DEBATES

Associate Editor's Report

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A seção *Debates* deste *LASA Forum* é dedicada à discussão das mais antigas formas de desigualdades naturalizadas pelas sociedades humanas: aquelas derivadas do sexo. Convidamos cinco cientistas sociais para a tarefa.

Laís Abramo e María Elena Valenzuela abrem a seção apresentando o panorama atual das desigualdades de oportunidades e de situação de homens e mulheres nos mercados de trabalho latino-americanos. O quadro que apresentam é animador em alguns aspectos e preocupante, em outros.

Por um lado, aumentou bastante a inserção e permanência das mulheres nos mercados de trabalho da região: aumentam as taxas de participação e as taxas de ocupação feminina, a escolaridade das mulheres aumenta em ritmo superior a dos homens. Ou seja, a brecha de participação e ocupação por sexo diminui nas últimas três décadas. Mas, por outro lado, as condições de inserção e permanência das mulheres continuam muito precárias. O trabalho informal e mal remunerado continua a incidir pesadamente sobre as mulheres e o emprego doméstico remunerado, ainda que comece a gozar crescentemente de proteção trabalhista, permanece sendo a forma principal de inclusão das mulheres indígenas e afrodescendentes. Ou seja, cristalizam-se formas de opressão por sexo e raça que, se não forem combatidas, tendem a perpetuar a naturalização da opressão feminina.

A agenda da Organização Internacional do Trabalho de promoção da igualdade de gênero através do "trabalho decente", apresentado pelas autoras, deve servir de parâmetro para os programas sociais e as políticas públicas latino-americanas, de modo a constituir-se num patamar mínimo do estado democrático na região.

É justamente sobre as políticas públicas e a agenda política dos novos governos democráticos da América Latina que se volta a discussão de Cristina Ewig, partindo da constatação metodológica de que a reprodução das desigualdades de gênero estão imbricadas nas políticas sociais dos governos e que estão também intrincadas com as desigualdades raciais e de classe. Sua análise concentra-se especificamente sobre a política de saúde e suas conseqüências para a reprodução das desigualdades de gênero. A análise de Ewig deve ser lida com atenção pois desvenda a relativa desmobilização feminista no continente, tanto pelas reformas neo-liberais, quanto pelos novos governos de esquerda, com as raríssimas exceções—o governo Bachelet, principalmente. Quando os políticos e tecnocratas partem do suposto de que suas políticas são neutras em relação às desigualdades naturalizadas pelas relações sociais existentes, temos aí um bom começo para a sua invisibilidade e reprodução.

Obviamente, como discutimos aqui mesmo no *LASA Fórum* do Inverno 2008, é sempre possível argumentar que destacar tais marcadores diacríticos (sexo e cor, por exemplo) em políticas públicas é perpetuá-los na sociedade. Mas essa é uma meia-verdade, como a discussão de Ewig deixa claro. Destacando tais marcadores podemos controlar politicamente a sua reprodução e eventualmente conseguir trazer tais desigualdades para patamares mínimos, o que nossos instrumentos técnicos e teóricos permitem. Ou seja, podemos fazer de uso de medidas quantitativas e avaliações qualitativas que influem diretamente seja na esfera ideológica, seja na base material de distribuição de recursos. Mas, não os destacando estamos ampliando a sua reprodução e ajudando-os a se consolidarem como a nossa própria natureza.

Patrícia Árias, no terceiro artigo desta seção, se dedica a discutir seis motivos pessoais que nutrem a agenda das mulheres no mundo rural mexicano, numa situação em que seus homens se ausentam regularmente em busca de emprego nos Estados Unidos. Estariam estas mulheres em melhores condições para exercerem sua liberdade individual, desconstruindo papéis de gênero e representações milenares do sexo, que as mantém em posições de subalternidade social? Como a crise e a desagregação do mundo rural mexicano são vividas por suas agentes em termos das relações sociais de sexo? A análise de Árias, ainda que limitada a um território geográfico nacional e à esfera da vida rural, é o contraponto necessário para avaliarmos como as políticas públicas, que discutíamos acima, são importantes na remodelação e reconfiguração dos constrangimentos estruturais que definem e redefinem as relações sociais. Isso em duplo sentido: tanto aquelas que destoem relações tradicionais, quanto aquelas que estabelecem os parâmetros da modernidade.

Este número de *Debates* se fecha de modo ainda mais desafiador ao se interrogar, como o faz Amy Lind, sobre a estranheza da sexualidade humana (queerness), em teoria e em prática política, num país que passa por reformas democratizantes que se querem radicalmente populares e libertárias. Lind se interroga sobre a agenda *queer*, tal como se encontra na arena política equatoriana hoje, em meio a campanha para mudança constitucional. Como conviverão constrangimentos à liberdade sexual individual e ao exercício da igualdade de direitos nas novas revoluções sociais pacíficas, como se quer o Equador de Rafael Correa? Mas, o suposto é que aos poucos a agenda das ciências sociais latino-americanas estão sendo fertilizadas pela teoria *queer*, como antes o fora pelo feminismo e pelos "novos movimentos sociais", pois nos obriga a lançar um olhar novo sobre algo que supúnhamos natural. Como pode algo tão naturalizadamente irredutível como o sexo

se dividir em diferentes formas de sexualidade socialmente aceitas?

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Gostaria de finalizar esta introdução refletindo sobre a construção social de tal irredutibilidade. Ou melhor, sobre uma instância muito particular de tal irredutibilidade, a partir do único conhecimento empírico sistemático que tenho. Posso colocar a questão assim: porque os negros brasileiros são negros?

Diferentemente de outros povos formados em diáspora ou oriundos de imigração, os milhões de africanos trazidos escravizados para as Américas e seus descendentes não se constituíram enquanto etnias em seus novos habitats, mas sim enquanto raça. O mesmo pode ser dito para aqueles que, séculos depois, imigraram livremente das jovens nações africanas em busca de trabalho no Ocidente. Os africanos de ontem e de hoje foram e são geralmente definidos negativamente (por outros) ou positivamente (por si próprios) por características fisionômicas e fenotípicas e não pela cultura ou nacionalidade de origem. Nas Américas, mesmo no Brasil, onde traços das culturas que trouxeram da África marcaram profundamente a cultura popular e fundiram-se à cultura nacional e regionais, apenas a mobilização pela raça lhes permitiu avançar reivindicações de direitos civis. Para os negros, como muito bem salientou DuBois, a dupla consciência de raça e de nacionalidade foi e continua sendo condição para integração social e política.

Este único fato marca a grande diferença entre os negros e outros povos formados em diáspora, como os judeus, por exemplo, que se cristalizaram, ao contrário, enquanto minoria étnica ou religiosa, ao lado de outras minorias nos estados-nações europeus, surgidos na idade moderna. Os judeus resistiram com sucesso, ainda que de forma muitas vezes trágica, ao processo de racialização que lhes quiseram impor— a religião, e a cultura desenvolvida à sua margem, lhes serviram de cimento identitário. Não há duplicidade de consciência, no caso dos judeus, pois a pluralidade de suas identidades sociais assemelha-se àquela das variações admitidas pelo estado-nação republicano e democrático: são portadores de especificidade religiosas e culturais, tal como outros coletivos são portadores de subculturas regionais, étnicas ou religiosas. No Brasil, continua sendo um brasileiro comum tal como o protestante, o evangélico ou o espírita, ao lado do católico.

Como os negros, também os descendentes dos japoneses que imigraram para as Américas continuam, de certo modo, a se diferenciar fenotipicamente dos demais americanos e brasileiros a depender de seu grau de miscigenação. No entanto, eles também resistiram com relativo sucesso à racialização, atendo-se à referência nacional de sua origem, muito mais forte que a designação de raça amarela que se lhes quis impor a imaginação racista. Assim, ao invés de amarelos, foram e continuam sendo japoneses, chineses, coreanos ou indianos, em qualquer país da Europa ou da América. As variações, ainda que dignas de nota, não vêm ao caso. Por exemplo: são "japoneses" ou "japa", no Brasil, e nipo-americanos, nos Estados Unidos.

É bem verdade que a cultura e a religião, no caso dos negros, serviram de núcleo a partir do qual a identidade racial pode desenvolver-se e solidificar-se. Costumes alimentares e de lazer, como o samba e a feijoada crioulizada por cozinheiras negras, ou religiosos, como a devoção a certos santos, o candomblé, xangô ou batuque, serviram de esteio para agrupar mais duradouramente pessoas muito socialmente diversas, mas que tinham na "cor", isto é, na raça atribuída, uma especificidade negativamente valorizada pela formação nacional. Não se trata, portanto, de negar o papel da especificidade cultural na formação racial dos negros. Trata-se, isso sim, de salientar o fato de que a principal referência identitária de outros povos diaspóricos gravitou sempre em torno de símbolos culturais, oferecidos pela nação ou religião de origem, enquanto que, no caso os negros, tal referência nunca foi tão forte quanto a raça, o principal marcador diacrítico da identidade coletiva.

Houve tentativas no sentido de que a nacionalidade e não a raça marcasse prioritariamente a identidade negra nas Américas. Identidades nacionais consolidadas entre os anos 1920 a 1950, no Caribe e na América do Sul, são provas cabais destas tentativas. As nações caribenhas e latino-americanas, em sua maioria, forjaram para si uma nova identidade supra-racial, desvencilhando-se do estigma da mestiçagem e, mais que isto, transformando tal estigma em carisma, ou seja, em marcador diacrítico positivo. Quando isso aconteceu, os negros foram instados a afastar-se cultural e sentimentalmente do continente de origem para tornarem-se cem por cento nacionais dos novos estados americanos. Apenas os países americanos podiam ser suas nações. Guerreiro Ramos notou com acuidade, assim como outros de sua geração, que eram eles, os negros, os verdadeiros brasileiros. Ou seja, aqueles que não poderiam reivindicar nenhuma outra nacionalidade ou cultura, os que não podem ter outra identidade nacional que a de brasileiros: "negro é o povo brasileiro", dizia Guerreiro. No entanto, a força dos estereótipos raciais que os identifica como negros, como se a cor fosse algo intransponível, atribuída pela definição-pelos-outros, sempre prevaleceu sobre a definição nacional feita-por-si.

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O processo de mestiçagem foi, até certo ponto, bem sucedido, se tomarmos como parâmetro o fato de que boa parte dos mestiços se desvencilhou de referências culturais africanas ou indígenas, chegando mesmo os mestiços claros a assimilar-se completamente ao mundo cultural e sentimental latino-americano de expressão européia. Digo "de expressão européia" porque esses mundos mestiços latino-americanos conservaram os valores europeus como referentes últimos pelos quais se medir. O que restou de "cultura africana" ou indígena foi gradualmente absorvido pelas culturas nacionais. Mas tal sucesso teve seus limites, exatamente, no sentimento de inferioridade mestiço, no preconceito de cor e na ampliação das desigualdades sociais entre negros e brancos daí decorrentes. De modo que a raça continuou sendo um referencial importante, seja para o complexo de inferioridade, o preconceito e a discriminação, seja para a construção de identidades raciais de combate e de afirmação social e cultural dos que não puderam ser plenamente absorvidos pelo projeto de mestiçagem e contra ele se insurgiram. Exemplos, no Brasil, desses movimentos raciais positivos de contestação foram a *Frente Negra Brasileira* (anos 1930), o *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (anos 1950), o *Movimento Negro Unificado* (anos 1980), entre tantos outros de menor repercussão sobre a vida política nacional.

Raça e cor, e não nações, foram referências para tais movimentos. As antigas nações africanas da época do tráfico negreiro foram abandonadas e persistiram apenas como denominações coloniais ou como instrumentos de genealogia cultural. Nunca houve, portanto, uma referência nacional moderna africana que servisse de contraponto à estereotipização racial.

O que acabo de salientar é muito importante para compreendermos o dilema em que vivem os negros brasileiros hoje, quando instados pelos arautos da mestiçagem e da ciência genética pós-racial a procederem segundo normas universalistas e republicanas de cidadania, renegando qualquer política pública que lhes beneficiem enquanto raça. Ora, a única mobilização possível que unifica os negros—ou seja, os que são tratados como negros—é através da noção de raça. Por isso mesmo a noção é re-trabalhada teoricamente pelos movimentos sociais para lhe retirar qualquer ranço racista (que pregue a superioridade racial). De raça-definida-pelos-outros, negativamente, a partir da generalização *pars pro toto* de deficiências morais, biológicas ou sociais, para raça-definida-por-si, generalizando carismas com marcadores culturais e históricos.

A meta de negação de qualquer especificidade racial e cultural, definindo-se como cem por cento brasileiros, mostrou-se idealista e impossível de ser cumprida, até mesmo por que os brasileiros, em sua maioria, não querem ser negros. Somos brasileiros, mas não deixamos de ser baianos, paulistas, homens e mulheres, ricos e pobres, negros e brancos, católicos, evangélicos etc. (identidades regionais, sexuais, de classe, raciais e religiosas). Se assim é, como mobilizar-se politicamente contra a discriminação racial sem mobilizar-se em raça? De fato, alternativas existem para outros povos discriminados: podem-se mobilizar como judeus, como japoneses, como sírio-libaneses, formando clubes, associações, etc.; o mesmo se aplica às mulheres, aos homossexuais, aos deficientes físicos, aos indígenas e a outros.

Alguns intelectuais dos anos 1940 e 1950 abraçaram o socialismo para manter-se coerentes com o universalismo e o hipernacionalismo que se pediam aos negros. Na verdade, se por formação nacional, os brasileiros eram negros e mestiços e, quando brancos, sabiam-se mestiços claros, no que toca às conseqüências da discriminação provocada pela cor, os negros eram pobres, explorados e sem direitos—raciocinavam os socialistas negros—tal como todos os trabalhadores sob o capitalismo imperialista. Essa formação pela via da luta de classes e pela arregimentação socialista prevaleceu por bastante tempo no século XX nos meios negros brasileiros e contou com a simpatia e a solidariedade internacionais, não apenas dos comunistas europeus, mas dos comunistas negros norte-americanos e latinos.

Difícil explicar, diante da história das idéias que germinaram nos meios negros brasileiros, porque essa vocação universalista cedeu lugar à mobilização mais nitidamente racial e mesmo étnico-racial dos últimos anos. Mas há que se lembrar que fenômeno análogo trespassou todo o mundo ocidental a partir dos anos 1970, dando espaço à formação do que os sociólogos vieram a batizar como "novos movimentos sociais". O movimento feminista, o movimento gay, o movimento de bairros, até mesmo o novo sindicalismo brasileiro, ainda que inspirados pela herança universalista marxista, foram, pouco a pouco, desenvolvendo identidades e ideais mais delimitados em torno do gênero, da preferência sexual, dos problemas locais e propriamente sindicais.

No caso dos negros, vale lembrar também que, como já salientamos, a raça (através da cor) foi sempre um marcador primordial para o destino pessoal de qualquer negro no Brasil. Assim, a ascensão social, o aburguesamento, o sucesso pessoal, a celebridade, o cultivo pessoal da alta cultura européia como forma de expressão, nada evitou—nunca—que um negro fosse um negro. ■

Igualdad de género y mercado de trabajo en América Latina

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Después de más de tres décadas de crecimiento sostenido de la participación laboral femenina y de sus niveles de escolaridad en América Latina, aun persisten serios obstáculos a una inserción y permanencia de las mujeres en el mercado de trabajo en igualdad de condiciones con respecto a los hombres. En el contexto de la globalización económica y de la transformación en los paradigmas tecnológicos y productivos—en los cuales algunas de las tradicionales barreras de entrada de las mujeres al mercado de trabajo o a ciertas funciones y ocupaciones desaparecen o se desvanecen—algunos de estos obstáculos han disminuido, pero otros se han reproducido e incluso incrementado.

Ese contexto también está marcado por una crisis del modelo tradicional en torno al cual se organizó el trabajo productivo y reproductivo, caracterizado por la definición dicotómica y jerarquizada de roles del hombre como proveedor y de la mujer como cuidadora, o, como máximo, como una "fuerza de trabajo secundaria". El aumento de la participación laboral de las mujeres (más acentuado justamente entre aquellas que están en edad reproductiva) y del número de hogares en que ambos padres trabajan o que están a cargo de mujeres (estos últimos corresponden a aproximadamente al 30% en las zonas urbanas de América Latina) ha producido un aumento significativo de las tensiones entre el trabajo y la familia, que afecta en forma desproporcionada a las mujeres. Con una jornada promedio de trabajo remunerado de 40 horas semanales, las mujeres siguen desempeñando la mayor parte de las tareas domésticas. Además, una proporción creciente de ellas se inserta al mercado de trabajo a través de contratos y formas de trabajo "atípicos", en los cuales las jornadas son con frecuencia extensas, intensas e irregulares, y que están en su gran mayoría excluidas de cualquier tipo de protección social, incluyendo la protección a la maternidad y otras medidas de conciliación entre el trabajo y familia, como por ejemplo la provisión de salas cunas y guarderías infantiles.

Es un contexto también en que las economías de la región, a pesar del crecimiento que se ha registrado en los último años, siguen caracterizándose en general por una baja capacidad de generación de empleo, en especial de empleo de calidad, o de trabajo decente. Este es definido, por la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT), como un trabajo productivo, adecuadamente remunerado, ejercido en condiciones de libertad, seguridad y equidad y capaz de garantir una vida digna a todas las personas que buscan un trabajo. En 2006 la OIT calculó que el déficit de trabajo decente en América Latina afectaba a 126 millones de personas, o sea, a 53% de su Población Económicamente Activa (PEA).

Principales tendencias de evolución del empleo femenino en América Latina

Las mujeres representan, en la actualidad, más del 40% de la PEA urbana de la región. Sus tasas de participación se han incrementado notablemente en la última década y media: han aumentado de 34% en 1990 a 53% en 2006. Ese es un indicador muy importante, asociado a la voluntad y disposición de incorporación de las mujeres al mercado de trabajo, de la cual depende, cada vez más, cualquier posibilidad de autonomía económica, aun en un contexto marcado, como lo fue la década de 90, por un aumento de las tasas de desempleo más acentuado entre las mujeres. Aunque persisten fuertes diferencias entre los niveles de participación laboral de las mujeres según los estratos de ingreso de los hogares de que provienen, siendo un hecho conocido que éstos son bastante inferiores entre las más pobres y con menos escolaridad, es en ese estrato que las tasas de participación laboral se han incrementado más acentuadamente. Como resultado, se ha reducido tanto la brecha de participación de las mujeres con respecto a los hombres, como la brecha de participación de las más pobres con respecto a los niveles promedio de participación femenina. Sin embargo, una gran proporción de mujeres de 15 años y más no dispone de ingresos propios: 45% en las zonas urbanas (para los hombres esa proporción es de 22%) y 59% en las zonas rurales. También han aumentado las oportunidades de empleo de las latinoamericanas, en una proporción mayor que las de los hombres: su tasa de ocupación entre 1990 y 2000 creció a un 4,4% al año, mientras la de los hombres creció 2,9%, lo que significó una disminución de la brecha de ocupación entre hombres y mujeres. Esa tendencia persiste en los años 2000. En Brasil, por ejemplo, la brecha entre las tasa de ocupación de hombres y mujeres, aunque siga siendo elevada, se redujo de 33 puntos de por ciento en 1992 a 24 puntos de por ciento en 2006.

Sin embargo, el aumento de la tasa de ocupación no fue suficiente para absorber la mayor oferta de trabajo de las mujeres, o sea, su mayor posibilidad y necesidad de trabajar. La tasa de desempleo abierto de las mujeres en América Latina en 2006 era de 13,3%, significativamente superior a la de los hombres (9,3%). Al contrario de lo ocurrido

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con relación a los indicadores anteriormente analizados, la brecha de desempleo por sexo aumentó en los últimos años, caracterizados por la recuperación económica.

También persisten importantes problemas en la calidad de la inserción laboral de las mujeres: la incidencia de las ocupaciones informales en el total del empleo femenino es superior a la registrada para los hombres y el servicio doméstico sigue absorbiendo un porcentaje bastante grande de la ocupación femenina en la región: 17% en 2006. El servicio doméstico es el segmento del empleo que cuenta con los niveles más bajos de remuneración y protección social, y aunque en los últimos años se han introducido en la mayoría de los países de la región una serie de reformas legales para equiparar sus derechos, todavía se rigen por un régimen jurídico especial, que reconoce a las/os trabajadores/as domesticas/os menos derechos que al conjunto de los/as asalariados/as. Un alto porcentaje de las mujeres ocupadas en el servicio doméstico en América Latina son indígenas o afrodescendientes, y en algunos países, también migrantes. Muchas de ellas enfrentan situaciones de doble o triple discriminación. También sigue siendo alta la incidencia del trabajo infantil doméstico.

La escolaridad de las mujeres se ha incrementado a un ritmo superior a la de los hombres (las ocupadas tienen en promedio un año más de escolaridad que los hombres) y ha crecido significativamente el número de mujeres en las ocupaciones profesionales y técnicas, alcanzando una proporción de más de 50% en algunos países de la región. Este es sin duda un factor importante para mejorar las posibilidades y las condiciones de incorporación de las mujeres al mercado de trabajo. En la medida en que aumentan sus niveles educativos, se incrementan significativamente sus tasas de participación, sus ingresos promedio y sus posibilidades de acceder a un empleo formal (en el cual son mayores sus probabilidades de contar con protección social). Sin embargo, al analizar la relación entre los niveles de escolaridad de hombres y mujeres y sus respectivas posibilidades y condiciones de inserción laboral, se evidencian fuertes desigualdades. Los mayores niveles de instrucción no les garantizan más y mejores oportunidades de empleo en relación con los hombres. Ellas necesitan de credenciales educativas significativamente superiores para acceder a las mismas oportunidades de empleo que ellos: en promedio cuatro años más para obtener la misma remuneración; y dos años adicionales para tener las mismas oportunidades de acceder a un empleo formal.

Por otro lado, los mecanismos de segmentación ocupacional que confinan a la gran mayoría de las mujeres a los segmentos menos valorizados del mercado de trabajo siguen existiendo y reproduciéndose. Mientras el 45% de los hombres está ocupado en el sector servicios, para las mujeres esa proporción llega a 75%.

Las brechas de ingresos, a su vez, expresan la desigual valoración económica y social de las tareas de hombres y mujeres y siguen siendo uno de los indicadores más importantes de las desigualdades de género. En América Latina, aunque se observa una disminución de esa desigualdad, ella sigue situándose en un nivel muy elevado: la proporción de los ingresos femeninos con relación a los masculinos se eleva de un 61% en 1990 a un 70% en 2006. Sin embargo, la brecha es más acentuada en los tramos superiores de escolaridad. En Brasil, por ejemplo, mientras en promedio las mujeres recibían, en 2006, el 71% de los ingresos masculinos, esa cifra disminuía a aproximadamente el 50% entre los/as que tenían 15 años y más de estudio. En México se observa una situación similar.

La promoción de la igualdad de género en la Agenda del Trabajo Decente

América Latina es el continente que se caracteriza por ser el más desigual del mundo. Las desigualdades de género, junto a las desigualdades en la distribución de la riqueza y las discriminaciones que sufren los afrodescendientes y los pueblos orginarios, son ejes estructurantes de la matriz de la exclusión social en la región y se potencian entre sí. La promoción de la igualdad de género, a su vez, es un elemento central de la Agenda de Trabajo Decente de la OIT. No será posible superar el significativo déficit de trabajo decente que caracteriza a la región, sin avanzar, al mismo tiempo, en la superación de la desigualdad de género y de los deficits de trabajo decente para las mujeres, tanto con relación a las dimensiones cuantitativa y cualitativa del empleo, como con relación a las dimensiones de los derechos en el trabajo, de la protección social y del diálogo social.

La Agenda Hemisférica del Trabajo Decente, documento presentado por el Director General de la OIT a la XVI Reunión Regional Americana de la Organización, realizada en Brasília en mayo de 2006, y que fue apoyada por los representantes tripartitos (gobiernos, empleadores y trabajadores) de 23 países de la región, que se comprometieron en la ocasión con una década de promoción del trabajo decente, establece algunas metas a ser alcanzadas hasta 2015, plazo también definido para los Objetivos del Desarrollo del Milenio (ODMs). Con relación a la promoción de la igualdad de género, esas metas son: elevar en un 10% las tasas de participación y ocupación de las mujeres y disminuir, en un 50%, las brechas de informalidad y de ingresos. Para alcanzar esos objetivos, la Agenda Hemisférica de Trabajo Decente propone algunas estrategias y líneas de acción.

Propone, en primer lugar, avanzar en la aplicación efectiva del principio de la no discriminación a través del fortalecimiento de los marcos legales y del desarrollo de planes nacionales (incluyendo políticas de acción afirmativa) para enfrentar el problema de la desigualdad y discriminación de la mujer en el empleo. Eso incluye la promoción de la ratificación y de la efectiva implementación de los convenios de la OIT relativos a la igualdad de género y a la protección de los derechos de las mujeres trabajadoras, entre los cuales se destacan los siguientes: los convenios n. 100, 1951, Igualdad de remuneración para trabajo de igual valor y n. 111, 1958, No discriminación (empleo y ocupación), definidos como fundamentales por la Declaración de los Derechos y Principios Fundamentales en el Trabajo, adoptada por la OIT en 1998; los convenios n. 103, 1952, y 183, 2000, de protección a la maternidad y el convenio n. 156, 1981, relativo a los trabajadores con responsabilidades familiares.

En segundo lugar, promover el aumento de las tasas de participación y ocupación de las mujeres, garantizando su acceso a las políticas activas de mercado de trabajo (formación, intermediación, planes especiales de empleo) en proporción no inferior a su peso en la fuerza de trabajo, estableciendo mecanismos que aseguren que las mujeres no sean discriminadas en los procesos de selección y contratación, promoviendo los derechos de las trabajadoras a través de la negociación colectiva e incluyendo medidas específicas dirigidas a las mujeres en los programas de empleo juvenil.

En tercer lugar, promover la mejoría de la calidad de los puestos de trabajo de las mujeres en la economía informal. Esa estrategia se desdobla en las siguientes líneas de acción: diseño e implementación de políticas de formación dirigidas a las mujeres con baja escolaridad para aumentar su acceso a nuevos nichos del mercado de trabajo y a ocupaciones no tradicionales; programas para ampliar el acceso de las mujeres a los recursos productivos (información, tecnología, crédito) y promover el desarrollo empresarial de las mujeres; mejoría de las condiciones de trabajo y eliminación de la discriminación contra las trabajadoras domésticas (revisión de la legislación a fin de lograr el pleno ejercicio de sus derechos laborales, aumento de la cobertura de la protección social, incentivo a su organización, etc.).

En cuarto lugar, reducir las desigualdades de remuneración a través del monitoreo de su evolución, la implementación de programas que actúen sobre la segregación ocupacional, la aplicación de métodos de evaluación de los puestos de trabajo sin sesgos sexistas (en base a las calificaciones, el esfuerzo, las responsabilidades y las condiciones de trabajo) y la elaboración de metodologías para implementar políticas de igual remuneración para trabajo de igual valor, y la inclusión de cláusulas en la negociación colectiva para hacer más transparentes la contratación y la promoción de las mujeres.

En quinto lugar, promover el equilibrio entre hombres y mujeres en las organizaciones sociales e instancias de diálogo a través del desarrollo de programas para promover la representación equilibrada de mujeres trabajadoras y empleadoras (incluyendo formación de líderes y negociadoras y establecimiento de cuotas), la incorporación de demandas de género en las agendas de las organizaciones de trabajadores y empleadores y en los convenios y negociaciones colectivas.

En sexto lugar, avanzar hacia la compatibilidad de la vida laboral con la vida familiar y personal a través de nuevos marcos legales y políticas de conciliación y co-responsabilidad que consideren la dimensión reproductiva como una responsabilidad social e integren a hombres y mujeres, garantizando el cumplimiento de la protección a la maternidad y extendiendo este derecho a trabajadoras informales, garantizando y ampliando las licencias de paternidad y parentales, ampliando la cobertura de salas cunas y guarderías infantiles para hijos e hijas de mujeres y hombres trabajadores (tanto formales como informales), promoviendo el desarrollo de programas voluntarios en las empresas y la inclusión de cláusulas en la negociación colectiva que faciliten la compatibilización de horarios y responsabilidades laborales y familiares y en general, políticas para lograr mejor calidad de vida familiar y personal y lugares de trabajo mas igualitarios y productivos.

En séptimo lugar, promover la incorporación de mujeres en los sectores más dinámicos y con mayor potencial de crecimiento en la economía global, en las áreas vinculadas al desarrollo de tecnologías de punta y a los nuevos sistemas de información y comunicación, a través de políticas educacionales que rompan con los estereotipos tradicionales y promuevan el acceso de las mujeres a la ciencia y la tecnología.

En síntesis, la región no solo está experimentando un cambio de los paradigmas productivos, sino también sociodemográficos que han modificado las fronteras entre el trabajo productivo y reproductivo e involucran necesidades a las que sólo el Estado puede responder. La promoción del trabajo decente y la igualdad de género como eje transversal de esa estrategia constituyen importantes pilares frente al gran desafío de la región para avanzar hacia una mayor justicia e inclusión social. ■

Inequality and Latin American Welfare Regimes: Why Gender Ought to Be at the Top of Political Agendas

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With the recent "Left turn" in Latin America, inequality has re-emerged on many national agendas with an urgency not seen since prior to the regional economic crisis of the 1980s. Most nations have prioritized economic inequality, which is understandable given that Latin America is the most unequal region of the world in terms of income. In several countries, notably Bolivia and Brazil, racial inequality is also an area of active discussion (on Brazil, see the Winter 2008 issue of *LASA Forum*). Gender inequality has not been a top agenda item, however, and some Left governments have even worked against gender equality. The abolition of therapeutic abortion by the current Sandinista government in Nicaragua indicates the regressive stance of this government on gender issues, for example. Despite other positive aspects of this program, the Venezuelan government's reliance on the unpaid labor of poor women for the success of its neighborhood "Misiones" that deliver state social benefits smacks of the instrumental use of women's voluntary labor. The government of Michele Bachelet stands apart for its pro-active stand on gender equity, evidenced in Chile's recent pension reforms that sought to correct important inequities in women's compared to men's pension distributions.

As these examples illustrate, gender inequality remains a pressing issue in Latin America, despite advances such as gender quotas for political office, the establishment of ministries of women meant to actively redress gender inequalities, and agreements to abide by international conventions on women's rights. These examples also indicate that many of today's gender inequalities are embedded in social policies, be it reproductive rights legislation, poverty alleviation strategies or pension policies. More attention is needed to determine how the social policies that constitute Latin America's welfare regimes alleviate or aggravate gender inequalities, and what can be done to improve these policies so that they promote greater gender equity.

Research on gender equity and social policy in Latin America needs both long-term and short- term perspectives, and sector-specific and overarching "regime type" analyses. This research needs to look beyond (though not lose sight of!) the reproductive health arena which at times becomes *the* focus of gender and social policy. Most of all, such research needs to take an "intersectional" approach—an approach that is attentive to how the inequalities of gender, race and class interact, resulting in distinct effects of the same social policy on different groups of people.

My own approach is sector-specific; I analyze one sector of Latin American welfare regimes, health care policy, with special attention to the gendered political dynamics and effects of the neoliberal retrenchment of the 1990s. Health policy (as Briggs and Martini Briggs pointed out in the Spring 2008 *LASA Forum*) offers a useful window onto "big questions of the state, citizenship, and struggles centered on neoliberal policies and their effects" (p. 17). It also offers a particularly useful site for analysis of gender inequality and its intersections with race and class within the broader framework of the Latin American welfare regime.

Because the health sector in Latin America is often composed of distinct systems (public health, social security health and private health systems) which serve different populations, health policy captures how one social policy sector impacts the entire national population (whereas pensions, for example, serve only formal sector workers—a small slice of the population). Segmentation within the health sector reveals how welfare regimes, as the renowned European welfare scholar, Gøsta Esping-Anderson (1990) first observed, can also stratify—along gender and race, as well as class divides. Latin America's public health systems serve the poor and in those countries where women or women heads of household are concentrated among the poor, these systems also serve a majority female constituency. It is also in these public systems where indigenous and Afro-descent populations are concentrated. By contrast, social security and private health systems in Latin America largely serve middle and upper-class, mestizo and "whiter" constituencies. Comparing these systems, their resources, and their quality (in which public health systems consistently fall to the bottom), allows one to see how the segmentation of health systems in Latin America is grounded in gender and race as well as in class inequality, and serves to reinforce these inequalities.

An historical view of the emergence of these separate systems offers even greater depth of understanding how gender, race and class interact to determine access to health care. Nancy Leys Stepan has documented how public health systems were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a context in which the medical profession was heavily influenced by Lamarckian eugenics (1991). Latin America's particular form of eugenics viewed public health systems, and within these systems the molding of mothers, as central to nation-building and betterment. Due in part to this history, public health systems in the region traditionally have prioritized mother-child health, and women and children have been the primary public

health system clients. By contrast, social security health care, created through a process of conflict and cooptation between largely male unions and authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments, was a masculine affair. The Colombian social security system restricted health care coverage for female dependents of male workers to obstetric coverage until 1993. In Peru, women workers in the social security system could not carry their spouses as dependents until 1992. These facts belie the gendered assumptions behind these systems: social security health systems were an essentially male privilege and the public health systems were feminized.

Gender inequalities are also evidenced in political debates over distinct health policies during the period of neoliberal retrenchment. For example, discussions of family planning, maternal mortality or infant health care regularly invoked policy discourses that underlined women's contribution as mothers to the family and the nation. Policy makers have tended to view women's wombs and mothering skills as essential for economic and national progress. Feminist activists have resisted this discourse, strategically invoking global conventions on women's rights (like the CEDAW) to demand women's autonomy as individuals and greater reproductive rights. In these debates, women and gender are central.

By contrast, in the "mainstream" health reform debates over privatization, decentralization and targeting of the 1990s and early 2000s, policy makers told me in interviews that gender was inconsequential. This response may have stemmed from a narrow understanding of gender as sex: what in the world would privatization for example have to do with sex, or issues related to biological reproduction? To these policy makers, such reforms were about reducing the role of the state, introducing the market, and promoting health care "choice" and efficiency. It was not about gender, or women. With the exception of recent reforms in Ecuador and Chile, feminists also largely stayed out of these "mainstream" health debates (Ecuador was most successful, in that "gender equity" was incorporated into the nation's general health legislation; on feminists' role in reforms in Chile, see Ewig 2008). In most countries, feminists focused on more obviously women-related policies such as abortion or access to contraception. The comparison of these contrasting policies and the dynamics of gender in each reveals a lot about the politics of the health sector, and in turn, welfare regimes. In certain arenas related to biological reproduction or mothering, gender is an accepted category of analysis, while in other more "technical" domains gender analysis is considered frivolous or a distraction. This division reinforces the misconceived notion that "gender = women" and "women = mothers" rather than viewing gender as a set of power relations in society based on the perceived differences between the sexes—power relations that play into all policy arenas.

"Mainstream" neoliberal social policy reforms such as privatization, decentralization, and targeting that were implemented across health, pension and education sectors in the region in the 1990s and early 2000s *do* have significant implications for gender inequality. In health care, privatization of health insurance in Chile led to discriminatory fee structures in which women were charged more than men due to the "risk" of pregnancy. Such practices shift social responsibility for reproduction onto individual women. This is doubly discriminatory because women, due to gender discrimination and segmentation in labor markets, earn less and thus are less likely to be able to afford the more expensive, but also higher quality, private health insurance (Pollack 2002, Ewig 2008). Similarly, private pension firms, using strict actuarial logic, provide women with lower monthly benefits because women tend to take time out of the work force or work part time due to childrearing, earn less due to labor market discrimination, and live longer than men and thus accumulate fewer funds that must be stretched over longer time periods (Arenas de Mesa and Montecinos 1999, Bertranou 2001, Dion 2006). As a result, private pension schemes leave older women more vulnerable to poverty. By contrast, the previous state-run systems did not differentiate benefits based on sex.

Likewise, the ostensibly gender-neutral move toward decentralization has often shifted state responsibilities to women, as in Chavez's Misiones, or in Peru's Comités Locales de Administración en Salud (CLAS) program. While my research on the CLAS in Peru reveals many positive aspects of community-based decentralization, it also demonstrates how gendered assumptions played into the execution of community-based decentralization policies. In urban areas, primarily women were recruited to serve on the CLAS committees in which they were asked to invest time and energy into overseeing the budget and daily administration of local health care centers and enlist neighbors in vaccination campaigns. To policy makers, such work fits into traditional notions of women's care work responsibilities and is seen as an "efficient" way to reduce local health care costs. Many policy makers assume these women do this work out of a "natural" concern for family and community well-being, rooted in their identities as women, when in fact many of the women I interviewed were hoping the work would be a stepping stone to paid opportunities—a hope that rarely materialized. By erroneously assuming that women's work is

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"free" and their time unlimited, policy makers fail to recognize the value of this work and the degree to which the informal labor of women sustains Latin American welfare regimes. Moreover, such policies reify unequal gender relations by asking women (not men) to contribute to community well-being under conditions in which the value of that work is not recognized.

Of course, my research is far from the first to recognize the ways in which welfare states in Latin America rely on women's unpaid work. Amy Lind (2005) shows how the use of women's unpaid labor became part of Ecuador's "logic of development." A main contention of feminist scholars of structural adjustment was that economic adjustment relied implicitly on women's voluntary labor for human survival in the "lost decade" of the 1980s. In other words, the use of women's unpaid labor is a recurring theme in Latin American social policy and is one that further embeds gender inequalities by simultaneously depending on and devaluing women's contributions to social reproduction.

"Targeting" was also a key strategy of neoliberal reforms. It refers to the practice of offering a carefully selected benefit or set of benefits (usually chosen on the basis of cost-benefit analysis) to a specified population—usually those most in need—as a way of ensuring that state monies are used in the most efficient manner and reach the most needy. On the surface, it makes sense to prioritize certain services, such as vaccinations, which have broad preventative effects at low cost. But the narrow range of services offered often misses critical elements essential to gender equity; the health package offered to the poor in Colombia, for example, did not offer full diagnosis for cervical cancer until 2006 (and in practice often still denies it) despite the fact that this is the leading cause of death for women in that country. In such cases, a concern for efficiency creates gender inequities by not offering life-saving health care to *some* women (poor women), and it also raises serious questions of medical ethics.

Moreover, targeting strategies may also reinforce gendered divisions of responsibilities in a similar manner to the decentralization described above. Mexico's Oportunidades program offers cash assistance to mothers that keep their children enrolled in school, who regularly bring their children to the local health center and who attend monthly meetings at the health center on child and nutrition and health. In many ways Oportunidades is working to ameliorate gender inequalities. For example, the program gives women, rather than men, control over this new cash resource thus providing women with greater authority in the household. It also provides extra incentives for girls to attend school, in order to reverse trends of girls' early dropout rates. But the program also relies on traditional gendered assumptions that it is mothers' responsibility to ensure children succeed, by putting the onus on mothers (not fathers) to attend lectures and ensure children's health and education in order to receive their monthly check (Molyneux 2006).

Key to a full understanding of how social policies may either ameliorate or reproduce inequalities is to take an intersectional approach which recognizes how gender, race and class work together to create inequality (McCall 2005, Hancock 2007). For example, in Peru, health reforms had profoundly different effects on rural, indigenous women than they did on urban, *mestiza* women. Race interacts with gender in the rural sierra of Peru, as women are considered "more indigenous" and more likely to remain monolingual Quechua speakers (de la Cadena 1996). As a result, these women are unable to participate in the CLAS reform described above, which requires fluid communication with health care professionals who rarely speak Quechua and often view indigenous people with disdain. Similarly, when the package of benefits offered to the poor is smaller than that offered to the middle class (as in the case of Colombia) or when private health care is of higher quality than the public system (as in most of Latin America) class mediates gender by affording middle class women improved benefits compared to their poor counterparts.

While I use one sector as a window onto the changing dynamics of gender (in relationship to race and class) in Latin American welfare regimes, others have looked at multiple policy sectors to paint broader pictures of the gendered nature of national welfare regimes. The works of Karin Rosemblatt (2000) and Christine Ehrick (2005) provide important insights into the gendered politics of, including women's roles in, the founding of early social security systems and poverty policies in Chile and Uruguay. These historical works provide clues as to the origins of the gendered discourses and political arrangements that still shape welfare policies today. Jennifer Pribble (2006) compares the contemporary Uruguayan and Chilean welfare regimes and provides a much-needed comparative assessment of what constitutes a "gender-friendly" welfare regime in Latin America. Finally, Juliana Martínez (2008) is perhaps most ambitious; she develops a typology of Latin American welfare regimes that consistently incorporates a gender analysis through a focus on the family.

Whether sector-specific, regime-oriented, contemporary or historical, research on gender and welfare in Latin America points to persistent gender inequalities that are reproduced by social policies. But this

research also demonstrates that these inequalities are constructed, they are surmountable, and they deserve a higher priority on the agendas of governments across the region today.

This essay draws on my forthcoming book Second Wave Neoliberalism: Gender, Race and Health Sector Reforms in Peru *(Pennsylvania State University Press) and on on-going research on gender and health reform in Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador. I thank Jane Collins, Eric Hershberg and William Jones for their comments on this essay.*

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Women in Rural Mexico Agendas and Transitions

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In recent years, three trends have emerged that are having a transformational impact on women from rural Mexico. First, rural Mexican women are participating in wage labor markets on a large scale; second, they are taking on new social and economic tasks as a result of indefinitely prolonged male migration; and, third, female migration is intensifying (D'Aubeterre, 1995; Durand and Massey, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Marroni, 1995; Moctezuma Yano, 2003). The explanation of reuniting families as the impetus for this migration has lost ground as the female exodus proceeds: the women currently leaving their communities may be married, unmarried, abandoned, widowed, or single mothers.

In light of this evidence, some studies claim that women have achieved greater "empowerment" in their places of origin (Deere and León, 2000). With the men away, women have taken on new jobs—as agricultural laborers on small plots for example—and are participating more in community activities (D'Aubeterre, 1995; Deere, 2005; Garza Bueno and Zapata Martelo, 2007; Menjívar and Agadjanian, 2007; Peña Piña, 2004; Rosas, 2004).

Although accepting new responsibilities has meant more work than rights for women, the absence of the male appears to have had positive effects on their self-esteem, autonomy and independence (Rosas, 2005). However, male absence can have negative effects as well. Remittances perpetuate economic dependency and male control of women: in many cases wives do not receive their allowances directly and cannot decide

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how to spend them (Peña Piña, 2004; Rosas, 2004). Many women stay in their in-laws' homes and are thus subject to the control of the families of their spouses (Estrada, 2007; Marroni, 2002; Menjívar and Agadjanian, 2007; Peña Piña, 2004; Rosas, 2005). In this context, the new tasks and roles women have taken on can lead to stress (Menjívar and Agadjanian, 2007; Rosas, 2005).

Although there are few studies of destination communities, they indicate that women's wage labor has brought about greater equality in marital relationships. In Dominican migrant households in New York with both husband and wife working outside the home, domestic chores and childcare were more equally shared (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). Grasmuck and Pessar also found that in order to preserve and prolong the benefits of migration, Dominican women postponed returning to their country. For example, they would purchase expensive goods on credit, thus obligating their families to stay longer in the United States. The men's strategy was the opposite: they sought to save as much as possible to get back to their communities of origin as soon as they could. In the case of these Dominicans, it is not clear whether it was the living and working conditions in the destination community or the separation from the community of origin and its controls that fostered greater equality between men and women in New York.

Mummert's (2003) study of migrants from Quiringuicharo, Michoacán suggests another explanation. Men said that "as long as a married woman stays in the village," her place is in the home, whereas in the North, "wives use the argument that the need for two incomes means they have to get out of the house" (2003:315).

Gender, Institutions and Social Models

Can we therefore say that marital relations of couples in destination communities may be different from those that existed in their places of origin? To fully explore this question, we can note first that Hontagneu-Sotelo (2003) finds that gender relations—understood as power relations between the sexes—are not limited to the domestic realm and everyday life; rather, they are present in all social and political fields and institutions. Thus, to understand rural Mexican women's demands and struggles, the scope of analysis should be expanded to include family, social and cultural contexts, since men and women are likely, and often obligated, to conduct gender relations as dictated by their families or the community. Social relations and institutions exert pressures that impose particular gender relations on couples through constraints, gossip, accusations, instigations, interpretations, and even violence, which has a serious impact on the lives of these women (González Montes, 2002). Thus, it is not surprising that women are interested in making changes: they are the more affected by the gender dimensions of models of social reproduction that determine patterns of residence, obligations, control, mobility and resources.

In the Mesoamerican model of social reproduction, the traditional subordination of the woman at home is deeply rooted, unrestricted and hazardous. As long as they were unmarried, women were under the control of their mothers, fathers, or brothers. In many cases they had no choice of whom or when to marry; until quite recently, this was a decision made by the family or it was the chance selection of a man "stealing the bride" (González Montes and Salles, 1995; Oehmichen, 2002). As for "single" women, rural societies have long concealed their existence, and especially their living conditions. Singles included unmarried women, mothers without spouses, widows, or those who had been abandoned by their husbands and either stayed with or returned to their domestic groups with their children. Women who are "single" in the sense that they do not have a recognized spouse have been the most vulnerable, and the most likely to suffer the worst living and working conditions in their domestic groups and in their communities.

Motivating Goals

1. *Having the right to work for wages.* Until the nineteen eighties, it was common for women who worked outside their homes to have to ask for permission from parents and husbands. Changes in traditional marital relationships were not to be discussed, nor were modifications in house rules: the women were to continue, as always, to be in charge of domestic chores and childcare, and their movements were to be confined to the journey from house to work and back. This placed them in a disadvantageous and subordinate position.

As women in agricultural families began to break the mold and work outside the home, their wage labor became highly valued and they sought assistance with agricultural work. Second, women began to make personal and independent use of their income and negotiate the financial contribution they make to their households. Third, wage labor ceased to be a sporadic, temporary event associated with the pre-marriage stage of life: it became sought after and constantly defended.

2. *Breaking with patrilocality.* In the Mesoamerican model of social reproduction, the most widespread model in Mexican rural societies (Robichaux, 1997), women go to live with their husband's domestic group when they marry. Patrilocal residence had

many advantages for society as a whole, but tended to be the worst stage in life for a woman: she was subject to abuse by her husband and in-laws, subordinated and obligated to help or to take over tasks from the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, and was vulnerable to physical aggression and social isolation (Córdova Plaza, 2002; Estrada, 2007; Mindek, 2007; Moctezuma Yano, 2002; Sierra, 2004). Once "joined in marriage, the woman could be beaten, sometimes brutally, without her own original family taking her back in" (Oehmichen, 2002).

Recent ethnography has shown that one of women's objectives, sometimes on their own and sometimes with their spouses, is to break with patrilocality as a form of post-marital residence in favor of neolocal residence—establishing their own households. Women insist on using the money received as remittances to build a house separate from their parents-in-law as soon as possible, and thus shorten, or better yet, eliminate, the patrilocal residence phase (Córdova Plaza, 2002; D'Aubeterre, 1995; Marroni de Velásquez, 1995; Pauli, 2007). They even "make attempts to delay their husbands' return" until they achieve their basic aim of having a home of their own, away from their mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law (Sánchez Plata, 2004:198).

3. *Escaping the moral control of communities of origin.* Wage labor and migration have helped women to deal with or to escape from the brutal moral control exercised in their communities of origin. The only option for women abandoned by their spouses had been to return to their original households. In exchange for a place to live and some assistance, they had to cooperate in the projects and economic activities of their own parents and brothers. At the same time, they were subject to accusations and sexual harassment from relatives and neighbors and to suspicion that could lead to an extremely tight watch on their activities, movements and relationships (Casados González, 2004). Female behavior is rigorously "watched and occasionally punished violently, when the husband or the father or the brother have doubts about her honor and sexual behavior" (Oehmichen, 2002). The fear of reprisals and loss of support forced women to repress their sexuality and to exalt their submission. The slightest doubt about a woman's sexual behavior could become an excuse for male family members to repress and punish her. To encourage other men to judge, avoid or harass the women, male family members often cut off communication and invented or repeated slander against them. Just having a spouse, any spouse, gave women legitimacy and protection from other men, from all men, in fact, which compelled them to accept spouses who were sometimes quite dreadful (Mindek, 2007).

But today things have changed. Single women who are unable to depend on their children's fathers or grandfathers are deciding to work outside their communities to improve their children's and their own standard of living. This option allows them to remain single or to form a relationship with another man.

4. *Having the right to live alone with their husbands.* Until recently, women accepted without question the decision made by spouses and the family group with respect to where they should live. But young women, both married and single, have started to make new arguments to justify the right to build their lives as a couple not only away from the in-laws' house but also far from their villages. They assert that "they want to live with their husbands" wherever their husbands are, and the only way to be with their husbands now, they may say, is to emigrate. For example, young women from Miguel Acuexcomac, Puebla, try to get to Los Angeles because they want to live with their spouses (Fagetti, 1995). In seeking to restore the marriage bond that has been weakened by distance, or else moved by a new ideal of married life, young women abandon their villages, leaving their parents and in-laws behind (D'Aubeterre, 2002).

The indefinitely prolonged emigration of husbands and fiancés has made it easier for women to assert their right to go with them. The scenarios of U.S. migration they have heard about, imagined or experienced, also influence them. In destination communities women have been able to confront the machismo, gossip, abuse and mistreatment that was common in their communities of origin and enjoy greater equality with their spouses. Domestic violence is also less pervasive than in their villages back home (Oechmichen Bazán, 2005; Ruiz Robles, 2004). By comparing the female condition in their communities with conditions in other communities, young women have been able to question traditional norms and obligations—especially in the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship. Migration can mitigate the tensions and complexities of the often conflictive relationships among women of different generations living under the same roof.

Migration can also open the door to changes that do not seem possible in the villages: a woman can decide, with her husband, about key questions, such as how many children to have and their education, as well as work, investments and projects. Not that the husbands are always agreeable, but outside the local context they may be more flexible. Departure may be a way to create husband-wife relationships that are more egalitarian than in communities of origin, where both are pressured into fulfilling the stereotypes and gender norms imposed by parents and siblings, as well as a long list of in-laws and

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extended family. For women away from the watchful eye of their relatives it becomes possible to negotiate and to make agreements with their spouses alone rather than the whole domestic group.

5. *Having the right to break marital bonds*. For decades male migration disguised the dissolution of marital unions and the abandonment of children. Ceasing to send remittances amounted in practice to cutting off marital relations even if it was not overtly stated. Mothers had to totally assume the economic responsibilities of supporting their children. This dynamic is beginning to change. Single women who do not have the support of the fathers or grandparents of their children are choosing to work away from their communities in order to maintain or improve their standard of living. At the same time, married women have begun to react to domestic violence that they are no longer willing to put up with. Oehmichen Bazán (2005) has shown that Mazahua women migrate for a variety of reasons that nearly always include escaping some form of conjugal violence. Women are increasingly walking or running away from violent marital or family relations. They also are increasingly unwilling to accept vulnerable positions within their domestic groups, opting to leave their communities.

Female-initiated marital breakups create a lot of tension within households. Parents and siblings, many of them also violent men, often do not accept this change and repeat the old arguments for why the woman has no right to separate, such as, "it's what she chose," "marriage is like that," "all men are like that," "what's she done to make him act like that," "she's brought shame on all of us," or "it would be just the same with someone else." Women who leave marriages face reprisals from their own families. Resources, services and assistance suddenly become scarce. But the women don't stop leaving.

6. *Challenging the stereotype of the male provider*. In order to secure these changes, women have had to struggle against gender stereotypes and ideologies. They have had to break with the idea that marriage required putting up with anything, including physical abuse, because they were being supported by their husbands. Significantly, most families did not support women who sought separation from abusive husbands. As long as a husband was supporting his wife financially, she was expected to put up with whatever he did. Women themselves valued that support, since working outside the home was not, generally acceptable (Rosas, 2005).

As the notion of egalitarian marriages has met with more approval, rural Mexican women are working outside the home in greater numbers and are valuing their own work. The "good man" increasingly is one who is dependable, doesn't abuse his wife and is not an alcoholic; he doesn't necessarily need to be the best provider anymore.

Conclusion

Rural Mexican women have fought to modify the status traditionally assigned them in their roles as sisters or daughters, as well as in their marital relationships as wives, daughters-in-law and sisters-in-law. Rural women use migration, work and money, often without expressing the fact openly, to break away from the values, beliefs, mechanisms, practices, identities and ideologies that have traditionally marked, bounded and affected their lives as females in a set of family relationships. Their struggle has not been necessarily against their husbands per se, but against the weft of family and social relations and meanings in which both husband and wife have been embedded. Departure from their communities of origin has facilitated the transition and a break with the Mesoamerican model of social reproduction, based on assumptions that create strong and painful gender imbalances for women.

Of course, communities and domestic groups have tried to perpetuate traditional relationships by keeping women in their communities. But the deepening agrarian crisis and the end of land redistribution have diluted the bonds connecting the migrants to their original communities and helped push the transition. There is an emerging trend for young people, both male and female, to give up agricultural activity and emigrate. Like men, women who have left their communities for economic reasons are the beneficiaries of a significant modification in the gender relations that prevailed in their households of origin.

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Interrogating "Queerness" in Theory and Politics Reflections from Ecuador

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Introduction

To speak of queer studies and politics in Latin America, one must necessarily interrogate the ways in which notions of queerness have circulated and been resignified by various groups of scholars and activists. Like other terrains of struggle, "queer" brings with it a set of pressing questions about the place of Anglophone expressions in Spanish, Portuguese and other linguistic contexts; the sexual, racial and nationalist taxonomies that accompany its interpretation; and the ability (or lack thereof) to organize successfully and establish a shared cultural meaning around such a term. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer scholars have long pointed out, both in the North and South, "queer" can be used in several ways: as an identity marker or category, as a methodology, as an epistemological framework, and/or as a starting point to produce new or distinct forms of knowledge and political strategies that challenge heteronormativities and gender normativities.[1] In Latin America, "queer" is often associated with northern or "western" cultural imperialism and seen as a notion that reinforces a whitening and/or homogenization of the interests and identities of people who do not fit within the culturally prescribed sexual or gender roles of their societies (e.g., Viteri 2008). Yet some of the basic forms of thought emanating from queer studies, embodied in the work of, for example, Michel Foucault (1978) and Judith Butler (1990), continue to take on new place-based meanings which have held both epistemic and political salience in the contemporary struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender[2] and intersex (LGBTI) rights in Latin America. That is to say, whether one opts to embrace the term "queer" or not, even negative encounters with "queerness" have produced important and interesting forms of inquiry and activism in the region, which in my view would not have occurred in such a way without an encounter with queer studies in the first place.[3]

Encountering "Queerness" in the Field: Gays, Lesbians, Transfeminists and Neoliberals

Recently I returned from a research trip to Venezuela and Ecuador where I interviewed LGBTI activists about this issue, particularly as notions of "gayness" and "queerness" are understood by activists in their quest for a post-neoliberal order, in the era of "21st century socialism" in these two countries. I was motivated to learn not only how activists are constructing political strategies which challenge the premise of liberalism as a cultural (and imperialist) project, but also how their own encounters with Latin America's new Lefts (plural) have given them pause to rethink the centrality of heteronormativity in both capitalist and socialist development projects and in the constructions of nationhood that are created through and sustain these narratives of progress and revolution. As I was asking questions aimed at these broad issues, I found myself returning to the question of identity markers as central to broader struggles for interpretive power within each country—struggles which also play out among LGBTI activists as they debate what constitutes an appropriate political agenda. Below I provide some examples from my interviews in Quito, Ecuador, to highlight some of the tensions that exist in current

Ecuadorian scholarly and political debates on queerness, and to draw out the strategic potential of a "queer" political agenda in a context in which "queerness" is more often than not rejected as a mobilizing category.

Quito's LGBTI movement, which is comprised of approximately 15 organizations, a handful of coalitions, and several additional individual activists working in a diversity of spaces, has effectively mobilized its various ideological sectors to participate, either formally or informally, in the redrafting of and negotiations surrounding President Rafael Correa's (2007-present) newly-proposed constitution, voted on in a national referendum on September 28, 2008. Ecuador's new constitution, which passed by a wide margin, provides several new articles aimed at protecting the rights of people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Unlike the 1998 constitution, which included sexual orientation in its anti-discrimination clause, the new constitution includes additional judicial guarantees and mechanisms that, for the first time, allows people to demand, either individually or collectively, freedom from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation in the workplace, educational system, health care system, housing sector, and in cultural life (Asamblea Constituyente 2008). It also acknowledges and aims to protect "alternative families"—families that are not based on blood or property relations but rather on "other types of solidarity," including migrant families, single parent households, and "sexually diverse" families including same-sex couples who live together. The alternative-families clause could also apply to, for example, transsexual and *travestis* communities, and to any other type of household that does not rely upon a traditional logic of blood relations.

The process by which sectors of LGBTI activists struggled to include these articles in the constitutional assembly's final proposal was long and arduous. And needless to say, there was great opposition to these articles. The religious Right and conservative Left coincided in some views on homosexuality and abortion—the two hot button topics—yet it was the religious Right that successfully pushed for an anti-same-sex marriage clause and a clause stating that same-sex couples cannot adopt, both of which appear in the new constitution. The opposition to same-sex marriage was particularly interesting given that virtually no LGBTI sector asked for it; rather, the fear of same-sex marriage was created by the Right as an intimidation strategy and ultimately, as an attempt to create opposition to President Correa's general push for economic sovereignty and individual and collective rights through his "citizen revolution," a process viewed by Right-wing economic and political elites as inherently anti-capitalist, anti-market, and as threatening to the traditional nucleus of the Ecuadorian nation, "the family."

Despite these tensions within the assembly meetings, the presence of key activists in the pre-assembly meetings and during the six-month constitutional assembly itself, coupled with Correa's majority political bloc approval of the articles, solidified the approval of the progressive articles in the final document. Interestingly, while certainly "queer" was not a term used in assembly negotiations, some activists have remarked that notions from queer theory were used to develop their own movement proposals to the assembly, a point I develop below.

LGBTI Movement Currents: Neo/Liberal and Transfeminist

To begin, two currents of the LGBTI movement stand out. First, the more liberal, mainstream current represented primarily by gay (male) rights and HIV/AIDS NGOs, along with at least one lesbian organization. This movement current presented its own proposal to the assembly which included same-sex unions, access to property rights, and anti-discrimination legislation, among others. The general thrust behind the proposal was to seek full citizen rights for gays and lesbians (and to a much more limited extent, transgendered people) in Ecuador's otherwise benevolent democratic system. This framework works well with the existing legal system, although the emphasis on same-sex unions meant that access to citizenship would be based on a traditional notion of an intimate relationship (either through a *unión de hecho* or domestic partnership, for example) and as such, this liberal approach did not challenge the traditional legal notion of "the family" as rooted in blood or property relations, nor did it question the neoliberal logic behind supporting a citizenship model based on the assumption that all citizens have equal access to the marketplace and consumer culture. In many ways, this current is comparable to liberal LGBT political currents in northern countries which aim to solidify access to citizenship through a marriage or domestic partnership model—a model often critiqued by queer activists as reinforcing rather than challenging a heteronormative logic of the family, marriage and market as hegemonic institutions (e.g., Seidman 2001).

The second current of the movement, which also submitted its own proposal to the constitutional assembly,[4] was often defined by its members as "*transfeminista*" in my interviews (Vásquez 2008; Medranda 2008; Valverde 2008; Rojas 2008). This current is

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comprised primarily of lesbian and trans activists and includes some gay men as well. According to one interviewee, "transfeminism breaks with a (neo)liberal logic, at least in the Ecuadorian context. We are not interested in the theme of goods and patrimonies; rather, we are seeking a broader proposal that goes beyond the neoliberal." With this in mind, activists in this current have attempted to create alliances with other sectors, both within the LGBTI movement and outside it, particularly with sectors that "…have not been heard and that have organized around an alternative aesthetic [i.e., form of expression] and notion of family…one based more on a logic of solidarity rather than on one of individualism. These are identities that are not recognized by the formal system nor within traditional cultural practices. We say 'no' to norms, to the dominant aesthetic, to the neoliberal system…there are other ways of seeing the world." (Rojas 2008).

For the transfeminist current, "trans" implies a break not only with the traditional gender/sex system but also with other forms of normativities based on race, ethnicity, class and geopolitical location. As some activists pointed out, unlike "queer," "trans" and "transfeminista" hold organizing potential in the Quito context and relate to local understandings of non-normative identities, forms of expression, and living arrangements. For example, the transfeminist current, which advocated for the notion of "alternative families" in its proposal to the constitutional assembly, draws directly from Ecuador's history of collective rights, rooted in indigenous thought and cultures, rather than relying on a notion of individual rights so common in liberal discourse. At the same time, transfeminist activists have also challenged both indigenous and mestizo accounts of "the family" which exclude sexual and gender dissidents. In addition, "*transfeminista*" implies an explicit political agenda, rooted both in transgender rights and feminism, which seeks to address the violence of the normalizing effects of state policies and laws, institutional discrimination and cultural discourses concerning homosexuality, gender identity and the family. In contrast, according to one activist, advocating for a "queer" agenda does not necessarily imply a political agenda per se, since "queer" can also signify a methodology or academic field and historically the embracing of the identity marker "queer" has not always been linked to political activism (Rojas 2008), a critique that has been made both in the North and South.

Transfeminism and Queer Studies

There is no doubt that the mobilizing success of transfeminism has its roots in queer studies. Indeed, transfeminism as a political project exists in part due to alliances among academic institutions, NGOs, movement alliances, and even the state-based National Women's Council (Consejo Nacional de la Mujer, or CONAMU), which now includes LGBT rights in its agenda, at least on paper. A recent academic event in Quito serves as a case in point. In a presentation at the tenth anniversary conference of the Gender Studies Program at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO-Ecuador) in June 2008, a Quito-based lesbian activist and intellectual argued that the term "queer" is not relevant in Ecuador and that, in her view, "transfeminism" is a more appropriate term to describe a new form of politics taking place within Ecuador's increasingly heterogeneous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) movement. For her, "transfeminism" referred to a particular kind of political vision that some lesbian and trans activists share with regard to social change. As in the case of the transfeminist current of Ecuador's LGBTI movement, for the speaker "transfeminism" captures at least two central political notions: the idea that the personal is still very much political; and the idea that activism itself must be transgressive, that is, that it must not buy into a heteronormative, eurocentric liberal logic of identity. The speaker drew from Judith Halberstam's (1998) research on female masculinities to define her own notion of transfeminism, yet she also drew from transnational feminist and postcolonial studies to define "trans" more generally as capturing "the sites where taxonomies don't quite fit" (Quiroga, 2000: 195-196 as cited in Viteri 2008: 180). Interestingly, while she drew from "northern" scholarship, her own appropriation and definition of the term took on a meaning of its own, one very unique and relevant to LGBTI movement debates in Ecuador and one quite distinct to Halberstam's original usage of the terms "trans" and "feminism." What is interesting about this term, from my perspective, is that while the speaker rejected the term "queer," she developed a similar challenge to the logic of liberalism so central to queer theory's critique of LGBT identity politics. Her theoretical perspective, like that of transfeminist activists, is grounded in lived political, cultural and economic experiences and not just in academic theory. Certainly there is a correlation between the two, yet as many scholars have pointed out, notions from queer studies circulate and are resignified in local contexts in such a way that they take on new meanings altogether, some of which challenge dominant understandings of "queerness" even as they are incorporated into LGBTI political strategies.

In Quito, the late Patricio Brabomalo was perhaps one of the first activists to identify explicitly with a form of "queer" politics and to publish his views on queerness.

Brabomalo, one of the founders of the LGBT rights NGO, Fundación CAUSANA, espoused a "queer" form of doing politics that involved a critique of various forms of identity expression among self-defined gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, *travestis* and transsexuals. As Brabomalo states,

> No existen un 'solo' de gays y lesbianas, existen además, maricones, plumas, locas, fuertes. No existen solamente lesbianas, existen también marimachas, tortilleras, areperas. (Brabomalo 2002: 31).

He continues,

> En el Ecuador el rostro que se le ha dado a la homosexualidad dentro de la misma población, muestra a un hombre comprendido entre 25 y 45 años, mestizo, de clase media, con escolaridad de nivel universitario. Estas características...se han diseminado en la misma población tomándose como referentes de un grupo de personas más heterogéneo de lo que se imagina. Este rostro...oculta la realidad y existencia de toda una gama de tonalidades, de rostros invisibilizados, escondidos y...sancionados en su "propio" terreno....(Brabomalo 2002: 31).

Brabomalo draws from the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Jeffrey Weeks, among others, to develop his understanding of the "face of homosexuality" in Ecuador, a "face" which he views as biased toward a Eurocentric, White, middle class aesthetic even within the realm of LGBTI activism. He draws from queer theory to elaborate on his political agenda, which entails a rethinking of identity as fluid and constantly changing rather than static and fixed. For Brabomalo, this approach speaks to his lived concrete experience more so than liberal theory.

Transfeministas and _Cooperativos_: Pending Questions, Preliminary Conclusions

The "face of homosexuality" that Brabomalo speaks of continues to serve as a visible terrain of dispute in Quito's current LGBTI movement to such an extent that the transfeminist current considers the liberal current a group of "*cooperativos*," or the corporate gay current of the movement. According to one self-defined *transfeminista* interviewee, the *cooperativos* emphasize individual rights, gay consumerism, and a corporate NGO model of advocacy, whereas transfeminists emphasize a logic of solidarity and aim to challenge, rather than merely reform, normative legal and political structures (Vasquez 2008).

The ongoing tensions among the liberal and transfeminist currents of Quito's LGBTI movement raises a series of questions about the usefulness of "queering" LGBTI politics in a country like Ecuador, and about the place of queer studies in Ecuadorian academic life. To be sure, FLACSO-Ecuador has provided a crucial space for critical reflection on these issues, initially established in part through an alliance with Fundación CAUSANA and FLACSO's Gender Studies Program. In 2002, the Sexual Identities Study Group was created by Fundación CAUSANA and FLACSO, with the goal of bringing together scholars and activists interested in intellectually interrogating the meaning of sexuality and gender identity. FLACSO has offered several courses in the areas of queer theory, sexuality studies and masculinity and femininity studies and has hosted several public events and conference panels on these issues. Activists from organizations such as Proyecto Transgénero, Casa Trans (housed together) and Fundación CAUSANA have been trained either at FLACSO or at other Ecuadorian universities where they have studied queer theory as part of their broader degree programs. In this sense, it is impossible to separate the academic enterprise of queer studies from political activism in Quito. Yet how these individuals resignify notions of queerness in their professional, academic and activist work, be it through embracing historically perjorative terms such as *marimacha*, *loca* or *maricón* and reclaiming them as forms of pride; or through creating new, locally understood terms such as *llapingacha*; or by critiquing the limitations of globalized discourses of "gay rights," these debates will continue to shape the increasingly heterogeneous nature of Ecuador's academic scholarship in gender and sexuality studies as well as its activist networks.

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Endnotes

[1] By "heteronormativities," I am referring to the ways in which heterosexuality is privileged above all other expressions of sexuality and viewed as natural and normal versus non-heterosexual identities or experiences which are marked as unnatural, abnormal, or as "outside" dominant societal understandings of sexuality, sex and gender. By "gender normativities," I am referring to the ways in which gender identities, forms of expressions, and roles are likewise naturalized and normalized such that anyone who does not fit within a culturally prescribed gender role is deemed "abnormal" in their society. Both of these types of normativities have symbolic and material effects, often violent ones, for sexual and gender dissidents.

[2] By "transgender" I am referring to various groups of people that transgress, challenge, or alter the gender categories assigned to them at birth: transsexuals, *travestis* or cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, *lesbianas masculinas*, transgenders.

[3] Not unlike earlier historical encounters with feminism, Marxism and liberalism.

[4] Multiple proposals were submitted to the constitutional assembly by LGBTI sectors but in my interviews these two proposals were repeatedly mentioned whereas other proposals were not. ■