



# Conversational Analysis with Chilean Youth about Sexuality and Self-Care. “Los cancheros y las sueltas”

Silva Segovia J<sup>1,\*</sup>, Castillo Ravanal E<sup>2</sup>, Espinoza-Tapia R<sup>2</sup> and Contreras Tinoco K<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Direction of investigation, Universidad de Tarapacá, Arica, Chile

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Faculty of Humanities, School of Psychology, Universidad Católica del Norte, Chile

<sup>3</sup>Coordinator, Temporary Classrooms, University of Guadalajara, Mexico

\*Corresponding author: Silva Segovia J, Direction of investigation, Universidad de Tarapacá, Arica, Chile; E-mail: [luzsilvasegovia55@gmail.com](mailto:luzsilvasegovia55@gmail.com)

## Abstract

In this work, we seek to understand the meaning of the experiences of sexuality, desire, and pleasure of students from the city of Antofagasta, located in the extreme north of Chile. It is a qualitative study in which we apply discourse analysis with a gendered perspective to the transcripts from a set of group and individual interviews with youth from 15 to 19 years old at the secondary school level. In the findings, we observe tensions anchored in an inequitable normative order for gender, mainly in the maintenance of myths and beliefs around sexuality. Women reveal gaps in quality sexual education that would give them tools to face prevailing forms of sexism in a cultural context that has multiple forms of structural violence, as well as economic gaps. In men, it is observed that sexuality is a tool to demonstrate their manhood both in public and in private. In their interactions, cross-gender violence and a masculine discourse directed at the female body are expressed in the need to control women and classify them according to their behaviors and sexual practices.

**Keywords:** Sexuality; Youth; Pleasure; Desire; Affectivity; Chile

## Introduction

In Chile, among the group aged 15 to 19 years, we observed a progressive decrease in the age of initiation of their sexual activity. In this regard, the Seventh Survey of the National Youth Institute [1] revealed that 26% of 15-year-old youths have started to engage in sexual activity. This percentage increased to 38% in 16-year-olds, 48% in 17-year-olds, and 63% in 18-year-olds.

By 2022 of these age segments, approximately nine out of ten young people can report that they have obtained information on sexually transmitted infections and HIV-AIDS from social networks, health professionals and internet pages [2]. However, the details of these data reflect numerous distinctions at the socioeconomic level. In this context, young people from low social strata declared that they did not receive this information from relatives or friends, while youth from a high socioeconomic level

manifested higher degrees of trust with close members of their inner circle.

Regarding their sexual interactions, a study by INJUV [2] found that 97.1% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 believe that HIV prevention campaigns are necessary in their places of study. In support of this, nine out of ten indicated that they agreed to take an HIV test with their partner, while more than 80% stated that they understand that currently it is quite likely to get HIV or a sexually transmitted infection.

Despite these statements, the data show deep problems in the practices behind this knowledge. On the one hand, only 56.7% of the young people surveyed declared that they had taken an HIV test, of which most were women (67.3% compared to 46.4% of men). On the other hand, the main reasons why young people would take an HIV test are associated with pregnancy control (29.9%) and routine wellness checks (27.2%).

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It is for this reason that UNICEF [3] has placed HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) at the center of an invisible global pandemic, and their figures have increased in the past decade in Chile, with young people between 15 and 29 years being the most affected. The increase also has a dramatic impact in the general population: 63% of new cases per year consist of this young cohort, who are added to the more than 84,000 people who reported living with HIV in the country by 2021 [4]. Regarding other STIs, it is estimated that during 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean ranked third in the world in terms of prevalence, with 38 million new cases of which 3.8 million were in the southern cone. In the case of Chile, in 2015, there were a total of 48,442 consultations for this cause in the public health system, of which 1,083 were child consultations (0 to 14 years old) and 10,330 were youth consultations (between 15 and 19 years of age).

Added to this problem are the rates of pregnancy in women under 20 years of age. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) [5], it is estimated that almost 18% of births in Latin America are to mothers under 20 years of age and that annually, approximately one and a half million women between 15 and 19 years of age give birth.

As a result of this situation, school-age pregnancies are the main cause of educational dropout in Chile [6]. Within this framework, Antofagasta presents the highest number of total pregnancies in the country at 7.8% [7].

In addition, world reports indicate that pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period contain more risks for mothers and children when they occur between the ages of 15 and 19, and they face a greater possibility of experiencing gynecological and obstetric violence, in addition to social exclusion and losses in educational and labor. Added to this is the fact that the risk of maternal death is lower in mothers from 20 years of age onward and highest in mothers who give birth before the age of 15 [8].

This statistical information and various investigations that collect testimonies and life stories challenge Chilean educational and public health institutions, as well as science, to produce knowledge aimed at improving Chilean sexual education. Indeed, the national context in these matters, consolidated from a conservative and neoliberal perspective, sharpens the distinctions and educational, economic and ethnic gaps for those who operate as caregivers or informants of sexual health self-care. As a result of these problems, it is the youth who do not receive quality sexual education that reflect perspectives focused on rights and citizenship and who share cultural contexts with mothers or fathers who were taught with great gaps in these matters.

In response to these concerns, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [9] has considered Comprehensive Sexual Education (EIS) as a way for children and youth to receive information leading to committed

decision-making, both in aspects of sexual and interpersonal relationships:

Many young people enter adulthood with mixed, negative, and confusing messages about sex. This is often exacerbated by feelings of shame and silence from adults, including parents and teachers. In many societies, attitudes and laws discourage public discussion of sexuality and sexual conduct, and social norms can perpetuate harmful conditions, such as gender inequality in sexual relations, family planning, and the use of modern contraceptives (p. 12).

Under the paradigms of sexual and reproductive rights that emphasize subjectivity, options are open to understanding youth sexuality in depth, especially in those segments of the population that live in regions characterized by cultural and educational isolation, as well as by the permanence of dichotomous gender customs and practices. In this research, we seek to generate information to contribute to a cultural transformation toward sexual life planning practices in accordance with sexual and reproductive rights. In this line, we propose to answer the following question: how are the experiences of sexuality, desire, pleasure and affectivity signified in groups of young people from the Chilean north in the context of gender gaps?

### **Sex-gendered bodies in a desert culture**

The youthful body, as one of the places inscribed by culture, needs to be contextualized to understand the forms and particularities from which it expresses desire and pleasure and faces sexual self-care. The present study is located in the Antofagasta Region, anchored in the Chilean north, the heart of the Atacama Desert. This region remains the mining capital of Chile and a neoliberal enclave of important transnational investment. This activity nourishes a sexual and labor contract that prioritizes the construction of male providers for home life, who are symbolized by their strong corporality, quarrelsome personality, competitiveness, pride, sexuality, distrust and other representations of masculine virility. In contrast, women are valued according to their role as household managers and caregivers, who are resilient, capable of solving the daily dynamics of the family and, in turn, dependent on the male provider for economic support. In this cultural scenario of social relations, the youths interviewed have built their repertoires of gender and sexuality, sometimes as opponents of this traditional ideology, other times in tension with it and many times, in accordance with the imposed mandates [10,11]. We understand, following Carol Pateman (1998: 28), that in the sexual contract, women commit themselves to sexual relations with men, and they are wives before becoming mothers of families. The history of the sexual contract focuses on (hetero)sexual relations and on women as embodied sexual beings. The story helps to understand the mechanisms by which men assert



the right of sexual access to women's bodies and claim the right to command the use of women's bodies.

According to these sociocultural characteristics, it is observed that gender relations are built mainly in female–male (social–economic–affective) dependencies, according to the assigned spaces (work–home–school) consistent with the ups and downs of cultural change. In relationships, some are a conservative type, and others have openings toward confluent relationships [11,12]. In symbolic and normative terms [13], the construction of masculinity in this area of the desert and cultural isolation has historically been strengthened around the identity of the shift worker, and femininity has been linked to status as a mother–wife symbolically located in the private sphere. Although in unofficial history, women have been a participatory and combative participant in resisting these scenarios, social forces continue to render her invisible to the political world. These contemporary women are heirs to those who participated in the Chilean labor movement, facing endless barriers and setbacks, such as resistance to their inclusion in the workforce, extreme marginalization within labor organizations, and permanent ambiguity about their double identity as women–mothers and workers [14,15].

These barriers in the assignments of prestige for the different fields of action continue to show an intrinsic relationship between the social and sexual division of labor, which changes very slowly compared with the transformations in the cultural context of the Chilean metropolitan areas [11,16]. In Chile, the prestige of the working man in the desert and the resistance of the male body that survives in the extreme aridity of the north after weeks underground have been exalted, as exemplified in 2010 when 33 miners were rescued alive after weeks spent trapped underground. These types of “feats” have become new metaphors about the exalted disposition of the masculine body and its capacity for sacrifice and are demanded by a post-Fordist capitalism in terms of flexibility, utility, productivity, economic performance and medical normality. Thus, the male body is understood as an agent suitable for production and consumption, in contrast to the female body, situated as a sacrificial subject, oriented almost exclusively to maternal care and nurturing and optimized in its ability to give pleasure and support the reproduction of the labor force [11,17-19].

### Reflections on youth sexuality in Latin America

The context described above lays the foundation for the ideals of masculinity and femininity. These are shared in family education from generation to generation, articulating not only the experience of sexuality but also contemporary social and cultural transformations, marked by access to contraceptive methods, the search for empowerment and equity for women, access to sexual education, the use of information technologies, and the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights. Likewise, these ideals influence the strategies deployed in the search for sexual pleasure, the

struggles for citizen rights regarding sexual orientation and, to a certain extent, citizenship in gender relations, such as reducing the size of the family, the prolongation and solid diffusion of schooling, the intense urbanization of the country, the broad growth of mass communication, the diversification of the religious scene, the emergence of feminism and the LGTBIQ+ movement [20].

At the 1994 Cairo Conference, the countries of the Americas recognized the need to address youth sexuality from equitable and egalitarian perspectives with the purpose of allowing youth to enjoy a pleasant and healthy sexual life [21,22]. Despite this objective, there are two fundamental factors to reflect on. The first consists of the socioeconomic, educational, and cultural gaps in which youth are located and how they challenge or enable access to complete, quality and participatory information, since there is no consensus on how to carry out sexual education [23]. The second is in relation to conservative teaching models promoted by the family and educational and ecclesiastical institutions, whose guidelines perpetuate and reproduce male hegemony [24-26] and, in turn, promote the cult of virginity, guilt and punishment of female infidelity in contrast to the acceptance of male infidelity [27,28]. Complementarily, we maintain that there are knowledge gaps in terms of changes in sexual and reproductive customs that have accompanied larger social phenomena that occurred in various Western countries, such as the neoliberal model, globalization, migration, or the insertion of women into labor and educational sectors [29-31]. As a result of these processes, there have been transitions in the ideals of romantic love as the principle behind marriage, the sexual division of labor, the increase in premarital sexual relations, and divorce as a possible recourse for troubled couples [32]. These transformations have not occurred in a homogeneous way and have had an impact on the construction of the feminine and the masculine ideals in different dimensions [32], as well as on the values and regulations associated with sexuality [22,31].

For these reasons, the problem is not whether a young person has had sexual relations or not, nor with whom they have had them, but the information and the meanings and senses that this group constructs regarding sexuality that allow them to exercise their rights and their self-care optimally without pressure or fear of punishment or other associated conflicts [22,31,33,34].

However, given the advancement of women in this field, sexual violence and femicide have also been exacerbated, both in Latin America and worldwide. Of all female victims, including girls, of femicide in 2021, approximately 56% were killed by intimate partners or other family members (45,000 out of 81,000), calling into question the concept of the home as a safe place for many of them [40].

Regarding the expression of desire, the sexuality of Latin American women is still restricted and pressured by sociocultural prejudices,



beliefs, mandates, stereotypes, and negative discourses on women's freedom, which translates into guilt and fear of being sanctioned by the representatives of health or, well, ecclesiastical institutions. These apprehensions are accompanied by a marked restriction on access to prevention or family planning methods through the call for conscientious objection by health professionals. An example of this occurred in Salto (Uruguay), where after the promulgation of the law (legalizing abortion in three areas), 100% of youth were sexually active [24,28,35-38]. However, some of these points indicate that there is still a need for studies that incorporate populations from different contexts in the Americas and, with this, generate transnational strategies on the subject, as well as account for the impact that sociocultural elements have had on regulations, tensions and meanings associated with sexuality [22,24,32].

Within the framework of this research, when we talk about youth, we refer to people between the ages of 15 and 19, as proposed by Duarte, who points out that there is not one youth but rather various kinds of youth [33]. In this line, we consider this population with its particularities, which are worth considering: heterogeneity, different levels of participation in social norms and social commitment and in some cases, an early entry into parenthood. In the same way as Duarte, we think of youth as an active, critical and rebellious population rather than a group structured by age or as a problematic population. It is, therefore, a group of people with potentialities, specific needs and the right to enjoy their sexuality.

### **Reflections on the meaning of sexual desire and pleasure from a gender perspective**

In recent decades, the mandate for modesty in intimate life, the silencing of erotic life and the desire for women contained in restrictive discourses on sexuality have been profoundly transformed, modifying, in turn, social interactions. In this 21st century, women in the world have mobilized socially and politically, demanding the freedom to exercise their rights in previously androcentric fields and areas, such as the arts, engineering, physics or mathematics [39], to which various demands on sexual rights have been added. However, given the advancement of women in this field, sexual violence and femicide have also been exacerbated, both in Latin America and worldwide.

In Salto, Uruguay, after the legalization of abortion, 100% of the obstetrician-gynecologists- declared objections, forcing hospitals to resort to the transfer of professionals from other locations to ensure safe abortion services [41].

These restrictions are articulated by questioning of active female sexuality, something that perpetuates the gender differences between men and women [42]. In the global South, modesty and delayed sexual activity—virginity—remain representations that retain desirable values, as do the principles of romantic love [43], which require that young women delay their sexual activity unlike

the freedom enjoyed by men of similar ages. It is in this framework where the valorization of motherhood as a destination for women is generated, as well as the rejection of abortion and, in some regions, even contraception [44].

From these values is also derived the persistence of representations that link pregnancy before the age of 19 as a consequence of "promiscuous sexual relations" or the consumption of alcohol and drugs. These values are unachievable within the articulation between sociocultural and gender systems of masculine hierarchies, linked to poor sexual education, prejudices and stereotypes that operate around sexual initiation, and the implications of structural violence that endanger the safety of young women and girls [45].

From these gender ideologies derive the difficulties of women in negotiating with their partners about the use of contraceptive methods and their own planning of sexual life. All these situations hinder the display of desire in women, unlike male sexual desire, which finds motivators in the very fabric of culture: pornography, advertising, and validating social discourses, among others [24,42,44-48].

Thus, the population of men and women between the ages of 15 and 19 face various tensions from the sexual and gendered relational context. On the one hand, the pressure and social sanction that parents present to their daughters for the delay of sexual initiation is presented as a value to preserve in the absence of quality education on sexual and reproductive rights. This situation stands in contrast with free access to social networks and sexualized advertising. On the other hand, youth may feel pressure from their peers or partners to open up to sexual experiences, linked to feelings of love or sexual desire [24,33,35,44,49,50].

Faced with this scenario, these groups of young people must face their insecurities with a marked lack of information in fundamental aspects such as pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual violence [45]. Added to this are the obstacles in accessing preventive methods and the tension of power relations within the couple in negotiating about planning sexual practices [44,51,52].

### **Materials and Methods**

This research has been developed under a qualitative model with a gendered approach, where individual and group interviews were conducted and recorded with the youth providing biographical construction and deconstruction of their experiences [24]. Through this process, the intersubjective processes of individual and social communication between researchers and participants were contrasted, which facilitated understanding through the discourses and symbolic constructions of their social worlds [53-55]. Eighty-eight students from secondary schools and universities in the cities of Antofagasta and Calama were included (see Table 1). This article presents a selection of outstanding stories in relation to the questions. The inclusion criteria were as follows: men and women



between the ages of 15 and 19, enrolled in an educational establishment, who wished to participate voluntarily.

The production of individual stories was carried out based on 4 dimensions: 1) social interactions and gender relations; 2) self-care in sexuality; 3) experience in sexuality, desires, and pleasure; and 4) affectivity, partners and love.

To ensure ethical criteria were met, participants were requested to sign consent and authorization forms, which participants agreed to. Subsequently, both the educational establishments involved and the youths who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form. A code was assigned to each interview to guarantee anonymity.

In the interpretive process, we followed some guidelines of discourse analysis and narrative analysis, which have served as guides for organizing the material [55-58]. We emphasized the treatment of symbolic productions, the social conditions of production and the position of the subjects in the social field that appears in the body of the narratives [59]. We highlight the production of meanings and the importance of the experiences of youth enrolled in different educational centers. Finally, theoretical counterpoints were made with the selected material, a process that implied four phases: 1) discovery in progress: identification of thematic axes and categories from the stories; 2) selection of microtexts, story editing, coding and theoretical discussions as a team; 3) construction of matrices for the rearrangement of the microtexts and their interpretative analysis; and 4) interpretation and theoretical counterpoint. The validation criteria used were triangulation of discourses (the men and women interviewed), triangulation of experts (researchers) and triangulation of techniques (individual interviews and group work).

## Discussion of Results

### Desire and sexual pleasure. Male vision

“In sexual pleasure, everything that you have inside emerges. I find it like a drug, the same thing I feel when I'm touching myself. It's like 5 minutes of complete ecstasy.” (Man, 17 years old, subsidized public school).

Sexual pleasure in men is experienced as an addictive experience of releasing emotions associated with satisfaction from the expression of bodily fullness. A disposition for pleasure without normative restrictions is recognized, which allows the young person to surrender to pleasure as he desires without limitations or feelings of guilt and inadequacy. In this sense, we find that masculine sexuality, unlike feminine sexuality, has been built without restrictions that hinder pleasure.

Another participant said, “For me, sexual pleasure has to be something that both parties agree on... Certain attitudes that one has to have, like being affectionate, tender, all that.” (Man, 17 years old, public school).

This young man shows a socialized perception of sexuality built from affection and consent for the deployment of desire as a mutual experience. From this perspective, the condition of sexual pleasure is considered an affective exchange linked to gratification and conditions that place the man as a provider of pleasure. A transformation from a restrictive model of masculine hegemony toward a model of sexual equality is recognized, where he expects to receive but, at the same time, must prepare to give [35,44,49]. In this model, a relational dynamic of the couple emerges where the strategy is the search for shared enjoyment.

Another participant said, [About sexual pleasure] “I think it's the parts of the body that respond to stimulation. I believe that. For example, if we already refer to sex, sex is that: stimulation in the body. But if it were "making love," I find that it is different because it involves feeling. It is already stimulating the body, the soul, the mind, everything, I think.” (Man, 17 years old, private school).

We identified an interpretation of norms about sexuality by young people who draw distinctions between sexual pleasure and "making love." Sexual pleasure is conceived from a biological perspective, associated with bodily changes and feelings; making love is linked to affective experience and involves the incorporation of the total subject. These representations of body-sex are deeply rooted in Latino youth with biologizing models of sexual education. In addition, the romantic love model is common in people raised in systems of male hegemony [47]. According to this story, carnal sexual pleasure is represented without affective implications, unlike falling in love, which encompasses surrender of the total subject. In this sense, youth tend to express a dichotomized sexuality that moves away from a confluent relationship that both enjoy consensually. Along with this, the story places the experience of sexual pleasure in certain parts of the body, that is, through fragmented bodies.

H4) “They start everything.” H2) “They give the pass.” H4) “I've also been with a girl [woman] that I couldn't even get anything from her [physical contact], does she understand? I was like four months and just like that, one gets bored. One is already at the right age; you want to be fishing [playing]. With one of those mines [women], you feel strange. I would still like to get married with one of those women (...) She is not one that the first time you see her, you are going to click [kiss]. You have to watch it for a long time, you play tricks with the lead, but then the lead is in the [conservative] cartridge. Here, the mines are cartridges, but pure screen.” (Conversation group [GC] in men [H], 15 years old, public schools).

In this conversation group of 15-year-old male students (GC H) from a lower income bracket, the initiative of the sexual encounter is attributed to women. These young men reproduce a hegemonic logic for male courtship behaviors typical of adult masculinity identified in previous studies within the region [24,49]. In this regard, they classify their partners according to sexual games and

activities, between women one marries and women with whom they display their desires and occasional sexual pleasures. This vision is articulated through a sexist gender education with a more rigid male predominance, where men seem not to care about their

social image, but they do care about the sexual morality of the women with whom they relate. Specifically, women are represented as objects of satisfaction of male sexual needs.

*Table 1: Conversation group participants.*

14 focus groups	Private Secondary Establishments		Municipal / subsidized secondary establishments		University Establishments		
Age Range	Between 15 and 19 years						
	Mens	Women	Mens	Women	Mens	Women	
Antofagasta	10	16	9	9	4	6	
Calama	9	9	9	7	-	-	
Total	19	25	18	16	4	6	88

*Table 2: Example of a matrix for the ordering and analysis of statements.*

Dimension							
Dimension description							
Categories	People involved	Subject identification	Stories in subcategories	Conflicts and tensions	Emotions involved	Search object	Interpretation
Dimension synthesis							

H4) “The mines have more experience. There are some women who are re charchas [very boring] because they always do the same thing [they mean that they do not innovate in terms of sexual practices], they don't do a single pose. Older women like to play, one kind of gets more excited. There one does it with more desire, but the girls, those who are 15, 16 years old, don't, well, they just take them down [alludes to women's underwear].” (GC H 15 years old, public schools).

In these young people, a harsh intergender interaction is observed that reproduces in the 21st century the restrictive logic of generations past in terms of sexuality. In the pursuit of desire, the body seems to be instrumentalized, mediating violence both in language and in the modes of interaction, reifying sexual contact. In this process, the sexual repertoire of younger women is criticized by men of the same age (“They always do the same shit”), delegating to them the responsibility of performative creativity in erotic play (“There are some women who they are "re charchas" (...) (of bad habits).”

In this modality of sexual encounters, dissatisfaction in the search for pleasure is recognized, and at the same time, a sexist discourse prevails through which men are located as judges of the sexual performance and behavior of their partners. On the one hand, diversity in sexual experience is valued in regard to male sexual enjoyment, and on the other hand, it is sanctioned for a woman to have a repertoire of sexual games.

According to the previous analyses, we see how the prevailing sexism is revealed when the choice of a stable partner is evaluated or the relationship itself is analyzed. These forms of subjective feminine and masculine construction have been pointed out in previous studies on the forms of partner organization, child rearing and the construction of masculinity and femininity within the mining culture of northern Chile [49,57,60], and it is something which, we believe, jeopardizes the possibilities of self-care and care of the other in sexuality.

H1) “They should take more care of their personality and even ensure they are piolita [ensure that no one finds out], and only be with one hueón [man-male]. Every day, we see any mine with any cock, and one more mine on top. Then, you have to be taking care of yourself so as not to get infected.” H3) “Those that are piolita [demure] can be counted on your hands.” H1) “Here, the women don't ask you for condoms. Here, the mines tell you throw it out.” (GC H 15 years old, public schools).

Some men in the group state that they are aware of the risks of having sex without a condom and that they know how to prevent these risks. In this regard, popular beliefs and representations emerge about prevention strategies in relation to pregnancies but also regarding sexually transmitted diseases.

In a complementary way, the following story reveals youthful myths associated with deficient sexual education (“When you ejaculate, you would have to pull out”; “Fertile days”; “Pull out”). However, it is observed that the use of contraceptives and condoms



has a fundamental place, even while there is a management of bodily self-care that incorporates his partner.

“If the woman doesn't take care of herself and neither do I, when she comes, she would have to make sure you were out. Although you still run the risk of getting AIDS. No matter how rich you are, you should take care of yourself. If you want to continue having a good time and she gets pregnant, your whole life will change. One cannot make love to a girl knowing that she is in her fertile days. That she takes care of herself with pills is her responsibility. If both partners take care of themselves, it's much easier to be calm. If you are with a girl, you have to know if she takes the pills properly. If you do it because of a fever, you have to take care of yourself and take precautions.” (Man, 17 years old, public school).

In the construction of the masculinity of these young people, there are reproductions of an individualistic gender culture based on sexual self-care. It is not observed as a consensual dialogue in pairs; rather, it is a matter for each individual. In this way, the gender culture in this scenario operates as a cultural reflection of older generations (fathers, mothers, older brothers or sisters) built in a sexist environment with gaps between men and women. These practices, a local habitus, are generated in social interactions in the environment [59], where the man, by developing his role as provider, reaches a status of dominance over the female body, which is symbolized by satisfying his desires and, at the same time, imposes on women the role of caregiver and reproducer [45].

In the case of the younger groups (15 years old), women have modified their sexual strategy toward a more aggressive position in their sexual performance, which is characterized by adopting attitudes of seduction and a leading role in conquest. This attitude allows them to survive the environment of violence built into a hierarchical and authoritarian social system.

These hierarchical and authoritarian [45] structures defined in advance the social relationships [59] in which men are expected to be active penetrators, constantly demonstrating their manliness [61], and in which women reproduce an attitude of passive submission to enter the game for sexual prestige. These representations generate tensions in both the sexual and social contact and can produce different levels of violence. This violence is created by a tug of war between the search for the sexual autonomy of women, who move from the places assigned by the gender hierarchy, and the desire to preserve a place in romantic love. In this context, it is the moment in which women position themselves as active in the sexual sphere when symbolic violence occurs [24], since the most autonomous and empowered women are spoken of as “loose.”

H4) “When my dad took me to the family, old cigars would get together, and my dad would always say about me: ‘This culiao is re cachero [he has a lot of sexual activity], he brings mines [women] home, and leaves the bed filthy.’ And they started to annoy me.” H2) “There are still women who are ladies, who look

good, are well behaved. On the other hand, there are some that I have seen who are drunk, they go out to the discos.” All) “Those girls are so loose!” (GC H 15 years old, municipal school).

Contrary to the previous conversation, in the following group of affluent youth, there is greater pressure to adapt their behavior to the requirements of the professional market:

“I would “screw up” my career if I had a child because it happened to my brother. He could not continue studying and had to go to work.” (Man, 17 years old, subsidized public school).

“A friend's girlfriend got pregnant in eighth grade. Poor girl, she screwed up her life; there is nothing else to do but drop out of school. I think that the weight will be more for her.” (Man, 17 years old, subsidized school).

“She didn't even leave school (...) Maybe her youth was screwed.” (Woman, 16 years old, subsidized public school).

The market demands that for their entry as productive subjects, they have a profession and thus gain prominence in the labor scene. This labor insertion is also conditioned by their origin or class membership. Likewise, the experiences of peers and friendships are constant mirrors that record gender distinctions and intervene in the construction of subjectivity and sexuality, and this model continues to place the weight of the responsibility for an unplanned pregnancy [24] and childrearing on women's lives.

H2) [In reference to the place of the sexual act]” Sometimes at parties, one does it in the bathroom, in the toilet or, if not, standing up. Or whatever. Later, if one stays there for a long time, the goats begin to bother them, they begin to hit. So, one can't keep things going, one leaves [ejaculates].” (GC H, 15 years old, public schools).

### **Desire and sexual pleasure. Female vision**

“Men: ‘I'm macho, I'll take all these.’ It's like ‘I messed with this and this, and now you come.’” (Female, 17 years old, private school).

“Women always take bad comments. ‘This is loose’ and ‘they look like bastards.’” (Female, 16 years old, private school).

“The system is like that. They see women who have more bloomers as more like whores, and they are cancheros. I'm not saying that everyone is like that—I have super sensitive friends—but from my experience, virginity doesn't affect them that much.” (Female, 17 years old, private school).

### **Desire and sexual pleasure. female vision**

“I think it is because they are not as enamored as women, who are more sentimental and become more attached to men. That's why you can end up with a girl and you won't go around crying like her.” (Female, 16 years old, private school).

Discomfort is observed in women living under an unfair regulatory model. This is how they build a female subjectivity dealing with commands for modesty and control over their sexuality. Indeed,

sexual activity validates manhood, while in women, it leads to questioning. In this regard, the 16- and 17-year-old female participants question the sex/gender model that validates the passivity and postponement of female sexual expression versus the position enjoyed by men whose social expectations allow the construction of a freer sexuality, at the cost of hidden or silenced emotions behind the search for prestige. In this sense, they account for their progress toward more equitable gender relations.

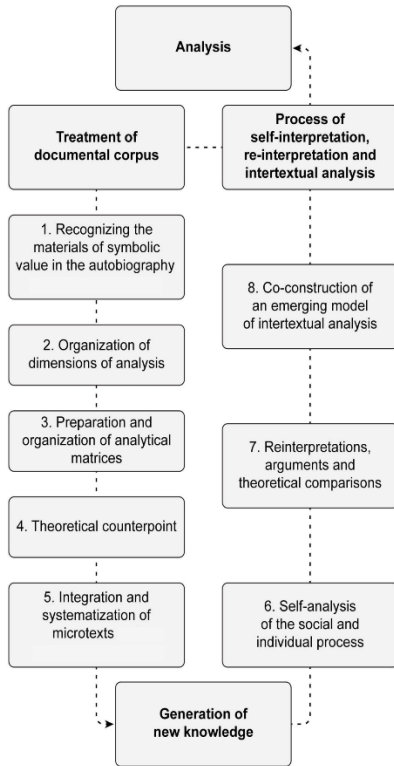


Figure 1: Diagram of the interpretive analysis process.

M2) “We [men and women] have a table in the playground and we sit down to talk, and the subject of sex always comes up (...) because the children were watching us, at that time, we had already made the children interested. The next day we saw the boys with other girls. I told him, ‘Hey, you told me that you were going to go to bed and they told me that they had seen you elsewhere. And guess who it was, the girl who hangs out with us.’ [He answers her], ‘Ah, right, yes, that girl provoked me.’” M2) “‘And you couldn't say no to her?’” [He replied], ‘No, it's that you don't know the girls as they are.’ That's when we sit down and talk about sex. [They respond]: ‘It's that there are girls who are not like you.’ You live in the world of Bilz and Pap [slogan for a drink advertising campaign that alludes to a fantasy world], you are pure, let's go out, buy me this? And the other girls [with whom they have sex] are not like that, they say ‘let's drink, you have money to buy cigarettes, forelocks [alcohol], dicks [marijuana],’ because that's the way girls

are. So, who isn't going to hit the goats [girls] with their hand [sex] there? Because they're drunk, how do you know if something happens to them on the way?” (GCM 15 years old, public school). Girls from a lower income bracket recognize in their affective and sexual experiences the incorporation of traditional gender norms, such as the importance of passivity or sexual restraint, actions that “favor” the evaluation and interpretation of their behavior by men. The social interaction between men and women around the scene of seduction and conquest generates metaphors and discourses on the aspects valued or sanctioned for each gender. These discourses depend on the validation and recognition of sexual activity in a dichotomized way. Thus, a distinction is established between good women and “groped” women, those with greater sexual experience who carry the label of “whore” and “loose”. Among these women, a process of social gender categorization is observed that operates not only at the intergender level (men-women) but also at the intragender level, where young women judge and establish hierarchies to classify the sexual behavior of their peers.

“Sexuality is different for men and women because they think differently and feel differently. But this itself is complicated. The man enjoys sex more easily from a biological perspective, and it is more difficult for him to contain himself, since they get excited with magazines and TV. On the other hand, it is more difficult for women to get excited. They only look for sex, and it is something that bothers me a lot. Men have no morals.” (Female, 18 years old, university).

A deep tension is observed in the gender interaction associated with the affiliation of these women to a model of restricted expression of eroticism. The sex/gender dichotomy is validated, placing an emphasis on the aspect of sexual pleasure that stresses physiological and male dominance [62]. In this framework, the practices of self-satisfaction and the search for sexual pleasure are only validated in the repertoire for men, linking it to immoral practices if it is experienced by women. Likewise, the interviewed woman expresses discomfort around the difficulty of expressing her desires and possibilities of enjoying sex. In turn, she values the perspective that the feminine experience is passive and the masculine one is active, and she attached the male experience of sex to an overflowing and uncontrollable sexual potential [63]. The gender construction that the young women perceive from the active/passive model creates in them a vision of the world where they seem to want sex with love, in counterpoint to the criticism that she directs at men (“They are only looking for sex”), whose actions she considers immoral.

“I don't find sexual pleasure something important. Maybe because I haven't enjoyed sex; I didn't like it, I didn't have a good time (...) I was always afraid of getting pregnant. That's why I stopped having it. That put a lot of pressure on me and my partner. He told me that we could stop doing it, but I didn't accept and I broke up with him.” (Woman, 18 years old, university).

M4) “My mother says that she is not afraid of sexual relations, but she is afraid of pregnancy because she says that I am very young. If I have a baby, my life ends.” M2) “The fear that we really have

is with our father because if we get pregnant, my father is not going to hit us but rather threaten us to leave the house.” (GC Women 15 years old, public school).

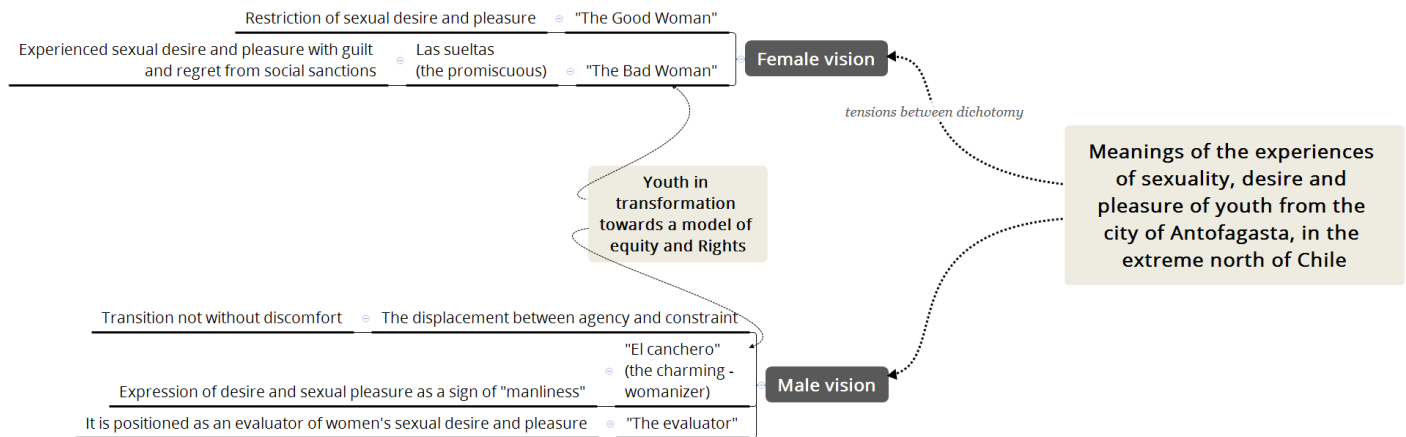


Figure 2: Emerging analysis model.

Both in young people from lower and middle income brackets, the sexual experience is lived in a conflictive way. Socioculturally, the female body has been assigned the fate of motherhood and the imposition of reproduction to the detriment of bodily enjoyment and the exploration of desire [64], relegating desire to silence and the abject (“Touch, Ah!!!! How disgusting”). These comments are related to the invisibility of feminine desire, which has been regulated by devices of social power; therefore, self-care will only focus on avoiding pregnancy and not on promoting democratic relationships, where female desire can be possible and, likewise, be negotiated in the couple's sexual enjoyment.

Based on these findings, we propose the following emerging model (Figure 2). This scheme reflects in a synthesized way the central knots of our analysis in search of understanding youth sexuality in a mining town with an androcentric and sexist sociocultural context.

## Discussion and Conclusion

What do the experiences of sexuality, desire and pleasure mean for young students from northern Chile? The meanings around the sexual and gender socialization of men and women between the ages of 15 and 19 reveal a series of tensions around beliefs related to the active practice of sexuality, as well as the reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices present in youth culture. Hence, discursive analysis implies the need to identify the dialectical relationship in the discursive field with the material experience of sexuality by young men and women.

In this sense, regarding the sexual repertoire among the participating youths, autoerotic (masturbatory) practices stand out, oriented toward the search for pleasure and, therefore, to a management of sexuality that implies not bonding with others for

fear of pregnancy. Likewise, little knowledge is exhibited on effective protection strategies against sexually transmitted diseases, and in some cases, unsupported popular myths and beliefs are used instead (“Ejaculate outside”). These strategies occur in conditions of casual sex in the context of youth entertainment venues.

From a gendered perspective, there are negative stereotypes about the role of both genders. On the one hand, women are conditioned as responsible for planning pregnancies, and accidental pregnancies imply that others assume they did not take responsibility for their own self-care. Along with this, gaps in sexual education based on rights and active sexual citizenship were identified in several participating women who developed strategies for the enjoyment of sexual pleasure without fear of expressing their bodily and sexual autonomy [65]. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the existence of prejudices and beliefs present in men who start out devoid of sexual education and with a limited vision of sexual equality in desire and pleasure. The experience of sexual desire and pleasure, in many cases, is entwined with gender stereotypes. Men reproduce a type of sociosexual interaction that implies greater freedoms and independence for themselves, and may even be encouraged by the family of origin to consider their behavior a manifestation of manliness.

These practices come into conflict with the current demands for equality on the part of women, who demand greater agency in matters of sexuality. Young women, as Silvia Elizalde [66] has analyzed, “are part of a generation that enjoys decisive achievements in matters of gender and sexuality” embodied in a significant set of laws that were the result of years of feminist struggles by women that long preceded them in the occupation of public space to make their complaints heard. In the context of this mining region, which retains many inequitable cultural customs,

women find themselves caught between a gender-informed model of demands and, at the same time, the maintenance of an order of domination by a policy of silencing. This phenomenon can be illustrated with the rejection of the exploration of bodily sensations and intergender discrimination against women with more liberal sexual behaviors. This tension generates different types of violence, ranking women between “good and bad” (“whores, thrown, loose”). However, at the same time, it has led to the consolidation of demands that seek to eradicate “micro machismo, street harassment or sexual harassment in the networks, in schools and universities” [67].

Women create more emphasis on access to sexuality, desire and pleasure in the context of romantic love, where there are some common points: a) that the sexual relationship occurs within a stable couple (pololeo) or in a loving romantic scenario that includes tenderness and affection; and b) that other important requirements such as monogamy and exclusivity are manifested while flirting with that person. In this context, the notion of desire and pleasure is directly associated with an affectionate, stable couple. We observed that in these men and women, the myth of romantic love and feminine erotic passivity is still present in the imagination, maintaining powerful prestige in the social context [68,69].

However, from a different angle, many women want changes in their sexual lives and are carriers of forms of equitable relationships that seek to nurture gender democracy in their relational environment. Additionally, many men conceive of women from within a value paradox: creative erotic play is desirable but those who express it freely are punished and delegitimized. Therefore, the challenges for these youths lie in the idea of the deconstruction of traditional gender and sexual norms, opening spaces of tolerance and negotiation for the creation of new management models regarding their differences [70,71].

Among the limitations of this research is the inquiry between gender and class that is that gender socialization can present differences between young people with greater cultural capital. In this framework, future research is expected to delve into the relationship between cultural capital and sexual socialization, both at home and in schools or other normalizing institutions. It is in these spaces where deep tensions occur between the gender socializing discourses of the family of origin and the transformative discourses promoted by institutions that validate models of equity in the sex/gender system [72-74].

Finally, we believe it is necessary to pay attention to the role of younger women in current local expressions of feminism to understand how they produce their own meanings and create their identity as feminists or activists. According to Tomasini [67], this implies exploring beyond the normative expressions of participation in feminism and, at the same time, overcoming the

dichotomous frameworks that conceive of either an affiliation with feminism or a rejection of it.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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