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Aging, Sex, and Well-Being in Brazil -- A Special Issue of *Aging & Anthropology Quarterly*

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By Aaron Seaman



[Aging & Anthropology Quarterly's](#)

current issue is a special issue entitled "Aging, Sex, and Well-Being in Brazil" and edited by Annette Leibing. The issue can be found [here](#). It is worth noting that the issue is open access, as are all their issues (see this [note](#) from editor-in-chief Jason Danely). Article abstracts are below:

[Heterotopia and Illness: Older women and Hypertension in a Brazilian Favela](#)

Annette Leibing

This article is about older women and the way hypertension is linked to their life in a favela, a "shantytown", in Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by Foucault, I suggest calling this complex phenomenon 'heterotopic illness'. By calling attention to the importance of place for understanding certain illnesses, the limited usefulness of some public health prevention campaigns is shown. Since hypertension can be considered a "disease of aging", it will be argued that some place-related stressors often have a greater impact on seniors than they have on younger adults.

[Aging, Gender and Sexuality in Brazilian Society](#)*Guita Grin Debret*

Drawing on the interplay between gender, aging, and sexuality, the aim of this article is twofold: (1) to show how Brazilian gerontologists treat gender differences and sexual activity in old age; (2) to analyze the ways discourses regarding the aging body and sexuality are perceived and evaluated by older women and men. I argue that attempts of gerontologists' to eroticize old age have to contend with the widespread notion that the desire for sex is inevitably lost with age. Thus, in the retiree associations that were studied, men had a tendency to assume they are not 'old' because their erectile function was still in good condition, and divorced or widowed women, in senior citizen associations, tend to regard themselves as happy due to having freed themselves from the sexual obligations imposed by marriage. In both cases, the dominant belief that there is a loss of sexual desire in old age was reproduced.

[Surgery-for-Life: Aging, Sexual Fitness and Self-Management in Brazil](#)*Alexander Edmonds*

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork on plastic surgery to explore tensions in aging norms and ideals for women in Brazil. I situate my analysis in relation to debates about a "de-chronologized life course." Some scholars argue that the life course in late capitalism has become less standardized. In this account, chronological age diminishes in importance as consumers are defined by life style choices available to all ages and the period of youth extends into middle age and beyond. In Brazil consumers embrace plastic surgery as a means to "manage" aging, mental well-being, and reproductive and sexual health. This promise of a flexible and optimized aging trajectory seems to echo the notion of a de-chronologized life course. I argue, however, that medical discourse and patients' accounts show ambivalence about aging and conflicts in the ideal of medically-managed sexual fitness for women. Drawing on analysis of changes in family structure and women's health regimes, I argue that passage through the life course, rather than becoming more flexible, is in some ways becoming more rigidly defined by biological processes.

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