

Women's vulnerability in the travel and tourism sector

September 27th has been established by the United Nations (UN) as an awareness day of the social and economic impacts of tourism as well as its relevance. The date has been used to ponder female participation in a largely feminized sector.

Women's presence in tourism is especially relevant in Latin America, as has been noted by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in their Global Report on Women in Tourism. These women often find themselves in situations of vulnerability in relation to the gender gap in the sector, which makes their work undervalued and poorly paid. While gender stereotypes manifest in a professional "glass ceiling", the commodification

and sexualization/exoticization of women's bodies are related to sociocultural and symbolic vulnerabilities.

Female tourists also face barriers that perpetuate vulnerability, such as street harassment (sociocultural vulnerability) or being infantilized by medical staff while traveling for in vitro fertilisation (symbolic vulnerability). Regarding this, scholars, such as Ling Yang, Elaine Chiao, Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore, or Charles Arcodia, demonstrate how gender barriers can reproduce women's vulnerabilities. In this regard the "vulnerable" female tourist can face risks that have been normalized, which coexists with the negotiation of

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gender roles to promote a more inclusive travel and tourism sector.

Regardless their relevance for tourism, an important gap remains in women's vulnerability and tourism studies. And in this newsletter, we aim to shed light on vulnerability as a theoretical concept for tourist destinations, we would like to revolve and promote questioning about organizational dynamics that reinforce female vulnerability in the sector.

Tourism and vulnerability of Mexican working women in a pandemic world

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Mexico received 45 million international, overnight tourists, 43 million single-day visitors (mainly border crossings), and 9 million cruise visitors in 2019. The contribution of travel and tourism to the gross domestic product (GDP) and employment in Mexico reached 16% and 13%, respectively. In addition, the tourism sector is recognized as one of the most feminized sectors in the Mexican economy, since about 60% of the people employed in accommodation and food services are women.

In the next section we would like to explore the negative consequences of Covid-19 in Mexico, such as negative gaps in tourism employment, especially accommodation and catering.

Before Covid-19, the sector was already characterized by job insecurity, low wages and poor working conditions, situations that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic and preventive actions to halt it.

The pre-pandemic tourism employment

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, scholars had already noted that tourism employment at a global level was characterized by its lack of security due to the marked seasonality of the sector, the extended use of temporary and precarious contracts, and high turnover rates.

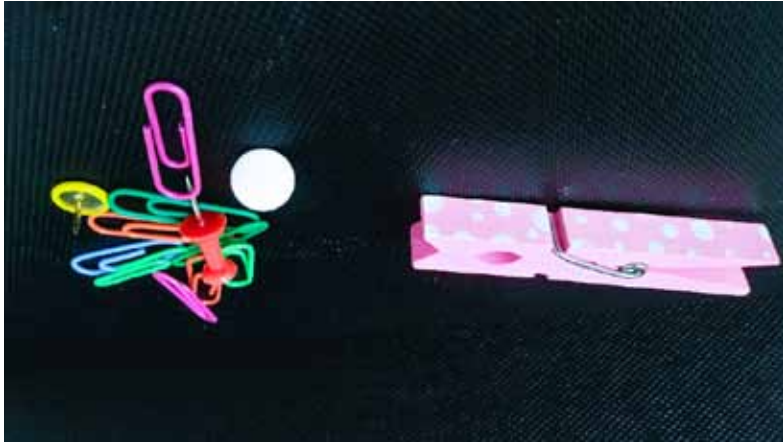
Reports from the UNWTO had also recognized the high feminization of the sector and the overrepresentation of young people and migrants. Research on previous disruptive events that have hit international tourism (e.g., the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US; the SARS crisis in China; the



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global financial crisis in 2008/2009; or the MERS crisis in the Middle East) demonstrates that the precarious status of workers in the tourism sector makes them particularly vulnerable to emergency situations.

Studies on labor markets in Mexico, such as the one led by Jesús Rubio Campos in 2017, have identified different forms of job insecurity that apply to the travel and tourism sector, including (a) temporality, which refers to the insecurity of workers regarding the continuity of employment; (b) vulnerability, due to the physical and mental conditions in which they carry out their work; (c)



Así somos.

wage insufficiency, where income is not sufficient to meet people's basic needs; and d) lack of labor protection, which refers to the absence or limitation of labor benefits and social protection. In addition to this, we highlight how women in Mexico are overrepresented in positions of lower responsibility and lower income (linked to vertical segregation); as well as in occupations traditionally conceived as "feminine", such as food preparation and cleaning (linked to horizontal segregation). More recently, the collection co-edited in 2020 by Paola Vizcaino, Heather Jeffrey, and Claudia Eger on *Tourism and Gender-Based Violence*, in

particular the chapter by Hande Turkoglu, noted how women workers are exposed to different forms of violence, including a higher incidence of sexual harassment at work by their superiors, co-workers, and clients/tourists. This has also been documented by the work of Rebeca Mejía Vázquez in the hotel sector in Toluca, Mexico.

Consequences of the measures taken during the pandemic

During the Covid pandemic, governments across the globe took a series of measures to contain infections, including the closure of borders, restrictions on international mobility, quarantines, lockdowns, promotion of social distancing, and use of mouth coverings and hygiene recommendations, among others. A report conducted by the ECLAC in 2020 summarized the measures that had a direct impact on tourism, ranging from the restriction and monitoring of travelers from areas affected by Covid-19 to the prohibition of flights, closure of borders, closure of restaurants, bars, and cinemas, the promotion of remote

working practices and the reduction of office hours. In Mexico, the decrease in flights and international arrivals began in March 2020, followed by a complete paralysis of activity from April onwards. The mobility of people to outdoor recreation and leisure sites was also significantly reduced by 40 to 50%.

The ECLAC's report in 2021 estimated a loss of 753,000 jobs in the tourism sector, mainly in the areas of accommodation, transportation, food and beverage services, recreational services, and travel agencies: equivalent to 1.4% of the employed population in the country. This loss of employment was concentrated in tourist regions, mainly in those dependent on foreign visitors, such as Cancun and the Riviera Maya or Los Cabos; those regarded as regional destinations, such as Acapulco or Veracruz, were also severely impacted. Job loss disproportionately affected working women who have a greater presence in micro, small and medium enterprises with far fewer resources than large national or multinational corporations (e.g., large hotel chains or tour operators) to withstand the

restrictions on tourism adopted during the pandemic. This situation was exacerbated by Covid and promoted informality. In Mexico, informality is heavily linked with economic, socio-cultural, and legal vulnerabilities in the travel and tourism sector; as a result of restrictions imposed by the pandemic, in some tourist destinations, informal food vendors and street vendors increased due to staff reductions in catering enterprises or hotels. Some destinations reported how formal staff and informal workers were severely affected. The impacts are still under assessment but some international agencies, such as ECLAC, UNWTO or Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres (CIM) strongly recommended a gender differentiated approach to mitigate those considered as more vulnerable due historic inequalities, such as: Afro-descendants, indigenous, or trans women.

Additional vulnerabilities among working women

In addition to factors previously discussed, 1 in 3 women in the tourism sector are self-employed, an status associated with a lower quality of employment,

due to a higher rate of informality, low remuneration, and low levels of qualification. Another ECLAC report recently documented working women's limited access to social protection in the Latin American region, with only 25.9% of women working in the tourism sector affiliated or contributing to a social security system. Moreover, women who are self-employed or own small businesses rely heavily on self-financing, as they face greater barriers to accessing formal financial resources. This presents a challenge to the reopening and survival of their businesses post-pandemic.

The pandemic highlighted the added burden that working women face due to caring responsibilities, and the pre-existing difficulties in reconciling tourism work and its odd patterns with personal and family life. Specifically, the closure of schools and the adoption of online educational provision that temporarily replaced in-person classes forced many women to leave their jobs because they had no other choice – either they had no family or friend networks with whom to leave their school-age children, or no resources to pay for outsourced childcare.



En serio, en el mar... la vida es más sabrosa.

Furthermore, the increase in domestic violence has been considered another pandemic in a society where 9 out of 10 person victims of domestic violence are women; according to Olga Sánchez Cordero (Secretaria de Gobernación de México), domestic violence increased by 120% in April 2020, the month of greatest spatial restrictions in the country.

The challenges that lie ahead for the recovery policies that aim to reactivate the tourism and hospitality sectors in Mexico and other Latin American countries include adopting a sustainability and gender-equality perspective and making sure to adopt strategies that decrease



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the vulnerability of all workers, but particularly of those who have a higher risk of employment loss and loss of income in times of crisis, including young people, women, and immigrants.

The vulnerable female tourist: the other side of the coin

We have explored how tourism promotes vulnerability among working women, but tourism can also reproduce vulnerability amid female tourists. The number of female tourists has been increasing in recent decades, particularly in female-only group trips and solo travel. As a consequence, this form of travel has attracted the attention of some destinations, and tourism enterprises have started to pay attention to their needs. It is relevant to remark that tourist practices involve a break from the traveler's everyday life, and result in exposure to unfamiliar places/spaces, which can increase one's vulnerability. In fact, "taking care of the tourist" has been at the core of the Mexican training programs in the industry, and tourism employees "take care" of the tourists as if they were extremely vulnerable,

sometimes going so far as to treat them as if they were children. This dynamic has in turn emphasized the importance of care work, which may cause male tourism workers to change their opinion about it. However, as we will explore in the following sections, vulnerability experienced by tourists is heavily gendered.

The risk and the vulnerability of female tourists

Vulnerability has not been extensively reviewed in tourism studies focused on gender, but some relevant work has been advanced to explore the multiple ways it is constructed. For example, Erica Wilson and Donna E. Little have explored how insecurity and fear impact on female travel intentions, their resignification of Gill Valentine's "geography of fear" has centred insecurity not only as a socio-cultural construction but also as a relevant factor in the decision-making process. According to them, female tourists seem to pay particular attention to avoiding unnecessary risks by dressing in a discrete manner and avoiding night outdoor activities; by doing so they minimise their vulnerability. This

internalisation of the “normality of lack of safety” by solo female tourists, which has been addressed by Toney K. Thomas and Paolo Mura, appears as a strategy used to minimise vulnerability especially when travelling to dangerous and challenging destinations, where the female tourist often faces socio-cultural and symbolic restrictions. Considering the increase of insecurity and violence experienced in Mexico during the last decades, female tourists generally follow some safety guidelines. Among the most common tips recommended by bloggers are: avoiding walking alone, especially at night; remaining aware of one’s surroundings; keeping an eye on their belongings; not getting too intoxicated; chatting with local women; dressing as local women; and taking advantage of social media or traveling in a group.

Normalization of a lack of safety is also a feature of adventure activities. For example, Mexican tourists have internalised the presence of at least one male companion as a strategic action to avoid vulnerability. In Mexico, the gendered nature of tourism spaces is well cemented and women who

perform outdoor activities (such as mountaineering, cycling, abseiling, hiking, or canyoning) use men as companions to avoid vulnerability. Regarding adventure tourism, vulnerability is heavily grounded in sexual harassment; as a consequence, women are used to negotiating their sociocultural, economic, and symbolic vulnerabilities while experiencing an *otherness* not only due to their presence in public rural spaces, but one also related to participating in masculinized activities (due to the components of risk, adventure or freedom).

Medical tourism, which is travel to receive affordable health care or surgery (general or cosmetic), is a niche industry where the tourist may also experience diverse vulnerabilities. This type of tourism increases women’s vulnerability by locating them in overlapping categories, such as the “patient” layer to the “tourist” and “women” ones. As a result, a female patient-tourist has to face extra considerations related to their medical treatment; for example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services) identifies infectious



Así somos II.

disease, antibiotic resistance, quality of care, communication challenges, air travel, and continuity of care as relevant risks to be considered. Fertility tourism is a space where vulnerabilities emerge with particular strength. Women, among others, who cross borders for in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatments can become trapped among medical and mobility discourses that usually patronize them in a double spiral constructed of narratives of vulnerability: under their designation as medical “patients”, and under their representation as wealthy “tourists”.



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Intersectionality to shed light on the multiple vulnerabilities

Sexual harassment is not the only materialised vulnerability experienced by women; risk can also be embodied through racial stereotypes. For example, in 2018, Elaine Chiao, Ling Yang, Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore, and Charles Arcodia emphasized the vulnerabilities faced by Asian female tourists who can be discriminated against and perceived as weak and therefore more vulnerable. To be defined as *the other* in a Western-dominated destination

is an example of how intersectionality, in this case gender and race, contributes to exacerbating vulnerability. Racial discrimination and the construction of *otherness*, regarding *mestiza* identity, have been explored by some gender and tourism scholars; Frohlick's paper on Nepalese mountaineers uses gender and racial politics to contextualise both global and local dynamics. By analysing Lhakpa Sherpa, the author highlights exoticism in the construction of Nepalese female subjectivities and the negotiation of vulnerabilities in globalized contexts. Also regarding mountaineering, physicality appears as a relevant issue faced by Mexicans. For example, clothes and styles can be questioned and compared with North American and European physical appearance. This difference can be used as a factor to disqualify their participation. To face those vulnerabilities, *mestiza* mountaineers have relied on sororal practices in which support among women becomes a tactic employed to confront vulnerabilities.

Another important type of vulnerability is the one related with ageing, explored by Sally F. Gregory in research carried

out in 2022 with senior scuba divers. In this adventure practice, the author emphasizes the need for spaces to embody seniority, as well as specialised services demanded by this type of female tourist. The life cycle has been also addressed through pregnancy and motherhood to make visible vulnerabilities experienced by women; this field of research shows time/space restrictions of being the primary caregiver and the possibility of giving birth. Some of our work found that Mexican pregnant women who practice adventure tourism face restrictions based in traditional assumptions rather than in medical advice. They also use strategies to negotiate their engagement in the activities. Motherhood has also been reviewed by gender and tourism scholars, for example, Janine Small examines the



experience of “traveling with children” to rescue the intensity of care work involved and how women negotiate their vulnerabilities by promoting more participatory care responsibilities with men during holidays. In both cases, pregnancy and motherhood appear as a socio-cultural construction able to reproduce vulnerability, and in some cases, vulnerabilities cannot be surpassed and remain as barriers to enjoying traveling.

Trans women tourists can also face relevant barriers in their tourist practices, as Carlos Monterrubio, Sheilla L. Rodríguez Madera, and Javier Pérez have identified in research carried out in 2020. These authors highlighted the barriers of this group in both intrapersonal (travel fears and being stigmatized or discriminated) and interpersonal experience (to be physically or verbally intimidated or abused), as well as in structural constraints (change of gender on official documents used to travel by air or provided to apply to a passport). Trans women’s vulnerabilities are exacerbated in tourist spaces that commonly

reproduce Cis-gender restrictions. As *the other*, trans female tourists face not only transphobia, but also age, financial, and physical restrictions, among others.

Finally, we would like to mention women with disabilities as another group that can be negatively impacted, as it noted by Angelina De Pascale, Marta Meleddu, Tindara Abbate, and Marco Pellicano in 2022; these scholars highlighted the gender gap experienced by Italian female travelers with disabilities, who are doubly disadvantaged due to their gender and their disability. Mexican destinations generally remain inaccessible to disabled tourists; although the sector has been making efforts to improve infrastructure and services, it is still an unresolved issue.

Concluding remarks

Tourism has been characterized as a cosmopolitan and friendly activity, and in some contexts it has been a mechanism to negotiate societal restrictions and empower women. However, the sector still has important tasks to mitigate the promotion and/or reproduction of women’s vulnerability.



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Women who work in tourism in Mexico face high economic and sociocultural vulnerabilities, with some groups such as indigenous women or Afro-Mexican women experiencing an even higher level due to historic inequalities. For instance, for female artisans, long-standing technological vulnerability has been exacerbated by Covid-19 and their limitations to find online marketing services. The Covid-19 pandemic increased economic (unemployment or lower income) and health vulnerability (lack of or limited access to health

services), as well as sociocultural (an increase of domestic and care burdens, and domestic violence), and symbolic discriminations (being sexualized or exoticized).

On the other hand, the female tourist is made vulnerable mainly through sociocultural practices (street harassment, stigmatization, physical or verbal abuse, or intimidation). In some cases, gender interacts with ethnicity (as it happens with Asian female tourists who experience discrimination), with age (senior female tourists), or life cycles (such as women traveling with children), and gender identity (trans female tourist) to create intersectional vulnerability. Stereotypes and inequalities promote and perpetuate vulnerabilities in tourism, and women experience them through diverse interwoven dynamics. Despite these restrictions, working women and female tourists continue to negotiate gender stereotypes and use small spaces to promote advances in the sector. To address more inclusive arrangements, we consider it necessary to use intersectionality

as a tool to generate tailored actions from public policies to corporate strategies, not only for female tourists but for working women. By addressing some specific challenges, like those mentioned above, the travel and tourism sector might promote safe spaces for women not only to negotiate the vulnerabilities they face, but to welcome and celebrate their uniqueness.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Isis Arlene Díaz Carrión is Associate Professor at Facultad de Turismo y Mercadotecnia, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (Mexico). She holds a PhD in Human Geography from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain). Her research focuses on gender as well as tourism and the impact of the sustainability agenda on tourism. Her recent work has been published in *Gender, Place & Culture*, *Annals of Leisure Research*, *Tourism Geographies*, *Región y Sociedad*, *El Periplo Sustentable*, among others.

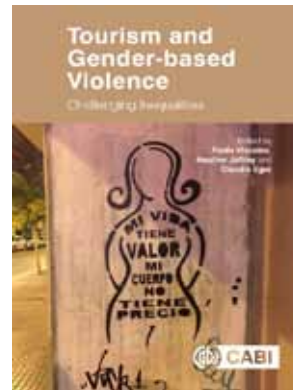
Paola Vizcaino

Paola Vizcaino is Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for Events Management in the Sports & Events Management Department at Bournemouth University's Business School (UK). She holds a PhD in Tourism Studies from the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. Her research focuses on gender and tourism, women's empowerment in tourism and the examination of tourism and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). She is the co-editor of the first collection on Tourism and Gender-Based Violence (CABI) and has published her research on gender and tourism in academic journals such as *Tourism Geographies*, *Tourism Review and Tourism, Culture & Communication*. She is a member of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and an associate of UK-based charity Equality in Tourism.

Hugo Gaggiotti

Hugo Gaggiotti is Professor at the University of the West of England, UK. He has a PhD in Anthropology and a PhD in Management. He was a foreigner at birth and has remained displaced all his life. The focus of his writing is on the intersections between rhetoric, rituals, liminality, and the symbolic construction of the meaning of work in mobile transnational workers. He conducted his fieldwork for many years in the borderlands industrial regions of Pindamonhangaba (Brazil), Ciudad Juárez (Mexico), Almaty (Kazakhstan) and currently in the US-Mexican borderlands of Baja California (British Council-Newton Fund Grant-Conacyt) and in UK (British Academy-Leverhulme). His work has appeared in a range of interdisciplinary journals including *Culture and Organization*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *Journal of Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, *Leadership and Scripta Nova*. Among his recent publications are (2022) "Unleading during a pandemic: Scrutinising leadership and its impact in a state of exception", *Leadership*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 277-297 and (2022) "Organizational Ethnography: An Experiential and Practical Guide". London: Routledge (with Pandeli and Sutherland). His own passions are the application of abductive reasoning (Peirce) to DIY and cooking.

FURTHER READING



Vizcaino-Suárez, P.; Jeffrey, H. and Eger, C. (Eds.) (2020) *Tourism and Gender-based Violence. Challenging Inequalities* Wallingford: CABI

Gender based violence (GBV) in travel and tourism is embedded within wider social structures of gender inequalities and discrimination. This book focuses on the multiple and interconnected manifestations of violence that women and girls encounter in tourism consumption and production, such as physical, sexual, emotional or socio-economic abuse. The book adopts a multidisciplinary perspective in its critical examination of the theoretical landscape of GBV, and its engagement with case studies on GBV and sexual harassment. It draws on feminist, intersectional, and post-colonial frameworks, bringing together contributions from academics and practitioners across the globe.



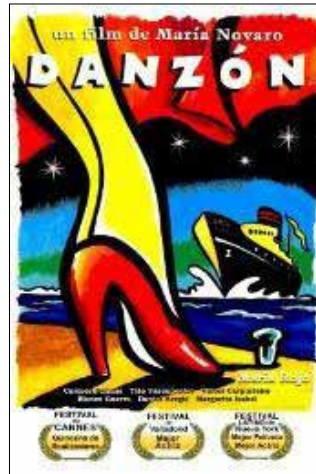
Correia, A. and Dolnicar, S. (2021) *Women's Voices in Tourism Research. Contributions to Knowledge and Letters to Future Generations* Queensland: University of Queensland

This book showcases the many contributions that women worldwide have made to tourism research. It also serves as a collective mentoring platform, containing letters written by women to the future generations of tourism researchers and passing on invaluable observations and advice.

Monterrubio, C.; Rodríguez Madera, S. L. and Pérez, J. (2020). *Trans women in tourism: Motivations, Constraints and Experiences*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 43, 169-178.

Díaz-Carrión, Isis A.; Vizcaino-Suárez, P. and Gaggiotti, H. (2020). *Change within the change: pregnancy, liminality and adventure tourism in Mexico*, *Tourism Geographies*, 22(2), 370–391.

FURTHER VIEWING



Novaro, M. (1991)
Danzón
Mexico, 103 min

Julia is a 40-year-old single mother who works as a telephone operator. Her only passion is dancing. When her dance partner inexplicably disappears, she will try to find him at any cost. (FILMAFFINITY).



Cisquella, G. (2018)
Hotel Explotación: Las Kellys
(Documentary)
Spain, 55 min

More than two hundred thousand women work doing cleaning services as chambermaids in Spain. They are as fundamental as invisible in the hotel industry. A few years ago, in October 2016, the Kellys (women who work as hotel cleaners) decided to organize to claim their rights. They have been victims of outsourcing, and many have been left out of the hotel staff without rights and exposed to dismissal when they are on sick leave.



Seidl, U. (2012)
Paradies: Liebe
Austria, 121 min

The film tells the story of Teresa, a 50-year-old woman who travels to Kenya as a sex tourist. There, she meets younger men and has sex with them. Her main concern is if they find her attractive or not. The men are engaged in prostitution, although they deny they have had encounters with other white women and do not ask her for a fee for their services but rather a financial help for their relatives in need. The film shows female sex tourism and, at the same time, the African colonial history. The cast is a mix of professional and non-professional actors. The so called "Beach Boys" are local boys encountered on the beaches of Kenya. "Paradise: Love" is the first part of Ulrich Seidl trilogy, which continues with two other films: "Faith" (2012) and "Hope" (2013).



Novaro, M. (2000)
Sin Dejar Huella
Mexico, 100 min

Aurelia, a single mother who works as a make-up artist in Ciudad Juárez, is determined to change her children's destiny. She meets Ana, an international trafficker of pre-Hispanic art who runs away from a policeman obsessed with her. She asks Aurelia to take her in her car. (FILMAFFINITY).

AFIN NEWS

Publication of Book *Volver a los orígenes*

The book *Volver a los orígenes: Una etnografía de la adopción transnacional* [Back to the origins. An ethnography of transnational adoption] by Chandra Kala Clemente was published in June 2022. This work presents and analyses ethnographically a phenomenon that has been little explored anthropologically in Spain: the experience of the search for origins in transnational adoptions. It is set in the increasingly frequent context of adopted persons and adoptive families who are interested in learning about their pre-adoption histories, and families of origin searching for sons and daughters. The book explores the contacts, reunions and searches of Spanish adoptees and adoptive families and their Nepalese relatives. The ethnographic material for this book draws from the fieldwork carried out in both Nepal and Spain, analysing the narratives and experiences surrounding transnational adoption, thinking of the search as always a right, and never an obligation.



AFIN at the Universidad de Costa Rica

Last August Marisela Montenegro, Joan Pujol and Beatriz San Román, lecturers in the Department of Social Psychology at the UAB, together with PhD student Jorge Lucero, undertook a stay at the University of Costa Rica. Among the various activities they carried out during the stay, Marisela Montenegro inaugurated the postgraduate programme in Psychology with a lecture entitled “A propósito de la identidad y la política: Tránsito por parajes tenebrosos, escarpados e inapropiados/bles”, in which she reflected on the limits of identity politics and the use of the metaphor of identity by far-right movements. Also, from August 9-11, they gave a workshop on critical discourse analysis for teaching staff and postgraduate students.



On 18 August, a discussion entitled “Subjetivación, Subjetividad y Sujeto: Chemsex, Personas no-binarias y Homonacionalismo” was held with the aim of reflecting on the processes that classify and rank subjects according to their geopolitical location, their sexed corporealities and their *genericisation*. Each of the participants gave an initial twenty-minute presentation, after which they debated the possibility of developing processes that question the hierarchical binarisms that shape not only the generation of knowledge but also the material conditions of lives and bodies. The presentation by Jorge Lucero, who is currently working on his doctoral thesis on practices and meanings in chemsex, was entitled “Proyecto sujeto en riesgo en los estudios chemsex”, while Joan Pujol’s presentation was “Del telón de acero a la cortina rosa: Europa, entre el homonacionalismo y la homofobia

nacionalista”. Meanwhile, psychologist Nathan Romano-Solís, professor at the University of Costa Rica and National Coordinator of the Global Alliance against HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Costa Rica, presented “Personas no-binarias: construcción de la subjetividad desde la (im)posibilidad”. The discussion was moderated by Professor Catalina Ramirez, Coordinator of the Graduate Programme in Psychology at the University of Costa Rica.



Beatriz San Román, Associate Professor at UAB

Beatriz San Román, member AFIN research group since its foundation, has obtained a position as Associate Professor at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The public competition for this position took place in July, with a committee chaired by Professor Miquel Torregrossa and including professors Mari Luz Esteban and Margot Pujal.

Beatriz San Román thus joins the permanent staff of the Department of Social Psychology at the UAB, where she has been teaching as an associate lecturer since 2016, at the undergraduate level (in Psychology and Sociocultural Gender Studies) and in the Master’s in Psychosocial Research and Intervention and the iiEDG Master’s in Women’s and Gender Studies. She is currently the principal investigator of the European project “Brighter Future: Innovative tools to develop full potential after early adversity” and she is part of the research team of two other AFIN projects: “REPMOB: Reproductive governance and mobilities in Europe, North Africa and Latin America” and the RICORS network “Primary care interventions to prevent maternal and child chronic diseases of perinatal and developmental origin”.

Anna Molas obtains a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral fellowship

The Ministry of Science and Innovation has awarded Anna Molas, postdoctoral researcher at the AFIN Group, a Juan de la Cierva contract. These contracts are highly competitive and are designed to support young doctors for two years to complete their post-doctoral training in a Spanish research centre. Anna Molas will therefore work in the AFIN Group within the framework of this contract on various research projects in the fields of assisted reproduction, maternal and child health and perinatal technologies. She will also be working on the publication of her first book based on her doctoral thesis on egg donation in Spain.

Panel "Abriendo la adopción" in the Congress AIBR

On 12 and 14 July 2022, in the framework of the 8th International Congress of Anthropology AIBR, Irene Salvo Agoglia and Chandra Kala Clemente, researchers of the AFIN Group, convened the double panel "Abriendo la adopción: búsquedas de orígenes y contactos postadoptivos en Iberoamérica" ["Opening adoption: origins searches and post-adoptive contacts in Iberoamerica"]. The panelists presented results of studies on the practices of openness in adoption, a global movement driven by progress in children's rights, scientific



evidence on the benefits of openness, the advent of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) and new communication technologies, origins searches by adopted persons, and genetic testing for finding biological relatives, among other factors. Situated in different countries in Ibero-America, the following papers examined and reflected on this issue from different disciplines, approaches, narratives and practices:

- "Sentir 'un pasado y un futuro en el presente': búsquedas de orígenes en las adopciones transnacionales", Chandra Kala Clemente-Martínez (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona);
- "'Sólo nos ayudan para echarnos': sobre la (no) asistencia en la búsqueda de orígenes en la adopción transnacional en Bolivia", Atamhi Cawayu (Centre for Research on Culture and Gender);
- "Cuando 'todo es falso'" casos de tráfico de niños para adopción internacional, al extremo opuesto de la adopción abierta", Andrea Cardarello (UQAM, Canadá);
- "Un archivo para repensar la adopción: Maternidad, género y desigualdad", Soledad Gesteira y Carla Villalta (FFYL/UBA-CONICET);
- "La apertura estructural en familias adoptivas monoparentales españolas", María Isabel Jociles Rubio (Universidad Complutense);
- "'El amor no resta, el amor suma'. Narrativas y prácticas de contacto postadoptivo en familias adoptivas chilenas", Irene Amalia Salvo Agoglia (Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile);
- "¿Las prácticas de la apertura en las adopciones transnacionales pueden crear vínculos de pluripantesco? Ejemplos etnográficos en el contexto etíope-hispano", Aranzazu Gallego Molinero (Universidad de Granada);
- "Adopción con contacto en Brasil: Confluencias de prácticas, reflexiones y acciones en un proceso de transformación cultural" Eduardo Rezende Melo (USP, Brasil).

(Im)perfect Bodies on Campus Ítaca

AFIN, within the framework of the Campus Ítaca organised by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and aimed at 3rd year students from several public secondary schools in Barcelona, had the pleasure of carrying out the project "Cuerpos (im)perfectos: analizando los ideales de belleza". The aim of the project was to accompany participants in a critical reflection on the discourses and practices on bodies in relation to the concept of hegemonic beauty in Western societies, using an anthropological approach.



The activity began with a brief introduction to anthropological science as a discipline that describes and analyses phenomena in different socio-cultural contexts. Key concepts of beauty ideals were addressed through academic materials, audio-visuals, and press reports. An ethnographic methodology was applied to analyse the problem in question through an observation session at the UAB's Physical Activity Service and a subsequent group analysis of the data obtained. Throughout all the sessions, a group discussion was held on doubts, reflections, key concepts, and debates on the ideas that arose. Finally, a presentation was given so that the students could express what they had learnt through the application of this qualitative methodology.

It is worth highlighting the pleasant experience of having carried out this activity due to the involvement and interest of the students and their collective critical reflections, as well as the satisfaction of disseminating and sharing the knowledge generated by AFIN and the importance of anthropological knowledge in this field. We are very grateful to those who participated, and we hope to repeat the activity next year!

AFIN in the international conference Reproductive Futures

From June 15-17, Anna Molas, postdoctoral researcher at the AFIN Group, attended the international conference *Reproductive Futures: Emergent Injustices, Hopes, and Paradoxes* in Tampere, Finland. The conference, organised by the ReproSoc research group of the University of Cambridge, was attended by various social researchers (anthropologists, sociologists, historians, among others) who addressed emerging issues in the study of reproduction. Some of these topics were related to new perinatal technologies, trends in assisted reproduction and transnational mobility, issues of reproductive justice and the consequences of climate change on reproduction. Anna Molas was the chair of one of the panels called *Biopolitics, Industry and Markets* in which she presented part of the results of her doctoral thesis on egg donation in Spain.



Completion of the BRIDGES project

The project “BRIDGES: Building Inclusive Societies: Diversifying Knowledge and Tackling Discrimination through Civil Society Participation in Universities” ended on 30 July. For three years, from October 2019 to July 2022, we have worked based on the PRA (Participatory Research Action) perspective between universities and research centres, together with activist and civil society organisations. The overall aim of this international collaboration and networking - Spain, Germany, England and Greece - has been to develop resources, materials and actions that help to fight discrimination in higher education from feminist and anti-racist perspectives. As a result we now offer, in the four languages of the project, free of charge and fully accessible through the BRIDGES Virtual Laboratory (<https://buildingbridges.space>), the products resulting from these years of work.

Very briefly, they consist of:

- The BRIDGES Virtual Laboratory itself, which will continue to be operational so that all the activities, resources, exercises, courses and materials collected can continue to be applied in the pedagogical spaces in which you work and participate.
- The Toolkit, which includes innovative strategies (concept development, exercises, activities...) to address structures of exclusion in adult and higher education.
- The training course on “Anti-racist and Feminist Practices in Higher Education”, aimed at teachers and trainers who want to work on anti-racist education in the classroom in a participatory way.
- The book entitled *Derribando muros, Construyendo puentes: Creando alianzas feministas antirracistas dentro, fuera y contra las universidades*, an open access publication written by the entire BRIDGES consortium that explains the process of creating the project and the lessons learned during the three years of its existence, including a methodological guide on narrative productions.

Thus, although the BRIDGES project has officially ended, we remain open to alliances, collaborations, exchanges and continuations of the process of the decolonisation of the university and education, which remains crucial and urgent in order to achieve greater levels of social and systemic justice. We will continue to tear down walls and build bridges!

Queer decisions: Racialised ‘matching’ and stigmatisation among gay parents

A new article by AFIN researcher Marcin Smietana, co-authored with France Winddance Twine, titled “[Queer decisions: Racial matching among gay male intended parents](#)”, has just been published in open access. This article is based on cross-national comparative fieldwork in the United Kingdom and the United States on how gay men seeking to become parents through surrogacy with egg donation choose the skin colour of the egg donor and, thus, of the future baby. The gay fathers interviewed sought a racialised resemblance to reinforce the kinship between themselves and their sons or daughters. They also did so to prevent the stigmatisation they felt their children and families might face if they did not look like their parents. In both California and England, gay men reported using racialised matching, demonstrating that a genetic and racialised model of kinship is still dominant in English-speaking global north countries. In addition to issues specific to LGBTQ families, the article may be of broader interest to those working with the topics of racialisation, kinship and the reproductive industry. The empirical work discussed in the article also refers to the authors’ earlier theoretical work, published last year, also in open access, on the racial contours of queer reproduction.

Study on the needs and demands of non-binary people

On 14 July, coinciding with Non-Binary Visibility Day, the presentation of the "Study on the needs and demands of non-binary people in Spain" took place in Madrid, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Equality. Lucas Platero, a member of AFIN, has carried out the academic supervision of the study, ensuring its rigour and making valuable contributions.

This is the first study to be carried out in Spain aimed at getting to know the experiences of those who defy gender binarism, including ascertaining their needs and demands and determining what difficulties and barriers they encounter in their daily lives or in certain areas such as employment, health and education.

The study has the added value of having been carried out with the contributions of non-binary people, who generously shared their life experiences and insights, placing them at the service of knowledge creation. These people, together with professionals and activists, have contributed to a study that aims to bring the demands and needs of non-binary people in Spain closer to the population as a whole, thus contributing to social change.

Santiago Joaquín Insausti obtains a María Zambrano contract

Santiago Joaquín Insausti, sociologist and PhD in Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires, where he also teaches, is currently developing his research at the Department of Social Psychology at the UAB, through a Maria Zambrano contract "for the attraction of international talent", funded by the NextGeneration programme of the European Union.

His research explores the changes in sexuality in Ibero-America since the 1950s, as well as the impact they have had on the configuration of society, culture and politics. His studies attempt to understand these transformations within the framework of medium-term structural changes in the sex-gender system that include the alternation of economic cycles, changes in political regimes and state regulatory logics, the emergence of new youth subcultures and demographic transformations in family structures.

His current research seeks to record and make visible the testimonies of institutional violence against transvestites and trans people in the context of the late cold war in Ibero-America. During that time, transvestites and transgender people gained access to reassignment treatment and symbolic recognition. However, none of these achievements included concrete instances of support and care.

The project seeks to build synergetic relationships between academia, civil society organisations and survivors in order to disseminate long-silenced memories and provide useful tools for public policy and activism in pursuit of the demand for justice and economic reparation for victims. For more information see [this link](#).

Celebration of the 1st International SexAFIN Congress

The 1st International SexAFIN Congress: “(Re)thinking comprehensive sexuality education from a gender perspective focused on children” was held online June 13-15. Organised by the SexAFIN team from the AFIN Research Group, the conference focused on barriers to and strategies around comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), as well as reflecting on both its present and its future. A diverse lineup of international speakers analysed the social constructions of childhood and sexuality from multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual perspectives. The main conclusions of the congress centred on the importance of including CSE in the educational curricula of primary schools in order to improve access to information on sexuality that promotes the acquisition of skills and attitudes that facilitate the development of a healthy and pleasurable sexuality. Speakers reflected on what children know about sexuality, how adults such as families and teachers accompany them (or not) in developing that knowledge, masculinities, sexual diversities, sexuality and disability, the types of resources that facilitate the transmission of information, such as children’s and young people’s literature on sexuality, and on the need to offer tools to access pornography from a critical perspective. Participants also stressed the need to include reproductive education in CSE.

You can find information about the speakers at the congress at the following link: sexafin-conference.afinbarcelona.com.



ISRF grant to publish Anna Molas' doctoral theses

The UK non-profit organisation Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) has awarded Anna Molas, a postdoctoral researcher in the AFIN group, a grant to assist with the process of turning her doctoral thesis into a book. This grant is awarded to a small number of researchers who are in the early stages of their career and who wish to publish their first book based on their doctoral thesis. The selection committee assessed the quality and interest of the thesis entitled *Taming Egg Donors: The Production of the Egg Donation Bioeconomy in Spain*, which analyses the dynamics of the egg donation industry in Spain based on ethnographic work with egg donors and assisted reproduction professionals. The book is expected to be published in early 2024.