

Gender, Trajectories, and Academic Recognition: Experiences of Pioneer Women Researchers in Communication in Mexico¹

Género, trayectorias y reconocimiento académico: experiencias de pioneras de la investigación en comunicación en México

Gênero, trajetórias e reconhecimento acadêmico: experiências de pioneiras da pesquisa em comunicação no México

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Abstract: This article analyzes, from a feminist and meta-research perspective, the professional trajectories of six pioneering women researchers in the field of communication in Mexico. Drawing on in-depth interviews, it examines experiences of gender inequality, the impact of motherhood on academic careers, forms of epistemic invisibility, women's support networks, and the institutional contributions of these scholars to the development of the field. The analysis is grounded in feminist theories of situated knowledge, epistemic injustice, and recent debates in communication meta-research. Findings reveal that communication Mexican academia reproduces inequalities through subtle yet persistent mechanisms, while also highlighting women's capacity to create collaborative practices, horizontal leadership forms, and new feminist genealogies of communication. The article argues for a reconfiguration of the disciplinary canon based on the voices and experiences of these pioneers.

Keywords:

Gender; Communication; Meta-research; Epistemic injustice; Feminist genealogies; México

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Resumen: Este artículo analiza, desde una perspectiva feminista y metainvestigativa, las trayectorias profesionales de seis investigadoras pioneras del campo de la comunicación en México. A partir de entrevistas en profundidad con énfasis biográfico, se examinan las experiencias de desigualdad de género, impactos de la maternidad en la carrera académica, formas de invisibilización epistémica, redes de acompañamiento entre mujeres y aportes institucionales de estas académicas al desarrollo del campo. El análisis se apoya en epistemologías feministas del conocimiento situado, la injusticia epistémica y debates recientes sobre metainvestigación. Los hallazgos muestran que la academia mexicana en comunicación reproduce desigualdades mediante mecanismos sutiles pero persistentes, al tiempo que revelan la capacidad de las investigadoras para generar prácticas colaborativas, formas horizontales de liderazgo y nuevas genealogías femeninas de la comunicación. Se propone reconfigurar el canon disciplinar a partir de las voces y experiencias de las pioneras.

Palabras clave:

Género; Comunicación; Metainvestigación; Injusticia epistémica; Genealogías feministas; México

Resumo: Este artigo analisa, a partir de uma perspectiva feminista e metainvestigativa, as trajetórias profissionais de seis pesquisadoras pioneiras do campo da comunicação no México. Com base em entrevistas em profundidade, com ênfase biográfico, examinam-se experiências de desigualdade de gênero, os impactos da maternidade na carreira acadêmica, formas de invisibilização epistêmica, redes de apoio entre mulheres e contribuições institucionais dessas acadêmicas para o desenvolvimento do campo. A análise dialoga com epistemologias feministas do conhecimento situado, a noção de injustiça epistêmica e debates recentes sobre metapesquisa em comunicação. Os resultados mostram que a academia mexicana em comunicação reproduz desigualdades por meio de mecanismos sutis e persistentes, ao mesmo tempo que revelam a capacidade das pesquisadoras de criar práticas colaborativas, lideranças horizontais e novas genealogias femininas da comunicação. Propõe-se uma reconfiguração do cânone disciplinar a partir das experiências das pioneiras.

Palavras-chave:

Gênero; Comunicação; Meta-pesquisa; Injustiça epistêmica; Genealogias feministas; México

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the field of communication in Mexico has experienced notable growth in terms of the number of programs, the existence and consolidation of academic networks, the proliferation of specialized publications, and the thematic diversity of its objects of study. However, this process of consolidation has been accompanied by insufficient critical reflection on the field's own conditions of production, epistemological foundations, and mechanisms of internal recognition. Although meta-research in communication has advanced in areas such as institutionalization, objects of study, theoretical-conceptual frameworks, methodological trends, and cognitive configurations, the gender dimension remains a scarcely explored component in systematic terms when characterizations of this field of knowledge are proposed.

Gender inequalities are not only manifested in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, committees, evaluation systems, or editorial boards; they also operate through less visible but equally structuring forms, such as everyday delegitimization, the disproportionate burden of care work, the penalization of motherhood, the invisibilization of contributions, and the masculine configuration of the disciplinary canon, among others. This coincides with diagnoses carried out in other Latin American countries and in other areas of the social sciences, where academia has been described, as we will discuss in greater depth below, as a gendered organization (Acker, 1990).

These pages seek to contribute to feminist meta-research in communication through the analysis of in-depth interviews with six researchers considered pioneers in the academic field of communication in Mexico: Rossana Reguillo, Fátima Fernández, Beatriz Solís, Delia Covi, Sarah Corona, and Patricia Ortega. Their trajectories, spanning nearly four decades of academic life, make it possible to reconstruct an experiential archive that accounts for the ways in which gender inequalities have been intertwined with processes of professionalization, teaching, and research in the field of communication.

We begin from two fundamental premises. First, the experiences of these scholars are not merely individual testimonies; rather, they must be understood as concrete expressions of the structural conditions that have historically shaped Mexican academia. Second, their narratives

offer interpretive keys for reconstructing feminist genealogies of the field, aimed not only at recovering and making names visible - something necessary for the indispensable recognition of women scholars' contributions - but also, and more especially, at identifying and validating the particular ways of doing, thinking, and accompanying that have sustained the communicational production of women researchers in the country.

The review of these trajectories is framed by contemporary feminist debates on situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), standpoint epistemologies (Harding, 1991), performativity and vulnerability (Butler, 2004), phenomenology of use and institutional work (Ahmed, 2017), and decolonial practices of knowledge (Lugones, 2008). It is also articulated with the theory of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), which is essential for understanding the systematic disauthorization experienced by many women in academia, and with Marcela Lagarde's feminist proposals (2015).

The meta-research approach seeks not only to describe experiences, but also to interrogate the ways in which the field communicates about itself, how it produces authority, and how it distributes prestige, from a perspective that emphasizes gender inequity. The testimonies of the interviewed researchers reveal tensions between motherhood and productivity, between activism and institutional recognition, between accompaniment and competition, between teaching and prestige, and between sustained presence and erasure from the canon. These tensions, far from being anecdotal, are structural and configure a critical map of the field that compels us to rethink its forms of legitimation and its policies of recognition.

The article is organized into four sections: a theoretical framework that brings together feminist and meta-research contributions; a methodological section grounded in situated epistemologies; the presentation, analysis, and discussion of results, which connects empirical findings with current debates in the field; and the conclusions, oriented toward a feminist, institutional, and ethically responsible rewriting of the discipline.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Academia as a Gendered Institution

The idea that academic institutions are traversed by gender dynamics has been widely documented. Acker (1990), for example, argues that organizations produce and reproduce gender relations even when they appear neutral. The figure of the "ideal academic" - fully available,

exclusively dedicated, detached from care responsibilities, and with linear trajectories - corresponds to a normative masculine model that excludes other ways of inhabiting intellectual work. This makes it possible to affirm, without doubt, that the scientific world is androcentric.

Gender is a social order that locates people on the basis of sexual difference and, on that basis, assigns places, establishes hierarchies, designates attributes, and ultimately characterizes men and women while imposing the fulfillment of certain roles assigned to each gender. This social gender order, characteristic of the patriarchal system, is discursively constructed and entails an imaginary - made up of representations, images, stereotypes, figures - that includes both the ideals it proposes and the dangers that threaten its foundations; that is, it reflects the normative gender parameters of the cultural group from which it emerges (Palomar, 2009, p. 57).

Androcentrism in science, and in the world of knowledge more generally, has been denounced by many feminists, including Harding (1996), Haraway (1991), and Fox Keller (1991), among others. This is not, therefore, a new issue; unfortunately, however, it has not lost relevance, and its attention and discussion remain urgent. Discriminatory practices based on gender, normalized and very often invisibilized, operate as forms of structural violence that undermine women researchers' confidence, continuity, and legitimacy. This is not unique to the field of communication; indeed, we might think that in fields of knowledge mostly considered masculine - those grouped under the so-called "hard sciences" or "exact sciences" - these practices of discrimination and invisibilization are suffered even more intensely.

As we will see in the empirical section, several of the experiences narrated by the interviewees confirm this diagnosis: some of them mention that motherhood meant they stopped being invited to participate in academic projects, while others report experiencing forms of invisibilization and lack of recognition despite having carried out most of the work.

2.2 Situated Knowledge and Feminist Epistemologies

A fundamental key for analyzing the trajectories of women researchers is Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledge (1988), according to which all knowledge production is located in bodily, social, and political experiences. In this sense, the trajectories of the interviewees are not only personal stories, but also epistemic positions constructed within specific sociocultural and scientific contexts.

Haraway argues that Western science has been sustained by a notion of objectivity understood as neutrality, detachment, and a "view from nowhere." This epistemic fiction consists of the illusion of an observer capable of seeing everything without being seen, without a body, without history, and without interests. The author states: "Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges. The claim to objectivity as a view from nowhere - the god trick - is an illusion we must reject" (Haraway, 1995, p. 326). With this critique, Haraway questions the idea that scientific knowledge can detach itself from the material, political, and bodily conditions from which it is produced.

Situated knowledge should not be conceived as relativism; that is, it does not mean that any perspective has the same value. Haraway explicitly criticizes postmodern relativist epistemologies because they turn the multiplicity of perspectives into a horizon without political commitment. The project of situated knowledge demands, by contrast, responsibility and positioning: one must make explicit where one speaks from, how knowledge is produced, and whom it benefits or harms. For this reason, the author proposes an epistemological framework that combines embodiment (the body as a concrete point of view), partiality (the impossibility of a total vision), political responsibility (commitment to the consequences of knowledge), and alliances (the articulation of heterogeneous knowledges) (Haraway, 1988).

For her part, Sandra Harding (1991) proposes that feminist epistemology entails a "standpoint" for making power relations visible. Women's experiences of discrimination, omission, cancellation, and delegitimization do not merely constitute biographical obstacles; they also make it possible to identify invisibilized structures. Like Haraway, Harding argues that there is no neutral perspective when knowledge is produced; for her, the standpoint is not an identity, but rather an epistemic positioning.

It is also important to recover the work of María Lugones (2008), who addresses certain intersections among feminist epistemology, science, and the university. The author analyzes how Western science has historically been constructed on the basis of androcentric criteria that privilege supposedly objective, affectively distant, and masculine rationality. Similar to the authors mentioned above, Lugones understands knowledge as a bodily and emotional process, not merely a cognitive one. Embodied life experience is a legitimate source of knowledge and an essential starting point for questioning the hierarchies and inequalities that mark the history of science. In the specific case of universities, the author approaches them through a critique of

evaluation systems, meritocracy, and unequal mechanisms of recognition between men and women.

From a decolonial perspective, Lugones argues that gender is articulated with race, class, and coloniality, thus adopting an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989). Although the six interviewees share certain privileges - such as belonging to urban middle classes and possessing high educational capital, among others - they have also moved through public institutions with scarce resources, hierarchical environments, and forms of internal coloniality that traverse the academic field in Mexico.

The work of Mexican anthropologist Marcela Lagarde (2015) is indispensable for the research presented in these pages. The author proposes the notion of captivity to account for how women are subject to multiple forms of subordination, both social and institutional. These modalities of subordination - often naturalized in academic institutions - generate exclusions and limit women's possibilities. Like Lugones, Lagarde understands knowledge as emerging from life experience and trajectory, but she places the emphasis not on woman as an individual, but rather on the indispensable collective reflection from which knowledge emanates.

The contributions of these authors allow us to confirm that universities, and academic-scientific fields in general, operate by concealing the gender biases that constitute them and that determine what can be called an institutional and naturalized structure of inequality. Some of these biases arise, for example, from the ways in which care burdens - which affect women to a greater extent - are ignored and are not sufficiently taken into account when evaluating publications, research, and women's possibilities for mobility. Likewise, symbolic violence and different modes of harassment in the academic world limit women's autonomy and their trajectories in knowledge production.

2.3 Emotional Networks and Unrecognized Institutional Work

Ahmed (2017) proposes that women often carry out unrecognized "institutional work": sustaining environments, mediating conflicts, accompanying students, and intervening emotionally to keep the organization functioning. We can even observe a certain sexual division of academic labor in the consideration of teaching as eminently feminine work.

In the forms of organization within academic institutions, certain patterns also recur in the search for and creation of emotional networks among women. In the interviewees' narratives, this

pattern appears repeatedly, as we will see below. Practically all of them state that they found emotional support networks only among women and that they oriented their academic practice toward the construction of horizontal networks based on what we might call, in Lagarde's (2000) words, "endearing leadership," grounded in the ethics of care, collective action, sisterhood, and autonomy.

This kind of organizational contribution, which bears fruit in collaborative work, horizontal designs, shared bibliographies, and so on, is often invisibilized in institutions. It is not taken into account and is rarely rewarded in evaluation systems, which are configured to measure quantifiable productivity, not relational work.

Emotional labor in academic institutions constitutes a structural component that also accounts for the gender inequity characterizing universities. Many women sustain academic work in institutions through horizontal support networks that, as noted above, are not usually regarded as relevant within evaluation criteria.

Following Hochschild (1983), emotional labor can be understood as the management and administration of one's own and others' affects in work contexts that demand a certain emotional "performance"; in the case of universities, this labor is naturalized as part of the feminine role. As the author notes, this demand is sustained by gendered dispositions that reinforce inequality. These ideas resonate with Sara Ahmed (2010), who argues that institutions depend on certain "affective economies" that circulate through bodies and symbolic territories, defining which emotions are possible, legitimate, or useful.

A useful concept for deepening this element of affective economy and emotional labor, both seen as dispensable in institutional environments, is the "politics of use" proposed by Puig de la Bellacasa (2017). For the author, the politics of use is key to understanding how institutions - in this case, academic ones - "use" certain cognitive, relational, and affective capacities without recognizing or redistributing them. What can be "used" within an organization produces practical value that is not always accompanied by political value. On many occasions, the politics of use produces a dislocation between responsibility and authority; simplifying this idea, to which we will return in the empirical section of this text, we can say that women are made responsible, but do not gain access to decision-making spaces, unlike what happens with men.

This dislocation dialogues with Fraser's (2013) analyses of recognition and redistribution. For Fraser, gender injustices are produced when there is an imbalance between cultural recognition and material and political redistribution.

Integrating the notions of Hochschild, Ahmed, Puig de la Bellacasa, and Fraser makes it possible to understand that gender inequity in academic institutions operates through affective, symbolic, and material processes that are intertwined. Recognizing these dynamics and articulations is indispensable for attempting to reconfigure university practices and for moving toward fairer forms of organization and institutional relation, where emotional labor is neither exploited nor invisibilized, but redistributed and valued in its proper dimension.

2.4 Epistemic Injustice

Fricker (2007) defines epistemic injustice as the systematic disauthorization of certain subjects as valid producers of knowledge. The interviewees describe experiences that fit this category fully: uncited work, reappropriated ideas, projects taken over by others, and lack of recognition in bibliographies or conferences. Epistemic injustice, as we will see, does not operate only in highly visible and weighty areas of the field, such as publications in high-impact journals or the authorship of books, but also in everyday processes of knowledge circulation.

In general terms, following Fricker, we can say that epistemic injustice strips human beings of their dignity by not recognizing them, on the part of other collectives or social agents, as full subjects capable of constructing and transmitting knowledge (Fricker, 2017, pp. 81-93). The author proposes two basic types of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. The first refers to situations in which insufficient credibility is granted to the testimony of the speakers who suffer it, so they cannot participate in communicative exchanges on equal terms. Hermeneutical injustice, in turn, prevents members of affected groups from adequately interpreting their social experiences. In this case, we refer to the epistemic injustice that particularly affects women academics.

2.5 Contributions of Communication Meta-research

Women's participation in the development of the field of communication in Latin America dates back to the very beginnings of its constitution. That is, from the first stages of the field's institutionalization in universities, organizations, and associations, it is possible to

recognize the sustained presence of women. Nevertheless, women's participation has not corresponded with recognition of that work, and the emergence of research specifically questioning their contributions, roles, and achievements is relatively recent (Corona Berkin, 2018; Heram and Gándara, 2021; Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Meta-research of the field makes it possible to identify trends, gaps, tensions, and patterns of legitimation. Traditionally, it has focused on objects of study, methodologies, institutionalization, and networks. However, intersections between meta-research and gender have been scarce. In a previous work (da Rizo, 2024), we proposed cartography as a tool for accounting for the biases, limitations, and academic procedures that have, if not excluded, at least limited the prominence and intellectual legitimacy of women in the academic field of communication in Latin America. We find cartography highly suggestive because it allows us to map dynamically the contributions of Latin American women communication researchers by identifying their objects of study, geographic areas of origin, educational trajectories, and other elements. This mapping obviously makes it possible to record how women have been invisibilized in the field of communication, as well as to recover some of the tactics that women academics have followed to navigate obstacles (da Porta and Rizo, 2024).

In that proposal, we posed the following questions:

How can we make these silences speak without falling into schematic, simplistic, or anachronistic perspectives that demand from the past intellectual operations based on the cognitive schemes of the present? How can we simultaneously recover those silenced voices by restoring the contexts that pushed them to the margins; that is, without ignoring the forces that operated so that today those voices can be recognized in new compilations and intellectual memories? (da Porta and Rizo, 2024, pp. 86-87).

These pages are inscribed within this logic of denouncing the invisibilization of women's contributions to the field of communication, as well as of recovering the voices and trajectories of the pioneers in Mexico, with the aim of analyzing not only the content of communication research carried out by women, but more especially the structural and epistemic conditions that make it possible. These include who is considered a reference, what forms of work are valued, how the field's genealogies are constructed, what citation practices predominate, among other aspects that reveal mechanisms of exclusion of women researchers. This perspective makes it

possible to situate the experiences of the interviewed researchers as part of a larger structure, not as isolated cases.

It should not be forgotten that gender bias must be understood contextually, since historically it developed within the hegemonic conceptions of academic knowledge, and not only within the field of communication. In academia, these absences tend to be "naturalized" and the problem rendered invisible. Hence, we consider it necessary to continue reviewing the ways in which references, authorities, and legitimate names were constructed, because, due to the fragmentation and dispersion characteristic of the field, as some authors have pointed out, historical reconstructions tended more to seek the legitimation of the field and to build its identity narrative than to debate theory or recover intellectual production in an integral manner; such a debate would have allowed women's production to gain access more fluidly and more evenly (da Porta and Rizo, 2024, p. 88).

Thus, reconstructing genealogies of the contributions and trajectories of women communication researchers is not an act of symbolic inclusion, but rather an epistemological and ethical necessity for understanding the real history of the field.

3. Methodology: Qualitative Approach and Feminist Epistemology

Feminist epistemology emphasizes the critique of androcentric assumptions and sexist biases in research, marks that can be recognized in the selection of research problems and in the supposed objectivity and value-neutrality that conceals the fact that all thought is situated (Rich, 2012, p. 64). This operation opens complex and ambiguous epistemological paths because it seeks not only to deconstruct a phallogocentric (Derrida, 1975) mode of producing science, but also to explore other forms that seek to move away from dichotomies, hierarchies, and the benefits those dichotomies entail (da Porta and Rizo, 2024, p. 93).

The research was based on in-depth interviews with a biographical approach conducted with six researchers considered pioneers in the field of communication in Mexico. The analysis was carried out from a feminist epistemology that recognizes partiality, reflexivity, and affectivity as constitutive dimensions of the research process (Harding, 1991).

The objective was not to reach theoretical saturation, but to reconstruct architectures of the researchers' experiences that would reveal the tensions among personal life, institutional life, and knowledge production.

We understand the in-depth interview with a biographical approach as a qualitative research technique that seeks to reconstruct a person's life experience, placing special emphasis on how that person narrates and gives meaning to her own trajectory. It does not focus solely on making events in the person's life visible, but rather on approaching the emotions, decisions, and social contexts that have configured the life of the interviewee. In a now classic text, Denzin (1970) stated that the in-depth interview makes it possible to "access the subjective world of the interviewee, her definitions of reality, and the processes through which she constructs meaning." If we add the biographical approach, the interview makes it possible to "collect narratives that express the subject's lived experience and illuminate her position in a social fabric" (Bertaux, 1981).

Thus, the in-depth interview with a biographical approach consists of a flexible conversation oriented toward having the person reflect on her life trajectory - in this case, the trajectory linked to her participation in the academic world, but with inevitable references to the other dimensions of her life. Through these interviews, then, we sought to understand how the researchers construct a particular meaning around their own experiences, decisions, life tensions, and so on, producing a narrative that articulates personal and contextual dimensions.

In the analytical phase of the interviews, we used thematic analysis of the narratives derived from the conversations held with the six researchers, based on the detection of categories such as the following: subtle inequality, motherhood, hybrid trajectories, accompaniment and mentoring, epistemic injustice, horizontal leadership, and disciplinary canon. These categories were articulated with feminist theories and discussions specific to meta-research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Veiled Inequalities and Institutional Subtleties

The researchers' narratives show that gender inequality in the academic field of communication in Mexico does not usually manifest itself through explicit forms of violence, but primarily through subtle mechanisms of exclusion, invisibilization, and delegitimization. These are experiences that many of the interviewees do not initially identify as forms of discrimination and violence, precisely because they are part of normalized practices within academic culture. The testimonies reveal that inequality in their trajectories as researchers in the academic field of communication in Mexico operated in a subtle but persistent manner.

None of the interviewees assumes that she has been a victim of gender violence and, in that sense, it is possible to affirm that they speak from a certain privilege. However, although they state that they did not receive direct violence, in all cases there are lived experiences that account for inequalities that may be more subtle, but are no less important. These inequities are manifested, for example, in explicit assumptions that women cannot hold positions of power, or in the lack of recognition of the work carried out by women.

Beatriz Solís states that she does not identify clear gender violence in the academic world: "In my particular case, in the academic field, I did not encounter many problems in terms of differences or remarks related to gender. I do know and I am aware that, in the labor field - precisely in the labor field of communication - that is where the issue can be seen more clearly."

But lack of recognition is recurrent. Fátima Fernández Christlieb, for example, points out that for a long time she did not interpret these experiences in terms of discrimination, although she did perceive a persistent feeling of not belonging: "I did not know that this was discrimination; I only felt that I did not fit into what was expected of a male professor. It was like being in a place where no one had imagined that a woman could be." This statement reveals how exclusion operates less through open prohibition than through institutional imaginaries that continue to associate academic authority with masculinity.

Several testimonies also reveal a form of invisibilization linked to intellectual recognition. Patricia Ortega summarizes this experience by stating: "It is not that they attacked me; it is that they did not see me. I did the work, but recognition always went to them." More than isolated episodes, these situations show the existence of everyday mechanisms that distribute academic prestige unequally and systematically favor men.

The narratives of Sarah Corona and Rossana Reguillo make it possible to identify how these dynamics are reproduced even in institutional spaces that are formally meritocratic. Corona recalls that the evaluation commissions of Mexico's National Council of Science and Technology functioned as "a boys' club where men defined the legitimate evaluation criteria," while Reguillo describes situations in which the contributions of women academics were ignored until a male colleague took them up and received the corresponding recognition. Two of Reguillo's statements bring this clearly into view: "The secretaries referred to Professor Fuentes, Professor Luna, and to Diana, Rosana, and María Marta. In other words, the women in the department themselves, the secretaries, erased the label, the credential." And: "I found myself in some

meetings where a woman said something wonderful, and then someone else took it up, and then a third person would say, 'as so-and-so said,' and then the woman was left as if she had never said that idea."

These experiences suggest that the legitimacy of knowledge continues to be traversed by gender hierarchies that determine who can be recognized as an authorized producer of knowledge.

The interviewees also show that women's access to leadership positions is often conditioned by expectations of service and care. Sarah Corona's reflection on her appointment as president of a commission made up exclusively of men is particularly illustrative: "At first one feels very proud (...), and then they saw a face on me that suggested I could take the notes, write the minutes, and everything else." This observation shows that female inclusion in decision-making spaces does not necessarily imply an effective redistribution of power, but often reproduces traditional assignments associated with organizational and administrative work. In a similar sense, Delia Crovi states the following: "Almost always, if a man invited you to work, it was so that you would be an assistant, not so that you would be his equal. It happened to me on some occasions: I invite you to write an article, we are going to write an article; the 'we' ended up being singular, because I did practically all the work, and it did not happen once, it happened several times." Crovi herself states bluntly: "Almost all the great Latin American communication researchers have had their intellectual slave who accompanied them for a long time and solved many problems for them."

Taken together, these findings suggest that gender inequalities in the academic field operate through discreet but persistent forms of symbolic exclusion that limit women's recognition, authority, and full participation in knowledge production.

These experiences can be understood through the notion of the scientific field. Far from constituting a neutral space governed exclusively by meritocratic criteria, the academic field operates through power relations that unequally distribute scientific capital, prestige, and legitimacy. The testimonies show that women academics not only faced obstacles to accessing positions of authority, but also had to permanently dispute recognition of their intellectual contributions. The invisibilization described by the interviewees reveals that access to academic recognition continues to be mediated by gender hierarchies that privilege the male voice as the legitimate bearer of scientific authority.

4.2 Motherhood as a Breaking Point

For the six researchers, motherhood emerges as one of the most critical moments in their academic careers. All of them assume that, when they became mothers, they had to interrupt - to a greater or lesser extent - their academic careers, partly because most of the care work for children fell on them. Sarah Corona recalls it as follows: "I think the hardest thing about gender in my time was time, because I think that, just like my women colleagues, the family demanded a great deal of time, because men did not participate in the ways, in the care."

Patricia Ortega, for her part, comments the following with respect to motherhood: "So I was going to enter the competition. And then they told me, you had better not say that you are pregnant, otherwise you will lose. Almost as if, like, this is going to affect you, right? (...) And I also received the comment: but how? You were supposed to be the next director of the division; what is going to happen now?"

The problematization of motherhood in Western societies has been a matter of discussion within feminist ethics and epistemology. Feminism calls into question the presumed naturalness of maternal desires and proposes locating them in the field of culture, as a mandate of the patriarchal system.

Rich (1976) argues that motherhood went from being a marginal question in feminist analyses to being a topic with great presence in women's collective consciousness and on the feminist agenda. Although there are several feminist approaches to motherhood, one recurring point is that, historically, the maternal function has served to justify women's exclusion from public, political, and economic life in the past. It is therefore necessary to understand motherhood as a category that incorporates diverse realities depending on context and on both individual and collective determinations from which it is exercised.

The relationship that women, academic or not, have with motherhood is a highly naturalized process that, at times, borders on mythification. According to Ávila, there is very strong social pressure regarding the right not to exercise motherhood, to the point that non-mothers are stigmatized (Ávila, 2005), being considered selfish or incomplete.

Experiences of motherhood differ for each woman, but they always entail specific decisions, practices, and attitudes. In the vast majority of cases, they also involve a world charged with contradictory experiences, whether conscious or not.

Trying to understand how motherhood is constructed and lived in a specific context such as the academic field implies seeing motherhood as a specific, situated social practice. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the particularities of those who identify as academics. As the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2008) put it, *homo academicus* is a very particular subject: a narcissistic subject who conceives of himself as free and independent from all social coercion, which leads to a narcissistic illusion that produces an exaltation of the self, self-maximization, and individualism. We are therefore facing a field whose basic actors are connected through elements such as competition, rationality, and supposed autonomy.

As noted above, motherhood was experienced by the six interviewees as a breaking point, each with its own particularities, and as one of the most complex and decisive moments of their academic trajectories. Although the experiences are diverse, all agree in pointing out that becoming mothers implied reorganizing time, priorities, and professional expectations within institutions that continue to be structured on the assumption of permanent availability.

The main obstacle identified by the interviewees was not motherhood itself, but the unequal distribution of care responsibilities. The testimonies make it possible to understand that academic inequalities linked to motherhood do not derive from a supposed natural incompatibility between being a mother and being a researcher, but from a profoundly gendered social organization of care.

Rossana Reguillo clearly describes the impact of this situation on the daily life of women academics. According to her account, childrearing placed her at a "disadvantage compared with [her] male colleagues" and produced a permanent state of exhaustion: "in order to raise children and take them to the park (...) one had to work at dawn and write dissertations at dawn." This experience reveals how women must sustain a double shift that combines academic work and reproductive work, often at the expense of their own well-being.

The academic field is organized around an ideal of permanent availability, continuous productivity, and exclusive dedication to intellectual work. This ideal has historically been built on male trajectories that rest upon the externalization of care tasks. For this reason, motherhood is not simply a personal experience, but a point of tension between two temporal regimes that are frequently incompatible: the time of social reproduction and the time of academic productivity.

In addition to material difficulties, the testimonies of the six interviewees show the existence of institutional prejudices that associate motherhood with a decrease in professional

capacity. Patricia Ortega recalls that, during an academic competition process, she was warned not to reveal her pregnancy because it could harm her chances of success. Later, when she became a mother, colleagues and authorities questioned her ability to continue carrying out leadership responsibilities. These experiences reflect the persistence of imaginaries that consider women who are mothers as less available, less committed, or even less capable of holding leadership positions.

Nevertheless, the narratives also show the complexity and ambivalence of maternal experience. Sarah Corona acknowledges that childrearing entailed important professional costs, but also emphasizes that it allowed her to enjoy affective and family experiences that she considers valuable. Patricia Ortega, for her part, emphasizes the dimension of agency present in her decisions: "Yes, I took pauses. Yes, I can say that I postponed some things, but I also feel that I decided it." These voices make it possible to avoid simplifying interpretations that reduce motherhood solely to an experience of subordination.

Beyond the particularities of each story, the interviews coincide in showing that the dominant model of academic excellence continues to be built on masculinized parameters of productivity and permanent availability. As a result, academic mothers frequently experience feelings of insufficiency, guilt, and exhaustion resulting from the impossibility of responding simultaneously to the demands of both spheres.

What appears in the testimonies is not only a material overload of work, but also an emotional burden associated with cultural mandates regarding good motherhood. The interviewees describe feelings of guilt, insufficiency, and exhaustion that stem from the impossibility of satisfying, at the same time, the institutional expectations of the ideal academic and the social demands of the ideal mother. Maternal experience thus becomes a privileged space for observing the way in which gender inequalities are subjectively incorporated.

4.3 Hybrid Trajectories and Support Networks

The interviewees entered the field from diverse trajectories: public media, feminist activism, cultural management. These experiences shaped particular ways of conducting research and, in some way, destabilize the linear model of professionalization, showing that the history of the field is traversed by contributions that are not always recognized as "scientific."

The trajectories of the interviewees call into question the traditional image of the researcher as a subject whose formation unfolds in a linear and exclusively academic manner. On the contrary, their paths are marked by diverse experiences linked to political activism, journalism, cultural management, activism, and social intervention.

The relationships of accompaniment described by the interviewees allow us to observe forms of production and sustenance of knowledge that are rarely recognized by institutional evaluation systems. Beyond the publication of articles or the acquisition of funding, academic work requires activities of listening, guidance, mediation, and care that make the continuity of collective projects possible. These practices refer to what María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) calls a politics of care: forms of relational responsibility that sustain social and epistemic worlds.

Rossana Reguillo, for example, recounts a trajectory that includes philosophy, radio journalism, university management, and work with urban youth - experiences that later nourished her intellectual production. Similarly, Delia Crovi shares a trajectory shaped by migratory processes and complex political contexts in different Latin American countries before joining Mexican academia. These paths show that a significant part of the contributions of the field's pioneers stems precisely from their capacity to articulate knowledges and experiences that exceed the institutional limits of the university.

Another relevant finding is the centrality of support networks among women. Unlike the competitive ties that often characterize the academic field, the interviewees highlight relationships built on solidarity, horizontality, mutual support, and the exchange of experiences. Sarah Corona describes Carmen de la Peza and Margarita Cires as "my companions, my friends (...) my sisters," whose voices continue to accompany her even when they are not physically present.

In a similar vein, Beatriz Solís refers to the importance that collaborations with colleagues had in her trajectory: "Because I learned a great deal that collective work allows us to grow enormously and enriches us when it is truly collective work. And so, in all these matters, well, there was collectivity, but there were also leaderships, and yes, we were women most of the time."

Several interviewees also identify female figures who functioned as intellectual and affective references. Delia Crovi recalls Clara Pasafari, who introduced her to empirical research and fieldwork: "Clara Pasafari was a hugely important academic mother. She was much older

than I was; she had completed a doctorate in the United States while having three children, an extraordinary woman for her time. She invited me to participate in a research project. There I learned a great deal about what an in-depth interview is, about fieldwork." These mentoring relationships show that the reproduction of the field depends not only on formal mechanisms of academic training, but also on affective bonds that often remain invisible in institutional systems.

The bonds and networks among women colleagues, according to what the six pioneers of communication research interviewed mention, constitute a true infrastructure of academic sustenance. They not only favor women's permanence in the field, but also make possible alternative forms of knowledge construction based on cooperation, reciprocity, and accompaniment.

From this perspective, support networks among women cannot be interpreted merely as secondary affective bonds, because they constitute true epistemological infrastructures that enable the circulation of knowledge, women's permanence in the field, and the reproduction of scientific communities. However, precisely because they are associated with practices of care and accompaniment, they tend to be excluded from formal mechanisms of academic recognition.

The narratives reveal a gendered distribution of emotional labor within academic institutions. The interviewees recount how they were frequently called upon to resolve conflicts, accompany students, mediate tensions among colleagues, or take on organizational tasks indispensable to the university's daily functioning. Although these activities require complex skills and a high level of institutional commitment, they are rarely recognized as academic work.

Institutions benefit from the relational work carried out by women, but without transforming existing structures of authority. As a result, a dissociation is produced between responsibility and power: women academics sustain a substantial part of institutional life, but continue to face barriers to accessing spaces of decision-making and recognition.

On mentorships, Sarah Corona Berkin acknowledges the following: "Héctor Schmuckler is the main teacher I had. That is where I met him, that is where I worked with him, that is where I worked creating the program. And also with his wife Ana María Netol, who was a perfect female image: she had a maternal side toward young professors like me, and she had an exceptional academic level." Rossana Reguillo, meanwhile, speaks of Carlos Monsiváis: "From Monsiváis I learned to escape academic rigidity, to ask questions, trying to see how he did it, like a more complete film."

The interviewed researchers describe trajectories marked by the expectation that they would take on tasks of student accompaniment, conflict mediation, and emotional containment of colleagues and authorities, sometimes even to "calm" tensions derived from male resistance or hierarchical dynamics. This work - although decisive for maintaining the daily functioning of their institutions - does not appear in evaluation systems and therefore does not translate into recognition or professional mobility.

The narratives of the academics show how the university requires their affective availability - being accessible, sensitive, conciliatory - in order to guarantee internal governability. Ahmed (2017) explains that women are often interpellated as the organization's "affective agents," because their emotional labor sustains the image of cohesive and functional institutions. The interviewees show that this affective economy also functions as a limit: the collegiality expected of them becomes a moral criterion, while emotions such as open critique or confrontation are read, in the case of women, as deviant and undesirable attitudes.

Several of the researchers stated that they had been called to positions, commissions, or projects because of their capacity to "solve," "accompany," or "organize" critical situations. Their presence is instrumentalized to stabilize collective processes, but the possibilities of structural transformation remain restricted. The politics of use (Bellacasa, 2017), in this context, generates a dislocation between responsibility and authority: women academics sustain institutional bonds and climate, but do not gain proportional access to decision-making spaces.

The researchers' experiences show that, although institutions discursively recognize the importance of the relational work they perform - often celebrated as evidence of commitment or vocation - there is no equivalent redistribution of power or leadership opportunities. That is, the institution symbolically values "care," but does not transform the structures that subordinate it or rethink the meritocratic criteria that invisibilize it (Fraser, 2013).

4.4 Epistemic Injustice and The Disciplinary Canon

The testimonies regarding the appropriation of ideas, lack of citation, and erasure of women's work are consistent with the notion of epistemic injustice. In fact, one of the most significant findings of this research is related to the forms of epistemic injustice experienced by the women academics interviewed. Their narratives show that the recognition of intellectual

authorship continues to be distributed unequally and that women's contributions often remain outside the official narratives about the construction of the field.

These experiences can be analyzed through the concept of epistemic injustice developed by Miranda Fricker (2016). The author maintains that certain subjects see their credibility as producers of knowledge diminished because of structural prejudices associated with their social position. The testimonies show that the researchers faced precisely this kind of disadvantage: their ideas were ignored, appropriated, or considered less relevant than those of their male colleagues.

The experiences recounted include the appropriation of ideas, absence of authorial recognition, and exclusion of women from the bibliographic repertoires considered legitimate. Rossana Reguillo describes how contributions made by women academics could be ignored until some male colleague took them up and received the corresponding credit. Similarly, Delia Covi denounces a recurring practice through which the intellectual work of many women remains subordinated to the prestige of male researchers.

Exclusion is also manifested in the processes of constructing the disciplinary canon. Patricia Ortega points out that study programs continue to reproduce bibliographies composed exclusively of men, even in areas where important contributions by women exist. This observation shows that invisibilization affects not only individual trajectories, but also the mechanisms through which knowledge is transmitted and legitimized within the discipline.

Particularly revealing are the interviewees' own reflections on the internalization of these hierarchies. Fátima Fernández acknowledges that, when remembering the most important figures in her trajectory, she first evoked men, later asking herself: "Why did I myself not see them as important enough to mention?" This observation shows how exclusion processes also operate at the subjective level, shaping perceptions of who is considered a legitimate reference of knowledge. As Reguillo states, "there is a persistence of thinking from the colonization of the imaginary that the word of a male academic carries more weight than that of a female academic. It seems to me that this still exists and is reproduced."

The narratives reveal testimonial injustices, since women's words receive less credibility. During much of their trajectories, the interviewees even lacked the conceptual tools to name the inequalities they experienced. As Fátima Fernández Christlieb expresses, for years she did not identify certain experiences as discrimination. This difficulty in collectively interpreting

experience constitutes precisely one of the central features of the hermeneutical injustice described by Fricker.

As can be observed, the results of this research dialogue with both classic and current debates on how scientific fields are constructed and legitimized. Specifically, the experiences of the six researchers with whom we spoke allow us to identify a masculine configuration of the disciplinary canon; the persistent invisibilization of women's work; the devaluation of teaching and management, which continue to be seen as feminized activities; underrepresentation in decision-making bodies; the limited recognition of affective modes of organization among women; and the absence of institutional policies of reconciliation and work-life balance.

The testimonies allow us to conclude that the canon of communication in Mexico has been constructed through selective processes of visibility that have privileged certain voices, trajectories, and forms of intellectual production. Recovering the experiences of these pioneers implies not only recognizing historically invisibilized contributions, but also questioning the very criteria through which it is defined what knowledge is considered valuable and who is recognized as a legitimate producer of knowledge.

More than simply recovering the names of the pioneers, whom we recognize and to whom we are indebted, exercises such as the one presented in these pages allow us to recognize practices of accompaniment in scientific work, collaborative modes of research, emphasis on situated and relational epistemologies, and women's contributions to the creation and institutional consolidation of the field of communication in Mexico.

The field of communication needs to rethink its criteria of authority and legitimacy. Including these pioneers is not an act of political correctness, but an epistemological and academic-ethical exercise that not only raises the need to recognize their contributions, but also, going further, seeks to place the theoretical-methodological perspective of feminist genealogies within reflection on our academic field.

The intersection between these theoretical perspectives and the testimonies analyzed makes it possible to affirm that emotional labor and the politics of use constitute everyday mechanisms of reproduction of the institutional gender regime. Although these researchers were pioneers in the consolidation of the field of communication in Mexico, the patterns described limited their access to leadership positions, conditioned the valuation of their academic production, and shaped the institutional expectations placed upon them. Their narratives indicate

that gender inequity in academia is expressed not only in quantitative gaps, but also - and above all - in the differential use of women's affective and relational capacities to sustain university life.

5. Conclusions

The trajectories of the six pioneering researchers interviewed reveal that gender inequalities in the academic field of communication in Mexico have not operated primarily through explicit forms of exclusion, but through everyday, subtle, and persistent mechanisms of invisibilization, delegitimization, and unequal distribution of recognition. The testimonies analyzed show that academia constitutes a gendered organization in which expectations, hierarchies, and criteria of valuation historically constructed from masculinized parameters remain in force.

One of the main findings of this research is that the experience of the interviewed women academics reveals the existence of forms of inequality that frequently remain outside institutional diagnoses. The lack of recognition of intellectual contributions, the differentiated assignment of academic tasks, the lower credibility granted to women's words, and the persistence of biases in evaluation and decision-making spaces reveal that gender inequities are not isolated events or individual experiences, but structural dimensions that traverse the production of knowledge.

Motherhood emerges as a particularly significant breaking point. More than an individual condition, it appears as an experience that puts in tension the assumptions on which academic life is organized. The narratives show that the ideal of continuous productivity and permanent availability that characterizes the scientific field continues to rest on masculine biographical models that invisibilize care responsibilities. The interviewees recount experiences of exhaustion, postponement, guilt, and professional questioning that reveal the absence of institutional conditions oriented toward conciliation and co-responsibility.

Another central finding is related to the relevance of emotional, relational, and care work in the consolidation of the field of communication. The interviewed academics not only produced knowledge, directed projects, or trained generations of students; they also sustained support networks, accompanied academic trajectories, built collective spaces, mediated conflicts, and contributed to the creation of intellectual communities. These forms of institutional work, fundamental to the reproduction of academic life, remain largely invisibilized in evaluation and recognition systems. The testimonies analyzed make it possible to affirm that an important part

of the history of the field of communication in Mexico has been sustained by relational and affective labor carried out mainly by women.

The academics state that they have sustained the field through emotional labor, horizontal and mostly female support networks, and they vindicate other ways of constructing knowledge and, ultimately, another way of being and existing in the academic world - less vertical, more based on the endearing leaderships (Lagarde, 2000) mentioned above, and more articulated through affective bonds, not only institutional ones.

The results also show the persistence of mechanisms of epistemic injustice that limit the recognition of women as legitimate producers of knowledge. The appropriation of ideas, the scarce citation of women authors, the absence of women from reference bibliographies, and the tendency to privilege male voices in the construction of academic authority reveal that the problem is not restricted to women's access to academia, but extends to the very processes of legitimating knowledge. The experiences recounted make it possible to identify both testimonial injustices, when women's words receive less credibility, and hermeneutical injustices, when women academics initially lack categories to name the inequalities they experience.

In this sense, the main contribution of this research does not lie solely in recovering the trajectories of six pioneers of communication in Mexico. Its most relevant contribution consists in showing that disciplinary history has been narrated through selective criteria of visibility that have privileged certain forms of knowledge production and certain subjects as legitimate references. The trajectories analyzed reveal an alternative history of the field: a history constructed from situated experiences, hybrid paths, collaborative practices, mentoring networks, and forms of leadership grounded in an ethics of care.

For this reason, the reconstruction of feminist genealogies should not be understood only as an exercise of symbolic reparation or as a strategy of retrospective inclusion. Rather, it is an indispensable epistemological task for understanding more fully how the academic field of communication in Mexico was constituted. Incorporating the experiences, contributions, and ways of doing of women academics makes it possible to question traditional criteria of authority, recognition, and scientific legitimacy, as well as to open the possibility of imagining fairer, more plural, and more democratic forms of knowledge production.

Finally, this work invites us to expand the agenda of communication meta-research through a feminist perspective capable of interrogating not only what knowledge is produced, but

also who produces it, under what conditions, through what relationships, and at what personal, affective, and professional costs. At a time when the discipline is critically revising its genealogies and forms of institutionalization, recovering these voices constitutes an opportunity to rethink the history of the field and its future horizons from an ethical, political, and epistemological perspective committed to gender justice.

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