

Metaphor, Women's Studies and the Gender Category as Instruments for the Study of University Organizations

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Abstract

Educational organizations and their organizational problems are becoming increasingly complex and cannot be explained solely through the lens of rational science, the theoretical bodies of administration, and organizational theory. Doing so has entailed “observing” them solely from “the metaphor of the ‘thing’” according to Kotic, from the perspective of measurement. This quantitative perspective has necessarily forced us to look at them with different eyes, recognizing the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of the subjects, as well as how they construct organizational realities, and therefore the configurations of organizations through social interaction and any type of communication in the language and in the language where the social is constituted. It creates new possibilities and new nuclei of intelligibility. The perspective on the organization must be from another horizon of analysis: The discourse and narrative of the actors. The objective of this paper is to expose the importance of alternatives of conceptual categories such as metaphor that allow the analysis and study of phenomena that occur in university organizations.

Keywords

Metaphor, Women's Studies, Gender Category, Organization Study

1. Introduction

In this document, a brief overview is made of the explanatory frameworks for the identification of the impediments that women face in the institutions in which they work. Exploring the issue of gender in the study of educational organizations represents a real pretext and opportunity to delve into the dynamics of the ineq-

unities produced by a patriarchal model (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) based on a sexual division of labor that places the male as a provider within a neoliberal economic system. This implies initiating a reflection on the way in which women and men interact in these organizational social spaces. The women and men who join organizations as a workforce do so under conditions determined by the structure, as well as at a level of micro-interaction where they carry and reproduce their forms of socialization around their conception of gender and their situated knowledge¹. What this article is about, then, is to reflect on what complementary nuclei of intelligibility² can help us understand these social constructions within educational organizations. And in this sense, the use of metaphors as conceptual instruments to explain or describe the issues is very useful, as can be seen in the development of this document.

2. Gender: Problems, Definitions and Theories

What is gender? What is the Gender category? What do we mean by gender? Despite the years of discussion in the academies, these questions are still present today in Mexico and in other parts of the world (Spain, Holland, England, the United States, Germany, Mexico, among others), in publications, in informal conversations, between activists of the contemporary women's movement and intellectuals. The overpopulation in the interpretation of this concept makes us find different answers, but what is certain is that each interpretation is pregnant with a political and emotional charge. This conceptual category, called "gender", both inside and outside the University Organizations, continues to generate controversy and provoke a visceral response that, in fact, even causes fear in a large sector of the population.

Gender theorists could not unify the basic concept. In this way, they were transmitted without clarifying it quickly by the media, and now everyone talks about the concept, giving it different connotations. This caused the original concept to be transformed until it became a cliché; that is, it has been used so much that it has lost its original force. This has caused those who use it for political issues or movements to not have a clear awareness of what they are talking about. This introduction is worth starting to review the facts with the category of gender.

The different views of seeing gender show, on the one hand, it refers to a pop-

¹The perspective of situated knowledge is an epistemological position that arises from the feminist current and allows us to understand the experiences and the construction of meanings of a subject from the position he occupies within a specific context. The ego is constructed by its positions; these are not mere theoretical products, but organizational principles embodied in material practices and institutional arrangements, power matrices and discourses that produce viable subjects (Butler, 1992: p. 169)

²It is a set of plot artifacts that allow "interpreting/making sense" through criteria specific to a particular community. Such nuclei may be unlimited and totalizing (as in the case of universal cosmologies or ontologies) or localized and specific (as in the theory of the educational process at Swarthmore University); They may lead a broad agreement (as in the common understandings of the democratic process) or appeal to a small minority (as in a religious sect). Moreover, such forms of intelligibility are characteristically embedded in a wider range of scheduled activities (written articles, experimentation, voting, preaching, and the like). [are constituted in] (...) propositional networks..." (Gergen, 1996: p. 9; Gergen, 1996: p. 25).

ulation differentiated by sex, that is, women and men. Hence, the cascade of assertions where it is explained that men and women are not identical and interchangeable. Another view refers to the sociocultural character of the meaning of gender, which distinguishes it from the organic and physical connotation of the conception of sex or sexual discrepancy.

It was the scholars and theorists of feminism within the universities in England who in the mid-seventies, began to tone up the concept of gender, making it more robust. That is, there is a whole distinction between sex and all social and cultural constructions with respect to sex-gender; thus, gender is a social construction.

In Latin America, gender as a concept was discussed in the early eighties, when texts began to be translated into English. Some feminist theorists, when referring to the concept of gender, when they translate it, expose the confusion that could arise, for example: *gender* and *geschlecht*, the first in English and the second in German, which refer to the socialization of sex that already contain the reference to the socialization of sex as a classifier of species, types or classes of someone or something (Lamas, 2000: p. 2).

The portfolios on the subject began to expand and the first research on the socioeconomic and political condition of women emerged. The concept is introduced by looking for a theoretical unifying language or a different view from that of the positivism of the discoveries and new knowledge that are produced from *patriarchy*³, and that allows freeing oneself from the fierce empiricism that is denoted in the writings of existing research.

In addition to the contribution of women in social movements, they have responded more to political controversy, and this has generated more criticism than epistemological, theoretical, and methodological debates on these issues.

But the problem does not end here; that is, the births of different schools or strands of feminism are added with different interpretations of each and their application. To mention a few according to Guzmán Cáceres (2022):

- Theories of difference
- Cultural feminism
- Biological explanations for the difference
- Institutional explanations for the difference
- Existential and phenomenological analyses
- Theories of inequality
- Liberal feminism
- Marxist and socialist feminism
- Theories of oppression
- Psychoanalytic feminism
- Lacanian feminism
- Theory of object relations
- Feminism of sexual difference
- Radical feminism

³A term or category taken from Kate Mollet from the work of Max Weber (Weber, 1974: I, pp. 303) in the sense of a system of domination of parents, lords of houses (De Barbieri, 1996: p. 5).

- Intersectionality Theory
- Postmodern feminism

Within the schools of feminism, it is used as a synonym for feminism, and for women's points of view, experiences, and interests. We say "gender perspective" when referring to the perspective of women and, in general, of a group of specific women, or to the position of feminists or to a branch within the movement. In recent years, in social analysis, it has replaced the sex variable. For example, we find statistics and in their tables in which instead of "sex" they say "gender."

The "*category of gender*" is used indiscriminately and unclearly as a synonym for women, or for men and women in relationships of inequality and conflict.

In universities this is not uncommon, since researchers seek to understand the historical and heuristic meaning of the term, first to update themselves and second in debates to see lights that could understand the processes. They seek to systematize by giving their own rationality to the gender proposal.

In this case, from the perspective of women and are, with some theories, doing the same exercise that Marx did with classical political economy, that is, to analyze them critically, now from the perspective of the women's perspective and their situations of subordination. To do this, he uses only two theories, on the one hand, the theory of kinship of Levis-Strauss where the object of analysis is the male and Freud's Psychoanalysis where the object of analysis is the woman. This exercise allowed her to understand how the society designed by men is structured and how it is linked to the social construction of the formation of women's identity in their context.

Due to this finding, Rubin (1974) comes to the following conclusion that gender is socially constructed. This is because society is organized based on kinship, and this causes men and women to be divided. For example, men provide, and women receive provisions from men.

All the above confusions require us to carry out a conceptual review of what is configured as the basis of this category called gender and that is used without hesitation by both social scientists and philosophers of science.

There are two fundamental positions.

Position 1. Gender as a social organizer, collective, and historical construction. Gender classifies people.

Position 2. The genre arises from human beings exist, and their bodies have sexual organs only to reproduce (Ayús Reyes & Eroza Solana, 2007).

Lamas (1994) in this regard states that the old individual-society tension is present in the conceptualization of sex/gender systems.

Harding (1996) states that gender is a category for the analysis and explanation of how society is configured based on this concept. Carrington and Bennett (1999) already argue that gender is an institutionalized or non-institutionalized social construction.

In the end, everyone agrees that it is a social model that determines consciences based on sexual differences. Where there are inequalities and marginalization for

women. The term *gender* has been misused and reduced to a concept associated with the study of aspects related to women. It is important to note that gender affects both men and women, that the definition of femininity is made in contrast to that of masculinity, so gender refers to those areas that comprise all the ways in which society is structured.

We can use the category of gender by practicing and thus learn that is, the key is to differentiate whether it is something socially constructed or biological. For example, if it is said that menstruation is a gender issue, we must reflect: Is it something constructed or biological?

It is undoubtedly biological; therefore, it is something in relation to sex since only women can do it and not gender. Now, if we affirm that women who are menstruating and for that reason cannot work or carry out any social activity, then this idea has nothing to do with biological issues but with a cultural social judgment; therefore, it is gender.

To say that gender determines the way in which society is organized and that this form is translated into roles or functions defines it from the perspective of functionalism, since Lamas (1986) speaks of those roles that are originated in the social division (Functions) of labor (Lamas, 1986). Parsons (1965) in this regard states that functions or roles are a relational category, as well as the gateway to the study of social structure, or as Parsons says:

The essential concept here is that of role-playing. I would like to treat this concept as the “lower” term in a few structural categories, of which the other terms, in ascending order, are *collectivity, norm and value*. (Parsons, 2007: p. 428)

Some feminist theorists decontextualize roles and dispense with the other elements that give them meaning. That is, the concepts are used, but not the substance of the theory, since collectivity, norms and values do not appear in the theoretical discourse of this way of seeing gender and less, therefore, they are put in a functional relationship.

These limitations are not corrected when it is said that gender is social roles and individual identity, since in social theory the sum of concepts does not necessarily produce a higher-level explanation. A more complex position is held by Benería and Roldán (1992, p. 24), when they define gender as, “...a network of beliefs, personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behaviors and activities that differentiate men from women through a process of social construction that differentiates them. De Lauretis (2015) argues under his Marxist gaze that the sex/gender system is a system of representation that assigns meaning to individuals within society. If gender representations constitute social positions loaded with different meanings, the fact that someone is represented and represents himself or herself as male or female implies the recognition of the totality of the effects of those meanings. Consequently, the proposition that the representation of gender is its very construction, each of these terms being simultaneously the product and process of the other, can be explained more precisely: The construction of gender is both the

product and the process of its representation.

Scott (1990), comments *that gender is built from the social relations that exist between men and women and /.../ but that relationship is based on power*. Gender articulates power .

This conceptualization is important because of the following:

1. It conceives gender as a matter of society and not only of individuals and their identities.
2. It is constitutive of all social relations, that is, it introduces corporeality into social action.
3. It is a society built by that relationship and dynamics of communication.

According to Lakatos (1970), the gender proposal could be an element of positive and negative heuristic discovery, that is, a real research program with all the characteristics of inquiry, framing a series of questions for research. Gender as an analytical tool identifies puzzles or problems that need to be explored and clarified, and offers concepts, definitions, and hypotheses to guide research. Therefore, the analysis of organizations from the gender category is viable.

2.1. Feminist Research

We cannot lose sight of the fact that feminist research on gender began in Europe and the United States in the mid-sixties and seventies. Since then, numerous works have been published, from various sciences such as biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history, among others, have sought to know the cause of the situation of women in the world to change it.

Since its inception, studies on the diverse problems suffered by women have sparked numerous debates, in the sense of giving this type of research a definition that would provide it with an academic identity, considering its nature and sphere of action. Thus, it is possible to find the first names that disputed the predominance to define the new field that was reconstructing knowledge and teaching about women; among them, the following stand out: women's studies, feminist studies, and new knowledge about women (Navarro and Stimpson, 1998).

In recent years, a few investigations and diagnoses have been carried out about women due to the discrimination and violence they suffer in their daily lives; however, in-depth studies have not been carried out on the reality regarding their position and the barriers they face to enter. To remain and climb in positions of power within public educational institutions such as universities.

A study that was considered for the beginning of this article is the one carried out by Buquet et al. (2013) at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), which identifies the forms and contents of gender relations in force in public university spaces. The idea was that with this research and its product, equality between the sexes would be achieved and provide answers to questions such as: How do the conditions of inequality between women and men originate, and how are they perpetuated in university organizations?

It also provided a systematized diagnosis of the situation and condition of

women in the highest house of studies in Mexico and the generation of a series of indicators that would allow gender equality in all universities in the country. Finding as one of the most important results “There are still disadvantaged conditions for many women...” (Buquet et al., 2013: p. 1). Other results that there is an imbalance within the administrative population of UNAM, with regarding male and female positions and their income. Concluding that women are excluded from certain positions and concentrated in others, as well as the lack of transparency in hiring and promotions, and in the Quality and Efficiency Incentive Program, in addition to sexual harassment; they are the result of preponderant institutional practices and regulations in higher education institutions, such as UNAM.

Although it is true, a considerable number of journalistic articles have been written, in indexed journals (digital and printed), books and papers on positions of power in universities, inclusion of women in degrees that were originally designed for male students, as well as essays such as the one carried out in Spain by Díez-Gutiérrez and others where he describes an in-depth analysis of the difficulties and motivations that women have to access management positions in addition to explaining the difficulties or barriers they experience in their daily dynamics of organizational work (Díez-Gutiérrez et al., 2003). From all the contributions found, it has been observed that a high percentage of women in higher education is not enough to show that they are integrated in equal circumstances due to the gender culture that is distinguished in public universities.

With the above, it can be pointed out that currently in Mexico there has not been a study, analysis or research on the difficulties or barriers faced by women who want to occupy or who occupy managerial positions, and on decision-making in university organizations, and on the contexts in which *promotion opportunities*⁴ are generated in them. In addition, gender differences are observed in those who occupy management and decision-making positions within public universities, but do they have the power to make transcendental decisions within universities? Why are they appointed “bosses” when the area to be led has irremediable problems? What everyone knows is that senior management is mostly occupied by men in public universities, that is, that despite everything written, researched, proposed such as laws and other conceptual and legal frameworks that allude to the defense of women and principles of equality and equity, in organizational reality, this does not happen, since the organizational and administrative management models are still designed or configured so that this does not happen. The questions would then be:

What designs or configurations exist in university organizations that allow equity and equal opportunities and growth for women? And could these designs or configurations help to identify the processes of access, selection, permanence and promotions of women to occupy positions in senior management, for example: What emerging models of analysis could be used to study gender relations in pub-

⁴It is understood as the generation of vacancies, promotions and the opportunity to remain in university organizations.

lic universities with respect to management positions?

It is true that progress has been made since the emergence of the analytic category of gender, but it has been limited to only one thing, that is, to the critique of androcentrism, as a key theme for understanding the social reality of women, their specific living conditions and their history in relation to those of men (Riegraft & Aulenbacher, 2012: pp. 567-571), but what are gender studies and what are they for?

2.2. Gender Studies

The so-called women's studies, feminist or gender, and the variety of approaches and theories that have emerged from them, have formed a background of a long and difficult road that has led them, at the present time, to fall under the support of the ideographic sciences, that is, the social sciences; The evidence is in the Lines of Generation and Application of Knowledge of researchers from higher education institutions in the country and in the world.

So, the category of Gender is inserted as an object of study of the Social Sciences and can be understood as an explanation about the relations between genders and it is then that Gender Studies could be considered an alternative to other theoretical models such as the theory of patriarchy.

It is argued that, although the incorporation of the concept of "patriarchy" constituted an important advance in explaining the situation of women, it loses its heuristic capacity to understand the situations of reality that exist within societies that determine the situation and position of women in any given historical formation.

2.3. The Gender Category

This concept was the work of feminist theorists and can be understood as a social construction of the difference between men and women, within a society where its main characteristic is the hierarchical division and power, which has not allowed for the establishing of a clear distinction between what *difference* is and what *domination* means.

Gender, as a social category, is one of the most important theoretical contributions of contemporary feminism. Its objective has always been to be able to study inequalities between men and women, emphasizing the notion of multiplicity of identities. In other words, gender is understood as the network of beliefs, personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behaviors, and activities that are the product of a long historical process of social construction, inequalities, and hierarchies between men and women, who are always the most punished in all of them due to their social conditions (Burin & Meler, 2010). That is, Burin mentions that historical circumstances inside and outside the family, access to education at any level, to their socioeconomic situation (Burin et al., 2007).

For example, there are studies that highlight the fact that it is women university professors, who when they are interviewed, in their classes in their meetings, and

even when it is not the subject or they are asked expeditious or implicit questions about family and domestic aspects, they bring it up, since they are part of their gender condition, which does not happen in the case of men. For such a statement and argumentation, Acker states that, “Women are a marginal element in the academic enterprise... because their position as a minority entails invisibility, defenselessness and lack of opportunity; dominant groups deny their contributions and distort the characteristics of their subordinates” (Acker, 1995: p. 169). The design of organizational structures is invisibly linked to positions of power in organizations, and these are strategically distributed to men.

Even with all this, in Mexico there are still insufficient studies aimed at promoting the gender perspective with sufficient autonomy within university organizations, the classic ones have aged and could no longer continue to generate gender theory to mature it, this task is necessary, but we do not know where Gender theory is being done from Gender Theory that it is so necessary to do so to impact central disciplines in the area of the organization. For example, it is not only the discipline of Administration or the Theory of Organization, which far from any suspicion, for this discipline should not only focus on contemplating administrative processes, since it is also necessary to broaden the analytical lens that allows visualizing the relationships between men and women as a vanishing point where the exercise of power is expressed within these social spaces. To this end, the analytical category of Gender, for this the Theory of Gender.

It must be understood that the feminine and the masculine are formed from a mutual, cultural and historical relationship. Gender is transdisciplinary, it is a globalizing approach and refers to the psychological and sociocultural traits and functions attributed to each of the sexes at each historical moment and in each society. It is processed through identity in society; it teaches women and men to behave within today’s societies with respect to sex and gender and with this they begin their socialization process that they do from birth.

This is normal, that is, the man for productive work and the woman for work at home (it continues to happen). This set of tasks is less socially valued than those performed by men, as evidenced by the invisibility of domestic work and its lack of social protection, as well as the fact that in the labor market women often receive less remuneration than men for performing identical tasks.

According to Paramo Bernal and Burbano Arroyo (2011), in general, when it comes to gender and work, the literature defines women’s work as a phenomenon of spaces, where public and private spaces have a gender mark. However, according to Article 4 of the Mexican Political Constitution, “Gender equality is a constitutional principle that stipulates that men and women are equal before the law”, “which means that all people, without distinction, have the same rights and duties vis-à-vis the State and society as a whole” (INMUJERES, 2009). What does gender equality imply? Gender equality does not simply mean achieving the incorporation of women into the spheres of power but also implies reviewing the *patriarchal model applied to organizations*. The recognition of equality has enabled women

to enter, not without considerable effort, into fields and professions traditionally reserved for men.

Another theoretical model for studying gender is the gender perspective, which dictates that everything is constructed taking sexual difference as a reference. They seek to examine the impact of gender on people's opportunities, their social roles, and interactions with their peers. In this sense, this model has made it possible to understand the limits between the public and the private and with it has defined the existence of metaphor-objects to explain gender discrimination that echo in the modern division between the feminine and the masculine.

2.4. Metaphor and Gender Studies in Universities

During the 1980s, metaphors aroused great interest as they became the basis for understanding organizational analysis and inspiring new theoretical ideas. It has been argued that organization is conceptualized as something that is using a metaphor, and that the metaphor used is of decisive importance for understanding the object of research, as well as for thinking and theorizing in a general way. The work of Morgan (1980) has been very important in this regard.

Morgan talks about the metaphors that are used to conceptualize the entire organization, or at least all those elements of an organization that a particular school or theory focuses on. (Metaphors are also often used to shed light on more delimited phenomena: for example, when talking about "higher" or "lower" positions within a hierarchy, or "sending" or "receiving" as elements of communication.) The main idea of this author is that "the schools of thought of the social sciences, those communities of theorists who subscribe to relatively coherent perspectives, are based on the acceptance and use of different types of metaphors as a basis for research" (Morgan, 1980: p. 607).

Some time ago, metaphors were thought to be primarily useful and necessary for poetry and rhetoric, but less suitable for rigorous thought and expression. On the contrary, the precision of science demanded literal expressions and the perfectly defined use of words. Even today, many people adhere to this stricter view (e.g., Pinder and Bourgeois, 1982), but opinions about the role of metaphors, metaphorical expressions, and thinking have changed, so that they now seem vital to understanding social research (and language use in general), and are also seen as a necessary element for creativity and the development of new approaches to objects of research.

The main advantage of metaphors is their generative power, their ability or capacity to explore creativity and new insights (See Czarniawska-Joerges & Joerges, 1988; Morgan, 1980; Schön, 1979; Roque Nieto et al., 2017).

After having given a brief overview of the concept of metaphor, we will refer to the use of these metaphors for the analysis of university organizations.

Using metaphor as an element of analysis to study university organizations has been a very important challenge for gender researchers, and even more so when different theoretical aspects have been generated over time from which the organ-

ization is considered. Alvesson (1998) mentions that metaphors are useful tools to understand the behaviors of the subjects in an organization, they are also considered simplifications, not only of the external reality but also of research and reflection on the internal reality of the organization, for example, we can use the metaphor to explain the difference in the number of people who are promoted in the hierarchy of any organizational structure and those who are not. Has been described through the phenomenon using the metaphor of the “*glass ceiling*” (Burin, 2008) and others.

This metaphorical category of analysis is used to explain the impediment to women’s promotion at a certain level by invisible (informal) obstacles in the systems of evaluation, promotion, and permanence within organizations. Other metaphors have been found that precisely describe similar situations. In addition to the *glass ceiling* to analyze the situation of people in organizations and only to put the metaphor on a specific issue and what is happening within university organizations with respect to the processes of access, election, and permanence in management positions and decision-making (Roque Nieto et al., 2017).

But what other metaphors can be used to analyze the realities experienced by people who intend to occupy a position in the top management of public universities? Let’s look at the metaphors proposed by Burin (2008). There is the metaphor of the *sticky floor*, which refers to the labor difficulties of women tied to certain jobs. Women have difficulty leaving these occupations, accessing other positions, and obtaining better working conditions. This is because women are still primarily responsible for domestic work and caring for people, which means that there is a “sticky floor” that prevents them from taking off. This affects the hiring times of women in relation to being hired part-time, full-time or permanently, obtaining stable positions within their hierarchies.

The metaphor of the “*glass escalator*”⁵ is used according to Lorber (2000) to understand the case of men who occupy positions traditionally recognized as feminine, where they tend to be more valued and promoted more easily. Alternatively, it refers to the preference to put women in senior management positions when organizations are in acute crisis. It is also used to describe differences in upward advancement in the professional workplace between men and women. In addition, it is used to illustrate the invisible barrier that prevents a demographic group, whether women or other minorities, from being able to rise above a certain point in the organizational hierarchy.

Another metaphor is the “*glass wall*” that explains the difficulty that some women have in changing or promoting themselves to other functions in the organization, that is, to change from teaching to research or from research to some secretariat or direction in an organization or university organization (Burin, 2008).

The metaphor of “*glass labyrinths*” in women’s careers, which are evident in their work trajectories. By having several functions in society such as triple work-

⁵Which involves a quick and effortless climb.

load: productive work, reproductive work and care work for a sick relative, disabled, dependent, etc (Burin, 2008).

The metaphor of “*iron choice*” that defines a situation in which a woman cannot choose freely, but must choose between two opposing conditions, the dichotomy that is presented to them between developing a career or raising their children and caring for their family (Burin, 2008).

Authors such as Ryan et al. (2007) propose another metaphor called the “*glass cliff*”, which is used to study the situations of women who are assigned positions in senior management that make it impossible for them to succeed. The university organization is made up of men, and for men to allow them occupy high positions under the pretext of equity and gender equality in organizations during crisis is because they have more stereotypical gender characteristics that allow them to deal with socio-emotional aspects that every crisis entails or because there is a hostile sexism that seeks and expects the failure of those who occupy those positions for and because it is difficult for them to succeed.

And, finally, the metaphor of the “*concrete wall*” proposed by Chodorow (2007), which means hardness and concreteness in the hierarchical positioning of women when accessing a position, is almost impossible to achieve within organizations.

Thus, metaphors become powerful tools for analyzing gender studies in university organizations.

2.5. Gender Studies, Social Construction and University Organizations

Taking up some elements of the theory of organizations, Hall (1996) and Montaña Hirose (2001) state that we are born and we die in organizations and are always in one way or another organization.

The gender perspective and its insertion in the field of administration have resulted in the study of social processes that began to be addressed in the seventies of the last century: women and men at work.

In view of this, two perspectives of analysis have opened the debate on Gender Studies in organizations. The first is based on a theoretical tradition anchored in feminist perspectives that make visible the discrimination of women to climb higher hierarchical positions in large companies (Alvesson, 1993). In this regard, Alvesson & Billing (2009) point out, it is not only a glass ceiling that prevents women from ascending hindered by men, but also by women themselves, there is also a floor designed and configured for women to adhere to the orders determined by this configuration of the *gender role*⁶ and that is the opposite with men who are favored to rise in positions in organizations (Burin & Meler, 2010).

The second perspective, according to Alvesson and Billing (2009), becomes a “toby’s club” also called Boy’s Only Clubhouse. It is, therefore, a place where men

⁶The mandates of the gender role for women are associated with the exclusive care of children and partners, submission and fragility.

come together from each other, dramatically separated from women; defined as an exclusive place for Men, where women are excluded.

Here, men use institutionalized and defined historical and cultural behaviors that make it easy to promote their jobs, occupy essential positions, and use practices such as cronyism friends, among many others. Because that's how access to jobs is for men and women.

The contributions from disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology feed the Discipline of Administration and Organizational Theory that most of the time serve to internalize ways of thinking and relating between men and women in their work areas. It is precisely here that the so-called Gender Studies take on special importance, as [Burin et al. \(2007\)](#) mentions, when referring to the use and potential heuristic to study inequities, inequalities, violence at work, labor discrimination, beastly leadership, toxic leadership, and everything that is generated in the practice of relations between men and women that rest on the subjective representations of the masculine and the feminine as a result of social construction.

It is when Gender Studies emerge with that capacity for explanatory analysis that they must study the social, symbolic, and historical-cultural construction of men and women because of sexual differences. In this regard, [Lagarde \(1996\)](#) states that “the category of gender analyzes the historical synthesis that occurs between the biological, the economic, the social, the legal, the political, the psychological, the cultural; it involves sex, but it does not exhaust its explanations there.” The transdisciplinary nature of Gender Studies is glimpsed.

However, when questions are asked about gender theory, some difficulties can be encountered because different theories about gender have some points in common but, at the same time, discrepancies. This allows a clear difference to be established between feminist theories and gender theories in academic fields.

Discussion about gender also occurs within organizations or institutions, so the institution represents a social order or pattern that has achieved a status or property in a regulated way, through socially constructed controls, that is, institutions are social patterns not just restrictive structures ([Powell & DiMaggio, 1999a](#)). Continuing with [Powell and DiMaggio \(1999b\)](#), organizations are structured through phenomena in their environments and become *isomorphic*⁷ along with them, and it is taken for granted that the technical procedures of production, accounting, personnel selection or data processing become means to achieve organizational ends. Although without depending on whether they are efficient or not, ideologies define the appropriate functions for businesses such as sales and production, among others; for a university such as teaching and research, engineering and literature are prefabricated functions available to any organization, as well as gender organizational functions ([Powell & DiMaggio, 1999b](#); [Roque Nieto, 2015](#)). In this regard, [Miranda López \(2001\)](#) in his doctoral thesis states that.

⁷“One explanation for this isomorphism is that formal organizations adjust to their environments through technical interdependencies and exchange.” ([Powell & DiMaggio, 1999a](#): p. 85).

“Organizations cannot be understood a priori as the space of calculation, foresight and control in which men and things are instrumentalized, that is, they become means to achieve ends. The organization is, in any case, the product of a struggle and an arrangement between the agents who apply different instruments of rationality (strategic, communicative, instrumental...) through which certain human and non-human elements oriented to the fulfillment of purposes and purposes are made calculable, manipulable and predictable” (Miranda López, 2001: p. 514).

Ibarra Colado (1991) comments on this:

It is necessary to emphasize that the knowledge around organizations indefinitely represents both the modern aspiration to rational knowledge, as well as its multiple ruptures and its recent fragmentation. Its theoretical diversity must be appreciated from the tensions between rationalization and power: the conditions for the formation and transformation of knowledge about the organization over the last century are precisely found in the dynamics of these tensions. This set of knowledge, little attended to by the social “macro disciplines”, contains a great richness to understand the conformation/dissemination of norms, technologies and procedures, which delimit social relations in their most specific spheres of realization under a certain mode of rationality. To take advantage of this knowledge, it will be necessary to recognize its explicit discursive functions, and those that remain hidden behind words (Ibarra Colado, 2001: pp. 31-32).

For these reasons, knowledge about organizations is of utmost importance; these, with what they say and what they do not say, can help us to understand the processes of formation and change of the university in Mexico today, beyond its apparent rationality.

Following this same order of ideas, according to De Vries and Colado, “universities have been spaces for disputes about how power is distributed, what the participation of its actors should be or how decisions should be made” (De Vries and Colado, 2004: p. 575); They deal with how the government is exercised and how power is exercised in the structure of universities. Who should have the power to make decisions within universities? Policies within universities—making an analysis of the cited article—have intersected with theories and proposals about how universities should and should function without neglecting the objective of higher education.

Universities have worked and have remained without carrying out an in-depth analysis of their ways of managing and structuring themselves as an organization, this implies that it is necessary to study their forms of organization to understand how and why they work and operate in the way they do. According to the institutional theory that emanates from the theory of organization, the best way to organize a public institution/organization is the one that runs and integrates the people who make it work, but how do these relate in univer-

sities with respect to power? If there were a disparity in terms of positions of authority and decision-making from men to women and vice versa, what perspective do you have about your position? What perspective do men have about the women who occupy them? What perspective do women have about the men who occupy them?

Reviewing what [Martínez-Labrin and Bivort-Urrutia \(2014\)](#) have written, we have the feminist structural analysis of women's work in universities, understanding them as institutions of production and reproduction ([Bonder, 1998](#)), where they—women—not only carry out work to train human resources and generate new knowledge, but also a social-organizational phenomenon of intergender. that is, an environment that fosters gender relations based on the dichotomy of men versus women according to [Fox \(2010\)](#), [Ceci and Williams \(2011\)](#), [Berríos \(2007\)](#) and [Acker and David \(1994\)](#) what role do women and men play in the election processes for management and decision-making positions?

Even the knowledge management model in universities, the production of knowledge and the creation of reason as part of university work remains, in the words of [Martínez-Labrin and Bivort-Urrutia \(2014\)](#) as a way closely related to men producing more science and academia, and that women, due to their role as women, are in charge of doing their “theirs” thing. That is, the reproduction of human capital, the “upbringing” of new workers defined by their *social maternity*, understood as the extrapolation of subjectivities and behaviors of what occurs in the domestic sphere transferred to organizations.

Only the analysis using metaphors to understand the power relations through gender between men and women, in addition to the subjectivities of the participation of women and men to ascend to key decision-making positions, is a topic of greater importance. For example, the studies carried out by Matts Alvesson and Yvonne Due Billing ([Alvesson & Billing, 2009](#)), which study the dynamics of gender roles in international organizations in Central Europe, and which resulted in a series of very important findings such as the description of how women executives are subject to inequities and discrimination to move up from management positions.

3. Final Comments

After this tour, some elements of analysis of university organizations can be observed, to identify obstacles faced by women. Studies on women, the category of gender, and organizational metaphors appear as complementary and emergent responses to explain, apart from instrumental rationality, what happens within the organization. In such a way, recovering some of these discussions is necessary and valuable to have sufficient academic arguments and insist that, within the study of organizations and the administration of university organizations, the so-called Gender Studies must be considered to study organizations whatever they are and that are not nullified. frivolous, invisible, and often laughable.

Thus, a theme that needs to be reconfigured according to contemporary analytical views was discussed. Women's Studies, the category of Gender and organizational metaphors, have been developed in various disciplines of the Social Sciences; however, in the studies of Management and Organizational Theory, they have not had the impact it requires because it is in organizations where their techniques are applied.

Thus, understanding the behavior of the individuals of an organization implies assuming them as men and women who work and deploy different types of strategies and, with it, their subjectivities and intersubjectivities.

At present, is it possible to reduce the distinction between man and woman without reproducing uniqueness and hierarchy, which is also based on a supposed anthropological nature or, in the worst case, on biological nature? Doesn't making female "values" prevail under an egalitarian fundamentalism, based on biological differences and their particularisms, become a simple hierarchical inversion? What are the consequences of such logic besides reducing the problem and rhetorically concealing the paradox?

In this sense, far from manifest moral qualifications and in the face of such questions, for [Luhmann \(2015\)](#) theoretical instruments precisely require a rigorous level of abstraction that sustains them operationally in themselves, which is incompatible with the idea of univocal order or moral, emotional or empathetic categories with the problem studied. Analytical instruments such as distinction, variation, selection, hetero-reference and self-reference, and the second-order observation of complex systems, which, being in a system/environment relationship, remain open for mutual resonance, disturbance, and irritation. This is plausible only when the idea that a social order can be represented hierarchically by only one of the parts is abandoned since if difference is renounced, a description and observation also collapse.

According to [Culebro \(2003\)](#), focusing only on the organizational structure implies not considering the individual or his or her motivations.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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