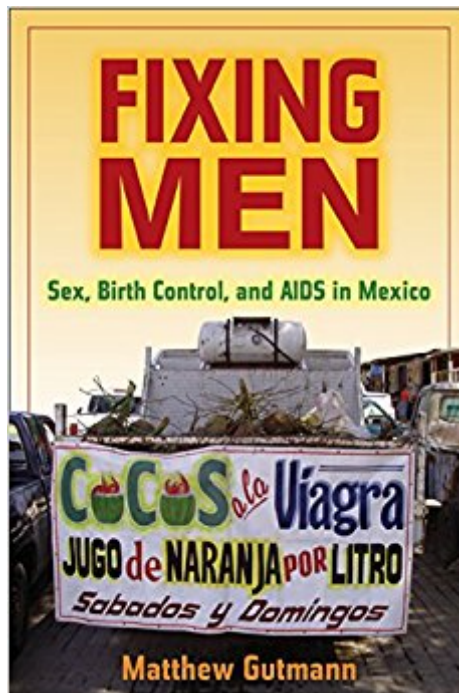




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# Fixing Men: Sex, Birth Control, And AIDS In Mexico



## Synopsis

Most studies on reproductive rights make women their focus, but in *Fixing Men*, Matthew Gutmann illuminates what men in the Mexican state of Oaxaca say and do about contraception, sex, and AIDS. Based on extensive fieldwork, this breakthrough study by a preeminent anthropologist of men and masculinities reveals how these men and the women in their lives make decisions about birth control, how they cope with the plague of AIDS, and the contradictory healing techniques biomedical and indigenous medical practitioners employ for infertility, impotence, and infidelity. Gutmann talks with men during and after their vasectomies and discovers why some opt for sterilization while so many others feel "planned out of family planning."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Fixing Men is terrific; sharp observation, tough-minded analysis, beautiful writing."&#151;Raewyn Connell, author of *Masculinities*"By bringing together a focus on men's sexuality in relation to key sexual health issues such as HIV/AIDS, family planning and contraception, vasectomies, and traditional healing for sexual ailments such as impotence and infertility, *Fixing Men* makes a major contribution that should help to define the field for some time to come."&#151;Richard Parker, author of *Beneath the Equator: Cultures of Desire, Male Homosexuality, and Emerging Gay Communities in Brazil*"This ethnographic study of male sexuality, reproductive health and health behavior makes new and needed contribution to several scholarly debates and literatures. It is certain to attract interest from medical anthropologists, along with researchers on gender, sexuality,

Mexican studies, and reproductive health."#151;Carole Browner, University of California, Los Angeles

"In this consistently engaging study of male reproductive health, Matt Gutmann has produced an original contribution to Latin American ethnography, the study of masculinity, and medical anthropology. Gutmann listens carefully to the life stories of men in Oaxaca and discovers among them a rich range of emotions, opinions, and behavior. As with his previous influential work, *Fixing Men* presents a serious challenge to stereotypical portraits of what it means to be a man in Mexico. Once you start reading this riveting volume, you will not be able to put it down."#151;Stanley Brandes, University of California, Berkeley

"Matthew Gutmann draws on his magisterial understanding of Mexican masculinities in demonstrating how taking male subjectivities and migration seriously can illuminate the dynamics of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. In *Fixing Men*, a conspiracy of silence recedes in the face of his dialogues with Oaxacan men, whose words, labor, and bodies challenge the cultural, sexual, and neoliberal logics that have enabled scholars and public health practitioners alike to avoid these complex questions."#151;Charles Briggs, author of *Stories in the Time of Cholera*

"*Fixing Men* is a path-breaking study of men's reproductive health in Latin America. In a scholarly field where the focus is almost entirely on women, *Fixing Men* shows us that men are important reproductive actors, whose problems, needs, and desires must be addressed in the fields of family planning, sex education, and HIV/AIDS. This book represents an important contribution to the anthropology of reproduction, the new masculinity studies, and to Oaxacan ethnography. Global health practitioners would also benefit from Gutmann's insights about the need to address men directly in reproductive healthcare delivery."#151;Marcia C. Inhorn, author of *Local Babies*, Global Science

Matthew Gutmann is Professor of Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, and Latin American Studies at Brown University and is the author of *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Tenth Anniversary edition, 2006) and *The Romance of Democracy: Compliant Defiance in Contemporary Mexico* (2002), both from UC Press.

Got this book for my Chicano Studies class and it did its job. It was in great condition when I recieved it and for a pretty good price too.

This book made me think about a comment from Professor Robert Richmond Ellis. He stated that he was going to write a book about Spanish-speaking gay autobiographies, but he learned that Latin American works always brought up issues of race in ways that Spanish counterparts did not. I

didn't read Professor Gutmann's book about masculinity in Mexico City, but I imagine that this book may be its diametrical opposite in that Oaxaca is presented as rural and having a large indigenous population. Professor Gutmann is very interested in the superstructure. Whereas other academics or laypeople would point to culture as the reason for most phenomena, this author points to governmental rules, global companies' profits, economies, and international migration as the cause of many items. For example, he stated that Chinese men don't choose to use condoms for fun; their government's one-child policy forces them to use protection. With regard to Mexico, he notes that the Mexican government is complicit with global pill companies in not bringing the price of HIV meds down. He states that if family planning clinics only focus on women, then few men will know they have the option of getting a vasectomy. In the book, one chapter tends to speak about these superstructural matters and the following chapter would speak about the author's everyday conversations with Oaxacans. For readers that don't care for academic-speak, they can easily skip over the more complicated chapters. The penultimate chapter on indigenous healing is a bit extraneous. He begins by saying curanderos often don't employ rigid dichotomies between the sexes. The chapter only marginally speaks of men's sexual choices. It's kinda just a way to lengthen the book. Dr. Gutmann becomes upset when any Mexican says, "Mexican men get HIV because they are so horny, that they'll even sleep with men." Logically, he points out to such speakers that when he asks of any man who has kicked it with men they say no. A huge purpose in this book is for him to detail other ways that Oaxacan men catch HIV. However, by finding the exceptions, he may be hiding the rule in a dangerous way. There is a book about gays and HIV in the Yucatan and the American professor there detailed the many ways that HIV-positive Mexican men do everything possible to not reveal same-sex action. Gutmann himself interviews many Mexican men that admit that they have had sex with gay men or prostituted themselves with men. One thing I do love is that he describes a "mix'e" who seems like a Mexican two-spirit person. I once read in a book on Aztecs in a small footnote that they probably had third-gender men like US Native American tribes had. Perhaps this book should be read in conjunction with other books on indigenous homosexuality in the Americas. Gutman is a progressive with a wife and two daughters. He may not be knowledgeable of the huge numbers of communities and nations of color that dismiss gayness as "a white scourge" or "unknown to us before colonialism," etc. Several African, African-American, South Asian gay activists have tried to challenge that fallacy. So, in this light, it is amazing that heterosexual Oaxacans can admit that same-sex liaisons happen. They never blame US Americans or Europeans for "forcing" Mexican men to get busy in that way. The way that these Oaxacans challenge gay invisibility in this non-white context is amazing and wonderful, yet Dr. Gutmann gives

a positive review of that phenomenon. I may not have articulated this well, but I find it troubling that Dr. Gutmann did not take this into account. As far as I know, Professor Gutmann was not teaching at Brown when I was an undergraduate there. Still, countless students speak about how they wish more classes would bring issues of race, gender, sexuality, national identity, and justice matters together. Well, Gutmann accomplishes that in this book and something tells me his classes would be awesome to take. I imagine that books like this one could be useful to not only anthro majors, but also gender studies majors. This is especially true as gender studies departments try to discuss men's issues, and not just women's issues. Really, his presence and writing may be just another countless reason for students to apply to and matriculate to this awesome university.

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