

FIRST HYPOTHESES ABOUT THE EMERGENCE OF “SEX” SEGREGATED TOILETS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS, BUENOS AIRES*

*Primeras hipótesis sobre la introducción de los sanitarios
segregados por «sexos» en las escuelas primarias de Buenos Aires*

Lucila da Silva^a

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Abstract. This article, based on a study of the introduction of toilets in primary schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is part of a line of research that locates the emergence of binary definitions of sex, gender and sexuality as we know them (associated with a set of behaviours, gestures, corporalities, and values), between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

There is consensus regarding the central role that primary schooling has played in regulating gender and sexuality along cis and heterosexual norms. As this study shows, school architecture was one of the technologies that worked in this sense.

At the end of the nineteenth century the practicality of “men” and “women” sharing educational spaces was widely discussed. However, the practice of marking toilets in primary schools according to “sex” had not yet become widespread. The aim of this article is to identify practices and discourses related to spatial “sex” segregation regarding primary school toilets. We argue that the “sexual” segregation of toilets is part of a series of discourses and practices that have operated since the end of

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^aInstituto Patagónico de Estudios en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales (IPEHCS-CONICET-UNCo). 1400 Buenos Aires st. Neuquén, Argentina. mluciladasilva@gmail.com

the nineteenth century, producing two hegemonic and excluding sex-gender figures: “man” and “woman”.

Keywords: History of schooling; School toilets; Sex-gender; School architecture.

Resumen. *Este artículo está basado en una investigación acerca de la emergencia de los sanitarios en escuelas primarias de Buenos Aires, Argentina. A su vez, se enmarca en una línea de investigación que ubica el surgimiento de definiciones binarias de sexo, género y sexualidad tal como las conocemos (asociadas a un conjunto de conductas, gestos, corporalidades y valores), entre mediados del siglo XIX y principios del XX.*

Existe consenso respecto al rol central que ha desempeñado la educación primaria en la regulación del género y la sexualidad, junto con las normas cis y heterosexuales. Como muestra este estudio, la arquitectura escolar fue una de las tecnologías que funcionó en este sentido.

A finales del siglo XIX se discutió ampliamente la conveniencia de que “hombres” y “mujeres” compartieran espacios educativos. Sin embargo, la práctica de identificar los baños en las escuelas primarias según el “sexo” aún no se había generalizado. A partir de allí, el objetivo de este artículo es identificar prácticas y discursos relacionados con la segregación espacial “por sexo” en relación con los baños de las escuelas primarias argentinas. Sostenemos que la segregación “sexual” de los baños escolares forma parte de una serie de discursos y prácticas que han operado desde finales del siglo XIX, produciendo dos figuras sexo-genéricas hegemónicas y excluyentes: el “hombre” y la “mujer”.

Palabras clave: *Historia de la escolarización; Baños escolares; Sexo-género; Arquitectura escolar.*

INTRODUCTION

The wild profusion of infantile sexuality will always be tamed.¹

The relations of the sexes, that is, the strong protection of one part and the loving help of the other, must have their place in the new education and the students must learn it.²

¹ Gayle Rubin “El Tráfico de Mujeres: Notas sobre la Economía Política del Sexo”, *Nueva Antropología* VIII, no. 30 (1986): 131.

² Bertilda Ayarragaray, “Coeducación de los sexos”, *Archivos de Pedagogía y Ciencias Afines* 5, no. 16 (1909): 75.

In 1986 the historian Joan Scott published an article entitled *Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis*. She addressed the incorporation of the concept “gender”, stressing that it has been useful to escape the “biological determinism” implicit in the notions of “sex” and “sexual difference”.³ This text is essential since it allows us to think about the category “gender” from a historical perspective. The author identifies a “descriptive”⁴ historical analysis, by proposing the need to “reject the fixed and permanent quality of binary opposition, achieve a genuine historicity and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference”.

In a similar path, Judith Butler’s works published in the early 1990s critiques the notions of “sex”, “gender”, “sexuality” and “desire”, which were intended – and still are – to be necessary linked. In her studies, the relationships of “coherence” or “continuity” between these elements are established and maintained thanks to the existence of a specific number of “intelligible genres”.⁵ Hence, some authors such as Moira Pérez point out that Butler thought of gender identity “not only as a construction, but as possibilities, and how that construction restricts them”.⁶ Besides, the author demonstrates how the “materialization” of “sex” in the body is also related to gender: “The regulatory norms of “sex” work in a performative way to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the sex of the body, to materialize sexual difference to consolidate the heterosexual imperative”.⁷

The theoretical trace marked by these contributions is currently followed by numerous empirical works. Queer Theory and Trans Studies have opened a relatively new research agenda, by proposing that it is necessary to “point out the historical processes through which certain physical characteristics were isolated and privileged” to establish the gender-sex binary.⁸

³ Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, in *Culture, Society and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2007), 77.

⁴ Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, 79.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 2011), 72.

⁶ Moira Pérez, “Teoría Queer, ¿para qué?”, *Isel* 5 (2016): 189.

⁷ Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 18.

⁸ Pérez, “Teoría Queer, ¿para qué?”, 190.

This article is based on a study of the introduction of toilets in primary schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is also grounded in the aforementioned conceptualizations, locating the emergence of binary definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality as we know them (associated with a set of behaviours, gestures, corporalities, and values), between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.⁹ Furthermore, the central theoretical position of this work is Foucauldian, since it emphasizes the productive nature of power relations. In this regard, we aim to take distance from the “repressive hypothesis”,¹⁰ and inquiry about practices and discourses that emerged along with the modern beliefs about children’s sexuality and gender.

This text is very modest in scope. In fact, its “hypothetical” character is emphasized in the title. The reason is that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the identification of toilets according to binary criteria of “sex” had not been generalized in Buenos Aires city primary schools.¹¹ This procedure was present in “monumental”¹² buildings that had been designed as schools. However, most primary institutions operated then in rented housing, and there the sexual segregation of “latrines” or “W.C.” was not a material concern.

Despite this, numerous investigations have shown that anxieties about the sexual segregation of space were current. The prudence of “men” and “women” sharing spaces (specially educative ones) had been widely discussed since the end of the nineteenth century. Considering this scenario, we directed our efforts to comprehend this configuration of toilets, by tracking discourses and practices about the “sexual” division of the school space.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Michel Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad I. La voluntad de saber* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno España Editores, 2013); Norbert Elias, *The civilizing process: sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Thomas Laqueur, *Making sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Pérez, “Teoría Queer, ¿para qué?”; Joan Scott, “La mujer trabajadora en el siglo XIX”, in George Duby and Michel Perrot *Historia de las Mujeres en Occidente*, vol. 4 (Taurus: Madrid, 1993), 425-461; Louis-Georges Tin, *The invention of heterosexual culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad*; Butler, *Bodies that matter*.

¹¹ Throughout this article we refer to the notion of “sex” since it was the one used at the time studied.

¹² Fabio Grementieri and Claudia Schmidt, *Arquitectura, educación y patrimonio: Argentina, 1600-1975* (Buenos Aires: Pamplatina, 2010).

The discussion presented here is the continuation of previous works.¹³ We analysed official files, press articles, blueprints and legislation related to the emergence of primary school toilets, between 1875 and 1905.¹⁴ In this article, we focus on a corpus of documents under the thematic unit “coeducation” (also called “mixed education”) as a strategy to access statements about sexual segmentation in school spaces.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis we present here is the result of the work with diverse official sources, in a period established between 1875 and 1905. The period was defined in relation to Laws n° 988 (1875), and n° 4878 (1905). These two points were chosen since they established the terms of the emerging common education system in Argentina. Besides, the last third of the nineteenth century was a period of building criteria consolidation in the city of Buenos Aires. So, first, we studied regulations about education, hygiene and construction, to inquiry if these mentioned bathrooms and what they said about it. With surprise, we noticed that these spaces were hardly mentioned in this period. This fact allowed us to infer that we were dealing with an emerging concern.

At the same time, we started studying school blueprints. We expected to find both here and in regulations the material features of these spaces. Soon we realized that only new schools had official blueprints. Also, when we examined school architecture closer,¹⁵ we conclude that we wouldn't find a model of school bathrooms because there were any guidelines for

¹³ Lucila da Silva, “Siete notas breves acerca de la historia de los Sanitarios Escolares en Argentina”, *Barda* 5, no. 8 (2019): 12-19; Lucila da Silva, “Subjetivación, Arquitectura y Poder: Claves para un Debate acerca de los Sanitarios Escolares sin Género”, *Espacios en Blanco. Revista de Educación* 1, no. 29 (2019): 133-44; Lucila da Silva, “Hacia una Genealogía del Sanitario Escolar. Primeros Hallazgos: Buenos Aires (1881-1905)”, *Anuario de Historia de la Educación* 19 (2019): 24-49.

¹⁴ Study period 1875-1905 (Law 988, of Common Education in Buenos Aires province; Law 4874/05 of schooling in provinces). Sources: Legislation (national and provincial laws, municipal regulations), National Council of Education (CNE) files, architectural drawings, magazine articles, photographs. Archives: National General Archive (AGN): over 300 files, period 1882-1905; Center of documentation and research of public architecture (CeDIAP): 96 files, including architectural drawings; National Teachers' Library (BNM): educational legislation and *El Monitor de la Educación Común* magazine articles; Legislature of Buenos Aires city Library 'Esteban Echeverría' (BEE); Library Ing. Agustín Gonzalez (BAysa).

¹⁵ Lucila da Silva, “Iniciativas Oficiales para la Edificación de Escuelas Primarias en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires durante el siglo XIX”, *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 9, no. 1 (2022): 150-167.

school buildings; and fundamentally because most primary schools worked in rental housing.

Therefore, we decided to consider these official sources as “existing”, “non-existing” or “emerging” State concerns. Then, we found another fundamental source that allowed us to approach the quotidian life in schools: The National Council of Education (CNE) files. These documents contained much valuable information: 1) Letters from principals requesting resources, repairs, personnel, etc.; 2) Reports from specialized offices and inspectors; 3) Budgets; 4) Unofficial blueprints (from tenants of school-houses); among others.

In light of this empirical ground, we attempted to intersect these diverse sources to address the major problem about school bathrooms emergence in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There, as mentioned, we did not find regulations or discourses about segregation of toilets until mid-twentieth century. But we knew from the documents that this was present in some institutions. In this article, as a strategy to get closer to these phenomena, we decided to include material on coeducation. Our attempt was to analyse our findings about bathrooms considering these discourses. It is the result of that work what we present here.

DISCUSSION

Coeducation of the sexes in Argentina

Important studies have focused on the history of “mixed education” or “coeducation”, mainly in the United States and Europe, including studies in Spain as well as in Spanish-speaking countries in South America such as Ecuador and Peru.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the topic seems to have received little attention in Argentina. It has been treated tangentially in works about women’s education or those with a gender perspective. It

¹⁶ Rebecca Rogers, “État des lieux de la mixité. Historiographies comparées en Europe”, *Clio* 18 (2003): 177-202, consulted on: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cli0.620>; David B. Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Learning together: a history of coeducation in American public schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992); Marina Subirats, “¿Coeducación o escuela segregada? Un viejo y persistente debate”, *Revista de Sociología de la Educación-RASE* 3, no. 1 (2010): 143-158. Ana María Goetschel, “La separación de los sexos: Educación y relaciones de género”, *Íconos-Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 16 (2003): 124-128. Enrique G. Gordillo, “Historia de la educación mixta y su difusión en la educación formal occidental”, *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 17, no. 25 (2015): 107-124.

also received mention in works that describe the positions of specialists and personalities with political influence. Nevertheless, we haven't found works that analyse these discourses about coeducation along with daily school practices.

As mentioned, discussions about the convenience of "single-sex education" in Argentina were prolific at the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, by the 1930s the topic remained in force. It was still discussed in educational journals such as *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, and in more popular publications such as *Caras y Caretas*.¹⁷

As a starting point, it is fundamental to point out that behind the figure of "mixed education" or "coeducation" there are a series of practices that are impossible to reduce to the formal registration of schools as belonging to "girls", "boys", or "mixed". Indeed, there were a multiplicity of gendering practices in public schools of which there is no systematic record, and which preceded the institutionalization of bathrooms. Although the study was carried out in the United States, some practices mentioned by Tyack and Hansot can give us indications of a still unexplored multiplicity:

There were many ways to educate boys and girls together under the same roof of the public school: to separate them in distinct rooms or on opposite sides of the classroom but give them the same course of studies; to offer them distinct curricula; or to mix boys and girls together in the classroom, teach them the same subjects, and subject them to the same set of rules and rewards. The last arrangement became over time the most common gender practice in public education; school people of the latter half of the nineteenth century called it "identical coeducation".

In Argentina, for instance, we can locate different quotidian practices like single-sex schools that eventually housed children "of the opposite sex", specificities according to level (primary or secondary), segregation "by sex" within schools, differentiated disciplinary sanctions, etc.

¹⁷ Josefina Fernández and Daniel Hernández, "La devolución de las cacerolas: representaciones sobre la mujer en la construcción de la nación argentina", in ed. Dora Barrancos, Donna Guy y Adriana Valobra, *Moralidades y comportamientos sexuales. Argentina, 1880-2011* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2014), 131-154.

All these practices suggest that sexual segregation in common schools had many nuances, being more a chimera than a consistently delivered policy.

When we inquired about the reasons for sex segregated initiatives, we found that one of the most common analyses affirms that sex segregation had its roots in the reticence to educate girls. However, in the 1880s the female presence in the primary schools of the Municipality of Buenos Aires was a fact. Some data is recorded in this regard in the Report on the State of Common Education of 1881 (“Informe sobre el estado de la educación común de 1881”). First, the “Number of female teachers” (439) already exceeded the “Number of male teachers” (398), registering a tendency to displace male teachers from public institutions, a phenomenon historians defined as the “feminization of teaching”. Also, the fact that male teachers dominated the teaching corps in private schools reinforces the idea that early public institutions preferred female teachers because they had lower salaries. This same trend was reflected in attendance at common schools as recorded in the Report. Female students in common schools represented 53.78 % of the total number of children enrolled in school.¹⁸

As we see, the reticence to educate girls is a phenomenon that demand a closer approach and is not the cause for segregated schooling. We want to propose here that, in the case of Argentina in this period of study, we will see how many of the concerns that crystallized in the discussions about common mixed education, coeducation, or as “the problem of women” were part of a middle-term debate about what would be the bodies, gestures, roles, and places that “women” and “men” should occupy in the ongoing modernization process.

Indeed, the “civilizing” work¹⁹ of modern schooling was a process that took many years. The sphere of influence and the curriculum of primary

¹⁸ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Informe sobre el estado de la educación común en la Capital y la Aplicación en las provincias de la ley nacional de subvenciones seguido de documentos y circulares* (Buenos Aires: Tipográfica de la Escuela de Artes y oficios, 1881).

¹⁹ Elsa Muñiz García, “Historia y género. Hacia la construcción de una historia cultural del género” in ed. Sara Elena Pérez Gil y Patricia Ravelo (Coord.) *Voces disidentes. debates contemporáneos en los estudios de género en México* (México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1999); Pablo Scharagrodsky y Mariano Narodowski, “Investigación educativa y masculinidades: más allá del feminismo, más acá de la testosterona”, *Revista Colombiana de Educación* 49 (2005): 61-80.

school emerged along with compulsory schooling. In this context, this institution operated as an effective gender *dispositif*,²⁰ thus contributing to the emergence of the “spheres” of “the feminine” and “the masculine”. That is why some authors argue that this project’s aim was producing the citizen, and his wife/mother.²¹

In this sense, it is possible to agree with Morgade²² that nineteenth-century education was strongly oriented toward defining the functions of persons gendered women. Nevertheless, there is a paradigm shift here that reflects the modern spirit of the time, since women began to be considered useful members of society who should be educated because their knowledge “could no longer be entrusted only to instinct”.²³ These convictions are still found in conservative figures such as Estrada, who affirms that “difference in functions implies a difference in preparation”.²⁴

As a result of the work with documents, we observe that politicians and specialists who advocated co-education gave principally economic reasons. It was too expensive to build and support separate buildings. However, they also believed that the school building should reproduce what they understood to be “the natural order” so that students of “both sexes” learn to relate “harmoniously”: “Because the mixed school is not another thing that a social family shaped in everything according to the natural family”.²⁵ This position is expressed in some articles of *El Monitor*²⁶ journal:

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Vigilar y castigar: nacimiento de la prisión* (México: Siglo XXI, 2000); Nari, “La educación de la mujer”.

²¹ Nari, “La educación de la mujer”; Scharagrodsky and Narodowski, “Investigación educativa”.

²² Graciela Morgade, “Mujeres y educación formal: De la lucha por el acceso a la lucha por el currículum”, *Espacios de Crítica y Producción. FILO UBA* (1995): 26-34.

²³ Nari, “La educación de la mujer”, 36.

²⁴ José Manuel Estrada, *Memoria sobre la educación común en la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: UNIPE, 2011), 123

²⁵ Ayarragaray, “Coeducación de los sexos”, 75.

²⁶ As mentioned in previous works (Lucila da Silva, “El niño débil en la revista argentina *El Monitor de la Educación Común, 1908-1929*”, *Historia Social y de la Educación* 1 (2017): 1-22), the relevance of *El Monitor de la Educación Común* is important for two reasons: First, the pedagogical press played a fundamental role in Argentina; educators, politicians, specialists, and authorities discussed in these documents characteristics of the emerging common school. Second, this journal was the official document of the National Council of Education. It was used to broadcast legislation, statistics, official reports, etc.

The temporary separation of the sexes, that is, during the school years, is an ill-advised and counter-productive action; As for the absolute separation of the cloister, since it is anti-natural, anti-social, anti-human, we do not hesitate to label it hateful and criminal.²⁷

Another similar argument arises along with the feminization of teaching. Mixed primary school could be a place where the vocation of women – who naturally possessed aptitudes to educate all children – was fostered.²⁸ This position reflects a close connection between the formalization of girls' and mixed schooling, and the feminization of the teaching profession: "With the teacher we will be able to multiply the mixed schools in which they are educated, are formed by rubbing shoulders, and learn to esteem each other, to appreciate each other while respecting both sexes".²⁹ Besides, the feminization of teaching involved two other processes. On one hand, the "theory of separate spheres" sealed the professional and labour destiny of middle-class women with normal school training. On the other hand, it evidenced the early prominence of a liberal-utilitarian decision-making logic, centred on the notion of "cost".

In addition, those who opposed coeducation shared the idea of the school as a *theatre of life* but taking the argument to the extreme. They pointed out that "coeducational schools are in a certain way society itself: a society into which innocent children enter without defence".³⁰ It was argued that the natural reflection of society should be the family – not the school – and it constituted an enormous risk to expose children who had not yet incorporated the precepts of "reason" to mixed schools.

The idea of mixed education finally triumphed because, as Nari³¹ claims, the sexual division of schooling was ensured by the curriculum. This position was specified in the Buenos Aires province Law of 1875, where no consideration was made about sexual organization, but it was established that "[Art. 3] school duty lasts eight years for men and six for women, beginning

²⁷ CNE "Examen de maestros", *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 24, no. II (1883), 148.

²⁸ Estrada, *Memoria sobre la educación común*; Nari, "La educación de la mujer"; Tyack and Hansot, *Learning Together*.

²⁹ CNE 1883, 148.

³⁰ Estrada, *Memoria sobre la educación común*, 123.

³¹ Nari, "La educación de la mujer".

all at the age of six fulfilled, except for weakness of body or spirit".³² And later, the Common Education Law of 1884 formally sanctioned that "primary education for children from six to ten years of age, will preferably be given in mixed classes, under the exclusive direction of authorized teachers", but it established rigid distinctions regarding the curriculum:

Art. 6. The minimum compulsory instruction includes the following subjects: Reading and Writing; Arithmetic [...] Particular geography of the Republic and notions of Universal Geography; History of the Republic and notions of General History; National Language, Morality and Civility; Hygiene notions; notions of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences; notions of drawing and vocal music; Gymnastics and knowledge of the National Constitution. For girls, knowledge of handicrafts and notions of home economics will also be mandatory. For boys, knowledge of the simplest military exercises and evolutions. And in the campaigns, notions of agriculture and livestock.

"Coeducation" as a debate about the sexual definition of school space

In the 1880s the positions against and for coeducation achieved a certain rapprochement, to the extent that both sides agreed on the importance of redefining the curricular design of common schools, incorporating specificities to train girls according to their "mission". However, fundamental differences remained in relation to the school space. Discussions about the need to educate "girls" and "boys" separately escalated. In the documents we examined these debates focused on differentiation of curricula, games, and physical education classes. However, we didn't find discussions expressing the need of segregate bathrooms.

In reference to the curricula, one of the areas that has received the most attention is the area of "gymnastic" education,³³ but there is a lack

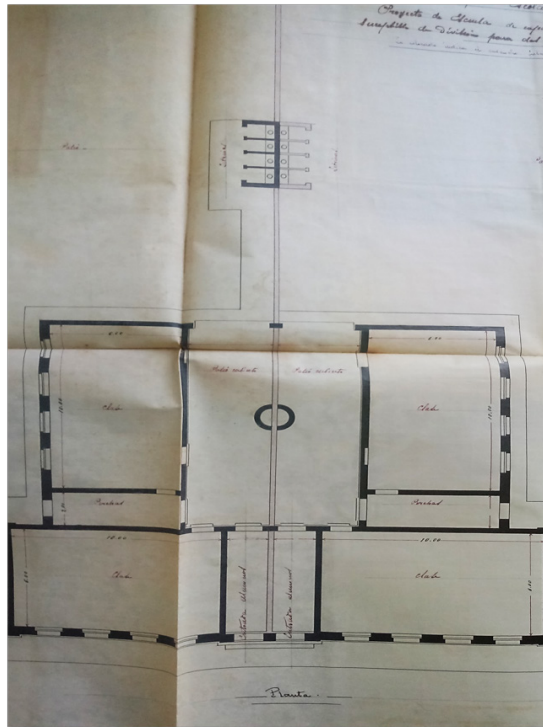
³² Ley n° 988 de Educación Común de la provincia de Buenos Aires del 14 de septiembre de 1875. Imprenta Rural, Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Part III) Chap 6.

³³ Pablo Scharagrodsky, "Eercitando" los cuerpos masculinos y femeninos. Aportes para una historia de la educación física escolar argentina (1880-1990)" *Apuntes. Educación física y deportes* 85 (2006): 82-89; Pablo Scharagrodsky, "El cuerpo en la escuela" *Explora las ciencias contemporáneas X* (2008): 1-16. Pablo Scharagrodsky, *Gobernar es ejercitar. Fragmentos históricos de la Educación Física en Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008). Pablo Scharagrodsky, *Mujeres en movimiento. Deporte, cultura física y femeneidades. Argentina, 1870-1980* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2016).

research about this type of spatial practices referring to other areas. For example, we do not know if during the “sewing” and “agriculture” class the students remained in the same room, or how the schools were spatially organized to support that gendered curriculum.

Despite this inconsistency, it worth mentioning two initiatives that took place in school buildings designed in the same period: First, some building designs featured two identical wings completely separating “girls” and “boys” (Figure 1). Second, a few blueprints introduced segregated restrooms, thus introducing the room that has most successfully sustained the modern sex-gender binary.

Figure 1. Blueprint of a primary school building. The wall in the middle divide boy’s wing from girls



Source: General Archive of the Nation (AGN) National Council of Education (CNE) File # 0775/81, 1891.

Although bathrooms segregation was not directly discussed, we believe these broader discussions can give us some clues about the scenario

that made possible the consolidation of this structure. Toward the beginning of the new century those who supported “mixed” education developed more nuanced arguments. In 1904, an article stated without hesitation that the co-education of the sexes in primary school “does not seem controversial”.³⁴ This agreement about primary school is useful to explore how age division was a major factor in discussions about the sexual definition of school space. Statements about the schooling conditions of each of the two “sexes” took different directions depending on whether they referred to infants, young people, or adults.

For instance, in debates on the sanction of Law 1420 the jurist Luis Varela, speaking at the National Pedagogical Congress, made observations comparing experiences of “mixed” and “single-sex” establishments to maintain that the first option was preferable. He affirmed, however, that this was accepted “because it is about small children”.³⁵ In the same context, politician and pedagogue Domingo Sarmiento referred to this issue when commenting on the experience of Chile. There, an alternate system of attendance that allowed boys to attend for five months and then girls for another five months was implemented temporarily, since the government did not have the resources to allow for separate educational buildings. Sarmiento pointed out this Chilean method as a mistake, contrasting it to the system found in the United States and England. He underlined the specific strategy that, according to him, guaranteed the success of coeducation in these countries:

To avert the risk presumed by the overly cautious, the English and North Americans practice having children of both sexes dressed in children’s clothing until the most advanced age possible. To keep them in their ideas, in their games, and even in their form, as much as possible. This rule of moral hygiene makes [...] mixed schools prevail until reaching grammar or higher schools, which require the separation of the sexes.³⁶

³⁴ CNE (1904), “La coeducación de los sexos y las aptitudes de las mujeres”, *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 361, no. XIX, 717.

³⁵ Pedro Varela, “Congreso Pedagógico”, *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 18, no. I (1882): 564- 573.

³⁶ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, “Estado actual de la educación primaria en Chile y causas de su decadencia”, *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 1, no. I (1881): 78.

Sarmiento's observation allows us to strengthen the hypothesis about the fundamental role age played concerning the interrelationship of the students. It is essential to note that most arguments limited mixed primary schooling to the early grades or up to ten years of age. There seemed to be a consensus regarding the inconvenience of educating boys and girls over ten years old together. This point materialized in Article Ten of Law 1420. It established that "Primary education for children from six to ten years of age, will preferably be given in mixed classes".³⁷ However, schools did not apply the laws directly; and the institutional readings and practices were multiple. For example, a report from 1881 shows 49 schools for boys and 99 schools for girls in the Municipality of Buenos Aires. However, according to statistics, the population of "girls" represented approximately 50 % of the total school population. Were girls' schools sparsely populated, or were boys' schools overcrowded? The reason for this (apparently) contradictory data is that the distribution of students was not as straightforward as one might think. Indeed, years later the government officially recognized that girls' schools accepted boys up to ten years old³⁸. Indeed, the incorporation of boys in girls' schools was openly discussed in 1888. Juan Tufró, director of the 3rd school district, argued as follows:

If the opinion of the teachers of the district should be considered, I would use it to support the thesis contrary to that defended by the School Council [which was opposed to the admission of boys]. Precisely the experienced and intelligent Director of the Graduate School for Girls has told she admitted small male students as do all the Graduate Schools for Girls in which 794 boys are currently educated, and that they should be sent home if this matter is resolved as proposed by the School Council.³⁹

It is also worth reproducing a fragment published in the magazine *El Monitor* ten years later, under the title "School Statistics":

³⁷ Law 1420, art. 10.

³⁸ CNE "Sección oficial. Coeducación de los sexos", *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 321, no. XVII (1888): 22.

³⁹ CNE, 1888, 22.

231 public schools have operated in the capital of the republic: 36 superior, 134 elementary, 32 infants, 20 night for adults and 9 military. Of the superior ones, 16 are for boys and 20 for girls. Of the elementary schools, 45 are for boys and 89 are for girls, with the latter also attended by boys up to the age of 10; the 32 for infants are mixed and the nocturnal and military ones are for men. So there are 90 boys' schools and 141 mixed schools.⁴⁰

Clearly, we find in these debates an argument that subsumes coeducation to considerations about children's age and sexuality. It pointed out the need to separate students for "moral" reasons that seemed to clear up when they were infantilized. This is a strong vector to understand why separating bathrooms was not a concern in primary public schools.⁴¹ In the nineteenth century, the discourse against coeducation was presented as necessary decisions to protect the "hygiene of the fair sex" (young women) from possible corruption. Here, "moral" concerns seem to focus in the "promiscuity" resulting from eventual affective-sexual encounters with classmates of the "male sex". This popular reasoning undoubtedly supported the decision to promote mixed schooling only for up to ten years.

Although this idea prevailed, we found other arguments against coeducation evoking reasons that – although within the spectrum of sexuality – seem to be of another kind:

The evils that physiological criticism reveals are common to all civilizations and races. Condourcet's proposition that "the meeting of the two sexes in the same schools favours emulation" can no longer be doubted.⁴²

The main inconvenience was that coexistence led "girls" – because they were the "weaker sex" – to imitate "boys", thus affecting their "moral health". Here we can see arising another meaning for morals. Former, girl's morals were threatened by heterosexual encounters. On the

⁴⁰ CNE, "Noticias. Estadística escolar", *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 301, no. XVI (1898): 986.

⁴¹ In respect to the age as a criteria for separating school bathrooms, it worth mentioning that actual regulations in Argentina allow infant schools to have mixed services but demand "sex" identified locals for primary and secondary levels.

⁴² CNE, 1883, 406.

contrary, in this argument their “moral health” could be affected if they imitate masculine conducts or gestures. Considering this, Tyack’s statement seems to have merit: “In the nineteenth century, when traditionalists were determined to set sharp boundaries around the separate spheres of the sexes, critics claimed that coeducational public schools made girls too virile”.⁴³ Nevertheless, not all “emulation” emerged as negative. Another position is shown in the following quote: “Excellent strength is undoubtedly that of emulation at school, as long as this happens between individuals of the same sex”.⁴⁴

We can suggest there was a fear that coexistence in school would blur or spoil this project of two ontologically different subjectivities, corporeality, and functions.⁴⁵ And those who advocated coeducational education had the same fears. They pointed out that “the education of the two sexes in common can be useful to prevent the birth of sexual instincts towards the same sex”.⁴⁶ Consequently, there seemed to be two positions that, although from different angles, informed practices that monitored the correspondence between sex, gender, and sexuality.

In this respect, various authors have shown that the prohibition of homosexuality has been a fundamental part of the production of the modern sex-gender binary.⁴⁷ Twentieth-century developments led some to argue for the creation of “a new sexual ethic” based on heterosexuality.⁴⁸ This required a series of strategies of “sexual illustration”⁴⁹ which crystallized in different *dispositifs*,⁵⁰ and the school was one of the most important.⁵¹ Other institutions stood along schools in articulating this

⁴³ Tyack and Hansot, *Learning Together*, 11.

⁴⁴ CNE, 1883, 406.

⁴⁵ Laqueur, *Making sex*.

⁴⁶ CNE 1883, 406.

⁴⁷ Judith Butler, *Undoing gender* (London: Routledge, 2004); Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad*; Rubin, “El tráfico de mujeres”; Scharagrodsky and Narodowski, “Investigación educativa”; Tin, *The invention of heterosexual culture*.

⁴⁸ CNE 1904, 765.

⁴⁹ Elias, *The civilizing process*.

⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, *Vigilar y Castigar*. (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI. 2002).

⁵¹ A significant part of this “sexual enlightenment” is constituted by the formal curriculum known as “sexual education”. An example is found in the *El Monitor* article referenced here (CNE, 1904b).

new sexual *ethos*. For instance, the family was perceived as “one of the main anchor points of modernity, an affective space within which concerns about the number, education and future of the children were born”. The capitalistic system offered another opportunity for “sexual and economic institutions interacting with each other”.⁵² Also, strategies of sexual illustration were informed and strengthened by a set of knowledge that emerged in the twentieth century. The development of disciplinary fields such as anatomy, physiology, criminology, psychiatry, psychology, and educational psychology accompanied discussions about “coeducation”.

What Do School Toilets Separated by “Sex” Make Possible?

With real surprise for me, the coeducation of men and women quickly became generalized, signifying a high degree of advancement of our social groupings. If any latent resistance may remain, it will disappear when we build special houses for schools.⁵³

Do not imagine that before sin humans were blind. Hadn't Eve seen “that the fruit was good to eat” and pleasing to the eye? They could thus see their own body. But do we have to admit that, in fact, they were looking at her sex?⁵⁴

Previously, we approached sexual definitions of school space. This means, exploring how conceptions about sex, gender and sexuality informed decisions about school architecture and interior design. At this point, we would like to briefly explore another aspect: how the material features of school space, specifically bathrooms, contributed to the consolidation of the modern sex-gender binary.

One of this work's main hypotheses is that the sexual separation of public-school toilets can be inscribed in the series of discourses and

By all accounts, this is a very prolific field. Fortunately, it is currently being investigated by colleagues from different institutions, with different approaches. Among them, it is worth mentioning the works with a historical perspective developed in Argentina by Dr. Santiago Zemaitis.

⁵² Scott, “La mujer trabajadora en el siglo XIX”, 406.

⁵³ Ayarragaray, “Coeducación de los sexos”, 81.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad IV. las confesiones de la carne* (México: Siglo XXI, 2008), 281.

practices that have operated producing the figures of “sex”: their corporality, their functions and, of course, their spatiality.

By 1905 only the toilets in some new school buildings in Buenos Aires were wholly separate and identified by “sex”. Educative architecture was not consolidated, and many buildings did not include toilets. Analysis of the National Council of Education files (which includes letters from directors, inspectors, and members of neighbourhood councils) suggests that concern about “latrines” emerged in the primary schools of the city of Buenos Aires toward the end of the nineteenth century. As mentioned, separating toilets materially by sex seemed not to be a requirement yet. Of course, this does not mean that there were no practices regulating children’s access to restrooms according to assigned sex. We can only affirm that it was not a problem materially translated, since public schools did not request resources to achieve it, but we cannot deny the existence of other practices of sexual organization of the space.

The thoughts around this lack of material initiatives brings back the aforementioned discourse about children’s sexuality. Indeed, in some documents in which specialists discuss coeducation it appears that children of a certain age “did not have sex”:

According to this Minister’s report, coeducation should not have the scope it has, in terms of age, in Germany, Austria, and Sweden (up to 12 years), but only nine years, that is, during the lower elementary course. It goes like this: “Until the age of nine, the child does not have sex; it is a boy”.⁵⁵

Certainly, in this period disciplines and discourses about children’s sexuality were still diffuse. Several authors have study how the knowledge that accompanied the expansion and hegemony of the modern school consolidated during the twentieth century.⁵⁶ As a result, we can

⁵⁵ Ayarragaray, “Coeducación de los sexos”, 84.

⁵⁶ Pablo Scharagrodsky, Laura Manolakis, and Rosana Barroso, “La Educación Física argentina en los manuales y textos escolares (1880-1930). Sobre los ejercicios físicos o acerca de cómo configurar cuerpos útiles, productivos, obedientes, dóciles, sanos y racionales”, *Revista Brasileira de História Da Educação* 3, no. 1 (2003): 69-91; Santiago Zemaitis, “Pedagogías de la sexualidad. antecedentes, conceptos e historia en el campo de la educación sexual de la juventud” (Trabajo Final Integrador, Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2016).

sustain that the category “sex” did not signify yet two subjectivities and corporalities as discrete sets of differentiated and distinguishable attributes.

Here we agree with one of the pioneer works that discuss the sexual production of the body: *Making sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*, by Thomas Laqueur. This author postulates that towards the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a shift in the way of understanding the body, which became then dichotomously sexed. Previously, the differences between the bodies of people identified and defined as “women” or “men” were considered a matter of degrees. Thus, a woman’s body could be considered “less vital” or “less perfect” than men, but not an ontologically different body. For Laqueur, this displacement is a necessary condition to create the differences between the sexes that – thanks to the mobilization of the great modern scientific machinery – expanded to all moral and physical aspects.

We found other documents supporting this hypothesis. For example, an article in *El Monitor* reports on education. There, when referring to the “Gymnastics” classes:

It seems that it will not be long before the ridiculous admonition against physical exercises in girls disappears. Some say that the young ladies do not need them, that they will be helpful only to the men, as if women were not, like men, a harmonic set of forces that all support each other.⁵⁷

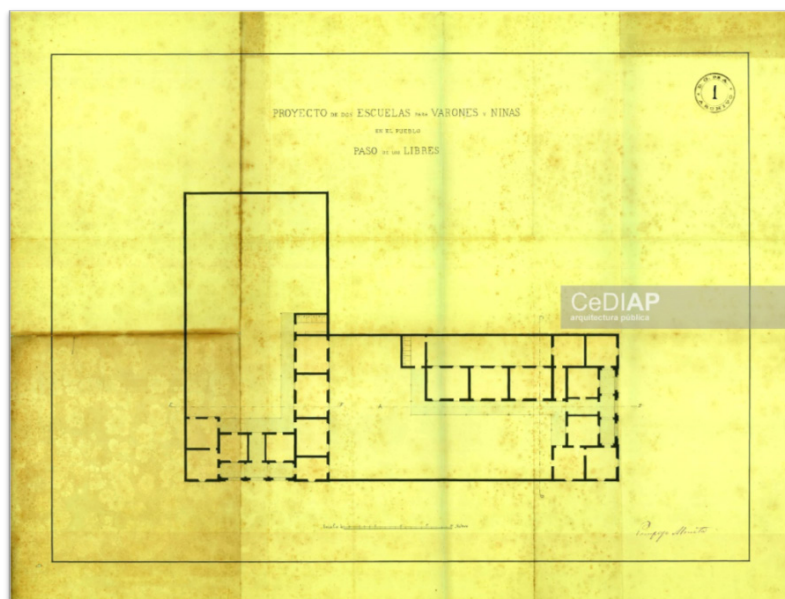
Consequently, we observe there was a singular engaging between notions about “sex”, “corporeality”, and “school spaces”: although the need to segregate children was fervently postulated in certain areas, the idea that these two types of corporality demanded specific spatialities was not present.

Of course, this is questionable regarding public schools that worked in rental houses and hardly had resources to materialize these initiatives. However, this diagnosis is correct for monumental schools and twentieth century school architecture: The spaces “for girls” and “for boys” – beyond their gendered designation – had the same form and structure. As we have seen, this was evident in the case of buildings

⁵⁷ CNE “Escuelas de niñas”, *El Monitor de la Educación Común* 53, no. III (1884): 385.

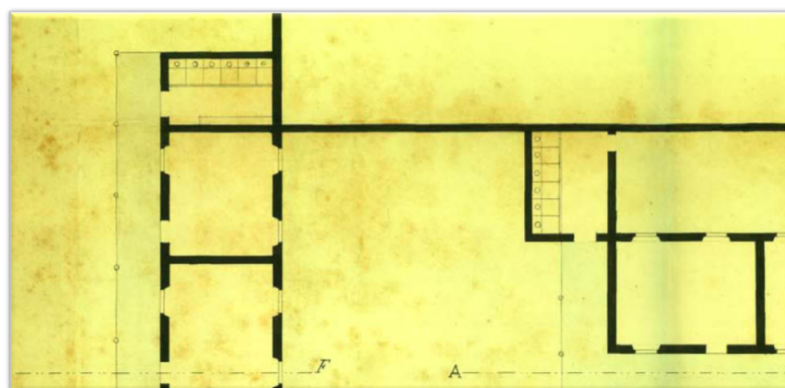
separated into two identical wings, and it is also clear that there were no architectural peculiarities in the exclusive “boys” or “girls” schools. Finally, there was no significant difference between the few segregated toilets except for the existence of urinals. In addition to the material structure, the toilets had the same scale and dimensions (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Project of two schools for boys and girls



Source: CEDIAP File 1373-00001_C, end of the nineteenth century.

Figure 3. Detail of bathrooms



Nevertheless, some notions in force at the time could lead us to think that certain characteristics attributed to masculinity⁵⁸ such as “vigour”, greater activity, or simply the hierarchy assigned to people sexed males could have some material translation. However, this seems not to have happened (at least not on a large scale). To some extent, this is contradictory regarding the role attributed here to toilets in the production of the modern sex-gender system. However, it is a fact that makes historical analyses more complex. It suggests that other elements related to toilets operated in the consolidation of the modern sex-gender system, beyond its general material structure.

The place of women

One of the few authors who has studied toilets recently, the lawyer Terry Kogan,⁵⁹ argues that sexual segregation in access to toilets originated due to the concern of the late- nineteenth century with “the place of women”. He mentions that rules dictated that the place of women was the home and that there was resistance to integrate them into public life. However, it is necessary to introduce some nuances since Kogan carries out a historiographical approach different from the one we adopt here. He postulates that this was a social response to the novelty of working women. We, however, agree with other thesis⁶⁰ that most nineteenth-century women from popular classes worked. Rather, what was named at the time “the woman problem” was the success of a “medical, scientific, political, and moral” discourse known as “the separate spheres doctrine”.⁶¹ Official discourses wanted to present women as weak subjectivities who needed protection in their “transit” through public space. Consequently, many new spaces such as workplaces, reading rooms, and toilets were segregated. This spirit is present in what, according to Kogan, was the

⁵⁸ Raewyn W. Connell, “Educatando a los muchachos: Nuevas investigaciones sobre masculinidad y estrategias de género para las escuelas”, *Nómadas (Col)* 14 (2001): 156-171; Scharagrodsky and Narodowski, “Investigación educativa”.

⁵⁹ Terry S. Kogan, “Transsexuals and critical gender theory: The possibility of a restroom labeled other”, *Hastings LJ* 48 (1996): 1223.

⁶⁰ Josefina Fernández and Daniel Hernández, “La devolución de las caserolas: representaciones sobre la mujer en la construcción de la nación argentina”, in *Moralidades y comportamientos sexuales. Argentina, 1880-2011* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2014), 131-154; Mirta Lobato, *Historia de las trabajadoras en la Argentina (1869-1960)* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2007); Scott, “La mujer trabajadora en el siglo XIX”.

⁶¹ Scott, “La mujer trabajadora en el siglo XIX”, 403.

first law that sexually segregated access to public restrooms in the United States.⁶²

Regarding the figure of female weakness, some authors mention that this concept of “the feminine” operated at the end of the nineteenth century as an “antidote against the risks that could come with [women’s] access to public space and collective work”.⁶³ We can locate in this path the argument of Fernández & Hernández.⁶⁴ The mobilized, public woman was presented to public opinion as a threat. This notion engendered a series of devices destined to fix their subjectivity to the private, domestic sphere.⁶⁵ In addition, some authors mention that this configuration did not affect only female sexed persons. Scharagrodsky⁶⁶ positions some masculinization strategies (such as scouting) also as a product of a specific female presence in public space:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, amid industrial expansion, an increasing number of American and English men began to worry about the virility of their sons openly. Terrified by feminist discourses, concerned about the feminization of family and school education and the power of the maternal law, they feared that their boys would not have the opportunity to learn to be men.⁶⁷

In light of this, the sexual separation of public access toilets (including those in schools) can be listed in the series of discourses and practices that produced the figure of the “fair sex”, the “weaker sex”: their corporeality, its functions and, of course, its spatiality.

Somehow, our goal was to know the “place of women” and “men”, analysing the discursive meaning of “place” with a material meaning

⁶² Government Of Massachusetts. *Act To Secure Proper Sanitary Provisions In Factories And Workshops*. Session Laws 668-670. Approved March 21, 1887. In Argentina, the first regulations about public bathrooms’ segregation emerged in the twentieth century. Particularly, school restrooms were formally segregated in a Building Regulation of 1943.

⁶³ Paula Caldo, “No parecían mujeres, pero lo eran. La educación femenina de las maestras, Argentina 1920-1930”, *Historia y Sociedad* 26 (2014): 242.

⁶⁴ Fernández and Hernández, “La devolución de las caserolas”.

⁶⁵ Paula Lucía Aguilar, “Una utopía cotidiana: Archivos, hogar, genealogía”, *Ensamblés* 2, no. 3 (2015): 133-145; Fernández and Hernández, “La devolución de las caserolas”.

⁶⁶ Scharagrodsky, “Ejercitando’ los cuerpos masculinos y femeninos”.

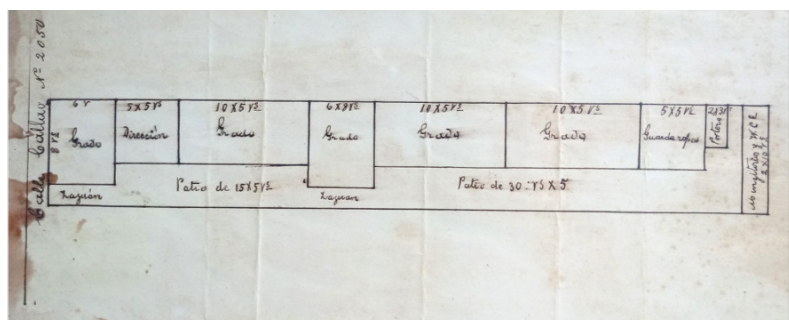
⁶⁷ Scharagrodsky, “Ejercitando’ los cuerpos masculinos y femeninos”.

linked to concrete spatial practices. We found that particular spaces have been assigned to people who were meant to be sexed as women, and other spaces assigned to those who were meant to be sexed as men. In the same way that Tyack and Hansot⁶⁸ analyse the location in the Anglican church as a sign of hierarchy, segregated toilets perform⁶⁹ a system of differences based in a binary logic of material exclusions.

Homosociability

Despite the previous affirmations, there was in the structure of the first toilets⁷⁰ a single sign of sexual distinction that must be mentioned (although in the period contemplated, it was still very incipient). We are referring to the “urinal”. Rather than working with specific artifacts we rely on records of its existence in the school plans and official reports. Also, as mentioned above, we noticed that the relation between this device and the “latrine” or “W.C.” was not organized as nowadays (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Drawing of a public primary school made by the tenant of the house. From left to right: classroom, principal's office, classrooms, closet, doorman room, urinals and w.c.



Source: General Archive of the Nation (AGN) National Council of Education (CNE) File 5601/97 (1897).

⁶⁸ Tyack and Hansot, *Learning Together*.

⁶⁹ Butler, *Bodies that matter*.

⁷⁰ It is fundamental to notice that, although the school bathrooms' structure remains the same, many gendered objects were incorporated along the twentieth century. Sometimes we find mirrors only in girl's bathrooms; the same can be said about trash bins and hygienic supplies as paper and soap. Besides, since 1943 the normative defines the exact number of artefacts depending on the gender. Lucila da Silva, "Hacia Una Genealogía Del Sanitario Escolar. Primeros Hallazgos: Buenos Aires (1881-1905)", *Anuario de Historia de La Educación* 19 (2019): 24-49; Inés Dussel, "The Pedagogy of Latrines. A Kaleidoscopic Look at the History of School Bathrooms in Argentina, 1880-1930", *Oxford Review of Education* 47, no. 5 (2021): 576-596.

Figure 5. Detail. “Mingitorios y W.C” means urinals and W.C.

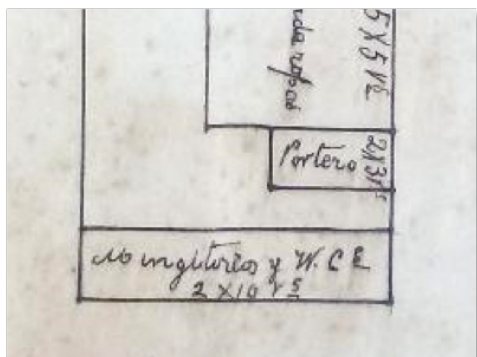


Figure 6. Drawing of a public primary school made by the tenant of the house. Detail. The legend is “mingitorios” (urinals). The rectangle with a circle inside was the usual drawing for latrines. It is unclear what the other drawings meant



Source: General Archive of the Nation (AGN) National Council of Education (CNE) File #1795/98 (1898).

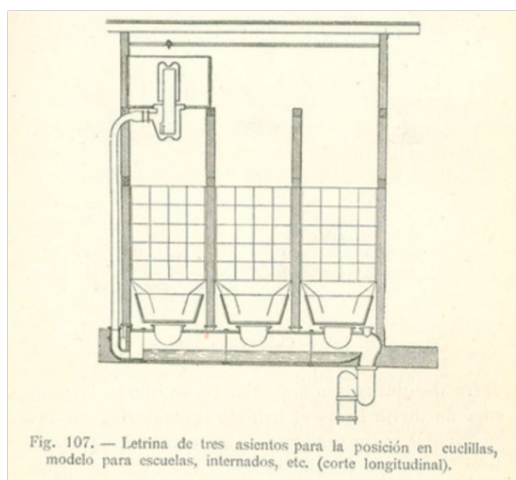
However, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the form it has today was already manifested as desirable:

These urinals must be divided by employing vertical and standard plates to their headwall, preserving them from rainwater. [...] It is convenient that the space of each square is not so big that it admits two children in it, nor so small that they cannot get between the two plates; That is why we judge a good width of about 40 to

50 centimetres, and a little less than exit for the dividing plates, with a height of approximately one and a half meters.⁷¹

Although it is impossible to delve into this fertile subject here, we can affirm that this device generated a body posture and a field of vision utterly different from that of common latrines. The male bodies must have been visible to the naked eye when they were upright since the urinals did not have doors, and the latrines did. Therefore, they came to be in a certain way public. However, in addition to an interpretation that indicates a symbolic relationship between the masculinized body as the sovereign-citizen body, typical of the public sphere⁷², we are interested in rescuing another facet of this visibility.

Figure 7. Three seats squatting latrine, model for schools, internships, etc.⁷³



⁷¹ Benjamín Zorrilla, *Educación común en la Capital, provincias, y territorios nacionales. Año 1889-90-91*. (Buenos Aires: Compañía Sudamericana de billetes de banco, 1892).

⁷² Several authors point out the impossibility of studying this topic without introducing a problematization of the role of women. Without delving into this discussion, we are interested in recovering these works since they successfully highlight the liberal fiction of two separate spheres (one private or domestic and the other public or political). This construction was only possible thanks to a process of inscription and reclusion of popular class women in this emerging domestic sphere. Cfr. Nancy Fraser, & Violeta Ruiz, "Repensar el ámbito público: Una contribución a la crítica de la democracia realmente existente", *Debate Feminista* 7 (1993): 23-58; Adriana Hernández, "Razón y cuerpo. Feminismo, esferas públicas y prácticas pedagógicas" *La Aljaba, IV* (1999): 141-152; Carole Pateman, "Críticas feministas a la dicotomía público/privado", in ed. Carme Castells, *Perspectivas feministas en teoría política* (Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica, 1996), 31-52.

⁷³ Súnico, Francisco, *Nociones de higiene*, 257. Francisco Súnico, *Nociones de higiene escolar* (Buenos Aires: Taller Tipográfico de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1902), 257.

From a Foucauldian perspective, visibility fields are diagrams that enable the emergence and proliferation of circuits through which specific rules circulate.⁷⁴ The visibility of the masculinized body supposes their inscription in the public sphere. Furthermore, the field of visibility of the urinals makes it possible for these corporalities to become the object and relay of specific norms. As Foucault has shown, normalization is a dynamic process that operates codifying the experience into a complex net of relations of power-knowledge. Unlike the law, that defines reality into two terms (legal, illegal), normalization establishes a gradient of positions, where the upper scores are privileged and wanted, and lower scores are defined as “abnormals”. However, normalization does not operate excluding nor repressing. On the contrary, it operates producing new “objetcs” and discourses about them. In this case, we are exploring how in bathrooms masculinized bodies seemed to become objects of cis and heterosexual norms, among other.

In short, we would like to suggest that due to their exposure, masculinized bodies were privileged objects and recipients of normalization in school toilets at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, this visibility allowed a more detailed “examination”⁷⁵ and a set of sanctions. As Connell affirms, schools were created to build masculinities”.⁷⁶ The approach of Scharagrodsky and Narodowski⁷⁷ follows this same path, in their statement that “masculinity was the object of central attention”. There is no doubt that the existence of these highly masculinizing spaces generated the conditions for the emergence and proliferation of a series of homosocializing practices and discourses. Many practices of this type are easily recognizable in that period: urinals, military gymnastics, scouting, public events, mass sports, male clubs, among others.

These arguments seem to hold. However, questions arise about feminizing practices. We could ask ourselves what kind of feminizing practices of this type occurred in the toilets in later stages or in other places. We propose that the feminized corporalities were less visible in the

⁷⁴ Foucault, *Vigilar y castigar*.

⁷⁵ Foucault, *Vigilar y castigar*.

⁷⁶ Connell, “Educando a los muchachos”, 161.

⁷⁷ Scharagrodsky and Narodowski, “Investigación educativa”.

toilets. However, they surely observed each other in other spaces, equally homosocializing, which have been barely studied.

The innocence

By the end of the nineteenth century, Argentina was still very influenced by Catholic values inherited from Spain. Religious and secular actors had strong disputes about the conception of massive primary schooling, that was finally sanctioned as “laic”. Nonetheless, the ideas about “Moral education of the spirit, physical education of the body and intellectual education of the mind” were still current.

Despite this inheritance, the meaning of “moral” was fluctuant and diverse. On one hand, Catholics understood that moral principles were “God’s laws”: “Man, then, is destined to achieve order of good through the practice of the moral law, which is nothing than the very religion that you profess as Christians”.⁷⁸ They believed proximity between “men” and “women” was a significant moral concern. As previously mentioned, these notions were present in discourses about “modesty” and “promiscuity”. For instance, in 1888 the baths in Mar del Plata city were strictly regulated and the separation between “men” and “ladies” became a priority.

On the other hand, we found positions aligned with the growing hygienist movement. As mentioned in other works, the goal of these specialists was the prevention of diseases. Therefore, they had a broad sphere of influence. Regarding Argentinian schooling, it involved essentially the surveillance of scholar’s bodies and the inspection of buildings. Hygienists did not particularly discuss the sexual segregation of bathrooms; but they played a fundamental role in redefining the ideas about morality. Far from the abstract ideas about morality as “good actions” and “God’s laws”, late-nineteenth century educators hold practical moral principles based on medical arguments.

These new moral precepts had other objects: clothing, body cleaning (in primary schools focused on ears and nails), and habits such as “punctuality”, “modesty”, and “sobriety”.⁷⁹ Also, as reflected in Mercante’s

⁷⁸ Esteban Echeverría, *Manual de enseñanza moral* (Buenos Aires: Maravilla Literaria, 1869), 6.

⁷⁹ Vicente García Aguilera, *La escuela*. (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Pablo E. Coni, 1873); José de Urcullu, *Lecciones de moral, virtud y urbanidad* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Pablo E. Coni, 1870); Esteban Lamadrid, *Nociones prácticas de moral* (Buenos Aires: Félix Lajouane, 1894).

words,⁸⁰ this morality was presented in close relation with “working”, being “industrious”, and the “love for the homeland”. In the context of the modern State emergence, this appeared as an openly “civilizatory” concept that established close relations between race, discipline over the body, poverty, and conduct.

But the transition from Catholic ideals to the new ones was gradual. And these two meanings of morality kept overlapping each other. Somehow, in Christian beliefs it was implicit the idea of morals as something that should be preserved. On the contrary, the hygienist movement was attempting to spread these rules over a population considered as foreigner and threatening.

We can observe the complexity of this notion in some arguments about coeducation. Goetschel⁸¹ mentions that many of the speeches that opposed coeducation did so by arguing that it led to “the loss of innocence”. Although it is unclear what “innocence” meant at the end of the nineteenth century, some authors suggest coordinates that can be followed. For instance, Ana María Fernández⁸² notes that there was a semantic link between “innocence” and “ignorance”. From this point of view, innocence meant not knowing certain things about the world.

From contemporary mentality, it is logical to think that the sexual regulation of access to the school toilets sought to avoid proximity between corporalities defined as feminine and masculine. Moreover, one can infer that the objective was to remove the genitals from the “opposite sex” gaze. Therefore, “conserving the innocence” meant preventing scholars from knowing the “opposite sex” body.

Nevertheless, the relevant fact is that in those days in Buenos Aires city, bodies were open to sight. In the first place, all corporalities were exposed to a certain extent since the use of toilets had not been institutionalized and the practice of urinating in the street was maintained (a practice that in the case of masculine sexed persons has retained its

⁸⁰ Víctor Mercante, *Museos escolares argentinos y la escuela moderna* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Juan A. Alsina, 1893).

⁸¹ Ana María Goetschel, “La separación de los sexos: educación y relaciones de género”, *ICONOS* 16 (2003): 124-128.

⁸² Ana María Fernández, *La invención de la niña* (Buenos Aires: UNICEF, 1993).

acceptability to this days). Then, in those cases where urinals had been constructed, people identified as men were widely visible (visibility that would later be extended to female sexed bodies in areas such as changing rooms). Finally, “men” and “women” shared spaces daily. Contrary to certain grandiose images, Buenos Aires at the end of the nineteenth century was “a great village”⁸³ in which sexual practices were visible in the streets.⁸⁴ Also, collective housing (*conventillos*) was widely spread among popular classes, and these buildings often had a single bathroom.

Indeed, as a result of our research, we have seen that visibility in school bathrooms was not always conceived the same. Many of the nineteenth century bathroom doors we have seen in drawings and pictures were shutter-style doors. It is interesting to notice that these doors were bigger than actual ones, and allowed air to go through the door, but not to see the occupant. As we know, the model of bathroom doors that prevailed was the smaller one. Our hypothesis is that these doors operated pointing out the parts of the body that, from then on, should not be seen.

Figure 8. Latrine's doors. Nineteenth century school



Source: archeological work.⁸⁵

⁸³ Francisco Liernur, “Una ciudad efímera. Consideraciones sobre las características materiales de Buenos Aires en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX”, *Estudios Sociales* 2 (1993): 123-131.

⁸⁴ Pablo Ben, “La ciudad del pecado: Moral sexual de las clases populares en la Buenos Aires del 900”, in ed. Dora Barrancos, Donna Guy y Adriana Valobra, *Moralidades y comportamientos sexuales. Argentina, 1880-2011* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, n.d.), 95-114.

⁸⁵ Daniel Schavelzon “Los baños del Caserón de Rosas en Palermo: nuevos hallazgos (2013-2014)” *Conicet Digital* (2014).

CONCLUSION

In this article we addressed the emergence and consolidation of bathroom's sexual segregation on primary schools. Our approach was grounded in previous research and in the analysis of documents about the coeducation of children, in Buenos Aires city, in a period between 1875 and 1905. In the first part, we summarize the discussions about coeducation. We showed how these differences were solved by ensuring the sexual segregation of curriculum. However, we also suggested that this anxieties about "boys" and "girls" sharing spaces remained in force until mid-twentieth century.

In the second part, we explore with more detail this spatial segregation, inquiring how different discourses about sex and sexuality informed different positions. Finally, we attempted to show how the structure of segregated bathrooms contributed to the consolidation of the corporealities, roles, discourses surrounding the cis-sex, gender, heterosexual binary.

As we argued, we were surprised because sources have shown that in the period boys and girls shared many spaces (including school) and their bodies were exposed to sight. That is why we propose that these *dispositifs* (bathrooms) seemed to produce ignorance about something already known.

We believe that it is possible to locate these transformations in the context of a larger process of "channeling behaviors"⁸⁶ throughout the modern proliferation of practices of "sexual illustration".⁸⁷

Although it has been the object of criticism and reworking, many authors have commented on Philippe Aries's thesis about childhoods. In short, during the *Ancien Régime* "children were not different from adults either by the clothes they wore or the jobs they did or the things they normally said or kept silent".⁸⁸ Norbert Elias observes that this "relative lack of dissimulation" with which adults and children spoke and behaved, changed with the advent of modernity. Then, adults and children begin to conceive of themselves as separate, specific subjectivities.

⁸⁶ Foucault, *Vigilar y castigar*, 175.

⁸⁷ Elias, *The civilizing process*, 218.

⁸⁸ Mariano Narodowski, *Infancia y Poder* (Buenos Aires: AIQUE, 1994).

Along with this distance between children and adults, emerged new educational questions about the specificity of children's knowledge. In this context, arise what Elias calls the "problem of sexual education, that is, of the child's integration into the behaviour patterns of his society".⁸⁹ Closely related to this process is the link between the "feeling of childhood"⁹⁰ and the "family-school alliance".⁹¹ As Foucault proposed, the sexuality of scholars became then a public concern.⁹²

Therefore, we can suggest that sex segregated toilets participated in a process of expropriation of an already existing group of knowledge about bodies. These were long-term processes that in their most institutionalized stage took the form of an "alienation" of cultural faculties and discourses.

Nevertheless, these phenomena should not be read in repressive terms. It is essential to maintain a positive way of studying modern sexuality. This is the central theoretical position of this work, and it has to do with emphasizing the productive nature of power relations. Starting from this productive conception of knowledge-power relations, we wanted to explore toilets rejecting the "repressive hypothesis".⁹³

The institutionalization of toilets progressively confined certain practices (urination, defecation, smoking, sexuality, violence, etc.) to the darkness of two set of rooms. However, this is not a repressive movement since, by hiding them, they become the subject/object of other discourses. Along with the hygienist moral, the "sexual awakening" of youth was emerging as a sanitary issue. So, practices that occurred nowadays in bathrooms were by the end of the nineteenth century alienated from everyday lives and turned into practices that must be hidden from certain views but offered to the specialist's eye: pedagogy, psychiatry, medicine, and other.

⁸⁹ Elias, *The civilizing process*, 219.

⁹⁰ Fernández, *La invención de la niña*, 7.

⁹¹ Narodowski, *Infancia y poder*, 6.

⁹² Michel Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad I. La voluntad de saber* (Madrid: Siglo veintiuno España editores, 2013).

⁹³ Foucault, *Historia de la sexualidad*; Butler, *Bodies that matter*.

Nota sobre la autora

LUCILA DA SILVA. Doctora en Ciencias Sociales (UBA). Becaria Posdoctoral del Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET / 2021-2023). Especialista en Cultura Letrada en Argentina (FACE-UNCo) y Licenciada en Ciencia Política (UBA). Docente de Metodología de la Investigación en la Universidad Nacional del Comahue (UNCo) y del Taller de Tesis en la Maestría y el Doctorado en Estudios y Políticas de Género de la Universidad de Tres de Febrero (UNTREF). Investigadora UNCo e integrante becaria del Instituto Patagónico de Estudios en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales (IPEHCS-CONICET-UNCo). Es miembro de la Sociedad Argentina de Historia de la Educación (SAHE) y de la *International Standing Conference for the History of Education* (ISCHE). Ha publicado un libro, capítulos de libros y artículos acerca de temáticas vinculadas al análisis de dispositivos escolares. Actualmente estudia los sanitarios escolares, articulando aportes de la Historia de la Educación, Estudios de la Cultura Material y Estudios de género.

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