Between tradition and resignification: the feminine regarding infertility (and new technological concepts)

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Abstract

This article analyzes such meanings given to the feminine being and are reconstructed regarding possibility of a life situation where infertility is present. It involves the issue of what it means to be a woman in Brazilian society. The research was performed with young university females from the University of Brasilia, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old. The debate centers on the analysis of the existence of a specific feminine corporeality which is broken when infertility is projected as a possible experience. The article contains discussions regarding gender, construction and retention of significant objectives, parallels with theories regarding deficiency and studies regarding new reproductive technologies.

Keywords

Introduction

Health comes if constituted for Social and Human Sciences and as a privileged space for debates regarding relationships between health, disease, body and culture. Sexuality, the body, the construction of identities through corporal experience — of disease and cure processes — have been the focus of studies of subjects such as History, Sociology and Anthropology and, more recently Social Service, theorizing itself regarding conflicts, problems, the impact of relations of being able to access health services and the construction of collective and individual meanings regarding the body and the forms of it being placed in the world.

This text, has as its objective, to analyze statements given by young women regarding a possible experience with infertility, demonstrated feelings and the impacts of these on the construction of the feminine identity. Infertility, as it appears in young college student's conversations, students of the University of Brasilia (UNB), provokes debate regarding the rupture of feminine markers in society, translating itself in the discussion regarding the experience of pain and deficiency. Based in discussions regarding the creation and retention of meanings, individualities and the social world of authors such as Alfred Schutz and Georg Simmel and in debates regarding gender relations, this text seeks to understand

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the meanings given to the feminine world by the women interviewed and which would be the reconstruction mechanisms of the feminine direction of life after the experience of infertility.

At the end, some considerations regarding assisted human reproduction programs are woven, in connection with discussions presents throughout the text and within the interviewed women's conversations. Highlighting, however, that the new reproductive conceptive technologies if found in a paradigmatic place which allows many investigations regarding the role of public health, the social place of women and how to construct health policies in a country with deep social inequalities. Since the text has as its principal objective of showing some emergent analytical possibilities with the research, it chose this parallel between conversation and the use of conceptive technologies when clarifying some theoretical questions (and partial answers) regarding the subject.

The research-base for this article was performed mid 2004, at the UnB, with students, men and women, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, from various courses. Open answered questionnaires with five questions were applied, in other words, the participants answered the questions in their own way. For the purposes of this analysis, only the answers from women and referring to the issue regarding infertility were used. The research was not sent to a Research Ethics Committee, since it is a little known procedure in Human Sciences. Even so, people were informed of the research's purpose and their freedom of participation in it at the time of requesting them to answer the questionnaire: the questionnaire's first page had an informed consent term and clarified that they should only respond to questions if they felt comfortable with them. Furthermore, it had no name identification which could link answers with the respondents.

What does it mean to be a woman when facing infertility?

The classic Simone de Beauvoir question, "what is a woman?" (Beauvoir 1974), it is constant in female studies, relationships between genders; theory and the feminist movement. Although difficult to answer due to diversity of women in different societies and cultures, or even the multiplicity of concepts regarding the reach of the gender concept within its own science it is impossible not to consider that something exists, socially constructed, characteristic of women for/in some social groups. It is this signification of the category woman, for Brazilian society, that becomes the focus of this analysis.

The difficulty of answering this question, especially for the feminist movement and theory, becomes related to the political commitment to the question of what it is to be woman. The diversity of meanings given to the feminine in each locality and commitment of not essencializing this category are impediments (or challenges) for the classification of "woman" being consensual for feminists. However, this is not to say that feminine does not possess meanings more or less definite and shared by

people pertaining to specific social groups.

The problem of essencialization does not place, for example, in Linda Alcoff's theoretical approach (2001), when inquiring about the limits of the creation of female policies linked to an idea of fixed identity. Alcoff is preoccupied in demonstrating that in this way of formulating policies leads, necessarily, to a fixed use of what it is to be woman, causing, sometimes, the creation of a feminine paradigmatic model which is not compatible with reality – which is multiple and fractured. In order to resolve this problem of the definition of being a woman, the author proposes the rediscussion of action forms where a feminist policy is done from the perspective of affinities, outlining the lack of tangibility of a supposed feminine identity.

For this author, the arbitrariness in definitions of masculinity and femininity is responsible for the blocking of policy actions linked in identities, since these would be based on the imaginary fixity of a group, while, in reality, social concepts and categories are fluid and changeable – as well as not being universal. Affinity policies, in contrast to identity, would reinforce the articulate the various demands and interests within a particular historical moment. The proposal for feminist policies, for example, would be to take the necessity of gender equality without the necessity to essencialize categories as a starting point. In other words, to combine the constructed socio-cultural identity, with the specific position of citizens in the social system. In this way, the issue of pondering about policies which demand fixed identities in view of the arbitrariness of notions and socially constructed meanings may be diverted.

> If we combine the concept of identity policies with a conception of the citizen as the positionality, we can conceive a non essencialized citizen and which appears from a historical experience, as well as repeating the political possibility to take gender as an important starting point. Therefore, we may say that gender is not natural, biological, universal, historical or essential and, at the same time, to insist that gender is significant because we take it as a position from which we act politically (Alcoff 2001: 103).

This search for the essencialization of concepts and individuals is not equally present in Simmel and Schutz's theoretical perspectives, for which no individuals or societies are imprisoned in a socio-cultural rigidity of meanings or rules. Using these two authors' perspective, we may return to Beauvoir's question and say that its partial answer *"woman is a uterus"* is not totally mistaken. In one determined society, such as the French or Brazilian, being a woman possesses meanings shared by its members. However, before problematizing the meaning of being a woman in these societies, it is worth understanding Schutz (1979) and Simmel's (1971) axioms as this meaning is produced and reproduced throughout time: is the meaning constructed through processes, individuals and collectives?

The human world is constituted by social interactions in which meanings are created, revised and taught. To be human is to be condemned to complexity: a per-

sonality is formed by a multiplicity of meanings which traverse individuals. It does not have, thus, rigidity or individual fixity, even though the subjects are not floating or without borders. The individuality, such as it appears to Simmel, is constructed in the synthesis between individual and society, in the individual insertion within varied groups. Singularity is the mixture between its free character and its social figure (Simmel 1971: 13).

And, it is possible to affirm that the individual does not deplete in the rules of the social game, it is imperative to understand that to be human is to exist in interactions with rules more or less defined from the interpretation of reality. To interact is to be in an inter-subjective world, in other words, a world where various *selfs* are placed in relation and are minimally understand. This means that guideline codes and interpretations of this world exist which allow the attribution of meaning to it (Velho G, Viveiros de Castro E *appended* Teixeira 1991: 11).

For Schutz, the existence of multiple meanings does not hinder belonging to a definite group. The belonging implies to have similar interests, shared feelings and values set in motion. Social groups may be existent — historically created and in which belonging is independent on the individual's will — and volunteers, in which the individuals enter at their own will and biographical construction. To be woman is to belong to an existential group: in this society, to be woman is not a matter of choice.

> … the subjective meaning that the group has for its members consists of their common knowledge of a situation and, with it, of a common system of types and relevances [shared] with the group's other members [which] defines the social roles, positions and *status* of each member. […] Our description serves in such a way for: a) existent groups, with which a social inheritance is shared; and b) the groups called voluntary which I form or to which I am associated with (1979: 83).

The objective meanings are those which are beyond the individual and which allow it to understand the exterior world. They are external constructions which define belonging to a category. The meaning of events, things and individuals is the crossing between an internal vision, subjective, with an external vision marked by other people's definition to the group. And, even if emancipating the individuals it is not fixed or eternal. This objectivity which is imposed on humans may be thought about, questioned and remodeled by people.

The reality is formed by citizens in action who can find the naturalized world strange, since it is replete with nuances, horizons and movements; therefore subject to changes and resignifications. This natural attitude, in Schutz, cannot be confused with the common sense of biology or ecological nature. Natural itself is already the meaning, however it appears on a daily basis as unpredicted: "it is the object of a well delimited world" (1979: 72). The natural attitude is the pragmatic guide of daily life, the stock of hand knowledge, a reference code for the action.

For Simmel, as well as Schutz, individuals live in interrelation. For the authors, individualities are constructed in the intersection between definitive or standardized interactions and the individual autonomy, in which no singularity and no society deplete one another. Having dimensions in bothwhich escape the understanding of all individuals. The impossibility to know the other in their completeness is characteristic of Simmel's Sociology as well as being characteristic of Schutz's thinking.

Although both sociologists emphasize the individual freedoms to construct meanings, both work with the idea that human beings typify. The experiences do not fit within ideal models and types, however we formulate them. The creation of typologies possess a duel function: the observation of the impossibility to know another completely and, simultaneously, a projection or generalization is the possibility of the understanding between people who interact. An ideal type is mediating between the individual and society, the subjective experience and the concrete reality.

> We see other people generalized, in the same measure. It is therefore, perhaps, because we cannot wholly represent a deviant individuality of ours (Simmel 1971: 17).

What could *woman* be called? To be woman is to typify, describe actions and behaviors which don't accurately correspond to reality, however which create the capacity to anticipate events. The typification of femininity allows the diversity of possibilities of individual actions to exists , as women come to act in view of various social situations. One question which may be posed: which is the social reality constructed by the members of this society for women? or perhaps the social reality is constructed by women for themselves? The answer is united to the idea of the feminine world, even with diversities and difficulties of definition of a consensual concept, is not chaotic – as well as of no world. The feminine being is intelligible, allowing the mutual understanding of social members regarding its nature.

The research performed for this analysis appears to have been in a form of life flow suspension of the young university students who suddenly appeared with the need to think about a life experience that had not necessarily had taken place. The research method was the application of an open questionnaire in which the young participants would answer the same question spontaneously: "How would you feel if your doctor informed you that you were sterile? Why?". To answer a question that, in truth, is a supposition regarding the future, a "project" in the sense of a reflective exercise regarding what will become, is a form of breaking with the daily chain of thinking what it is to be woman, disclosing a defined conception (even with diversified nuances) regarding femininity.

The young people interviewed project a universal type of woman for them and for other women, showing that the social binding in interactions and meanings are strong and don't allow an absolutely free and au-

tonomous *core*. Further than one subjective meaning, in other words, that attributed by the subject involved in the action itself, women's answers indicate one objective meaning, a partial answer to Simone de Beauvoir's question.

The ideal type projected for female research subjects demonstrates the guiding principles; marks constructed in face to face interactions with contemporaries and their own history of this society where the projected feminine world seems to coincide with the majority's perspective of theories of gender relationships studies. These theories demonstrate that the normative categorization of woman, in the majority of known societies, is still related to the idea of biological and social reproduction (Ortner 1979), being socially recognized by means of their fertile capacity.

> A little disappointed, because every woman has the dream of being a mother. But she would not despair me, because she still has the possibility of adoption. (M52).

As Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1979) point out, only the biological data, in other words the existence of a feminine genitalia and organs apt for biological reproduction, is not enough to explain the insertion of women in societies, neither is it enough to explain why women come to be defined from their reproductive capacity. Only the feminine anatomy is not capable of saying why, since antiquity, the marks of feminine sociability are fertility, reproductivity and maternity. For Rosaldo and Lamphere (1979), the biological data, in other words, the feminine or masculine anatomies, only acquire meaning in a sociocultural context. Fertility, as a biological category becomes the mark of feminine socialization, making the notion of female identities the largest part of the societies who are linked to the idea of a body suitable for reproduction. Femininity one is shaped by elaborations regarding the reproductive functions of women, having established the place to be socially occupied by them.

The above mentioned is interesting enough to elaborate and exemplify this formularization. The reference of the young explains one form of insertion of women into social life which passes through filiation and, when affirming that it would not be despaired, therefore possibility of adoption exists, the interviewee reinforces a type of hegemonic feminity in which maternity, even when not having been of biological reproduction, remains as a defining mark of being a woman.

Adoption is highlighted here as one of the forms to bypass infertility, which is understood as a problem. To adopt a child is not the first option for the constitution of a familiar life. It has a valuation of parenthood as consanguinity, which it is important to bear in mind to understand the development of technologies (and their commercialization) to allow conception to take place, where the absence of children is no longer approached as a sterile female, male or couples problem but as a problem of medicine. Furthermore, the available medical treatment is, such as adoption, a bypass to the situation of infertility, since there is no cure: infertile men and women therefore remain infertile even after passing, successfully, through the assisted reproduction programs. Either way, there is a preferred way, creating training periods or stages for the hypo/infertility solution.

> It made me feel bad, because we all want children. But, I looked for a treatment and, in last case I would adopt. I believe everything has solution. (M03).

In a society in which feminine sociability is to a large extent conditional on a reproduction possibility, when a woman suddenly comes across, at a moment of their life, with the impossibility of biologically reproducing, in other words, when a woman discovers her infertility when desiring maternity, it is possible that a rupture of objective meaning given to femininity occurs. When this happens, negative feelings are generated in women in relation to themselves. The valuation of reproduction and the affirmation of feminity from the idea of women being naturally their for maternity, causes them, when desiring a biological child and being infertile, to be suddenly tragic. This would be the absence of moral certainty, socioculturally produced, that women must reproduce. As Debora Diniz (2001) points out, the tragic one is in the sphere of maybe, where the construction of truth is disabled or ruptured.

The chance of infertility in women's life cycle may be the rupture of meaning of feminine life in this society, causing them the pain of absurdity, in other words, meaninglessness. Absurdity, however, demands new meanings and moral insertions into social groups, since "the total absence of moral demands the establishment of a naked relationship with reality, an impossible task to be executed without resulting in the self-destruction of the human gender" (Rouanet 2001: 13).

The meaning given to femininity by those women interviewed is enveloped by historical, social, cultural and individual characteristics which do not allow the understanding of the women, infertility and the feminine being herself is detached from the idea of a world formed by interactions. Using Simmel's form/content of dualism, it can be said that woman would be the form which has its contents updated at specific moments. And one of the moments in which the need to update the contents of femininity is the moment of rupture of the "stock of hand knowledge". When the previous project is already reflected to be in conflict with new situations which appear in the life of women, such as the possibility of infertility, a new attribution of meanings is required.

The women's opinions are indicated as a marking characteristic of the feminine imperative of biological reproduction. In the greatest part of the interviews (25 questionnaires, from 58) this necessity translates to a desire and dream of having biologically linked children. The women's answers reveal normatives, containing the logical feminine-maternity as confirmation of feminity, and are universal. The desire to be a mother is in all women, which indicates the calling of a feminine nature which is confused with the biological capacity of reproduction, in the meaning of creation for the feminine experience.

However, the women's answers also demonstrate the difficulty in creating a new stock of knowledge in which one another radically different conception regarding femininity may exist. The centrality of biological and social reproduction being defined as the most important part of the feminine identity does not allow the consideration that infertility is a common or possible situation. What is surprising is that to project to be informed of the impossibility of consanguineous children generates depreciatory feelings and removes them, at least at this moment, from thinking about a complete social existence, revealing feelings of sadness and inadequacy.

> The emotional shock of losing a child would be so great. By not realizing a dream, as in my case, of having a son. Beyond the fact that maternity is something which confirms femininity and my existence as woman. It is an extremely inhibiting fact of this exercise. (M24).

The majority of these young women seem to suddenly come across the incapacity of relocating femininity, reintegrating its definition into the reproductive sphere. To rethink femininity does not only talk of defining new meaning to individual lives. Contrary to the fact that meanings are constructed in the interactions between individuals and society, it is not possible to create new stock without the doubt, conflict and anguish of the lack of existent meaning. In this way it is clear that the diversity of meanings is socio-historically limited: the change of meaning is only made possible inside a known universe.

> Bad, because I cannot consider a life, one of the most important things in the life of a woman. Not able to teach, create, coexist this child. It would be horrible! (M33).

> Sad, because I had a sensation of the loss of biological function which implies instincts which could not be materialized without pregnancy. (M05).

> I cannot say with all certainty how I would react, because it's a very complicated subject, by messing up the dream that the majority of women have had since their childhood, until creation. I believe I would be very sad and would be very shaken, I would feel humiliated, but would try to join a group of women who had experienced the same thing, and when conditions to create a child developed, I would adopt a child […]" (M32).

The answers allow a discussion regarding a type of specific corporality placed for females and which has been ruptured. The valued anatomy and feelings and which are part of the existential construction of women discover impediments for their substantiation. The care, love, pregnancy, corporal change appears as markers difficult to be relegated to another plan which is not its principal one. M32's reply does not deny the existence of a natural capacity, however relates it to that which is socially expected as the role of women. This interviewee seems to be able to change the resignification of femininity when it does not place the desire for children in her absolute plan, which demonstrates different forms thinking and living as a woman. However, it also shows that the objective meaning regarding femininity, seated in reproduction, would make her feel humiliated in view of specific social interactions which would cover this performed capacity.

> Disappointed. Because I possess a will to externalize the value of my feelings with my partner. A child is the production of that affection and love. (M06).

The discussions presented by the women lead to the hypothesis that experiences of infertility and deficiency are very close. Notions of debility, frustration, guilt, impotence and incapacity are recurrent in the women's answers when explaining their emotions in view of the possibility of infertility (twelve questionnaires cite at least one of these feelings). The women project a feminine identity such as a particular way to experiment an externalized life and to suddenly come across themselves with the breaking of what they had constructed for themselves and others regarding being a woman causing pain and the feeling of being less than a woman, to belong less to the category which before they felt fully capable of being a part of.

The above mentioned emotions refer to an idea of injury, from the moment where the interviewed women related the loss of a biological capacity as a disadvantage and interpreted this incapacity as debilitating for social life. In the social game, these women would suddenly come across a situation where their bodies would be socially unacceptable, or at least, inferior. If the definition of being woman is conditional to the existence of the reproductive capacity, when this disappears the inferiorization of the infertile feminine body appears as a possible result. One creates a gap in the social *status* of femininity, an empty space in their identifying definitions. The moment which would be privileged for cutting the experience for construction of a new form of behaving and which is recognized in the world, coincides with the rupturing of femininity.

> I think that I would feel less of a woman, seeing as I see the greatest virtue a woman has is the possibility of producing a newborn child, of being mother […] (M53).

In accordance with this opinion, it may be affirmed that maternity is located in the plane of virtue, in other words, in the moral field, however, women do not disengage form the concept of a biological essence or nature: the ontology of femininity refers to two interconnected spheres. And it is this close relationship that is presented as the cause of the said feelings of incapacity for a complete social life, even one which has no physical and/or cognitive impediment for the accomplishment of their yearnings, desires and expectations. The idea of complete femininity appeared in the answers linked to not losing reproductive capacity, even when not used throughout life, such as would be the case in choosing not to have children.

> A little sad for not having the option to choose between having or not having children, however, with certainty I would support adoption. (M03).

"Woman is a uterus", therefore, she is not very distant from the objective meaning of femininity for the young women of Brazilian universities. The complete body leaves the stage and enters a scene of inferiorized body. The body as an experience limiting unit is the only possibility to exist in the world: only through it, experiences become accessible. The valuation of this mold as biological and reproductive allocate it with a defined role in social interactions in a way which the separation between being and the world already is meant. The infertile feminine body is shown as the moral and corporal transgression of what it is to be a woman, this same transgression only being possible because femininity is forced into a specific concept of nature-reproduction.

> I don't know how to objectively talk about how it would make me feel. However, probably debilitated, because I would lose a relatively common biological function which is common to every individual. (M28).

> Very bad. To lose something like this is very frustrating and brings sensations of impotence. (M09).

In only one questionnaire, the current meaning of femininity is questioned:

> I would face it normally, because, if I wanted children, I would adopt. However, the feeling of pity coming from society would annoy me, seeing that for it, to be fertile is obligation of woman. (M38).

This questioning seems to corroborate the feelings of deficiency experienced by the women in the situation of infertility generated by social relationships of which the women are a part of. For this answer, societies, rules or social expectations would be responsible for not incomplete social participation of women when infertile, once the objective meaning of femininity imposes a specific body type. For the woman above there seems to be no problem in infertility itself, disclosing a possible capacity to relativize femininity when detaching maternity from a body suitable for reproduce. The answer demonstrates the possibility of the diversity of subjective meanings regarding people and situations.

However, I would like to consider two things beyond this possibility of seating femininity in other bases. The first refers to the separation between women and their social pairs when infertility is placed between them; because M38 recognizes some women would be separated (by themselves or others) from social life for not being able to have the same biological linked children when seeing themselves as abnormal. Secondly, it refers to the fact that adoption is not necessarily the affirmation of non hegemonic females, being able to be seen as half redeemed and reaffirmation of the necessity of being a mother in the most varied forms.

> Completely destroyed and desolate. It would be one of the biggest disillusionments of my life. I, with certainty, would adopt a child, but I think that it would be always frustrating for me by not be able to reproduce, as well as many other women. (M04).

Therefore, at least three analytical possibilities mentioned through the described opinions are visualized. The non necessity of being a mother, having no problems with infertility. The possibility of adoption as an alternative to guarantee the accomplishment of the desire of being a mother as a reaffirmation or resignification of maternity. And, furthermore, infertility having the power of making women themselves feeling deficient. Deficiency is not caused by an injury or illness medically proven to remove their reproductive capacity however, mainly, through the social value surrounding feminine fertility.

From the medical or biological point of view the existence of injury in itself for infertility[1] is not necessary – also because, in this research, it talks of a projection. Only one parallel possibility with the deficiency exists because the socio-cultural aspect is interlineated: an involuntary absence of children when the logical feminine-nature-reproduction is regent of the definitions of the feminine gender. These imperative and universalized norms make it difficult for other accomplishments (or considerations regarding them) of femininity detached from reproduction, without which causes negative stigmatizations for women.

Resignifying femininity represents, for these women, relocalizing themselves. For this, the habitual mark in understanding femininity must be weakened or even disappear. Infertility, at least for a moment, can cause the running down of the objective meaning of what it is to be a woman, affecting the personal constructions felt in life. However, for confirmation of this hypothesis, further research regarding the individual and collective life trajectories of women before and after infertility is required. It is important to remember here that there is a moment of reality crisis of the known which seems to transform women into strangers within their own houses, in their own bodies. She no longer has a map which gives a guide of the new form of living in this femininity in this world and the resignification appears as a way to give continuity to individual life; since the guideline code is ruptured, the recipes for daily life become redundant.

> Terrible! I always wanted to produce a child. It would take me a long time to adapt to the new situation. (M01).

To say that it has broken femininity or that infertility places women between tradition and the resignification of liberty is to assume that the discovery of infertility is the possibility of chance and the disillusion regarding preestablished concepts. The certainty presented by the young women regarding what it is to be a woman is placed in check demanding the recreation of themselves. Each woman, in her singularity, has to search for the redefinition of the feminine meaning of life in this society, a reorientation for her life. However, the newly created meaning has to be compatible with some objective meanings already present within the social game. The existence of *public mind experiences* impedes that the world's meanings are totally unconnected from the life of interactions.

To be a woman is to be inserted into an existential group and the resignification of femininity must be formed inside this group. The category of woman is

not placed in ways of extinguishing or destruction because of disillusionment or absurdity of the rupture of preconceived identity due to infertility. For this, at the time of research, the women's opinions seem to highlight the infertile body as more inferior than which indicates the new meaning of being a woman in this world. The research shows that freedom of the ego does not prevail over nature, as Simmel points out with respect to Kant's question[2]. The oppression of nature and history barely makes full creativity possible in the production of new meanings for femininity. Inheritance still seems to prevail: women when thinking about the condition of infertility do not construct a new idea of woman and do not remove themselves from the category of woman; they are still women, and even infertile, they would be inferior-women!

These young people who had participated in the research live in a specific social configuration which offers possibilities and limits for the experience of femininity. Amongst these configurations, in the last decade, it is highlighted that the women recognized the guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights. They understand the safe exercise of feminine sexuality as well as the guarantee of a safe and pleasant reproductive process. The debate regarding reproductive technologies is inserted in this area and one of the most controversial discussions regarding the subject is if having children is a right and, if in view of infertility public health must provide assisted reproduction programs.

In the Brazilian public health system, assisted reproduction programs have been created in university hospitals and some public hospitals, since these are the country's great medicinal research centers. And, as Marilena Corrêa (2001) points out, the use of reproductive technologies in very close to the condition of human experimentation research, due to the unfamiliarity of risks and successes of the applied techniques, as well as because of the rapid technological-scientific development in the area which gives character of constant testing of the new technologies.

However, in the last years, some public hospitals have disengaged from university hospitals (such as the Hospital Regional da Asa Sul, DF) opening assisted reproduction programs, as well as the proliferation of specialized private clinics, what guarantee technical legitimacy before the population. The demand on the Health department for these programs was initiated in middle of the decade of 2000 and in 2005 the agency announced its proposals to regularize offers of procedures of assisted reproduction within the SUS (Garrafa 2007). Although the use of these technologies is still not regulated in Brazil by federal law[3], the creation of these programs within the sphere of public health guarantees the legitimacy of techniques before the Brazilian society. This is because in democratic societies the public sphere represents the place the entire community would be accepted. The public's own concept refers to it as being common. The creation of public assisted reproduction policies allows the inference that the use of reproductive technologies is accepted in a consensus for all or for the majority of the country's population.

The existence of public hospitals with assisted reproduction programs demonstrates the attempt to democratize access to reproductive technologies which are expensive and which have low success rates. To democratize means to attempt to give access to people from various social classes guaranteeing the satisfaction of the desire to have children, the principles of our public health system, especially, the universality of access to services considered important within health care. Even some authors, such as Rosana Barbosa (2003), point to a lack of democracy in the creation of access within public health, reinforcing situations of inequality, which marks the construction of public assisted reproduction programs revealing the proposal that all people have the right to biological filiation. Or, at least, that they are not private from the satisfaction of this desire due to the social class they belong to, since the cost of treatment can reach R$12 thousand per attempt.

The technological use within the public scope was a little problematic, taking into consideration the amount of feminist literature and debates of surrounding the subject. The political discussions had still not incorporated debates regarding gender relations, naturalization and denaturalization of femininity, for example, which is one of the principal discussions considered by this article. In this sense, the creation of assisted reproduction programs, whether public or private, seems to reinforce traditional moralities while they could be great protagonists of the moral transformation of Brazilian society, especially in the construction of femininity and sexuality.

What if it was seen that its own programs reinforce the naturalized logic of femininity and heterosexuality when prioritizing access to heterosexual couples without children, deprioritizing homosexuals or people with a desire of filiation without sexual relations. Assisted reproduction programs are provided, normally, to people who prove their incapacity to have children in medical terms, in contrast to their sterility or non biological filiation because of sexual choices (Diniz & Costa 2005).

What was perceived during the analyzed research here is that infertility, more than being inserted in a context of the necessity of treatment services, is inherently in a field of moral conflict. Moral conflict in the definition of femininity, sexuality, in the definition of people eligible for assisted reproduction programs. It is a field of conflicts between traditional moralities and the possibilities of redefining the moral world of Western societies.

However, the most marked question regarding infertility is of how it configures itself as a problem, disease and up to deficiency, deserving medical attention of a high complexity from a moral definition regarding what femininity must be. The research indicates that it is exactly the feminine-nature-reproduction logic that the incentivizer suffers in view of infertility for the redefinition feminine incapacity in other terms that are not its reproductive capacity.

> Sad, since I have intensions of being a future mother. I would research all options that medicine has to offer and, in last case, would opt for an adoption. (M06).

Even when there is no expectation of living through the experience of maternity, as some women never affirmed to have made plans to have children, the weak reproductive capacity is the cause of psychological suffering for women. The difficulty of considering other forms of satisfaction and completeness of femininity seems to be close to the naturalization of femininity in Western societies.

The political-feminist demand of Linda Alcoff (2001) to discuss the deestablishment of a fixed feminine identity is a good proposal to allow actions which stimulate the formation of new meanings for femininity, to be woman, or even for the insertion of diversities of feminine identities in the political space. As considered throughout the text, infertility is placed in a paradoxical position in our social reality, opening spaces in such a way to ressignify the distant nature-reproduction logic of femininity regarding the allowance of its reinsertion of women in this logic through other mechanisms such as assisted reproduction and adoption (which can have various interpretations, as highlighted).

Donna Haraway's (1995) is another example of the denaturalization of theoretical perspective. In order to destructure a supposed feminine essence and to speak of new femininity possibilities, this author considers *cyborg*, a political strategy which permits the removal of the human being from the structuration of the concept of Man, constructed from the classic Greek culture as white, powerful, Mr. The cyborg is nothing natural; in contrast, it is pure artificiality. A hybrid between human and machine. It is not constructed by hands other than non human ones. Haraway's force-argumentative is to be found in this point: human beings are a human construction.

This key-metaphor would allow the redefinition of human beings to transcend to essentialisms and representationism (Arditi 1995). It is the translation of the reconstructive challenge of new social practices which incorporates the difference, whatever they are, and not the transformation into inequality of power from nature's argument. Therefore, the *cyborg* is the deestablishing figure of the social notion of linked knowledges in human naturalization, especially feminine naturalization, mining the concept of human nature. The merit of these two differentiated theoretical artifices of feminists studies accurately questions the existence of the natural: for the two authors, nature does not exist and the behaviors, culture and concepts of identities are the historical fruits of their own human relationships.

For Alcoff and Haraway, the resignification of femininity will only be possible with the denaturalization of gender as a first step in order to remove it from the field of a socialization based on the concept of biological and social reproduction. However, it is necessary to understand that, as the answers of the young women point out, the feminist struggle for actions which generate other possibilities of thinking and exist in femininity even if they seem distant by historical and social force of the reproductive imperative and the linking of the being a woman to nature or the essence of maternity as a universal virtue.

Final considerations

The panorama of mentalities traced by this article demonstrate that the suffering of the women in view of the expectation of infertility is so intense that the incapacity to generate biologically linked children transmutes into deficiency, at least in the terms of the presented theoretical perspectives. The suffering of infertility is confined to private, it is configured as debilitating and frustrating and is threatening the identity of women in the traditional concept of femininity.

Although femininity is constructed over the imperative of biological and social reproduction is a problem and the feminist proposal of this work is that it is of a redefined fact, which it is noticed that even with the rupture of the meaning of life of the women researched when considering the impact of infertility, there is little possibility of redefining it in other terms that are not feminine-nature-reproduction logic.

Femininity is placed in a logical place: infertility may in such a way be the context of the possibility of redefinition over another less overwhelming or more libertarian logic, in view of the rupture which would be considered natural, regarding the moment of reinforcement of femininity's naturalization. And is this characteristic or paradoxical aspect which transforms the subject of the new conceptive technologies into a space of burning debates for theoretical feminists preoccupied regarding the formularization of public health policies.

The proposals for the construction of the feminine experience in other logics have not been taken into consideration in the creation of female conceptive health policies, even though so many Brazilian feminists work with this subject. The incorporation of the traditional definition of femininity for assisted reproduction programs, instead of stimulating the questioning of the desire for children, offers women the medicalization of their bodies, the weakening of their beings, for the reintroduction into normality. What everything indicates to is that the concept of infertility as a disease or deficiency is one of the biggest motivators for the increase of clinics specialized in reproduction.

It leaves these considerations regarding feminine naturalization and the constitution of infertility as a deficiency that policies in relation to reproductive technologies must be formulated. To make less discriminatory health policies possible and to promote gender equality, it is essential to reflect regarding cultural symbols which form the social populations' imaginations.

Notes

1. "infertility has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the incapacity of a couple to obtain pregnancy or childbirth of a live baby one year

after regular sexual relations without the use of contraceptive methods, increasing its possibility of occurrence with age, being that one in every four couples older than 35 years will suffer from infertility" (Borlot & Trindade 2004).

2. "The answer that Kant gave to this question – As nature is it possible? – it is of value for the philosophy of life. This value has to be seen with the freedom that the ego earned, thanks to Kant, in detriment of nature… the natural existence was subordinated to the will of the ego." (Simmel 1971: 04. free translation, with emphasis in the orginal)

3. The only regulation is of the Federal Council of Medicine, resolution 1358/1992, although law projects are being processed slowly in Congress.

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