

Not Foreigners or Secretaries: Discourses of Chilean Female Scientists on Academic Work

Ni extranjeras, ni secretarias: discursos de las científicas chilenas sobre el trabajo académico

Carla Fardella Cisternas¹, Alejandra Corvalán-Navia¹,
Javiera García-Meneses², y Francesca Chiappini Koscina³

¹ Universidad Andrés Bello, Chile.

² Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile.

³ Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Chile.

Abstract

Women who are engaged in scientific work represent less than a third of those who produce knowledge in Chile. This is in addition to unequal working conditions, as well as a symbolic network that makes it difficult for the development of female scientists. The increasing number of studies on science and gender tend to focus on describing and analyzing academic conditions and environments; however, the experiences of women, as well as their qualitative aspects, have been little studied. This paper reports the findings of a study which was intended to highlight the perspective of these female scientists, investigating the meanings that they construct regarding academia and their work experience within it. Based on the pragmatic discursive analysis of 20 interviews with female researchers from various disciplines, two interpretative repertoires are reported. The first we call “I don’t want to be your secretary”, which addresses the sexual division perceived by the interviewees in academic work, while the second, entitled “I’m the only woman” highlights accounts of being a minority at work in an androcentric symbolic order. The results of this research are expected to foster dialogue about pluralist academia and a scientific community committed to gender justice.

Keywords: scientific women, science and society, university transformation, discourse analysis.

Post to:

Carla Fardella Cisternas
Quillota 980, Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Andrés Bello,
Viña del Mar, Valparaíso, Chile.
carla.fardella@unab.cl

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Resumen

Las mujeres dedicadas al trabajo científico representan menos de un tercio de quienes producen conocimiento en Chile; esto se suma a condiciones laborales desiguales, así como a una red simbólica compleja para el desarrollo científico femenino. Los crecientes estudios sobre ciencia y género tienden a centrarse en describir y analizar las condiciones y entornos académicos; sin embargo, la experiencia de las mujeres, así como sus aspectos cualitativos, han sido escasamente explorados. Este artículo reporta los hallazgos de una investigación que busca relevar la perspectiva de las científicas, indagando en los significados que construyen sobre la academia y su experiencia laboral en ella. A partir del análisis discursivo pragmático de 20 entrevistas a investigadoras de diversas disciplinas, se reportan dos repertorios interpretativos: “No quiero ser tu secretaria” y “yo soy la única mujer”, y plantea los relatos de ser una minoría laboral en un orden simbólico androcéntrico. Ambos repertorios muestran como las científicas conviven creativamente con una academia que tiende a organizarse mediante prácticas que aseguran que el conocimiento producido y reproducido sea androcéntrico. Se espera que los resultados posibiliten un diálogo acerca de una academia pluralista y una comunidad científica comprometida con la justicia de género.

Palabras clave: mujer científica, ciencia y sociedad, transformación de la universidad, análisis de discurso.

Introduction

Female participation in higher education has made significant strides in the last decade, particularly in terms of access issues (UNESCO, 2017). In many countries, such as Chile, this increase is reflected in the similar percentages of female and male undergraduate enrollment (Ministerio de Educación, 2018). However, the data indicate that as one progresses up the various academic ranks, the presence of women decreases (CONICYT, 2018).

In line with this, when we look at the figures on women in academia, only 28% of them are dedicated to research and just 16% lead high-performance scientific teams (CONICYT, 2017). As a consequence, female academics, and specifically female scientists, are underrepresented at the level of university chancellors, registrars, in postgraduate and research administration, and also, to a lesser extent, in positions such as vice-chancellor and academic deanships (Berríos, 2007; Del Pino, Vallejos, Améstica-Rivas, & Cornejo-Saavedra, 2018; Gaete-Quezada, 2015; Kiss, Barrios, & Álvarez, 2007).

These data demonstrate that there is an unequal playing field, not only in terms of numbers, but there is also a symbolically adverse scenario for female scientists. Indeed, the increase in the number of women in higher education and their growing presence in science does not mean that the symbolic scenario regarding gender differences in the scientific space is changing. According to Pacheco, Cayeros, and Navarro (2011), the rigidity of this symbolic scenario could be supported by the supposed culture of objectivity and neutrality of academia and science. However, this supposed *objectivity* may be nothing more than the generalization of androcentric values that have been constructed and conceptualized as neutral and universal values.

With regard to this, although a number of studies that address the issue of women and science describe the working conditions and highlight the gaps in terms of presence, recognition, and remuneration of female scientists in academia, their daily work experiences have been scarcely researched. As a consequence, it is essential to understand the meanings and discourses constructed by women in science in response to the question of how female scientists describe academia and their work experiences within it.

Based on the pragmatic discourse analysis of 20 active interviews (Denzin, 2001) with female scientists from various disciplines (Commercial Engineering, Sociology, Physics, Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Anthropology, Psychology, Environmental Chemistry, Philosophy, Civil Engineering, Social Work, Law, and History), we obtained two main interpretative repertoires to understand how female scientists construct meanings regarding their work experiences in academia.

Review of the situation of female scientists in Chile

Figures and gaps in female participation in academia

According to UNESCO (2017), women make up 28.8% of the total number of researchers worldwide and 45.4% in Latin America. In Chile, the percentage of women researchers is 31.1%, putting the country 17th out of 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean on which there are figures. In line with this, according to the statistical report issued by the Studies Unit of the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (2018)—hereinafter, CONICYT—although women access undergraduate and postgraduate education in equal or greater proportions than men (53.1% and 50.2%, respectively), these figures decrease as one advances in academic careers.

In the same vein, at undergraduate level, the percentage of women with degrees exceeds that of men (56.6%), but at postgraduate level that proportion decreases to 48% on master's degree programs and 43.5% on doctoral programs (CONICYT, 2018). Then, for various reasons, women working in research only reach 28% of the total (UNESCO, 2017). This percentage is repeated in the award of postdoctoral, initiation, and also regular grants, where the proportion of women who are awarded Fondecyt, FONDAF, or PIA projects does not surpass 35% of the total. In the case of EXPLORA, FONIS, and Regional projects the situation is different, and awards made to women for these projects are higher than those made to men, at 51%, 59.1%, and 63.6%, respectively (CONICYT, 2018).

Considering female participation in academia, taking into account the 60 universities identified in the 2018 academic staff report of the Higher Education Information Service (SIES), it can be observed that 43.4% of the total number of academics are women; however, this percentage decreases as the age range of these staff rises (CONICYT, 2018). Similarly, although women represent about 45% of the teaching staff and 35% of assistant professors are women, only 30% are hired full-time and only 15% of full professors are women (Universidad de Chile, 2014).

On the other hand, there is a decrease in the proportion of females in academia as the amount of money and power distributed increases. If we look at the academic ranks, understood as “the spaces or pigeonholes that teachers occupy by virtue of their curricular background, teaching seniority, and professional merits” (Kiss et al., 2007, p. 97), we observe a decrease in the percentage of women in the upper ranks. In this respect, only 20% of higher education institutions and scientific councils are headed by a woman (considering directors, vice-rectors and rectors), and only 8.2% of rectors are women (Observatorio de Género en Educación Superior, 2019).

Thus, in the context of academic work, we find more women dedicated to teaching and a minority focused on improving the indicators that make it possible to achieve promotion in the hierarchy (Kiss et al., 2007). Although 31.5% of researchers are women, the percentage of female researchers also decreases in higher-ranking roles: while 45% of Technical and Support Staff are women, only 16% of directors of research centers like Fondap, PIA, and Milenio are women (CONICYT, 2017).

All of the aforementioned gaps become more accentuated when we link them to the salaries received and differentiate them by gender. According to the National Statistics Institute (INE), women's hourly income for scientific and intellectual work is 34% lower than that of men (INE, 2017). As the report points out, this is partly explained by the differences in remuneration between faculties: those with a lower female presence have higher remunerations (Universidad de Chile, 2014).

Going beyond the figures: discourses and representations of women in academia

Going beyond the figures presented above, it is important to look more deeply into the different interpretations and explanations that the specialized literature has constructed around the aforementioned gaps and inequalities. As stated by Kiss et al. (2007), higher education and science have historically been structured as an adverse and foreign space for women. This is associated with the predominance of men since its beginnings, which has fostered an androcentric culture with multiple effects in formal structures, symbolic representations, and non-formal practices, which are deployed on a daily basis in university institutions.

As Saini (2017) contends, androcentrism permeates academic culture, although it is usually concealed behind discourses of neutrality, objectivity, and pluralism according to which it is claimed to have been founded. That is, even though academia has been built on the promise of being a place for reflection and progress, the truth is that the representations of the masculine and feminine respond naturally and without great difficulty to the discourses of the dominant androcentric extra-academic culture.

As we have stated, discourses about men and women in academia tend to reproduce the gender stereotypes that are rooted in the hegemonic culture in at least two ways: on the one hand, a series of studies document the classic sexual division (care work and productive work) and, on the other, the cognitive inferiority/superiority attributed to women and men, respectively. It should be noted that we have worked with the notion of discourse (Potter, 1998) and not gender stereotypes, as this enables us to understand that the notions of the masculine and feminine are not just mental schemas around an external object, but rather a collective (non-mental-internal) construction that is also endowed and sustained by context-specific power relations and practices (Tipler & Ruscher, 2019), allowing us to approach the problem of women in science in a more complex and socially rooted way.

The discourse about the sexual division of labor refers to the debate that emerged in the 1970s regarding how social tasks and roles were divided according to sex, assigning productive, paid, and public tasks to men and, at the other extreme, reproductive, care, unpaid, and private tasks to women (Morton, 1970; Benston, 1997). In the academic sphere, various studies have shown how this division is repeated: management tasks, staff care, or student care tend to be focused among female academics (Muñiz, 2016; Müller, 2019; Saracostti, 2006; Tronto, 1993), while the tasks of obtaining resources and funds for research and representation of projects tend to be done by men (Ríos, Mandiola, & Varas, 2017). In light of this, Muñiz (2016) points out how the roles associated with care within faculties—mainly training and administration of day-to-day life—have been subordinated to research, innovation, and representative positions, a discourse that is largely associated with the so-called sticky floor, which is explained below.

On the other hand, we find discourses related to cognitive inferiority/superiority organized according to the premise that women are more emotional and men are more rational (Morton, 1970; Benston, 1997; Saini, 2018). In this vein, some authors demonstrate how representations of the masculine and feminine tend to be polar: masculine is associated with notions of competence, assertiveness, authority, and orientation towards achievement, while feminine is linked to warmth, sociability, emotionality, and orientation towards relationships (Glinsner, Sauer, Gaitsch, Penz, & Hofbauer, 2017; Hochschild, 2003). With regard to academic work, this translates into the belief that women have difficulty in holding positions of authority, since they are insecure or unable to impose order or take rational decisions (Barberá, Candela, & Ramos, 2008; Jost & Kay, 2005; Quiles et al., 2008).

Discourse regarding the feminine and the masculine and how they operate in academia are unfailingly associated with the phenomena widely described in studies that address women, science, and work (Martínez-Labrin & Bivort-Urrutia, 2014). One of the phenomena that characterize this division is metaphorically expressed as a glass ceiling: “This structure is used to explain the limit on the ascent of women at a certain level due to invisible—informal—factors in assessment and promotion systems” (Martínez-Labrin & Bivort-Urrutia, 2014, p. 17). The glass ceiling refers to the constraints imposed on women to advance in professional terms, as a result of characteristics that are tacitly attributed to the female gender; however, the glass ceiling, although it is an invisible factor, is sufficiently frequent to constitute one of the central phenomena in the experience of women in the labor field (Rebolledo, 2001).

The barriers that hinder the progress of women in their professional trajectories not only occur vertically, but also horizontally. To account for this phenomenon, the literature talks about glass walls, which express “the difficulty that women have to change from one area of work to another or to move horizontally within their organization, for example, to change from teaching to research” (Martínez-Labrin & Bivort-Urrutia, 2014, p. 17). For example, women tend to have a greater presence in feminized and undervalued areas of knowledge, such as education, nursing, psychology, or social work, fields that are otherwise associated with the discourse of reproductive care and work. In addition to the glass ceiling and walls, there is also the sticky floor, a notion that is intended to describe how women in academia tend to take on management roles and maintenance tasks that are undervalued by the university organization, which has the effect of leveling off their careers and hindering their promotion to positions of power (Del Pino et al., 2018; Martínez, 2012; Ríos et al., 2017).

The discourses and phenomena underlying the inequality in the participation of women academics have been subjected to tension and made more visible partly by greater access of women to the university labor context, since their increased presence has undermined the prevailing discourses, norms, and institutional work structures in academic spaces (Yáñez, 1999). However, all of this shows that the disciplinary and androcentric order continues, positioning female scientists as intruders in academia (Berlien, Varela, & Robayo 2016; Martínez-Labrin & Bivort-Urrutia 2014; Ríos et al., 2017).

It is necessary to understand that the androcentric academic situation, its symbolic order, its valuations of work, and representations about what science is (Fardella, 2020; Fardella, Sisto, & Jiménez, 2015) are embodied in visible and invisible daily practices, which facilitate a male-centered academic culture, favoring men over other academic identities and relegating women to a marginal position that is loaded with ambiguity and silence (Berríos, 2008; Del Pino et al., 2018; Harding, 1997; Longo, 2009). In this respect, this paper proposes to reveal the perspective of women scientists, analyzing the discourses and meanings that they construct about academia and their work experiences within it.

Methodology

In order to adequately address the objectives of this study, we chose to use a qualitative methodological approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Flick, 2004). This perspective is particularly appropriate to identify the discourses that female scientists in Chile have constructed based on their work experiences, within a context of redesign and implementation of managerially-oriented public policies for scientific productivity.

Between 2016 and 2018, we conducted 20 active interviews (Denzin, 2001) with female academics from central Chile, representatives of different areas of knowledge, with high rates of scientific publication and awards of competitive funds. The aim of the study was to understand the discourses they constructed regarding their work environment, their profession, and their performance within it. These data are related to a broader study on the transformation of science in Chile (Fardella-Cisternas, Sisto, & Jiménez, 2017; Fardella, Corvalán, & Zavala, 2019).

To obtain the data, we conducted active interviews, which are defined as an interaction in which the participants (interviewer and interviewee) are assumed to be subjects who interact openly (Denzin, 2001), although thematically steered by flexible guidelines with an open response format, which was organized around three specific topics: scientific trajectories, practices and experiences in scientific production, and work identity. The flexibility and spontaneity of the active interview necessarily leads to new discursive spaces, which make it necessary for the interviewees and interviewers to relate and reorganize new accounts about their work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Each interview was recorded and transcribed using the Jefferson system (Potter, 1998), which enables preservation of the characteristics of active speech. The symbols used are explained below:

- Capitalized text indicates shouting or expressions louder than the rest.
- Underlined text indicates words or parts of words that are accentuated by the speaker.
- Downward arrow precedes a marked lowering of intonation.
- Upward arrow precedes a marked rise in intonation.
- Colon indicates the prolongation of the prior sound; the number of colons indicates the length of the prolongation.
- Numbers in parentheses indicate the duration of a pause in speech, in seconds.
- Point in parentheses indicates micropause, which is normally shorter than 0.2 seconds.

The total corpus of the interviews was coded in terms of content, creating units of meaning that were filtered and reorganized in an open form using qualitative techniques of content analysis. These are based on the extraction of key ideas that allow the information to be articulated in categories, which play the role of hypotheses, which are contrasted after the analysis or integrated into more complex categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In a first stage, the interviews were broken up and simplified into codes that allowed simple management of the volume of data. This phase culminated in a book of 47 codes, grouped into thematic units subjected to pragmatic discourse analysis and interpretative repertoire analysis (Potter, 1998). This paper reports the codes and categories that refer specifically to discourses regarding work experience.

Results

In order to answer the question of how women scientists describe academia and their work experience within it, the results shown below are divided into two broad categories. The first category, called “I don’t want to be your secretary” refers to the sexual division of academic work and the undervaluation of the tasks that women perform within this work space, describing how they have confronted these situations. The second category, called “I’m the only woman”, refers to the masculine rationality that governs academia and which has led women to inhabit this space from a place of foreignness. In turn, we analyze the effects of these discourses on women’s position in the current academic context, a predominantly male scenario in higher education: the symbolic order and the representations that derive from it, along with day-to-day practices, both visible and invisible, that enable men to construct a masculine subjectivity culturally rooted in their ability to acquire prestige and a superior hierarchical position, while women inhabit a marginal position loaded with ambiguity and silence.

“I don’t want to be your secretary”: the sexual division of academic work

Female academics describe the university as a scenario where academic work is organized according to binary gender categories. In this respect, the discourses analyzed reveal that, in most cases, women assume and are assigned tasks and roles related to the management and care of students in their respective schools or faculties, while men are entrusted with the tasks of research or representation of the faculty. The interviews show how this organization of academic work develops spontaneously, without explicit planning in the departments.

I enter the: room, I sit down and they all look at me and one says, ‘Cata, we’re going to have to ask a favor of you, as we don’t have simultaneous translation. (0.2) ‘I had to translate the whole conversation ... JUST MEN, and me:: I had to TRANSLATE. Do you know what that is? (0.2) I mean:::, they would speak in English and I would say it in Spanish, someone would speak in Spanish and I would translate into English (Interview 10).

This excerpt illustrates how the organization of academic work reproduces the model of sexual division of labor in a natural and mechanical way. From the interviews, it is clear that women in the university assume tasks that are associated with domestic and service duties. In this scenario, the tasks relegated to female academics seem to be submissively linked to emotional labor (Hochschild, 2003), which, in the hegemonic discourse of gender roles, appears as the counterpoint to the rationality and neutrality that characterize scientific work. Male academics are consistently linked to these tasks. In this regard, one of the interviewees states:

In the schools there are lots of these academi:c secretaries that resolve a:ll these dome:stic problems, right? And: and: the men are more in those positions already:: (0.1) I’m in charge of the research group, right? Or: I’m in charge of something else: I can’t be on that committee and I don’t understand: hmm:? (Interview 2).

It should be noted that the tasks that are distributed and allocated to men and women in academia are not only different and submissively associated with the model of sexual division of labor, but are also tasks to which different values are assigned. In association with this, women are faced with the fact that the tasks allocated to them as a priority receive less recognition or are even invisible in standardized performance assessment systems (Fardella-Cisternas et al., 2017; Fardella et al., 2019). Many interviewees referred to situations of this kind and demonstrated their displeasure with regard to them:

We were sitting there, doing a report and he stands up and goes to the back and starts to dicta:te to me ((laughs)). So, I said to him, you *know* what, *you’re* reproducing the scenario of the manager and the secretary, it makes me un:comfortable, you’d better sit here next to me ((laughs)). (Interview 20).

As Martínez and Bivort (2014) point out, this type of situation alludes to what has been defined as vertical segregation, which is understood as the construction of symbolic limits to establish a boundary between the feminine and the masculine in productive spaces. This leads to the binary and hierarchical association, where the upper level is masculine, productive, rational, and recognized, while the lower level is feminine, domestic, affective, and invisible.

I don’t want to work as their secretary, do I? It’s like: if they weren’t capable of using the computer, well, bad luck, I can’t do it (0.1), you need equality of condi:tions to be able to work (Interview 12).

As the excerpt shows, the dissimulated but persistent sexual division of academic work is recognized by female academics as unequal conditions. Indeed, this distribution means that they use their time for tasks of lower value, reducing their writing time to the detriment of scientific productivity, in many cases causing

the silent exclusion of tasks that provide more prestige, such as research (Berríos, 2008). As Ríos et al. (2017) explain, female academics note that administrative tasks would lead to a “way of organizing their inclusion in the university that impedes their academic careers” (p. 120).

For me, I think it's a good balance to teach classes and share my passion with students and carry out projects with students, and also to have some time, because in the end I don't have that much left, maybe one day a week, for my research projects (Interview 3).

The scenes recounted are, in a way, an exposure of female subjectivity to the undervaluation of her work, which questions her image of herself as a worker. In the accounts, the ways in which the women interviewed construct the meaning of their work are subjected to tension and made difficult. Faced with the devaluation of their tasks in academia and their disadvantaged position, the speakers seek to positively reconstruct the meaning of their work. In this aspect, for some women, the link with students—derived mainly from teaching or research training activities—is recounted as a central resource to increase the value of their work. Teaching, as an activity of unquestionable and agreed social transcendence, allows the speakers to regain the appreciation of their role. In this respect, the female academics point out:

In the end you don't *have* the same productivity as your male colleagues (.) now, what is interesting is that you *appear* to be a significant model, eh: *for* a certain group of students (Interview 10).

In essence, female academics describe their work context as a space in which there is an evident division of labor associated with gender roles, since women are generally delegated service and administrative tasks ahead of research tasks. This division of academic work not only implies there is segmentation of work, but also a hierarchization of this work. Many interviewees point to the devaluation of the service and administrative tasks allocated to them and, at the same time, difficulties or obstacles to dedicate time to work that involves greater symbolic prestige. Faced with this tension, the accounts position teaching and the recognition of their students as a central factor to restore the importance of their role. According to Rodríguez (2014), the struggle to give meaning to work in a labor context that devalues the image of the female worker takes place through ethical and affective discourses (Pullen, Rhodes, & Thanem, 2017), since the value of work cannot always be achieved by traditional criteria, such as wealth, status, and authority.

“I’m the only woman”: the androcentric symbolic order in male work

“The only woman” is an illustrative rhetorical device that demonstrates how female academics construct their work environment at the same time as constituting themselves as a minority. In turn, this has the effect of showing the counterpoint to the majority presence of men in universities and research centers. Thus, for the interviewees, being the *only woman* is a relevant criterion to describe their work environment and to describe themselves in that environment.

I'm the only woman. And the secretary (.) Of course, and: there are no other female lecturers. No, here in philosophy, I'm the only woman (Interview 11).

Although male academics are the majority in many disciplines, it is also true that there are many others where women are not a minority (particularly the so-called feminine disciplines, such as nursing, pedagogy, psychology). Even so, women continue to perceive the work space as masculine, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Education is a field for women; but the ones we're citing are always men (Interview 6).

The construction of the female interviewees as a minority fits comfortably into the concept of foreignness, developed by Martínez (2015), which allows the participation of women in academia to be conceptualized as an experience of foreignness or being out of place.

Indeed, something happens when it's just women, you *feel* a freedom, a confidence, you *say* whatever you want and: there's no filter, you *understand*? And deep down, surely, they (.) always move like that ... men have probably always lived like that. What to us is a group of a hundred women, there are no men ... they've always experienced that (0.1) naturally, that feeling of: feeling ... that feeling of: comfort ... they don't need to create that: that: the artificial way of being (.) ... that's the normal thing *for* them (Interview 6).

The stories reveal how the feeling of foreignness is constructed discursively as a counterpoint to men's *feeling of comfort* in academia. The narratives commonly describe daily experiences of subjugation, distrust, discomfort, and rejection, as the opposite of what men experience in their work contexts. This is why there are abundant narratives about feelings of exclusion in the interviews:

They changed the time of the meeting to after work, and I was left out because I had to go to take care of my son (Interview 8).

There were no regular meetings, that is, there were no explicit, common, and formal spaces to carry out the work ... the work was done through the relationships that they had established, their previous relationships of friendship, eh: THEIR personal channels of communication and I was never there (Interview 10).

Well, the political decisions are made somewhere else, right? ... Those two guys, academic colleagues, I don't know what they decided: having coffee when I wasn't present (Interview 2).

The experience of foreignness is not solely related to being a numerical minority, but also discursively reveals the recognition of a strange norm, resulting from an androcentric order. And it is specifically the foreignness that allows the distance to be able to recognize the grammar that is foreign to women. One of the participants called this masculine rationality, related to what has been described by authors as patriarchal, epistemic communities (Harding, 1997; Haraway, 1995).

When they told me that I thought like a man: it was always a compliment (.) that (.) because: they were telling me that I was very serious: that: that: that I could argue well or whatever: (.) and I felt good, I felt flattered. I: began to study topics that philosophically were tremendously dark and difficult and therefore they were the ones I wanted because: it was what: VALIDATED ME too, right? (Interview 17).

Masculine rationality is a figure that illustrates the distance that women perceive with academic grammar, while at the same time displaying the possible and potential existence of other academic languages. As an interviewee states:

Like capsules of reality, that's how knowledge is constructed, that's the knowledge that prevails. If you *want* to say something like that, you *have* to be heard by those guys, because, it's those people that are building that kind of knowledge (Interview 2).

In this respect, the organization of academic work and the grammar underlying the way of constructing knowledge is governed by androcentric norms, which are often a reference to organize the other discourses present in academia. Regarding this, some female academics explain how they have had to learn these languages in order to be heard by their colleagues. Indeed, this imposture is narrated as a strategy that would allow the female interviewees to find or obtain a disguise to inhabit a space of (certain) authority in their work

contexts. In line with this, experience shows how women perceive that academia in general, but also the production of knowledge in particular, tends to be organized according to practices that ensure that the knowledge produced and reproduced is masculine.

Discussion

The results presented reveal how female academics describe their work context and experiences, demonstrating that the latter is intimately and profoundly marked by discourses on the masculine and the feminine in the academic field. According to the accounts, the female academics identify subtle discriminatory practices in a series of work areas, such as production of research, academic ranks, and the division of academic duties, where they are relegated to administrative tasks instead of more prestigious ones, such as research.

In spite of this, the female academics have attributed a particular meaning to the tasks that have been devalued in the academic contexts in which they work, giving them a feminine axiological character. These women thus demonstrate how it is possible to resignify their experiences as academics and scientists, vindicating their working conditions, and achieving their professional and personal consolidation.

The projections in this study are related to the need to continue exploring the idiosyncratic aspects of the female experience in academia. From that, affects appear to be relevant in both the identity construction of female academics and in everyday academic practices. These affects may be associated with androcentric practices, where, on the one hand, foreignness is associated with insecurity and self-attribution of insufficiency in the academic context. Thus, as Pullen and her collaborators (2017) contend, it is through everyday encounters and relationships with others that affects move between bodies and are established as social orders, which either endow female bodies with capabilities or limit them. Therefore, by means of the repetition of certain affects deployed in mundane events, affective registers are created and, in each interaction, it is proposed to the subjects how it feels to be a female academic. On the other hand, affects can also mobilize intimate relationships of collaboration and trust among female academics, which organize the experience and transform the expected ways of being in academia. Thus, emphasizing these phenomena can promote the creation of different epistemic communities that problematize the current forms of competitive and hyper-individualized organization of the university.

Thus, we have shown that the mere inclusion of women does not ensure the construction of a pluralist and inclusive university. For this reason, it is also necessary to explore phenomena related to class and ethnic barriers, which reveal the tensions and exclusions of women from contexts with lower socioeconomic income or from rural contexts, or indigenous peoples. It is therefore necessary to expand upon and explore how other subjectivities that differ from the figure of the male/white academic manage to construct versions of the world to navigate modern academia.

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