Diversidad sexual[1] in Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz, Mexico

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Abstract

This article is based on two months of ethnographic fieldwork done in 2017 in Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz, Mexico. I focus on the ways in which queer mestizos[3] contest, negotiate and mediate gender/sexual policing and how they challenge and produce/reproduce traditional gender roles and heteronormativity. I track these queer practices in contexts where institutions like family, marriage, church, and mass media, as well as cultural expressions like motherhood and language[4] police alternative gender/sexual identifications and/or expressions. Gender and sexual policing are also mediated by the intersectionalities of gender,

[3] Mixed race as people part of the unmarked majority in these towns.

[4] Institutions and cultural expressions that work hand in hand in the construction and creation of people's internalized homophobia.

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race-ethnicity, class, sex, and sexuality. I address queer (in)visibility and reveal how queer Mexicans make queer-worlds possible for themselves and publicly display what it means to be queer in these two towns. My findings reveal gender and sexual fluidity as well as emerging spaces that intersect with other practices for queer Mexicans. The data gathered also suggests terms of identification as a significant terrain fitting neatly into the paradigms of these two towns.

Keywords: Diversidad sexual, performance, terms of identification, "puto(s)", "vestida(s)", "mayate(s)", "manflora(s)"

Resumen

Este artículo está basado en dos meses de trabajo de campo etnográfico hecho en 2017 en Poza Rica y Coatzintla, Veracruz, México. Me enfoco en las formas de comportamiento de mestizos pertenecientes a la diversidad sexual en estos municipios como las formas en las que cuestionan y negocian la vigilancia social de género y/o sexualidad. Al mismo tiempo, observo las formas en las que este grupo cuestiona, y a la vez, produce y reproduce roles de género tradicionales y la heteronormatividad. Analizo estas prácticas en contextos donde instituciones como la familia, el matrimonio, la iglesia y los medios de comunicación, así como las expresiones culturales como la maternidad y el lenguaje vigilan el género y la sexualidad, en otras palabras, las expresiones alternativas. La vigilancia sexual y de género también está mediada por las interseccionalidades de género, raza, etnicidad, clase, sexo, y sexualidad. Revelo la (in)visibilidad de la diversidad sexual, las formas en las

que el grupo hace posible espacios para vivir su identidad y relacionarse mutuamente, así como también las formas en las que el grupo demuestra públicamente lo que significa ser parte de él. Mi estudio revela la fluidez sexual y de género incluyendo los espacios claves que, a su vez, se cruzan con otras prácticas. Los datos recopilados aquí también sugieren términos de identificación como un terreno significativo capaz de delinear claramente el lenguage en estas dos poblaciones.

Palabras clave: Diversidad sexual, género como una actuación, términos de identificación, "puto(s)", "vestida(s)", "mayate(s)", "manflora(s)"

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Introduction

Using the theoretical framework of Judith Butler, I deconstruct gender, sex, and sexuality in places like Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz, Mexico. Drawing on Butler's (1988) work on gender performance, I explore the ways in which individuals from *la diversidad sexual*, such as those who self-identify as "putos"[5] and "manfloras,"[6] are policed and regulated. The ethnographic work was conducted by using participant-observation in these towns, as well as semi-structured/open-ended private interviews with twenty-seven participants who considered themselves part of *la diversidad sexual.*

[5] A colloquial gendered term to refer to fag, faggot. As well, it represents the popular term to refer to gay, transsexual, transgender and/or *vestida* individuals.
[6] A gendered term used to refer to butch and/or feminine like lesbian women.

During fieldwork, I was able to observe how some people who identified as "putos" performed heteronormative scripts by adopting regional and cultural gender patterns, particularly while playing the role of "vestidas."[7] Although the focus is mainly on "putos" because of their larger visibility in both towns, I do also engage with "manfloras" to contrast their role with "putos." Regarding "manfloras," the interest too lies in engaging with the ways in which they challenge, while also perpetuating, the Mexican heterosexual system. Thus, by engaging with the sexual agency of "putos" and "manfloras," I also address how these individuals manage their self-expressions according to their own interests; that is, by publicly acting as *declarados(as)* or by partially concealing their own self-identifications.

[7] A term to refer to a man who cross-dresses as a woman and also used in place of other terms such as *transexual*, *transgénero*, *homosexual* and/or "puto".

Gender performances and the use of spaces: The street

I use Judith Butler's (1988) framework on bodies as intrinsically attached to a gender category, therefore, as a socially constructed idea. According to the author, gender entails an act grounded in cultural significations, an act that is not done in isolation, but achieved publicly and within temporal and collective dimensions. For Butler, gender, as a socially constructed idea, is shaped by its own social temporality; a set of repeated performances where the countless repetitions of gender create the idea of gender (p. 520-526). I take Butler's (1990) work on gender, particularly her argument on gender as a performance, in other words, an "always a doing"

act (p. 33). Following Simone de Beauvoir's arguments, Butler (1988) draws on the idea that to be a woman is to have become a woman, which for her means that it is to make the body adapt "to a historical idea of "woman", or to induce the body to become a cultural sign" (p. 522).

Moreover, Butler's (1990) framework is used especially for her claims on gender as an unstable category (p. viii). As stated by the author, even though gender is an unstable category, one is still required "to live in a world where gender is stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable" (Butler, 1988, p. 528). Butler (1988) proposes that "gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity but serves as a social policy of gender regulation and control" (p. 528). Thus, the author does not perceive the performance of gender as free, but rather more akin to writing a script with a regulatory frame; a written script that has been repeated and rehearsed over and over even before one came on the scene. Butler adds that while contradicted, gender is a performance with social disciplinary consequences. In other words, "performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect" (p. 528). Butler's insights on gender as scripted, on doing proper gender, and on gender policing are particularly relevant here as I draw on her approach to gender as both self-regulated and regulated by others, particularly when analyzing gender policing.

I recognize that Butler's work engages with gender policing, although not so much with sexual policing. As well, even though

her work refers to the doing of gender, it does not engage with the social context in which the "gender doing" takes place. Nonetheless, I consider her claims on gender as scripted according to a regulatory frame still represent relevant contributions in this work, and I apply her ideas to social contexts of Poza Rica and Coatzintla. In the following section, through one of the incidents that occurred to me, I examine local expectations of "doing woman" in a town like Coatzintla, Veracruz. Using Butler's arguments on woman as a cultural sign and as a repeated corporeal project, I explore the ways in which doing woman becomes a means to control and discipline women through access to (and/or exclusion from) specific spaces.

On Tuesday, July 4, 2017, I was introduced to Joanne, a nineteen-year-old girl who lived and worked in Coatzintla and who self-identified as a bisexual woman. A friend of mine, Emilia, told Joanne about me and the research I was conducting, and since Joanne was interested in participating, Emilia introduced her to me. After meeting with her and explaining my research, we decided to meet two days later, on July 6 at 11:00 a.m., outside of *Su bodega*, a grocery store located far enough from her house. Once there, we would decide where to go for an interview. Since I did not want to appear too formal in the eyes of a nineteen-year-old girl, I carefully selected what I would wear. The weather was approximately thirty-four degrees Celsius (plus humidity), so I decided to wear a denim mini skirt, a blue tank top, and black sandals. I put on my sunglasses, arranged my hair to look casual, so my curls would cover most of

my face, took my backpack and left the apartment early, as I wanted to arrive before Joanne.

As planned, I arrived a few minutes early, so I waited for Joanne. At 8 minutes past 11:00, I started wondering if she was not going to show up, so I decided to go to the corner on the opposite side of the street in the hopes of seeing her from a distance. There were some men on this corner working at a construction site, but I didn't pay much attention to them. At twenty past 11:00, when I realized that Joanne was probably not going to show up, I overheard one of the construction workers say to his co-worker: "*Pinche "puto," seguro está esperando a su 'mayate'!* ("Fucking faggot, for sure he's waiting for his man!"). My first reaction was to look around to see who the construction worker was referring to, but there was no one else around except me. Suddenly, I understood that the construction worker was referring to me: that I was a man trying to pass for a woman waiting for *su "mayate,"* also understood as an *hombre-hombre* or a self-identified straight and macho looking man who engages in either casual or long-lasting relationships with "putos." More precisely, I had trespassed the gender norms by standing on a street corner while also appearing to be waiting for someone. For the construction worker, I was behaving in a way that was considered by the social order of Coatzintla as outside the norm. The construction worker's reaction responds to the practices and discourses prevailing in the contexts of Coatzintla and Poza Rica, settings vastly influenced by Christianity, particularly by Catholicism, and where the performances of women are highly structured and

regulated. And while women's movements are regulated in these contexts, men use street corners, and any other places in town as settings to interact with others without restrictions or the risk of being subjected to any kind of labels. Women, on the other hand, do not stand on street corners and if they do so, weather during the day or night, then they are labelled as *prostitutas* (prostitutes).

Furthermore, in these two towns, it is well-understood that *el papel del "puto"* (the faggot's role) is to financially support *a sus "mayates"* (their partners), a subject that I also address in more detail. For now, I would like to also note that the local use of the masculine term "puto" is used in a derogatory manner, in this case, by the construction worker. Overall, the term "puto" is used by some Mexicans to insult men who do not conform to gender norms and appear effeminate and/or identify as gay. And even though most transsexual and/or transgender women as well as gay men find the word "puto" offensive when someone else uses it to refer to them, when *transexuales, transgénero, "vestidas"* and/or gay individuals use the term among themselves, they find it quite amusing. In other words, they use it as a suitable way to reclaim their non-normative sexuality.

This incident made me reflect on Cerwonka & Malkki's (2007) work on the body as the tool that contributes to the understanding of specific practices during fieldwork (p. 33). At the same time, the episode reminded me about the ways in which spaces are used in these two towns. For instance, in the setting of Coatzintla, the construction worker saw me as out of place because, according to

him, I was not positioned in the proper place assigned to women, either in the home doing house work, or at any well-structured place of employment. Instead, I was standing on the street corner in an apparently suggestive way. In the construction worker's eyes, I could not be a prostitute. Instead, he saw me as a "puto" since "putos", at times, may choose not to reveal their identity to protect the identity of *sus "mayates."* So, the fact that I decided to hide my face with my hair, from the construction worker's viewpoint, made me clear that I wanted to conceal my identity. The construction worker's comment also made me reflect on gender and the spaces where women are expected to be found. Although each woman in these towns has her own daily routine, the settings that most women frequent are generally the same: the open-air-markets, the grocery stores, the shopping centers, the school system, the Church, and the workplace, since they represent the proper places in which women should participate. Thus, since I placed myself in a different set of routines and within spaces not considered as falling within the realm of domestic activities or formal work, like being on a street corner and waiting, I was seen as out of place. My incorrect performance of womanhood also opens up questions about the gender performance associated with "puto," – which is both ascribed to people in a derogatory way and taken up as a term of self-identification by some individuals from la diversidad sexual. In the following section, I discuss how "puto" exists as an "in-between" gender category, and as a category where both masculinity and femininity co-exist.

Performing "puto" in Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz

The performance of many who self-identify as "putos" is achieved through female body gestures and appearances like clothing, hair, makeup, and accessories, such as the performances of Vanessa, an interviewee who self-identified as a *transgénero*, *vestida*, "puto" and a woman, depending on the context. By the time I met Vanessa, she was in her late forties, had lived as a woman since her mid twenties, and worked as a hairdresser. The day I interviewed her, she wore black dress pants, a floral-patterned blouse, high heels, and a dark brown wig. Her makeup was impeccable. Vanessa's posture and movements were those associated with the traditional ideas of Mexican femininity: delicacy, gentleness, empathy, sensitivity, and European-like prettiness. Vanessa's stylized movements even resembled those of her favourite artist, María Felix[8].

[8] A famous Mexican movie artist from the 1940s and 1950s.

During the interview, Vanessa recalled how, at the early age of eleven, she began to adopt her mother's role, for example, by cooking for all her siblings when her mother needed to be at the hospital caring for an ill family member. She mentioned how, through the years, she slowly started taking on her mother's role within the family, of guardianship. Vanessa also told me how her own role in the family resembled that of her mother, such as bringing her adult siblings (two brothers and three sisters) together either daily and/or weekly. And while during the interview Vanessa told me that she identified more with her sisters, she also mentioned having a good and respectful relationship with her brothers since

by then, she was for them, as her mother still was, the "pillar" of the family. Additionally, Vanessa mentioned how her female performances represented labour for her relatives. More precisely, she told me about the expectations that her widowed mother and five siblings had of her as the presumed person responsible for the maintenance of their mother's household, as well as the person in charge of the domestic activities attached to this home. Besides, relatives expected Vanessa to care for the family's most vulnerable, such as children, the sick, and the elderly. Most importantly, her siblings assumed that Vanessa, as perceived by them as someone who transgressed the gender norms, would stay home and care for her own mother, since she was not expected to leave the mother's household to get married. In other words, family members perceived Vanessa's gender transgression as an element that made her unsuitable for marriage and, in turn, a likely caregiver for her mother.

While many "vestidas," like Vanessa, preferred to use women's clothing, makeup, and jewelry accessories daily, during my fieldwork, I met other "vestidas" who chose to cross-dress only for special occasions. The term vestida was thus also claimed by male-born individuals who lived their lives as men but cross-dressed as women often or sporadically. The term "vestida," then, was even claimed by those who followed more masculine scripts (through clothing, body postures and behaviours) daily and cross-dressed frequently or sporadically, as well as by those who regularly adopted gracious and girly body movements –such as constantly gesturing with their

hands while talking, waving their hands, and nodding their head in greeting, and moving their hips when walking. In order to address this fusion between gender and sexuality, I will refer to a brief historical context on Gregory Mitchell's (2015) work in Latin America. Drawing on the investigation of James Green (1999), Mitchell indicates that by the late nineteenth century, when the medical system began to divide men who have sex with other men into the categories of *activos* and *pasivos*,[9] other categories emerged, such as the figure of *tias* (aunties, also referred to effeminate older gay men), a classification that became established by the mid-twentieth century. More specifically, some of these *tias*, if they were wealthy enough, were able to financially support their men (p. 41). "Putos" and "tias" roles in Brazil resemble *el papel del "puto"* (the faggot's role) in the contexts of Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz. For instance, Yasmin, a thirty-two-year-old male-born individual who self-identified as transexual referred to this subject during his/her interview. Yasmin, who was born and raised in Coatzintla and who, in her teenage years moved to Poza Rica, mentioned in her *costeño* (coastal) accent:

[9] Like Michel's analysis on activo(s) and pasivo(s), Gutmann (2006) and Lancaster (1992), as well, refer to these terms as ways to categorize men who have sex with other men. *Activo* (active) term is used to refer to masculine men who perform manly, virile roles during sex. *Pasivo* (passive) term is assigned to individuals who perform receptive roles during sexual encounters.

> *Si tu naciste, homosexual, gay, tienes que pagar porque tu naturaleza es de hombre; ¿para que nació el hombre? para mantener a la mujer, el hombre nació para dar, ¿sí me explico? así es que si naciste homosexual ni modo te toca pagarle al pelado porque naciste para pagar.* (If you were born homosexual, gay, you must pay because

> by nature you are a man; what was the man born for? To financially support a woman, man was born to give, you know what I mean? So, if you were born homosexual you must pay your lover, because you were born to pay).

As his/her statement demonstrates, Yasmin, who also went by the masculine name of Walter among close and extended family and friends, identified, as well, as a woman. He/she moved between various identifications since he/she thought of himself/herself as male by nature and homosexual as well as a woman because of his/her relationships with men and his/her cross-dressing performances. And because of these multiple sites of identifications, he/she also ascribed to the idea that he/she needed to pay his/her lover, "because you were born to pay." Yasmin's ability to move between various identifications placed him/her into the masculine role of provider. Yasmin's gender role playing demonstrates the localized ways of perceiving fluidity between genders, a fluidity that contests the binary between woman and man's identity as well as the binary between woman's identity and man's role as main provider, while also drawing on them. Moreover, during the interview Yasmin indicated that as a homosexual, he/she enjoyed taking on the role of pasivo(a) and was attracted to men who enjoyed the role of activos in intimate relationships; however, according to him/her, Poza Rica and Coatzintla were full of *gallinas* (hens) a local term for cowardly men. Yasmin disliked gallinas, in other words, men who performed masculinist acts – through their clothing, physical bodily

movements, and manly behaviours – in public, but preferred to act in the roles of pasivos instead of activos in private. Indeed, there were occasions when Yasmin engaged in intimate relationships with men who performed masculinist acts in public, but liked to take on the roles of pasivos in private; in some of these encounters, she was even requested to take on the role of activo(a), a role he/she did not enjoy.

The Latin American model of homosexuality

Mitchell (2015) states that even though variations in the Latin model of homosexuality are a common affair among the Brazilian lower classes, such a model in Brazil continues to have a hold with the widespread idea that *bichas* (homosexuals) are horrified at the thought of having sex with other bichas while preferring having sex with normal [meaning the self-identified straight, heterosexual] men (p. 108). Nonetheless, Mitchell refers to Paulo Longo, an activist and founder of a now-outdated NGO —non-governmental organization— and his comments about some *garotos* —male sex workers who self-identify as straight, heterosexual men— who eventually participate in non-commercial sex with each other (p. 108). Thus, the performances of these garotos demonstrate some fluidity in male sexual performances. Like Mitchell, my findings hint at some flexibility, given the proposal received by Yasmin, even if Yasmin was not interested in participating. Thus, like the bichas in Mitchell's research, Yasmin's responses represented the idea of

having sex with other homosexuals as being horrible (in his/her own words also called gallinas, a category that he/she gave to individuals who preferred to take the role of pasivos in sexual encounters) while only accepting those who followed the Latin model of homosexuality, the active men. Thus, Yasmin's position reveals how the Latin model of homosexuality remains key to how "putos" define themselves. While Yasmin conforms to the Latin model of homosexuality (which is based on a binary of *activo/pasivo* paradigm), he/she also challenges the binary system with his/her complex gender identifications.

The sexual proposals that Yasmin encountered with gallinas challenge Roger Lancaster (1992) and Matthew Gutmann's (2006) models of same-sex practices among Latin American men as uniquely associated with the Latin model of homosexuality. More precisely, the proposals of gallinas contest Lancaster and Gutmann's models of same-sex practices among men as uniquely related to one's role in sex. In Poza Rica and Coatzintla, same-sex practices among men are not uniquely related to one's role in sex performances (even though in some cases they are). While the roles of *activos/pasivos* matter (as participants like Yasmin express), "putos" challenge the conflation between their passive role and their resulting feminization. As suggested by Yasmin, he/she played a role commonly associated with masculine men in Mexico, that of provider. Most significantly, this context demonstrates how gender and sexuality are intertwined.

Contrary to Yasmin, Cassio, a friend of mine in his late forties, who self-identified as "puto" and went by the he pronoun, mentioned

his enjoyment when challenging the Latin American model of sexuality addressed by Gutmann and Lancaster. Cassio proudly shared with me his participation in sexual performances of *activo* and *pasivo* with his straight, macho-looking partners. Furthermore, and in opposition to Yasmin who was not interested in participating in *activo* performances, Cassio's sexual performances not only challenged Gutmann and Lancaster's work, but he also pushed the boundaries of sexual identity because of his interest in participating in *activo/pasivo* intimate relationships.

Even though Yasmin and Cassio did not share the same views regarding *gallinas*, they did share a common understanding about them having to pay for the time and the attention that their partners gave to them. According to Cassio, it was the responsibility of "mayates" (as many of them, but not all, are married men) to financially support their wives, whereas it was el "puto's" responsibility to financially support their lovers, or at least help them as much as possible. In this way, through this money exchange, *hombres-hombres* could act as male providers in their households, while Cassio and Yasmin assumed the role of provider with "mayates" or hombres-hombres. The term "mayate" is mostly attached to the practices of *hombres-hombres* – either single or married men – as the *activos* in the relationship, although in some cases, *hombres-hombres* express their desire to take on the role of *pasivos* by asking "putos" to act as *activos*. Most importantly, "mayate" practices take place as largely clandestine sexual relationships that must be managed under the discretion of the declarado(a) individual. In Poza Rica and

Coatzintla, such a performance is used by "putos" as the key approach to conceal the identity of "mayates" as well as the tool that "mayates" apply to evade sexual revelations while presuming performances of straight, heterosexual men.

One fine afternoon in the month of August, I arrived at Cassio's hair salon holding the candle of his favourite saint, San Martín Caballero, since, previously, he had asked me to buy it for him. Cassio, who was cutting his male friend-client's hair when I arrived at the salon, grabbed the candle, and put it on the altar; an altar placed behind the area where the customers sat and which had a medium size photo of San Martín Caballero. As soon as I arrived, I noticed that the background music was the last album of Alejandra Guzmán (a Mexican Rock and Spanish singer). I decided to sit down to enjoy the music and while doing so, Cassio's cell phone rang. Looking at this phone, Cassio, in his costeño accent, said: *De seguro es un mayatito que quiere dinero por hacerme el amor* (for sure it is a mayatito who wants money for making love to me). Cassio then answered the phone and said: *Bueno, ¿sí? ¿qué onda,?¿cómo te va chacalito? Entonces vente y verás que te vas bien desestresado, con eso te curas* (Hello, what's up? How are you doing chacalito – friend? Well, come on and you will be de-stressed in no time, that is all you need to cure yourself). While continuing to cut his male friend-client's hair, Cassio told us that the person who called him was coming to see him. Cassio's expression, physical movements, and behaviour revealed both his contentment at seeing his friend-partner

as well as his contentment to offer him some kind of financial reward.

Often, the gender performances of "putos" are closely related to "mayates" as Cassio's phone call reveals. And even though I had access to "putos," as a woman and a person with close family ties in both towns, I did not have access to "mayates" and "mayate" practices because of their secrecy. My own familiarity in the towns represented a barrier. Because people in the towns knew who I was, I was not able to establish conversations about "mayate" practices. Thus, the fact that I did not have access to "mayate" practices made me reflect on the role of gender as a powerful tool of inclusion/exclusion. Drawing on Sandra Harding (1993), Susan Archer Mann (2012) states that "the starting point of standpoint theory is the recognition that in societies stratified by race, class, gender, and sexuality, one's social situation enables and sets limits on what one can know" (p. 23). Mann's argument of the standpoint theory resonates with me, as during fieldwork, I became aware that my gender prevented me from finding out more about "mayate" practices as income strategies used by men to make ends meet while performing their public role of men as providers. And while I became aware through conversations with "putos" that financial issues play a big role in the relationships of "puto"-"mayates," I do not know if this strategy is only used by "mayates" to fulfil economic means or as an approach that combines financial motives with same-sex desires. In the same way, I was not able to understand whether "mayate" practices represent a tactic only used by poor mestizo men or whether it is also an approach used by middle-class individuals to maintain their

middle-class status. Nevertheless, despite the fact that my knowledge about "mayates" and "mayate" practices is quite limited, during fieldwork I became aware of the fact that if "mayates" were exposed publicly, they may be subjected to social stigma and shame while possibly turning themselves, as well, into "putos".

I was able to access aspects of the relationship between "puto"-"mayates" through men like Cassio, aspects that raise issues on gender and gender expectations. For example, instead of *hombres-hombres* acting as the leaders and providers in front of "putos," it is "putos" who assume the role of main providers in front of "mayates". More precisely, instead of *hombres-hombres* acting as independent leaders and the ones who are in control of the situation, (as in a typical patriarchal society, and as could be assumed under machismo[10]), *hombres-hombres* act as dependents of "putos's" money. Thus, what was revealed to me was that by acting as the providers of "mayates," the relationship "puto"-"mayates" intersects with other practices and ideologies like machismo and patriarchy, but in unpredictable ways. It seems as if it is the "puto" who assumes a more dominant masculinity with the money they provide to "mayates." Yet given that my findings are limited on the "puto"-"mayate" relationship are limited, much is left to the imagination as to how these relationships unfold.

[10] Machismo refers to a gendered ideology which assumes that masculinity is superior to femininity. This term is particularly associated with the establishment of gendered relations and as a form of patriarchy (Gutmann, 2006).

In his/her conversation, Yasmin addressed the theme of homosexuality, since he/she self-identified as such because of his/her sexual encounters with other men. Yasmin understood his/her

sexual desire from a biological deterministic perspective. In other words, as something given by nature. For instance, during the interview Yasmin told me: *Yo nací así y aunque en el pasado mi familia no me apoyó, ahora todos me apoyan, particularmente mi madre, ya que para ella siempre seré su hijo* (I was born this way, and although in the past my family did not support me, now everyone accepts me, particularly my mother, since for her I will always be her son). Yasmin added:

> *Yo como homosexual, yo sé que la sociedad es fea, la sociedad es cruel, por lo tanto yo cuando veo que algun niño hijo de una clienta o amiga, tiene detallitos como afeminados, yo le digo a mi clienta y/o amiga: "Mira mana, yo entiendo que aceptes a tu hijo, pero si todavía estas a tiempo, (porque se supone que es hasta la edad de los once años cuando todavía puedes cambiar la mentalidad de un niño), trata de cambiar la mentalidad de tu hijo y si sientes que ya no puedes pues ni modo, ya acéptalo como es, pero si puedes cambiarlo, hazlo.* (As a homosexual myself, I know that society is awful, that society is cruel, so every time I see a child acting in effeminate ways, and if that child happens to be the kid of one of my clients and/or friends, I tell her: "Listen to me, friend, I understand that you accept your child the way he is, but if you still have time, [since it is known that you can change a child's character until the age of eleven], then try to change your child's character and if you feel that you cannot change his character, then, well, accept him the way he is, but if you can change his character, do it").

As one can see, the advice that Yasmin gave to her female friend alludes to the gender and sexual policing that takes place in these towns. Henceforth, by recommending her female friend to police and regulate her child's behaviours from an early age, Yasmin perpetuated the notion of conforming with heteronormativity and the heterosexual system. At the same time, Yasmin's comment is significant because of his/her approach to gender as a masculine process. For example, when he/she said, "every time that I see a child acting in effeminate ways," he/she separated gender from sexuality, since he/she did not focus on this individual's (in this case, a child) possible sexual preferences but on the individual's ways of performing masculinity. In order to address this topic, I draw on Pascoe (2005), to analyze gender performance and gender policing. Building on Butler's (1990) model, Pascoe approaches gender as something people reach through "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal overtime to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 14). In line with Butler, Pascoe addresses gender not just as natural, or as something people are, but rather as something people produce through their actions (p. 14). In this way, Yasmin's comment suggests his/her perceptions on how this child fails to perform proper masculinity. Thus, in a Butlerian model of repeated invocation or repudiation, by acting in an effeminate way according to Yasmin, this child becomes the "abject identity;" an identity created to serve as a mechanism of gender policing (p. 14). As abject identity, this child must be in a constant process of social repudiation, so

others can continually affirm their identities as "normal" and socially "intelligent" (p. 14). Hence, as this case suggests, failure to perform proper gender results in punishment.

When referring to the term gay, Yasmin stated: *Aquí el ambiente gay es muy competitivo, y aunque habemos gays o transexuales buena onda, hay otras que son muy envidiosas* (Here in Poza Rica, the gay environment is very competitive and while there are gays or transsexual folks who are nice, other girls are very envious). As can be noticed, Yasmin used the terms gay, homosexual, transsexual and girl interchangeably, pointing to a fluidity that contrasts with his/her biological deterministic view. As well, Yasmin's conversation reveals a fluidity that can also be perceived when using adjectives and pronouns. For example, while interviewing him/her I was able to notice the way in which she used masculine and feminine adjectives interchangeably when referring to himself/herself. For instance, when self-describing himself/herself Yasmin indicated: *Soy muy hermético* (I am very hermetic, using the masculine form of *hermético*). And many other times, when alluding to his/her own persona, Yasmin used the feminine form of terms. I also observed that whereas he/she used both forms to refer to himself/herself, she also used the pronoun *el/la* (the) interchangeably when referring to himself/herself. In the same vein, when mentioning *vestida*'s friends, he/she usually applied the feminine article *la*, for example: *la loca de mi amiga* (My girlfriend, the fag, queer). As a Mexican and a native Spanish-speaking person, my perception of such a preference for the feminine pronoun to define "vestidas" and/or "putos" refers

to the level of familiarity and closeness that exists between Yasmin and his/her specific friend. Thus, through the use of the feminine article la, followed by the feminine form of the noun, Yasmin then publicly declared the relationship he/she had with his/her friend.

Except for Bladimir, a Poza Rica resident and the only individual who self-identified as a bisexual male in my study and who used the masculine form to refer to himself during the whole interview, other participants who self-identified as gays (including those who may have appeared as masculine), "putos", *transgénero*, transexuales and/or "vestidas" used masculine and feminine forms interchangeably. Such practices express a more fluid way of thinking about gender and sexuality and their connections as well as a particular way in which being gay can be addressed as being girlie. More specifically, in Yasmin's case, when referring to his/her friend as *la loca* (the fag), he/she was not prioritizing so much a friend's preference but stating the relationship he/she had with this particular friend. Additionally, another aspect I considered relevant during my investigation was the distinctions that people made between the terms gay and "puto." During fieldwork, I noticed how most individuals from *la diversidad sexual* addressed their preferences for the term gay over the Mexican term "puto." In the following section, I mention the difference between these two terms.

Terms of identification: Distinctions between gay and "puto"

While conducting fieldwork, I noticed that my participants used the term gay as an umbrella term to refer to themselves as people with alternative gender/sexual identities and/or expressions. And while many did not express dissatisfaction with the term gay, instead using this term along with others interchangeably, other people indicated their dissatisfaction with the term "puto" like Bladimir. Bladimir associated himself with the term gay as follows: *Me gustan los matrimonios gays, si las parejas heterosexuales tienen ese derecho, ¿por qué nosotros no podriamos?* (I like gay marriages. If heterosexual couples have that right, why wouldn't we?). Nonetheless, during the interview, Bladimir also expressed his dislike of the term gay, as for him it is restrictive and rigid, and excluded the possibility for sexual fluidity. According to Bladimir, the use of the term gay in Mexico reflects an emphasis on rigid models of sexual/gender identities (like gay versus straight, heterosexual men), which in turn regulates gender and sexual identifications and/or expressions. In Bladimir's words, this approach leaves out other forms of sexuality, including sexual desires that are more fluid. During the interview, Bladimir stated: *En una telenovela Mexicana llamada Que pobres tan ricos, esa telenovela sí trató el tema gay pero no bisexual, solo gay y no fluidez* (In a Mexican soap opera called *How the poor is so rich*, the soap opera talked about the gay theme, but it did not talk about

bisexuality, only gay but not fluidity). In relation to the term "puto," Bladimir expanded his comments by explaining the following:

> *Una vez, entre mi borrachera en Palladium agarré un taxi para que me llevara a mi domicilio y cuando menos cuenta me dí, yo tenía el cuchillo en el cuello y el taxista me dijo; "Pinche "puto", dame las cosas que traes." Cuando me dejó bajarme, yo corrí, a mi casa. Una vez que llegué a casa pensé, que entre mi desmadre piensan que soy "puto". Me sentí muy mal y me culpé a mí mismo.* (One time, when leaving Palladium, I was drunk, so I took a taxi home and suddenly, I felt a knife at my throat. The taxi driver, who was holding the knife, said to me: "Fucking faggot, give me all your possessions." When he allowed me to get out of the taxi, I ran home. Once home, I began to think that others perceived me as "puto" because of my wild behaviour. I felt very bad and I blamed myself).

Whereas at one point in the interview, Bladimir applied the term gay to himself, he distanced himself from the term for not being inclusive enough. Moreover, Bladimir expressed sadness towards the term "puto" because he perceived the local derogatory way in which the term was used, in this case, by the taxi driver and the person who stole his possessions. As a person who performed masculinity, Bladimir, in this scene, was labelled as "puto" by the taxi driver as a way to police him for attending Palladium:

Discotheque, a nightclub in Poza Rica well-known for attracting people from *la diversidad sexual.*

Contrary to Bladimir, Cassio, as *a declarado*, likes the term "puto" and, as mentioned before, he self-identified as such. On July 3rd, the first day that I visited Cassio during the summer, he was wearing white shorts, a green shirt, with the logo of the gym where he trained, and black running shoes. He had the appearance of a confident, youthful, and sexy person. Cassio has lived in Coatzintla almost all his life, except for some years, while he was trying to make a living in other parts of the Mexican republic. With a sign on the door saying *Abierto* or *Cerrado* (Open or Closed), Cassio's small and cozy hair salon remained locked for security purposes. When Cassio opened the door for me, on July 3rd, he received me with a warm hug and then continued to cut his male client's hair. Sitting on the only sofa, was a female client waiting for her turn to get her hair done. Cassio introduced me to both of them by saying:

> *Miren, ella es Verónica, una amiguita que viene de Canadá, ella viene a hacer un trabajo de investigación en Antropología, solo que a diferencia de los otros antropólogos que vienen aquí a estudiar las ruinas del Tajín y a los Indígenas Totonacas*[11]*, ella viene a estudiarnos a nosotros, los "putos". Ven, ella sí es de las mías porque ella viene a estudiar la putería.* (Look, this is Veronica, a friend from Canada. She is here to conduct an anthropological study, only that unlike the other anthropologists who come here to study the archaeological site of Tajín and the Totonac culture,

[11] It is important to mention that the population of the north part of Veracruz, where Poza Rica and Coatzintla are located, is 70% mestizo. The separation prevailing in these towns between the mestizo population and the Indigenous group, Totonaco, demonstrates the perversive discrimination experienced by the Totonaco people.

she is here to study us, the faggots. You see, she is one of mine because she is here to study whoring).

Cassio's references to the term "puto" reflects his comfort and identification with the word. As such, preferences for the use of "putos" vary. For example, Camilo (a man who transgressed the gender norms) mentioned that if others referred to him using the term "puto" in a rude and repressive tone or as a way to police and discipline his sexuality, he would get mad, but if he were called "puto" in a nice and friendly tone, he would fine with it. Nonetheless, he preferred the terms homosexual or gay. I suggest that people's preferences for the term gay are related to the fact that gay is an English term in circulation in Mexico and represents a western, and therefore, a modern, progressive, and European-like term of identification.

The preferences that queer people have for the term gay are shared by many in these two towns of Veracruz, Mexico, since gay and "puto" represent terms of identification attached to race and class issues. Contrary to the Mexican word "puto," which refers to a darker-skinned, backward, and uncivilized individual, the English word gay, as used in Veracruz, alludes to the lighter-skinned, modern, and more educated, refined person. More precisely, "puto" is associated with ugly and "naco," a Mexican Spanish slang term known as a contraction that originates from totonaco – also referring to the members of the Indigenous group Totonaco – and relates to bad taste and lower social classes. In other words, it is directed at

people perceived as unsophisticated, bad mannered or poorly educated. In this sense, "puto" is used to offend, undermine, and punish those who transgress gender and/or sexual norms. Thus, it is because of the connotations of the term "puto" that participants like Bladimir, when hearing that someone referred to him as "puto," expressed discontent by feeling policed and regulated, to the point that he blamed himself for his behaviour. Nonetheless, despite its connotations, the term "puto" is reclaimed by other participants such as Camilo who indicated their acceptance for the term if it was used in a nice and friendly tone. As well, Cassio proudly reclaimed the term "puto". As a native of Coatzintla, a setting not only inhabited by Mexican mestizos but also by Mexican Totonac people, Cassio, as a mestizo male-born individual, reclaimed the term "puto" to exalt his Indigenous side and the qualities attributed to it, such as honesty, authenticity, openness, loyalty, and self-respect.

As Butler (1997) notes, language acts as a system with consequences (p. 7). In Butler's words, individuals "exist not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable" (p. 5). In this way, Butler argues that if language can sustain the body, it can also undermine its existence through a series of figures of speech and their injurious effects (p. 15). Moreover, she suggests that the repetition of these injurious figures of speech also demonstrates that while particular words are not perceived as direct acts of violence, their repetition only gain power through a history of endless citations. It is also the repetition of

these injurious figures of speech, the mechanism that opens a space for agency, appropriation, and radical resignification (p. 15). In this case one can say that it is the constant repetition of "puto" that allows for another gender and/or sexual expression to become possible, and for the reclaiming of "puto" as a term of self-identification.

During fieldwork I observed that while many individuals from *la diversidad sexual* may act as *declarados(as)* (out of the closet individuals), others may prefer to act as *no declarados(as)* (in the closet), whereas others may choose to perform in *semi-declarados(as)* (semi-closet) ways. In a sense, people from *la diversidad sexual* use any of these classifications to police and regulate their own actions and their own movements within these two towns in Veracruz, Mexico. *Declarados(as)* refer to people who publicly declare themselves as folks with gender/sexual identities and/or preferences considered by society as outside the norm, that is as part of *la diversidad sexual. No declarados(as)* are those who only share their gender/sexual identities and/or preferences with some, but not all, of their close friends. They do not share it with close or extended family members, their neighbours, at their workplace or in any other circles where they navigate regularly. Instead, they would only disclose their sexual/gender identities and/or preferences to individuals with whom they would sleep or are very close to. Some men, who are *no declarados(as)*, marry and have kids. Some, while married, even sleep with other married and *no declarado(a)* individuals. In a sense, they lead double lives. They act as heterosexual people in society,

while they only reveal their sexual/gender identities and/or preferences to a few. Moreover, folks performing in *semi-declarados(as)* ways are those who tend to divide their lives between family and friends. Whereas they perform as heterosexual people in front of close and extended family members as well as in any other conventional settings where they navigate regularly, they act as *declarados(as)* in front of friends.

In the same way that gay men and/or "putos" use s*emi-declarados* ways to divide their lives between family and friends, lesbian women, also known as "*manfloras,*" also use *semi-declaradas* ways to separate their own lives by performing as heterosexual women in front of close and extended family members and in any other conventional settings they frequently navigate, but act as declaradas in front of friends. I will now focus on the topic of "manfloras" to explore the ways in which these individuals create spaces where diversidad sexual becomes possible for them.

Performing "manflora" in Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz

Another marginalized and discriminated sexual identity is "manflora." In the towns of Poza Rica and Coatzintla, the term "manflora," an identity also created through its constant repetition (Butler 1997), is applied to lesbian women regardless of their physical appearance. Hence, while some "manfloras" have a butch-like appearance, others try to dissociate from the masculine look due to

its oppressiveness. Whereas butch-like women may wear their hair short and adopt male clothing styles, such as jeans, male t-shirts or shirts and runners, many others may choose more stereotypical performances of femininity as a way to blend in with mainstream discourses while also avoiding gender disciplining and policing from society. Besides expressing femininity through clothing, hair style, makeup, and accessories, some lesbian women may emphasize the way they move their bodies – by tilting their heads, tossing their hair, gesturing with their hands, and flirtatiously moving their hips and legs – to avoid suspicions of sexual transgression. Maritza, a nineteen-year-old girl from Coatzintla who self-identified as bisexual and as one who performed stereotypical femininity, explained her practices as a *semi-declarada* person:

> *No todos en mi familia saben que soy bisexual, bueno mi mamá y mi hermano sí saben pero no lo aceptan. Mi papá, con quien no he vivido por muchos años ya que se separó de mi mamá cuando yo era muy niña, también lo sabe pero él dice que es solo una etapa y que ya se me pasará. Mis tíos, tías y el resto de mis familiares cercanos no lo saben, tampoco en la iglesia donde asistimos lo saben o en mi trabajo. En cambio, entre mi círculo de amistades sí, gente de mi edad, ellos sí, todos ellos sí saben que soy bisexual.* (Not everyone in my family knows that I am bisexual, well, my mom and my brother know about it, but they do not accept it. My father, with whom I have not lived for many years since he separated from my mother when I was very young, he also knows,

> although he says that what I have is only a stage and that it will pass. My aunts and uncles and the rest of my extended family do not know about it, neither in the church we attend or at my workplace. On the other hand, among my circle of friends, people of my age, yes, they know about it, they all know that I am bisexual).

Since my research project focused on people who were publicly known as *declarados(as)*, among my informants there were also those who participated in *semi-declarado(a)* performances. For example, Amanda, a twenty-five-year-old self-identifying lesbian, indicated her *semi-declarada* position by mentioning that although all her friends knew she was living with another woman, a relationship she had had for the last three years, her close and extended relatives did not know about it. Amanda's circumstances allowed her to hide her sexual identity from her family, since all her relatives (close and extended family members) lived in a small town four hours away by bus from Poza Rica.

Amanda, who also had a feminine appearance, moved to Poza Rica six and a half years prior to our interview, and lived there for three years until she moved to Coatzintla to live with her girlfriend, Emilia (a butch-like and a *declarada* lesbian woman) at Emilia's parent's house. On diverse occasions, Amanda mentioned to me her concerns as to whether to reveal her sexual identity to her parents, since she feared that her parents could refuse to talk to her and not allow her to see her son. Amanda's worries related to

the fact that her parents were raising her five-year-old son, Raúl, a child she had given birth to a year and a half after she moved to Poza Rica. Shortly after her arrival in the area, Amanda met a boy and she started dating him. Months later, Amanda became pregnant and when she told her boyfriend about it, he left her. Amanda's son, Raúl has been living with his grandparents since his birth. According to Amanda, she believed that if her parents found out that she was in a lesbian relationship, they might take the child away and try to obtain legal custody of Raúl. Even though Raúl lived with his grandparents, Amanda had full custody of her son. During our conversation, the possibility of asking a lawyer for legal advice was raised; however, Amanda mentioned that, at that point, she did not have the financial resources to pay for a lawyer. Besides legal issues, Amanda was afraid of the emotional influence that her parents, siblings, and extended relatives could have on Raúl, since they could use Amanda's sexual identity to discredit her role as a mother in front of the child. Amanda's case demonstrates the complexities that Mexican lesbian women, and mothers, continue to face in Mexico.

Although Amanda and Emilia worked for the same company, Amanda had "better" working hours than Emilia. For instance, Amanda's job allowed her to enjoy a fixed schedule of four days a week from Tuesday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., while Emilia's hours varied between mornings and evenings and even night shifts. Thus, while Amanda enjoyed a long weekend every week, Emilia struggled to be home on Amanda's days off. Once or twice a

month, Amanda would travel to her town to see her son and parents, and sometimes, despite work schedule inconveniences, Emilia would accompany her. For Amanda's parents, brothers, and sisters as well as all extended family members, Emilia was not Amanda's lover, her partner. Instead, for Amanda's family, Emilia was a friend, and just a good friend.

Because Amanda had a son from a previous union with a man, this legitimized her as a heterosexual woman in the eyes of her parents and relatives. Therefore, Amanda's relationship with Emilia did not raise many questions. As a Mexican woman who is familiar with the Mexican constructions of gender and sexuality, I consider that the prevailing approach of perceiving close intimacy between women as friendship allowed Amanda and Emilia to live together, not because people recognized their sexuality, but because lesbianism is perceived as unsuitable in a heterosexual system, and therefore, living together as women does not raise suspicions. So, while Amanda did not act as a *declarada* lesbian, she still was able to live her everyday life as such by manipulating existing gender scripts that allowed her to be emotionally close and intimate with Emilia publicly. Thus, by strategically playing on existing gender scripts to live together as a couple while passing for close friends, Amanda and Emilia demonstrate one way in which women were making spaces possible for their own *diversidad sexual.* And while Amanda and Emilia were able to use this way to live their lives as lesbians, others, like gay men, as well as some bisexual men, "putos" and/or "vestidas" were not able to live together with their partners without

raising suspicions. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, while some lesbian women practiced traditional femininity to avoid being policed in the street, others preferred to challenge gender expectations despite the oppressive responses in both towns. This scenario demonstrates that even though gender and sexuality are intertwined, the oppressive responses that butch-like lesbian women receive from mainstream society are caused by these women being viewed as individuals who failed to perform proper gender (Pascoe, 2005, p. 14). Thus, by failing to perform femininity, butch-like lesbian women become "the abject other" by facing more public oppression than those lesbian women who adopt more stereotypical performances of femininity (Pascoe, 2005, p. 14). In such cases, then, one can say that instead of policing only the sexuality of these women, it is the policing of both, gender and sexuality, the factors that affect and oppress butch-like lesbian women.

Furthermore, while, in most cases, society regulates and undermines individuals from *la diversidad sexual*, in other cases, there are these individuals themselves who police and undermine their peers, such as the case of Arianna, a participant from Poza Rica. Arianna, a thirty-year-old woman from Poza Rica, also self-identified as a *semi-declarada* lesbian woman. And although Arianna identified as a lesbian woman, she preferred the term gay. Whereas other female participants did not self-identify as gay, but as bisexual and lesbian women, Arianna was the only lesbian woman who reclaimed the term gay as hers. I met Arianna through some friends, Pepe, Juan, and Antonio, individuals who also identified as part of la

diversidad sexual. Like Juan and Antonio, Arianna had a business *en la Avenida 20 de Noviembre*, (on November 20 avenue) one of Poza Rica's most upscale suburbs.

Marking herself as different from other people who were dedicated to the corn business by daily setting their steamer pot on a table at a specific street corner, Ariana had an enclosed establishment for her corn business, which made her business more upmarket than the street businesses. As well, Arianna distinguished herself from the rest of the participants, who were working class individuals, since her personality revealed her privileged class position in society and her status of *niña fresa* (strawberry girl: A Mexican Spanish slang term for a young person from an urban and a middle-class background and someone who mainly belongs to a European-Indigenous-descent elite [Mendoza-Denton, 2008, p. 11]). Despite having spent her childhood and much of her adolescence in Poza Rica, Arianna did not have the costeño accent of the rest of the participants in my study. Instead, Arianna had the tone and accent of people from the northern region of Mexico (a region perceived as wealthier, more urbanized, and more modern), since she spent five years as a university student in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, located in the north part of the Mexican republic. Immediately after we met, Arianna told me that she wanted to be interviewed in English. Arianna, who during the interview was wearing what could be considered a conservative outfit (torn blue jeans and a green t-shirt), graduated from *El Tecnológico de Monterrey* (Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education). After she completed her undergraduate degree in

accounting, Arianna worked at a PEMEX office in Mexico City for five years as an accountant. When I asked her where she socialized, Arianna mentioned that she socialized either in Mexico City with her *Chilango* (name given to people who reside in Mexico City) friends or in Monterrey with her Mexican *Norteño* friends. She told me her preferences to socialize outside of Poza Rica were due to the fact that, according to her: "there are no good gay bars in town." She also referred to her trips to Las Vegas, Nevada, and Los Angeles, in the US as favourite places to visit *gringo* nightclubs – something that set her apart as more cosmopolitan than the other Mexican people from *la diversidad sexual* whom I spoke with. Similarly, she indicated her preferences of listening to English music.

As mentioned before, I met Arianna through common friends – Pepe, Juan, and Antonio –and as white and middle-upper class, Juan and Antonio, entrepreneurs, and loving partners, identified with Arianna because of their white skin and middle-class position. Juan and Antonio aspired to Arianna's life outside Poza Rica, especially her trips to the US. Antonio admired her, since one of his biggest dreams was to sign a contract with a record company in Mexico City and become a famous singer. As a member of a wealthy family, Arianna's responses demonstrate both her own pride of belonging to Poza Rica's social elite as well as her wishes to dis-identify from everything outside her middle-upper class context. Arianna's movements – similar to the movements of Juan and Antonio, who also lived in Arianna's district – demonstrate her wishes to express belonging to the Poza Rica's elite since the spaces she frequented correspond to the upscale

neighbourhood of 20 de Noviembre – the same area where she lived and had her corn business. As a woman who could pass as white and feminine, Arianna's responses show the ways in which processes of class distinction intersect with queer self-making. In the same vein, Arianna's answers demonstrate ways of recognizing how larger social processes of national identity function in specific local settings (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007, p. 17). After examining Arianna's responses in light of what other, less privileged queer people told me, I suggest that Arianna's preferences for the term gay relate to the fact that gay as a race and class-based term represents for her the American, modern, progressive, and European-like term of identification. Hence, the term gay suits her perceptions and her way of policing herself as belonging to the Poza Rica's elite, a group that, in her own views, embodies modern, progressive, and Mexican mestizo style. Nonetheless, since the Poza Rica's elite is limited, the rest of the participants in this article mostly refer to working-class individuals.

Conclusion

The aim in this article has been to highlight how gender is performed, while also policed, in the towns of Poza Rica and Coatzintla, Veracruz. To secure compulsory heterosexuality and the heterosexual system, queer male-born individuals are policed and disciplined under the term "puto;" a term constantly used in derogatory ways by mainstream society. Nonetheless, as a form of resistance, some "putos" have

self-reclaimed such a term to embrace their own gender and/or sexual identifications and/or expressions. While queer male-born individuals challenge heteronormative scripts, some also perpetuate the binary system addressed in the Latin model of homosexuality through "puto"-"mayate" relationships. Here, I have suggested that the relationship "puto"-"mayates" intersects with other practices and ideologies like machismo and patriarchy in unpredictable ways. Additionally, the "mayate," as the partner of "puto," invites reflections on what constitutes *la diversidad sexual* and has the potential to expand what is commonly understood by the term queer. "Mayates" are not usually considered queer; instead, they are seen as *hombres-hombres*.

Additionally, lesbian women are policed and regulated through the term "manflora". And even though lesbianism is perceived as unsuitable in a heterosexual system, lesbian women may still live their everyday lives as such by manipulating existing gender scripts of heterosexuality and, in turn, allowing them to be emotionally close and intimate with each other. Thus, by strategically playing on existing heterosexual scripts, lesbian women are able to make queer-world spaces possible for themselves. This work has also underlined the fact that even though gender and sexuality are intertwined, sometimes it becomes visible to perceive them as apart from each other. More precisely, while "putos" are stigmatized for transgressing gender norms, men who perform masculinities can get away from stigmatization, despite acting as *pasivos* during sexual encounters. In the same way, butch-like lesbian women face more gender policing than those who act more stereotypically

feminine. Thus, one could say that it is not so much the policing of sexuality as the policing of gender that oppresses most.

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