

Introduction: On a 1st Anniversary

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Nota bene: This introduction was written near the end of 2020, a year that saw the world struggle with COVID-19. These issues make up the primary body of the below text. Yet, as we moved into the new year, perhaps thankful that 2020 had come to a close, on 6 January, and before the introduction was sent to publication, the US Capitol building in Washington, DC, was laid siege by far right extremists, White supremacists, and supporters seeking to stop the confirmation of the election of Joseph Biden. I [Frank] am reminded of a similar note I wrote in an article for the Sexual Violence Research Initiative’s “16 Days of Activism” series in early December: “We write this post amidst political protests that have shaken Kyrgyzstan, with the recent election results being annulled. We send our thoughts for those working to ensure a fair, democratic, and transparent government; and hope for a speedy resolution to these issues” (Kim and Karioris 2020). In a similar sense, with the events still etched in our minds and processes just beginning to begin (arrests, an impeachment, etc.) and the inauguration still to come, we include this short note affirming our commitment to democratic principles, challenging violent masculinity, and supporting antiracist activism.

With this, the first issue of the second volume—or year—of the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities*, we celebrate the journal’s first birthday. It is a joyous occasion, one that has been a long time in the making. During our first year, we published eight articles, a strong set of book reviews, and a tribute to a colleague who is deeply missed. The articles have examined issues related to aging, migration, race, and queerness—doing so in contexts from around the globe. Not only have the first two issues been globally engaged, addressing a wide range of topics, they have also represented a wide berth of disciplines. This is a feat that tells us that the journal is needed and doing exactly what we hoped: to bring forward and create spaces for new, interdisciplinary conversations.



These metrics, though, do not fully describe the year of care, love, and effort that has gone into arriving at this first birthday. And, like any one-year-old, the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities* is beginning to take shape, beginning the process of viewing the world around it; it is starting along the path that will last a lifetime of making sense of each piece and putting them into some form of narrative. One-year-olds are also not well equipped for deprivation; they are in need of many forms of protection, and must be constantly cared for. In so many ways, it feels like this journal, which has been a product of love for an extended time before its birth, is much like this one-year-old. We have seen it birth out of nothing into this world and seen all its movements, its challenges, and its joys.

Yet, at the same time, like for all the others having their first birthdays now, it is not a time for celebration. For those born in 2020, it is hard to understand how one is meant to recognize and commemorate such an occasion. This is both a practical question—as, for much of the world, lockdowns are a still requisite part of quotidian life—as well as a moral one. How does one celebrate in the face of deprivation and despondency? How does one recognize the suffering of the world and still be able to find joy to celebrate?

In our previous introductory editorial (Allan et al. 2020), we spoke about many of the issues that seemed, at that time, impending, forthcoming, or yet-to-be fully realized in our world. We note this here, as this much shorter and less thoroughly citational editorial introduction builds on this, and, rather than having seen much change, is, in many ways, finding itself in a similar place. In seeking to build on its analysis laying out issues heavily related to domestic and sexual violence, suicide, and death rates, it is important to add the growing economic issues to these matters.

In the opening days of December, the United States saw daily death rates cresting 3,000—more than on the “opening day of the Normandy invasion during World War II: 2,500 . . . [and the death] toll on Sept. 11, 2001: 2,977” (Hollingsworth and Renault 2020). Similarly, during the first week of December nearly 1 million new people in the United States filed for unemployment (Casselmann 2020). Yet, this does not tell the entire picture. Taking the 6.8 million claiming state unemployment, with the addition of 4.4 million claiming the federal extension, means that at the beginning of November there were roughly 11.2 million (of a total population of 331 million) claiming loss of earning ability (Guilford 2020), with the official unemployment rate at 6.9 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). For reference, the US unemployment rate during the 2008 Great Recession

(lasting from December 2007 to June 2009) peaked at 10.6 percent, whereas the COVID Recession has—currently—peaked at 16 percent (by government estimates) (Kochkar 2020).

This all comes concurrently with the second (or third, depending on how you count it) wave of COVID, which has seen continued expansion of deaths and a continued group of COVID deniers (Falzone 2020). For communities already suffering from (inter)generational poverty (Araujo et al. 2018)—particularly Black (Cohen 2011) and ethnic minority (Cherng 2017) communities—this crisis, on the heels of the 2008 Great Recession, is just beginning.

During these economic challenges, many parts of the world are seeing political changes—with the election of former Vice-President Joseph Biden and Senator Kamala Harris as the next President and Vice-President of the United States. While this is a positive move toward addressing many of the issues that have torn the United States asunder in the past four years, it is important to recognize that this is not a solution to all that ails the country, and, further, that the role of activism is to continue pushing for change—regardless of party affiliation. As such, and as we have already seen, the coming four years will contain within them new challenges for the United States that must be faced head on.

While much of the above is particular to the United States, at the same time we are seeing these economic issues globally. The World Bank (2020) predicts that global extreme poverty will rise in 2020, the first time in 20 years, affecting between 88 million and 115 million people for a total of 703–729 million people. This only accounts for “extreme poverty,” meaning people who lives on less than \$1.90 a day. However, the World Bank (2020) acknowledges that “many people who had barely escaped extreme poverty could be forced back into it by the convergence of COVID-19, conflict, and climate change” and that levels of poverty more broadly are also increasing.

It is difficult to tell what will happen in the coming year; this is itself part of the crisis. For so many, this pandemic has meant not only greatly increased costs, but also the constitution of a life lived precariously, lived on the side of a cliff with little in the way of holding onto. Precarity is heavily indebted to labor conditions (Millar 2017) and the expansion of neoliberalism’s hold on our very personality and inner-selves (Brown 2019). Many of us—many of us reading this—find ourselves in affective states that are contingent, that are forcibly fluid, that are reliably refusing to let us release the tension from our shoulders.

The articles contained in this issue do not explicitly address COVID and its relations to masculinities, bodies, or sexualities, but they are by-products of labor and life under COVID (and we look forward to receiving those articles on COVID when the time is right). Yet, it is important to acknowledge not just the articles here, but those that were not able to be written or submitted because of the pandemic. This is especially true for women, who, multiple studies have demonstrated, are experiencing declining productivity in relation to their male peers (Flaherty 2020). We have not yet begun to see the full impact of COVID on professional output.

The gender gap of the pandemic—a longstanding gap in labor, compensation, promotion, and beyond that has been magnified by the pandemic rather than created by it—is something that initial studies have already begun unpacking. Caitlyn Collins and colleagues (2020) describe the decrease in working hours that mothers have endured; and the National Bureau of Economic Research published a report examining the current negative impact on gender equality and future possibilities for increases to gender equality (Alon et al. 2020). These are just the beginnings of a reckoning with the gender, sexuality, and racial implications and impacts the pandemic has and will have on the world. As we move forward, we hope that we may be part of the process to address and examine these impacts and the ways that they are intertwined with masculinities and sexualities.

With all of these struggles, we—as so many people who must go about their days, now without their loved ones, without a job, without income or money, and without economic leadership prioritizing the well-being of the people (*demos*)—will continue looking after this journal, its authors, and its mission. Our little one-year-old needs our support and love, and, as such, it is with this ethos that we present the first issue of Volume 2 of the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities*. It is presented not without hesitation and with an explicit acknowledgment of the state of our world. And it is sent out into the world with the understanding that staying alive takes priority over these scholarly contributions for many.

Our world will find a way to address the pandemic, and so it is to a world just beyond our current horizon that this issue is addressed. Much like many of the writings contained herein, hope is the runner that we alight upon in thinking to new spaces, possibilities, and lives.

The Editors

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