



# Virtually Virgins: Sexual Strategies and Cervical Cancer in Recife, Brazil

*Jessica L. Gregg*

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## **Virtually Virgins: Sexual Strategies and Cervical Cancer in Recife, Brazil** Jessica L. Gregg

This book provides a detailed, intimate portrait of a community of women living in a shantytown (favela) in northeastern Brazil, while exploring the complex interplay between gender, sexuality, power, and disease. It reveals how poor Brasileiras are constrained by dominant cultural constructions of female sexuality as a dangerous force that must be controlled by men; yet these women also manipulate these expectations by using their sexuality as a means to secure economic support from men. The book argues that these constructions affect their interpretations of medical discourse on the prevention of cervical cancer. Since women view sex as both a force they can't control and as a necessary tool for their survival, they choose to de-emphasize medical warnings against risky sexual behavior, with grave consequences for their health. The text is threaded with poignant, humorous, sometimes graphic, and always memorable depictions of the women's lives in the shantytowns, making this serious anthropological study a highly readable one as well.

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