and activists by addressing the process of transforming theory into practice, conceptualizing the meaning and significance of advocacy at the national and community level and supporting and advancing the implementation of sexual rights. Keynote addresses included, 'The Past and the Future: Theoretical Frameworks for Thinking Sexuality' and 'Facing Cultural Diversity in the Recognition of Sexual Rights as Human Rights'. Parallel sessions focused on the naming and framing themes on sexual (in)equality, including: gender and sexuality, HIV/AIDS and information technologies; sexual diversity, the body and pleasure; sexuality and the marketplace; and cultural perspectives on moving from sexual repression to sexual democracies. An important component of this conference focused on research and training and policy/advocacy within the international sexuality field.

Research papers from 2011 IASSCS conference in Madrid, Spain

Three research papers developed from presentations given at the 2011 Madrid conference are included in this special issue and follow this introduction. Reflecting the diverse broad strokes of current work on the social and cultural aspects of sexuality, they address issues

of sexual exploitation in the Peruvian Amazon, issues of sexual identity and 'categorisation' in Sri Lanka and sexual and reproductive health in Mexico.

Jaris Mujica's paper, 'The Microeconomics of the Sexual Exploitation of Girls and Young Women in the Peruvian Amazon', identifies the economic dynamics, logic and mechanisms of commercial sexual exploitation in the port of Pucallpa on the Ucayali River. Using a discourse analytic approach, this research highlights local and familiar forms of sexual exploitation, situating this phenomenon not as a vehicle for the accumulation of wealth or surplus, but as a business whose profitability is tied to the trade in alcoholic beverages and foods involving family connections and networks. It is important to note that the author overcame considerable obstacles to conduct this research, including gaining access to this remote region and completing the fieldwork in an area known for high criminal activity and drug trafficking. In spite of such challenges, Mujica's research provides new insights into sexual exploitation as it is culturally 'practised' and, in so doing, heightens our awareness and understandings of sexual exploitation by exposing it as a 'perverse supplementary economic logic that has spread to various parts of the Amazon and its poor economies'.

Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala's paper, 'Butching it up: An Analysis of Same-Sex Female Masculinity in Sri Lanka', elucidates the category of female masculinity as it is embodied by Sri Lankan non-feminine lesbians. The paper provides a crucial window by which to understand this relatively new category, as it is personified and given meaning to by the individuals Kuru-Utumpala interviewed. The author challenges current conceptualisations of female masculinity by giving voice to their voices in terms of how the interviewees view themselves, the extent to which their actions and behaviours fit within a masculine framework and the ways in which notions of desire are felt and understood in relation to their understandings of gender. Acknowledging that the category of female masculinity continues to operate within the socially prescribed gender binary, Kuru-Utumpala – via the interviewees who eloquently speak to how they accommodate or reject this category within the reality of their lives – provides a meaningful framework in which female masculinity is juxtaposed to 'gender oppositions, gender refusals, and gender rejections'.

Tamil Kendall's paper focuses on the rights of women with HIV to access comprehensive reproductive health information and services. 'Falling short of universal access to reproductive health: unintended pregnancy and contraceptive use among Mexican women with HIV' offers revealing reproductive trajectories of women who have experienced discriminatory denial of and pressure to accept specific contraceptive methods because of their HIV status. The paper aptly reminds us that providing a favourable context for women with HIV in reproductive counseling settings, so that they can prevent unintended pregnancy, must be a primary cornerstone of reproductive rights. Moreover, Kendall demonstrates how the pervasive and narrow focus on the male condom within the counseling arena, coupled with omissions of scientific information about prevention of vertical and sexual HIV transmission as well as lack of access to other contraceptive methods, significantly impacts the constitutionally guaranteed right of these women to freely choose the number and spacing of their children. The paper calls for 'respectful implementation, rights-based training for HIV healthcare providers and careful monitoring and evaluation of services provided. A strong case is also made for women's increased access to the female condom and investment in microbicide research and product development that includes HIV-positive women.

2013 IASSCS conference: sex in the marketplace – what has love got to do with it?

The 2013 conference is hosted and co-organised by the Study Group on Sexualities of the Institute Gino Germani in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires Argentina. Presentations focus on the increasing commodification of social and sexual relationships, in both their sexual/erotic and emotional dimensions. Within the context of expanding global market economies and of national/local responses to this process, the conference will explore themes related to: the political economy of the body; the analysis of the market value of bodies and of the activities in which those bodies are involved; and the multiple markets and marketplaces in which genders, sexualities, health and rights are produced and reproduced.

The large numbers of abstracts received in response to the call for presentations is indicative of the relevance of the theme to the global sexuality research field. The overwhelming response demonstrates that researchers and scholars are not only interested in applying social, cultural and political analysis to the study of sexuality, but also in exploring its economic dimensions. Thus, in keeping with the umbrella theme of the commodification of sex and sexuality, 2013 conference abstracts that have been selected examine, from a range of perspectives, how the reasoning behind capitalist production can colonise not only sexual exchange, but also the sphere of sexual politics, especially as related to academic production.

Under this umbrella theme, the various sub-themes that will be presented at the conference include: (1) Selling the body: sexed economic relations, commodified sexual relations, (2) The production of sexual knowledge, theories and research on sexualities, (3) Sexuality and gender: Two movements for the price of one?, (4) The commodity in the sexual market: Heterosexualities versus heteronormativities, (5) 'If you have any questions, ask your doctor': Sexuality as a health issue, (6) Sex, communication and the acceleration of time, (7) A best seller: Stories of romance and the power of utopian ideals of love – love as a political discourse, (8) The institutional (ex)change market: the law, policies, education and religion and (9) Artistic production lines: Transgression or abjection.

A significant number of submissions pertaining to the first sub-theme, Selling the body: Sexed economic relations, commodified sexual relations (143 submissions), explore the relationship between sexuality and capitalism as represented by the following topics: the commodification of sexuality; the libidinalisation of commodities; the traffic of commodities and people; the intersection between gender hierarchies and sex work; and the expression of sexual citizenship in contexts defined by the (ex)change market.

Equally relevant is the sub-theme Production of sexual knowledge, theories and research on sexualities (107 submissions), which encompasses the diversity of theories, epistemologies and methodologies in sexuality research pertaining to the commodification of sexuality. Papers selected for this sub-theme focus on love and sexuality as an object of study within the social sciences and humanities as well as in biomedical fields. This sub-theme begs the question of whether or not there exists a trend towards the commodification of certain kinds of sexuality research and explores the notion of 'evidence' in policy regarding sexuality, North-South 'collaboration' in academia and the ramifications of utilising one dominant scientific language (i.e., English). Related themes include: analyses of the long-existing links between politics and sexuality; of the political sphere as a dominating force in relation to the somewhat ambiguous field of sexuality research; and of the discourse and practices of 'romantic love' as a 'survivor' of the collapse of the great modern discourses by the end of the twentieth century.

The sub-theme focusing on Sexuality and gender: Two movements for the price of one? Social movements around sexuality and gender (87 submissions) looks at the complex relationship between the state, academia and diverse social movements. It encompasses issues such as: convergences and divergences across progressive social movements (e.g. feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, sex workers, HIV-AIDS, reproductive health and rights, environmental, end of life, harm reduction and those movements against trafficking and sexual violence); sexuality and gender as conceptualised and enacted by social movements in relation to the state and to academia; the professionalisation and commodification of activism with regard to non-governmental organisations; and love stories and passion within social movements.

The sub-theme, Commodity in the sexual market: Heterosexualities vs. heteronormativities (68 submissions) focuses on heterosexuality (and heteronormativity) as a topic of study and includes topics such as: heterosexuality and love; the reconstruction of heterosexuality as an expression of sexual diversity (beyond heteronormativity); the potential emergence of 'non-heterosexual' as a meaningful discursive category (especially in younger generations); the tensions within heterosexuality (e.g. non-heterosexual fantasy in an increasingly homoerotic global culture); and heterosexuality, women and men.

The sub-theme, 'If you have any questions, ask your doctor': Sexuality as a health issue (53 submissions), focuses on sexuality as a health issue and includes presentations that explore: health as a mechanism of politicisation/depolicitisation of sexuality; the discourse of 'unhealthy' sexualities as part of the medicalisation of sexuality; health and the homogenisation/commodification of sexualities as sexual subjects; and the pharmaceutical industry and the pharmaceuticalisation of sexuality.

The sub-theme, Sex, communication and the acceleration of time (41 submissions), addresses sex and sexuality as virtual commodities travelling through time. Presentations focus on: sexual dynamics in the media, cyberspace and online networks; the emergence of love and relationships between individuals meeting through the internet; the explosion of internet-based pornography and diverse cybermarkets regarding sexuality; censorship and the regulation of virtual spaces; and online activism and advocacy efforts centring on sexuality issues.

The sub-theme, A best seller: Stories of romance and the power of utopian ideals of love – love as a political discourse (38 submissions), addresses diverse current discourses on romantic love, including those that describe the phenomenon as a tactical instrument, as a source of power or as mere utopia and/or those using 'love talk' to legitimise sexual citizenship and sexual rights.

The sub-theme, The institutional (ex)change market: The law, policies, education and religion (33 submissions), focuses on authorised institutional discourses in relation to sexuality. Issues addressed here encompass: the limits and potential reach of the human rights discourse in relation to erotic justice; the concepts of legality and illegality in relation to sexuality; illegal practices (e.g. abortion or sex work in specific places) within black markets; and heteronormativity and the state.

Finally, the sub-theme Artistic production lines: Transgression or abjection? (21 submissions), addresses topics as diverse as: sexuality, love, eroticism and friendship in the arts and literature; sexuality-themed art and sexuality activism potentially viewed as inoffensive *petit-bourgeois* transgression; and abjection as a focus of artistic endeavour.

In conclusion, may we thank you for joining us here in Argentina. We hope you enjoy the conference and gain much from attending it, in the form of new ideas, new energy and new friendships. We look forward to welcoming you back again at the next IASSCS meeting, details of which will be announced shortly.

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