

Academic trajectories in gender and sexuality studies: tensions between professionalization, activism, and biographic experiences

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Abstract

This study analyzes relations between professionalization, activism, and biographic experience within trajectories of three female scholars of gender and sexuality studies, an area with tradition in the political field outside the university. As a hypothesis, we maintain that analyzing these trajectories allows rebuilding both this area's institutionalization process and its transformations regarding how social sciences are researched and taught, as well as changes among public, private, and intimate spaces that reconfigure biographies of institutional subjects. In a qualitative strategy, in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of researchers to inquire into their university development, academic insertion, and incorporation into and development in the scientific system. Our interest is to take into account the particularities of a generation that entered the academic system in a context of professionalization that rapidly changed the daily work of Argentinean universities. As part of our conclusions, we claim that the interviewees' incorporation into this knowledge area encourages them to reread their biographies and politicizes their personal narratives through a specific (type) of knowledge. At the same time, teaching work is re-signified in terms of activism for its chances of intervening in students' biographies and current pedagogical dynamics. Finally, we claim that this activity is a form of resistance against the current devaluation of knowledge transmission and also against the over-valorization of the circulation of knowledge in peer-review international journals

Keywords

Academia – Activism – Biography – Gender Studies – Professionalization.

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Trayectorias académicas en los estudios sobre géneros y sexualidades: tensiones entre profesionalización, activismo y experiencia biográfica

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Resumen

Este trabajo analiza las relaciones entre profesionalización, activismo y experiencia biográfica en las trayectorias de tres académicas que se desempeñan en los estudios sobre géneros y sexualidades, un área con tradición en el campo político extrauniversitario. Como hipótesis se sostiene que el análisis de estas trayectorias permite reconstruir tanto el proceso de institucionalización de esta área de conocimiento y las transformaciones en las formas de investigar y enseñar en ciencias sociales, como también los cambios entre los espacios público, privado e íntimo que reconfiguran las biografías de los sujetos institucionales. Partiendo de una estrategia cualitativa, se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad a partir de la construcción de una muestra intencionada que indagaron el proceso de formación universitaria, la inserción en el ámbito académico y el ingreso y desarrollo en el sistema científico. Interesó atender a las particularidades de una generación que ha ingresado a la actividad académica en el marco de una profesionalización que está reconvirtiendo de manera acelerada la labor cotidiana en las universidades argentinas. Como conclusiones se destaca que el ingreso en esta área de conocimiento propicia una relectura de sus propias biografías, politizando la propia narrativa personal a partir de un saber específico. A su vez, que la tarea docente es resignificada en términos de activismo por su posibilidad de intervención sobre las biografías de estudiantes y las dinámicas pedagógicas actuales. Por último, que esta actividad constituye un modo de resistencia frente a la actual desvalorización de la transmisión de conocimiento por sobre su circulación en revistas internacionales.

Palabras clave

Academia – Activismo – Biografía – Género – Profesionalización.

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Outline of the research problem

In this study, we discuss tensions between professionalization, activism, and biographic experience in trajectories of three teachers and researchers of gender and sexuality studies, in a particular scenario of knowledge production with two characteristics.¹ On one hand, the strong academic professionalization—both at global and regional levels—is rapidly converting daily work in Argentinean universities. On the other is the progressive process of institutionalization and consolidation of gender and sexuality studies taking into account the development of numerous courses, postgraduate courses, research centers and scientific groups, and recognition of research into this knowledge area by scientific and financing institutions.

If studies on gender and sexuality have been characterized for their permanent tension between academic and political fields, and between biographic dimensions implied and production rules and validation of social knowledge, how do the current processes of academic professionalization, ruled by assessment and accreditation, affect these tensions? It is in our interest to pay attention to singularities of the academic work of a generation that entered into the scientific system during the last ten years, and that differs from pioneering and consolidated generations, to ask: What particularities do the new generation's work entail in this area, under current standards of production, transmission, and circulation of knowledge? While one feature of this knowledge area is the complex combination of research distance and affective or political commitment (PECHENEY, 2008), the pertinent question is whether the processes

of professionalization and progressive institutionalization redefined meanings of political and activism experience among those who work in gender and sexuality studies?

As an analysis hypothesis, we are interested in asserting that in spite of accelerated transformations of production forms of current knowledge, performance in this study area turns indivisible links among academia, biographic experience, and activism, as a result of at least two identified features in the analyzed trajectories. On one hand, entrance into gender and sexuality studies produces reorientation of academic trajectories of those who develop themselves in those studies; this propitiates rereading their own biographies and politicization of their personal narratives from a specific form of knowledge. On the other hand, inscription in this knowledge area re-signifies teaching work as *activism* through the possibility of intervening both in students' biographies and in institutional cultures in which they develop, thus mobilizing less explored transmission devices in the university classroom.

Interest in the relationship between academic trajectories and knowledge changes is part of a research field attentive to analysis of *university experience*. This field seeks to reconstruct practices involved in different daily life processes in Argentinean public universities and to analyze both recent transformations in these institutions and their impact on various university actors' trajectories (CARLI, 2012, 2013; PIERELLA, 2014; BLANCO, 2014a, 2014b). At the same time, the field relates to academic production focused on teachers and male and female researchers with outstanding development at local and regional levels through an analysis of teachers' work (OLIVEIRA BUENO, CATANI, PEREIRA DE SOUZA, 2002); variations in academic trajectories in different faculties, careers, and disciplines (LANDESMAN, 2006); academic professionalization (GARCÍA, 2007; MARQUINA, 2007); and gender and science studies (MAFFÍA, 2006). As a common feature in the lines of this research, we are interested

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in indicating emphasis given to articulations between biographical data and professional and institutional trajectories (HERNÁNDEZ, 2004; NOVOA, 2007). In this intersection, *becoming an academic* is configured in each analyzed trajectory, despite the fact that *the biographic* constitutes an unseen dimension of modernity in terms of legitimating criteria in knowledge transmission and production processes (such as objectivity or neutrality) (CATANI, 2002).

To conduct our qualitative analysis of an exploratory nature, for which a purposive sample was designed, we reconstructed three academic trajectories using in-depth interviews, conducted during May and August of 2014. These interviews inquired into the process of university education through the postgraduate level, introduction into academia, and the beginning and development of research work. Sharing a common social world around a specific type of activity—taken from the formulation by Bertaux (2005)—allows comparative analysis of these trajectories. At the same time, the diachronic storytelling used allows narration of aspects in each interviewee's biography: maternity, family ties, and perceptions of their colleagues on their own work. As a second object of analysis, the *curriculum vitae* of each interviewee was studied, including documents providing information about the objectified trajectory (GARCÍA SALORD, 2010), something that allowed us to locate significant milestones when comparing reconstructed trajectories.

This text has three sections. First, we situate analyzed trajectories in the current context of academic professionalization and institutionalization of this study area, and, at the same time, in its generational specificity by differentiating it from pioneering and consolidated generations. Second, we emphasize how contact with gender and sexuality studies during university education produces both a turn in education and projection of a future academic career by researchers, as well as a retrospective rereading of their own biographies. Third, we discuss the place of university teaching in the

analyzed trajectories as a way of politicizing academic practices during the existing process of professionalization and institutionalization.

Generations, academic professionalization, and area institutionalization

The three trajectories analyzed unfold temporally in the context of a process that has been called strong *academic professionalization* and whose beginning in Argentina can be dated in conjunction with education reforms occurring in the mid-1990s. These reforms imprinted pressure on external evaluation in the higher education system, postgraduate courses, and selective incentives to research in a context of employment pauperization due to expansion of university staff with few work hours and low remuneration (NAISHTAT, 2003). As Chiroleu summarizes,

[...] Between 1980 and 2000, students tripled and teaching positions doubled between 1982 and 2000; while the workload didn't change substantially, since the percentage of exclusive [teachers] went from 10,2% in 1982 to 11,4% in 1992, and to 12,5% by 2000 (apud GARCÍA, 2007, p. 53).

A new phase began in 2004, marked by reorientation of economic and education policies nationally and regionally. This period is characterized by growth of postgraduate programs and research scholarships, widening of research positions, salary incentives for teachers who had obtained doctoral degrees, access to subsidies, or coordination of projects conditioned by graduation criteria (UNZUÉ, 2011). This guidance derived from a policy formulation aimed at strengthening the scientific and technical system, prioritizing exclusive job positions (CARLI, 2011; EMILIOZZI, 2011), and external financing (GORDON, 2011). But the last decade's open scenario has also allowed entrance of new generations into the research system. In

this sense, it emphasizes the revalorization and recognition of public universities as research locations, which represent 40% of workplaces for researchers or those who have a scholarship from The National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) of Argentina, the main scientific research local financing agency (OREGIONI; SARTHOU, 2013).

The three interviewees received their education and entered the scientific system in this context. With an average of forty years by 2014, the three of them graduated from public universities between the late 1990s and the beginning of this century. After that, they began their masters and/or doctoral studies funded by CONICET scholarships. By 2010, all of them had post-doctorate scholarships or were working as researchers, a full-time position that all the interviewees currently hold, in the Scientific Research Career (CIC) program of this organism.

These teachers and researchers are identified as *young doctors*, their youth being a condition related to their positions in the scientific Argentinean system, not transparent data measured by their actual ages. The three interviewees are scholars in the initial categories of the CIC hierarchy (Assistant Researcher or Research Fellow);² they have been socialized in the academic job as part of a historical cycle characterized by an accelerated process of academic professionalization and by a greater budget investment in the scientific and technological system. That makes this generation different from the previous, which today is in full activity with a consolidated trajectory in the field (although not necessarily recognized by the scientific system). That pioneer generation is mainly composed of feminists educated in the 1960s and 1970s, and who began institutionalizing gender and sexuality studies, along with renewal of university life during the post-dictatorship era, beginning in 1983. The pioneering generation can be ascribed to the growing participation of women in public life

2- The CIC scale consists of the following levels: Assistant, Fellow, Independent, Principal, and Senior.

and their consolidation in universities—after being allowed to access that institution by the end of the 20th century and doctoral programs in the 1960s, as per Maffia (2006). In contrast, the younger generation inserted itself into a mass university, which multiplied the number of female students by seven from 1959 to 1996 in the case of the Buenos Aires University (UBA) (ROMERO, 1999).

At the same time, academic trajectories of the interviewees differ from the preceding, due to changes that occurred in universities as well as in gender and sexuality studies. This field which includes a set of heterogeneous research spheres oriented to inquire into different aspects of social life crossed by gender and sexuality and the ways in which it is regulated by legal, moral, and social mechanisms (HEILBORN; CARRARA, 2005). These mechanisms can be distinguished by the confluence, when not the conflict, among theoretical, methodological, and conceptual articulations that cannot be reduced to a single disciplinary framework. The pioneer generation began *women's studies* and then *gender studies*, focusing on issues such as “the domestic and extra-domestic work, the political participation of women, the sexual violence and reproductive health,” with strong links to “women and feminist movements,” according to work developed by Gogna, Pecheny, and Jones (2010, p. 170).

Following these authors, the first women's studies developed in Argentina outside universities, and in the context of the last military dictatorship (1976–1983), led by feminist scholars in private research centers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), through diverse psychological, social, economic, and political inquiry processes. During the 1980s, a time known as the *democratic spring* in Argentina, these studies gained strength. Bellucci (2014) claims that 1987 was a crucial year for institutionalization advancement, when the following two courses were inaugurated: Introduction to Gender Studies in the Psychology School and the Specialization

Degree in Women's Studies, both at UBA. In the coming decades, these courses would eventually be diversified and articulated along with other knowledge fields and approaches; today, not strictly a *field* (due to lack of clear game rules to structure the conflict, competence, and positions about different and legitimate ways to produce knowledge), but as Vaggione characterizes it, an "area in development" (2012, p. 10).

Therefore, the young generation differs from previous ones in that it operates under a radically dissimilar scenario. A 2010 survey revealed that numerous courses on gender and sexuality developing within Argentinean public universities were mainly at postgraduate levels, and to a lesser extent, at graduate and professorship levels. The main knowledge areas are Humanities (40 courses), followed by Psychology (28), Social Sciences (13), Medicine (7), and Law (3)—all with different disciplinary themes, approaches, and frameworks (GOGNA; PECHENY; JONES, 2010). From 2010 to the present, it is possible to add the exponential emergence and consolidation of more than 20 postgraduate courses, programs, observatories, and subjects of different natures, which make this area one of the most dynamic in Argentinean public universities.³

In this epochal and generational context, and given our hypothesis, we should continue analyzing academic trajectories to: a) account for the institutionalization process of this research area and transformations in the way in which it is taught and researched in the social sciences field; and b) recount changes within public, private, and intimate spaces that reconfigure biographies of institutional subjects.

Gender and sexuality studies, a turn in university education and biography

In all three interviewees' analyzed trajectories, their positions in the scientific

3- Some of the landmarks in the institutionalization process of these studies are the certification of PhD in Gender Studies (UNC – Cordoba National University) (2011), the mention in Gender Studies at the UBA PhD (2012), among many other university programs.

system are similar, but they have different disciplinary backgrounds, they come from and work in different educational institutions, and they have had different entries into teaching that allow understanding the forms of *becoming a scientist* (REMEDI; BLANCO, 2014), and these cannot be reduced to governmental designs of disciplinary or institutional nature.

Involvement with gender and sexuality studies takes place differently among the three interviewees. The first case is a researcher who began her university education at the beginning of the 1990s in a public university in the countryside, unlike the other two interviewees, who studied in the country's biggest public institution, Buenos Aires University (UBA). The first interviewee was born to middle-class professional parents, is the third of four university-educated sisters, and studied Social Communication after moving from a country town to begin her studies.

This interviewee chose Social Communication out of "curiosity"⁴ to read "a little bit of History, of Economics, a little bit of Philosophy, a bit of everything," but not for her interest in journalism or media production although she worked for a local newspaper in the last phase of her studies. To earn her degree, she worked on a thesis that analyzed the moral panic of youth—an in-vogue topic in the '90s, when she was a student—through media enunciation.

She began contact with *gender studies* (sexuality was not yet a relevant topic) during the first part of her degree, in classes with consolidated-generation teachers and researchers, who regularly traveled from Buenos Aires to that small university to teach theory of communication and cultural studies. "It was then that for the first time I started hearing something related to the *gender* word." However, she did not make an appropriation of those new readings until she started working on her doctoral project at the end of the 1990s, when she did so to continue

4- From now on, terms and phrases that appear between quotation marks are expressions and native categories of the interviewees obtained during this research.

her postgraduate studies. Only, by then, one of her preferred teachers put her in contact with a recognized researcher of the pioneer generation. This teacher facilitated new meanings for the interviewee around “working gender.” “It really hooked me. Especially the political discussion was very attractive, the political dimension of what she was pointing at. There was a whole world opening itself just right there.”

The second interviewee is a sociologist, who studied at UBA and comes from a middle-class family who suffered the 90s economic crisis. “My neighborhood, Floresta, a middle-class place that became impoverished during my adolescence; workers, unemployed or with informal jobs, that was the case of my family.” She started working at 15 years old, and three years later, began college in a private institution, driven by her interest in obtaining a degree in International Relations. She left the private university and entered UBA the same year, when she went from Political Sciences to Sociology. Her first readings on Marx and the question around descendent familiar mobility marked her first interest. In her words, “Those who studied Sociology were there because we wanted to understand what happened to us, in our lives. And that was it. I didn’t understand why I had money when I was a little girl and then, suddenly, stopped having it.”

Unlike the first interviewee, her contact with this field did not originate in her disciplinary education or her link with teachers at the university, but due to her personal search. During her degree, she took “every *gender* course available,” although in a reading group—coordinated by a philosopher and a literature teacher—that took place in the *Women’s Library* (a civil association with a feminist tradition, funded in 1995), the interviewee first recognized her main education: “I was taught to think as a feminist.” They [the philosopher and the literature teacher] incarnated for her another academic role, “a militant academic line” (as opposed to her teachers at the university), which hatched the profile she was seeking for herself: “I wanted to do research to transform.”

On the other hand, the third interviewee studied history at UBA, comes from a merchant family, and is part of the first generation of graduates. The entrance to public university, after an education in parochial schools, put her close to leftist discussions, common in the public university tradition. She attributes her approach to gender and sexuality studies to a set of random reasons: “By the middle of my degree, just by chance, and because I didn’t know what seminar to take, I enrolled in the Women’s History and Gender Studies seminar, without knowing what it was about.” That seminar would cause the interviewee to find new texts, perspectives, and sociability with classmates—until then little explored in her student experience: “We attended the seminar every Saturday for four hours, early in the morning, until noon, and it was a powerful experience because I discovered a lot of things related to each our daily lives.”

In all three cases, the interviewees’ contact with gender studies, approached by different paths, represented an inflection point in their academic trajectories that drove their education. After the first link to her teacher, the first interviewee proposed to obtain a doctoral CONICET scholarship. Her teacher put her in contact with other scholars of gender and feminist studies, and through her, she obtained academic endorsement for her grant from researchers of the pioneer generation. In her path, which started with her doctoral education and continues in the UBA School of Literature and Philosophy, she integrates into new groups of discussion and education. For example, she is part of the new *Queer Studies Area*, an area that renewed academic practices around gender and sexuality studies in the UBA context. The interviewee then began a process of relative exogamy with academic life, an “in between” derived after meeting territorial activists and academics with *other* education paths,

[...] with profiles that didn’t come from academia, a place that I knew, when I had built my little certainties around

knowledge. I used to attend five congresses a year, prepared five 20-page papers; I read them because I was too shy to talk. I used to be like a *bookworm*.

This experience of education and participation would amalgamate her later line of research: articulations among class, gender, age, and sexual orientations in rhetoric on juvenile delinquency.

In the second interviewee's case, her approach to readings, methods of discussion, different disciplines, and the encounter with other forms of activism that were not linked to the university's militancy in the *Women's Library*, produced in the long term a reorientation of her educational trajectory. That is how readings appealed to her to rearticulate her interest's focus, linked to her entrance to a course on rural studies, which caused her to conduct a critical analysis of the traditional sexual division of the familiar job, using case studies of rural families in the Argentinean northeast. In the third case, experience in the Women's History seminar allowed her to accomplish her first publication, a result of her final work in the course, but—in a more general way—produced her education's reorientation. After that experience, she sought to reread every text from a new perspective, even questioning the tradition of the discipline, and searching for a singular modality of appropriation of her education as a historian. In the time left before finishing her degree, the interviewee started choosing topics to prepare examinations "that were related to gender issues":

But it didn't do any good for me, doing that. Medieval history was completely traditional, factual. I got a four in XII Century Crusades, the worst grade in my whole degree. [...] After that, when I did Classical, I did it on homosexuality. [...] I graduated with Colonial History and my topics were cases of bigamy and well, they kind of liked it, but then returned to ask me

about the merchants. That's it: that was the topic, not the bigamy. It's like they didn't have a gender studies or gender approach, not at all. It's just now that they have it, but that wasn't the case when I graduated.

In all three cases, the researchers' encounter with this field of knowledge operated not only by modifying their education trajectory *forward* but also *backward*, allowing a retrospective reading of their own biographies. In other words, we are interested in emphasizing that practices and readings from gender and sexuality studies impact daily life not only the academic performance's context but also by providing new repertoires for the personal narrative.

The first interviewee says: "For me, it was very clear that the selection of my topic was actually connected to something already active in me: the question about my own gender condition." Her family links, experience of maternity, her place as a woman in a class mostly composed of men, and the way in which her work topics were valued by her colleagues began being topics of academic interest. On the other hand, the second interviewee says:

Where I became a feminist is at home, in a private space, with a patriarchal father, with a submissive mother, a prototypical family, with an unlivable place, in an unlivable body, and for my family, my family, was the worst experience that made me an uncompromised feminist.

In the third case, the Women's History seminar put the interviewee in contact with texts that discussed the decade of the 1960s, the so-called *pill revolution* and the radical chance it meant for so many women's lives, something that led her to reflect on her own mother, who was young at that historical time: "I saw that there were other people who weren't in those texts. There was something that puzzled me: This is the story of young university girls, or militants, not about *the* women in the sixties."

It is worth stressing that issues, situations, and practices that constitute the interviewees' objects of reflection after encountering gender and sexuality studies are not limited to those mentioned here. What we want to highlight is a common feature: contact with this knowledge area produced "strong reflexivity," that is, implications for the researcher who studies it on her own role. That process connects their own biographies with the topic subject to research and teaching (BENNETT, 2006) and allows us to think about complex articulations among "academia, activism, and biography," not only in terms of political participation, such as the range of institutionalized practices, but also, and fundamentally, to think about these "other possible ways"—considering the articulations raised by Mouffe (2007) between politics and the political—in which passions are at the core of politicization processes. We see this in the following section.

Teaching as politicization in the context of professionalization

The last topic subject to analysis is teaching work as an activism practice for the interviewees. Teaching appears vested, through mediation of knowledge "made body," as a form of intervention, "transference, activism, or militancy" in their narratives.

What is the particular politicization of the teaching practice? The first interviewee seeks to generate disruption in habitual expectations of knowledge transmission in university classrooms: that is where its political character lies. In her words, "to bring to the classroom examples, discussions, questions on gender and sexuality is, in some way, to pass a threshold," something difficult to do, given that "subjects by themselves do not necessarily appeal to these topics." Therefore, issues that initially belonged to private or intimate levels are reread in the classroom, paying attention to their social dimensions: the sexual identity in hetero-normative contexts; abortion within

a social order that confines it to secrecy; the body that seems absent in the classroom. This gesture constitutes "provocation," given that "[those topics] don't appear automatically." Therefore, and following her narrative, one of the ways of "opening" the topics is to appeal to everyone's own biographies. "Then something appears, in the sensible awareness of the *pibas* and the *pibas*,⁵ which leads me to talking about my experience, my parents, my 'couple.'" As the American feminist writer bell hooks says, in this sensible quality, there seems to be located a certain *subversive locus* that women's studies had when they emerged, and that seems to be updated along with the rise or renewal of this field of knowledge, by questioning the educational space as neutral or lacking passions and emotions (HOOKS, 1999).

On the other hand, whether gender and sexuality studies, as we said at the beginning, actually seek to "question"—this is precisely the question, the inquiry; the interpellation is an intervening proceeding by excellence. The second interviewee maintains that her interest in teaching is not that of "transmitting contents" (given that "contents are already there"), but "the possibility to create questions" in students. The third interviewee says teaching is a type of activism job, especially training teachers, which is one of her work tasks. Her job there is to contribute to questioning, investigate teaching practices fundamental in pedagogies of gender and sexuality as daily experiences that take place in education institutions and that intervene in the production of social identities, especially of gender and sexuality (LOPES LOURO, 2009). In other words, teaching as activism has the objective of favoring critical reflection about processes of cultural transmission.

Some features that provide meaning to these scholars' teaching experience are preparation of specific materials, search for devices that provoke students (from the exposing way to the expository strategy), and "first person" examples

5- A colloquial and affective manner of calling males and females "young people."

as a way of inviting others to revise their own practices. In this way, they seek to differentiate themselves from the common transmission features of university life: the “merely repetitive work of quoting authors” or that which evades questioning personal experiences.

An interesting point of analysis is also the place of teaching, considered low on the scientific system’s hierarchy in which the three scholars work, in the current state of academic work. What we called before the “academic professionalization process,” which has marked performance since the beginning of this generation of teachers and researchers, and which differs from the “consecrated,” currently modulates teaching dynamics at universities. Teaching, according to the current normative of the Researcher Career, is a non-mandatory activity and is allowed in the university system only under a minimum time dedication of less than ten hours per week. According to the official normative, the exclusive dedication to research “is only compatible with a simple teaching position.”⁶ At the same time, productivity measured through publication of papers in “high impact” journals (indexed in international indexes), preferably in a foreign language, is one current assessment criterion in annual or biannual reports.

Restrictions of teaching, along with evaluation criteria, conflict with expectations for other ways of achieving impact, transference, or produced knowledge. In one interviewee’s words:

Inside, I fight a lot with the fact that the productivity criteria translates into publications as the only criteria. Because, really, to whom are we providing transference? Our teaching? There is a hierarchy being built there that is not good, because then teaching is left for teachers, as if this is some part of a scale.

6 - The CIC statute (ARGENTINA, Ley n. 20.464) in 33-b stipulates that the research function “will be compatible with an assistant teacher position, a university cathedra, or postgraduate teaching [...] CONICET will be able to authorize up to two teacher positions in the same place and by a limited period of time, and in no case could they exceed three years.”

Because that is not valued, is less valued than before. Teaching does not give you many points.

Works by Didou and Remedi on the impact of academic professionalization in Mexico—a country with a longer tradition than Argentina, but which operates as a model for the region—show that one consequence of constant evaluation and accreditation of bureaucratic mechanisms of supervision is “neglect [of] the particularities of the research work” (2009, p. 27). We can add to this analysis that, in the local scenario, these elements also neglect the relevance of teaching activities at universities.

Undeniably, current processes of academic work are strongly focused on evaluation and accreditation policies and on producing “reconversion of trajectories,” academic realignments, as well as “bewilderment, anguish, confusion, stress, discomfort, or endless careers” (REMEDI, 2006, p. 76). Then, emphasis on teaching by those who work in this knowledge area can be thought of as a resistance practice, non-quantifiable in evaluation platforms, and against the productivity motto that seems to permeate academic work.

Final words

This reflection is part of a broader work that seeks to analyze trajectories of teachers and researchers working on gender and sexuality studies. The main goal is to investigate three convergent processes from the beginning of the current democratic cycle in 1983, to the present: changes in ways of producing and transmitting knowledge, mutation at universities, and the transformation in the daily life that configures biographies of institutional subjects. Within this framework, and taking into account the developed analysis that considers articulations between knowledge production and biographic experience in a study area with a strong activist tradition, it is in our interest to highlight these two findings and formulate some questions.

First, performance in gender and sexuality studies articulates the biographies of those who develop in it their academic future, in a double process; on one hand, rereading their own biographic experience in a framework of intelligibility provided by the lexicon, the corpus, and the organizational experiences around this knowledge area that locates generic personal or familiar condition at the story's center; and, on the other hand, reorienting the meaning of professional practice toward an area of interest that, during the last decade, has gone through an extraordinary expansion of self-development due to its accelerated institutionalization. Second, for the young generation in this area's scientific system, valuing teaching as a form of activism constitutes a method of criticizing the professionalization system,

which privileges other indicators of success and, simultaneously, constitutes a method of knowledge transference that seeks to *transform*. There is, in this point, a reevaluation of some features of the *activist scholar* profile, which would seem to belong to other generations, in contrast with the (hyper) specialization forms of the current one. Lastly, it is possible also to ask—but not to answer, just to suggest a possible horizon of enquiry—about the limits of this politicization process of daily teaching work. If individual tactics constitute methods of providing new meanings to teaching work, what are the chances of deploying collective strategies? Given that professionalization is a global process, is it possible to have action frameworks that transcend *personal* movements and initiatives?

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