

A map of the dissidents: the gender studies in theses and dissertations in communication of Brazil (1972-2015)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-5844202033>

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to map the interfaces between the gender studies and the master's and doctoral studies in communication from Brazil defended in the period from 1972 to 2015. Altogether, in the analyzed period, 13,265 master's and doctoral studies were produced in Communication. Of this total, 316 researches interface with gender studies. These investigations were glimpsed through their problematizations and main theoretical axes, among them, feminist studies, LGBT and/or queer studies and the masculinities studies. In the analysis, it was possible to note that the incorporation of gender studies is still incipient in the field, requiring the displacement and dedication of these masters and doctors, a fact that indicates the need to invest in new problematizations.

Keywords: Communication research. Gender studies. Theses and Dissertations.

Introducing a gender issue to communication research

This article aims to map the interfaces between gender studies and communication research. For the production of this map, post-graduate research - theses and dissertations - that encompass perspectives on gender studies in the area of Communication from 1972 to 2015 are taken as an investigative cut. It is understood, therefore, that a look on these investigative practices is necessary to understand relationships between the communicational problems produced in the researchers training context and the gender construction in the context of our knowledge. In the wake of this thought process, defining these scientific plots is not an easy task. The Communication field has a diverse and interlocutor knowledge construction from different disciplinary fields, in addition, it is structured by the complexity and spread of communicational phenomena. It is a field made up of heterogeneous ties in terms of concrete structures (academic institutions and organizations); of conditions for knowledge production (in universities); of knowledge-producing subjects and constituent knowledge (researchers, theories, methods and objects).

In this sense, the current challenge seeks to think about the intersection between two fields of interdisciplinary thought on their own, gender studies and communication studies. When considering this relationship, the importance of reflecting gender issues in different

areas of human knowledge becomes evident due to its particular constitution as a cultural problem. Our genres are dimensions that occupy a central space in social relations. Above all, as an arena of tensions over basic human life questions: identity, justice, the simple fact of existing and even being able to survive in that existence. Data on gender-based violence in Brazil is alarming. According to the Violence Against Women Dossier¹, produced by the Patrícia Galvão Institute, the rate of femicide in Brazil is 4.8 per 100,000 women, the fifth highest in the world, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO). Shown in the 2015 Map of Violence:

Out of the 4,762 women murders recorded in 2013 in Brazil, 50.3% were committed by family members, and in 33.2% of these cases, the crime was committed by the partner or ex. These almost 5,000 deaths represent 13 daily female homicides in 2013. The 2015 Map of Violence also reveals that, between 1980 and 2013, 106,093 Brazilian women were victims of murder. From 2003 to 2013, the number of female victims increased from 3,937 to 4,762, that is, more than 21% in the decade (AGÊNCIA PATRÍCIA GALVÃO, 2016)²

Also, according to the report produced by the Bahia Gay Group (GGB), 343 LGBTs (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals) were murdered in Brazil in 2016. This data comprises a scenario never before revealed in the country's history:

Every 25 hours an LGBT is savagely murdered victim of "LGBT phobia", which makes Brazil the world champion in crimes against sexual minorities. More homosexuals are killed here than in the 13 countries in the East and Africa where there is a death penalty against crimes committed to LGBT people. Such deaths are growing alarmingly: from 130 homicides in 2000, it jumped to 260 in 2010 and to 343 in 2016 (MOTT; MICHELS, 2016, p. 1).

According to data from Rede Trans Brasil³, Brazil is the country that kills the most transvestites and transsexuals in the world. In 2016, 144 murder cases were reported. According to data from the European network *Transgender Europe* (TGEU):

of a total of 295 registered transgender and gender-diverse killings between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016 in 33 countries over the past 12 months, the majority were in Brazil (123), Mexico (52), USA (23), Colombia (14) and Venezuela (14). In Asia, the majority of registered cases are in India

1 Available on: <http://www.agenciapatriciagalvao.org.br/dossie/o-dossie/>. Accessed on: Jun. 25, 2018.

2 Available on: <http://agenciapatriciagalvao.org.br/violencia/dados-e-pesquisas-violencia/dados-e-fatos-sobre-violencia-contra-as-mulheres/>. Accessed on: Jun. 25, 2018.

3 Available at: <http://redetransbrasil.org/dossiecirc2016.html>. Accessed on: Jun. 25, 2018.

(6) and Pakistan (5), and in Europe, in Italy (5) and Turkey (5) (NOGUEIRA; AQUINO; CABRAL, 2017, p. 49).

These facts reveal a social dynamic that, to a greater or lesser extent, allows and even justifies this violence according to culture. For this reason, problematizing the interfaces between gender and communication has to do with the socio-political relevance of thinking of the media and communicational institutions of society as being important channels for the knowledge production about gendered cultural relations. This means also paying attention to the propagation potential of other speeches, representations, identities and possible experiences that can be formulated to contribute to the reduction of violence and asymmetries sanctioned in bodies marginalized by cultural dictates (women, gays, lesbians, transvestites, transsexuals, non-binary ...).

Inspired by Pelúcio (2014) and Bento (2017), I consider gender studies as constituents of subordinate and dissenting knowledge, mainly because this is a field composed of people who were historically excluded from the academy's "respectable" banks. Gender and sexuality problems have created along the history of social and human sciences, important ruptures regarding the canonical scientific paradigms and their interpretations about concrete reality. Due to their own epistemological condition, on the edge of activism and academy, the insurgent movements of gender and sexuality that created this field brought to the academic arena confrontation strategies to disrupt and unsettle scientific rational, forging theoretical tools that proposed new analysis of all social dimensions

In this regard, being more than a conceptual framework, gender theories had to break the truth systems of hegemonic scientific knowledge. To escape the pitfalls of knowledge hierarchy, this gap required feminist, queer, lesbian, gay and transgender thinkers to substantially revise canon knowledge with a certain amount of non-conformity. As Bento (2017) said, the body of theory is a fighting machine. It can be said precisely at this point that gender studies are made of dissident theories and subordinate knowledge, as it is necessary for these theories to be contradictory, divergent, and non-conformant with: dominant hegemony, the power relations that establish naturalized asymmetries, the practices of knowing that establishes infallible truths about body shapes, the institutions that standardize marginalities and violence, the laws, and the hetero-centered culture. This is because the marginal and subaltern condition of these subjects is also linked to the way in which science and knowledge began to think of them and, therefore, the uprising in which other forms of knowledge demanded the creation of a new epistemology, a different look which puts into practice the recognition of fissures, particularities and the production of engaged and politically responsible knowledge for their choices and formulations.

Epistemologically, therefore, it is strategic to say that these theories are dissidents, just as it is also important to denote them as knowledge that does not conform to the excluding social reality that violates differences. It is necessary to accept the risk of misunderstandings, in order to think and reflect on this knowledge among academic practices, and be willing to

recognize oneself at the periphery without aspiring the center, and to make the peripheries of this knowledge a continuum of concrete social transformation.

The current challenge leads us to reflect on the limits between the domains, the borders and the structures that solidify scientific thinking. The view outlined here refers to the possibilities of thinking about the knowledge established in a scientific field, tensioning its force lines, fields those created by a hegemonic and androgenic speech of science, with localized and embodied objectivities, as well stated by Haraway (1995). Our objects do not exist under natural conditions, they are formulated in very specific space-time processes and represents which and in what ways we choose to talk about certain concrete realities.

Projections for the map formulation: methodological aspects

For the constitution of the map proposed here, the consult was carried out in Capes thesis and dissertation database⁴, based on keywords that sought to measure the breadth and heterogeneity of gender studies, among them: femininity; masculinity; homosexuality; transsexuality; bisexuality; feminism; genre; gender relations; gender studies; queer studies. This enterprise also counted on simultaneous research in libraries and repositories at universities. In addition, I used as sources to complete the total production of 43 years of graduate studies in communication in Brazil, the state-of-the-art research by Brazilian authors such as Escosteguy (2008); Jacks, Menezes and Piedras (2008); Jacks *et al.* (2014) and Jacks *et al.* (2017). In addition to the two volumes organized by Lopes (2003) from the book “Diversity & interdisciplinarity: theses and dissertations Communication Sciences: ECA-USP, 1972-2002” and the research by Romancini (2006) for the overall numbers of theses and dissertations in defended communication.

As these data are dispersed and have their limits, it is also important to consider the limits of this investigation in relation to the total number of investigations carried out in those years as well as the number of gender and communication research that make up this map based on keywords.⁵ Another issue that may affect this analysis is that for various reasons⁶ I did not obtain full access to the 1972-2009 research, only its titles and abstracts, unlike the investigations carried out between 2010-2015. From this search in total, 316 studies carried out some type of incorporation of gender studies.

4 Available at: <http://bancodeteses.capes.gov.br/banco-tese/#/>. Accessed on: Jun. 27, 2018.

5 Special attention is considered to the research defended in the first 14 years of graduate studies in communication (1972-1986), the data corresponding to the cataloging of these investigations are scarce and difficult to access, therefore, some investigations may not be included in this analysis.

6 I tried to access some research, however, in most cases I was not successful. Especially with the investigations in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, theses and dissertations are not available on websites or online libraries.

Subsequently, investigations were read and cataloged by period.⁷ Thus, through the characterization of research, some criteria for the constitution of the map scenario creation set started to be taken into consideration. First, research should have an interface dimension between communication and gender in its motto, this dimension may be included in the problematization of the empirical object, in the theoretical-conceptual direction, or in the methodological emphasis (general and specific objectives). Thus, from the introduction, the research was fully read in order to verify the constitution of chapters that elaborate the relationship between communication and gender studies.

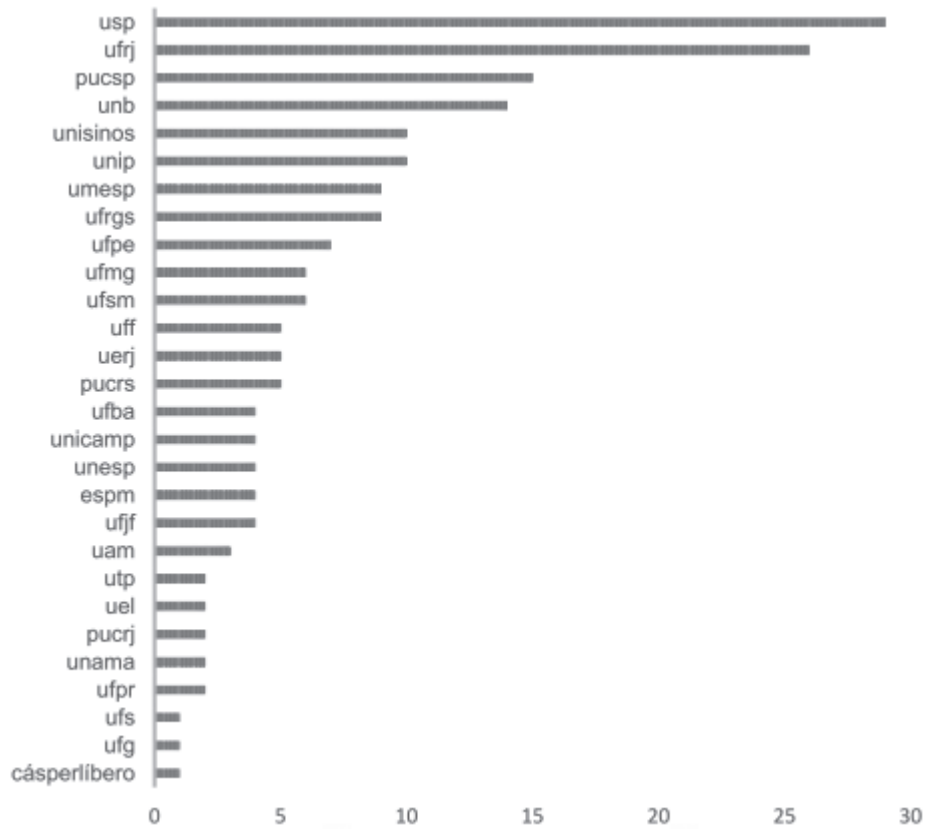
Gender and communication studies 1972-2015: quantitative aspects

Between 1972 and 2015, 13,265 master's and doctoral studies in communication were done and according to the keywords used, 316 had some type of interface with gender studies. This number represents 2.36% of the total research creation in a 43-year postgraduate degree in communication. Due to the multiple research sub-areas undertaken in the field of communication, it is not possible to say whether this percentage represents a short or a large creation of gender research in our area. However, it is possible to point out some elements. These 316 investigations are distributed in 28 of the 44 Postgraduate Programs in communication that had master and doctorate defenses between 1972 and 2015⁸, that is, more than half of the PPG's, 65.9 %, has some research related to gender issues. In the graph below, it is possible to observe the universities and their respective productions:

⁷ First, readings of abstracts and introductions were considered. Thereafter, the investigations were read in their entirety according to their full availability. It is important, however, to consider some distinctions in these readings, as the investigations done between the decades of 1970-1990 are, for the most part, not available in their entirety, and were analyzed from their summaries. The investigations carried out between 2000 and 2015 were analyzed in full.

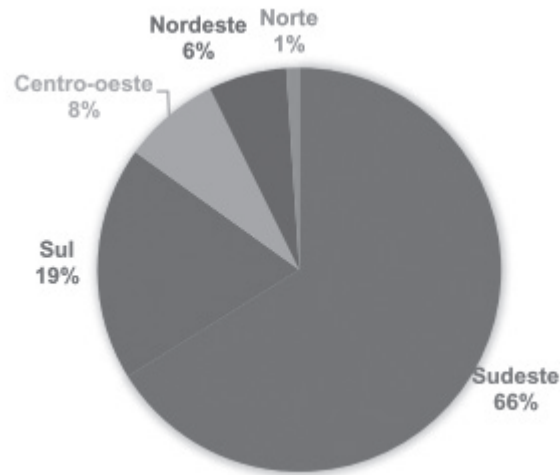
⁸ According to the document of the area at Capes (2018), we have 50 accredited postgraduate courses (24 doctorates and 26 masters).

Graph 1 - Universities versus theses and dissertations in communication with gender research (1972-2015)



Source: author.

There is a great disparity in research production in the regions of the country. The Southeast and South regions are the ones that produced the most: 66% and 19% of the surveys, respectively. Then, the Midwest regions with 8%, Northeast, with 6% and North with only 1% of surveys:

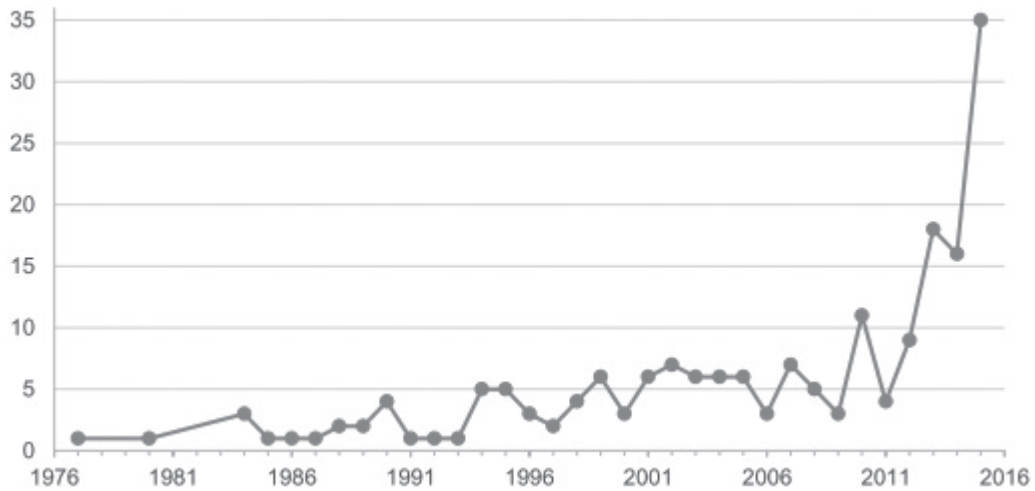
Graph 2 - Distribution of research by region in Brazil

Source: author.

However, this asymmetry in the creation of investigations must also be considered in relation to the asymmetry of programs in each region of the country. The South and Southeast regions have the most PPGs in communication and in addition, it was in the Southeast region that the first PPG's in the area were established. According to the data I obtained, for the years in which researches were defended, the first investigation on the subject was created in 1977: the dissertation *Female characters of the soap opera in their relations with work*, by Dulce Monteiro, defended at the UFRJ PPG, being the only gender themed research of the 1970s. From then on, between the years of 1980-1990 there was a certain linearity in the number of investigations being carried out, about one to five surveys until the 2000s, when that number had a modest increase, from three to seven searches per year until 2009.

A significant increase in this production occurred only in 2010, with 11 surveys. But it is possible to consider 2015 as the peak year, with around 35 gender and communication researches defended, practically twice as many investigations in relation to 2013, that had 18 and to 2014, with 16:

Graph 3 - Creation of theses and dissertations in communication and gender by year of defense (1977-2015)



Source: author.

As of 2010, the gender theme seemed to suffer an exponential concern in the reflections of communication. There can be many factors for this expansion: as an example, in relation to the themes and research objects of the period, it seems the manifestations of multiple phenomena and also networked social movements contributed to the development of gender and communication issues. Actually, in 2015 for the first time in five years, the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Compós)⁹, awarded a dissertation whose theme involved gender relations based on queer studies¹⁰.

Another factor that should be considered in relation to this quantitative expansion, concerns the growth in number of communication Postgraduate Programs in recent years and consequently the increase of research being created in this area. According to the data collected by Jacks *et al.* (2017), between 2000 and 2009, 21 PPGs were created and between 2010 and 2015, 11 were created. Still according to the authors, in 2015 895 theses and dissertations were defended, while in 2010 that number was of 668 investigations. In this sense, in 2015 gender and communication surveys accounted for 3.9% of total production, while in other years they reflected 0.6 to 2% of defended surveys.

If we look at the table below, we will see the number of investigations defended by period and respectively the amount of gender and communication research for each decade:

9 Link to access the awarded theses and dissertations from 2011: <http://www.compos.org.br/premios.php>. Accessed on: Jun. 27, 2018.

10 The dissertation: *Queer Documentary in Southern Brazil (2000-2014): contrasexual and contradictory narratives in the representations of LGBT characters*, by Dieison Marconi Pereira, produced in the Communication Postgraduate Program at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM).

Table 1 - Total of theses and dissertations in communication versus percentage of gender studies (1972-2015)

Time period	Defended Theses/ Dissertations	Gender studies	%
1972-1989	619	13	1,9%
1990-2000	2.288	49	2,1%
2001-2009	5.715	158	2,7%
2010-2015	4.643	94	2,0%
Total	13.265	314	2,36%

Source: author.

In this case, if we look at the data from a cyclical perspective, we will see that the increase in gender and communication research is proportional to the increase in theses and dissertations defended in the area, since these investigations represent between 1.9 and 2.7% of the total set of defended research.

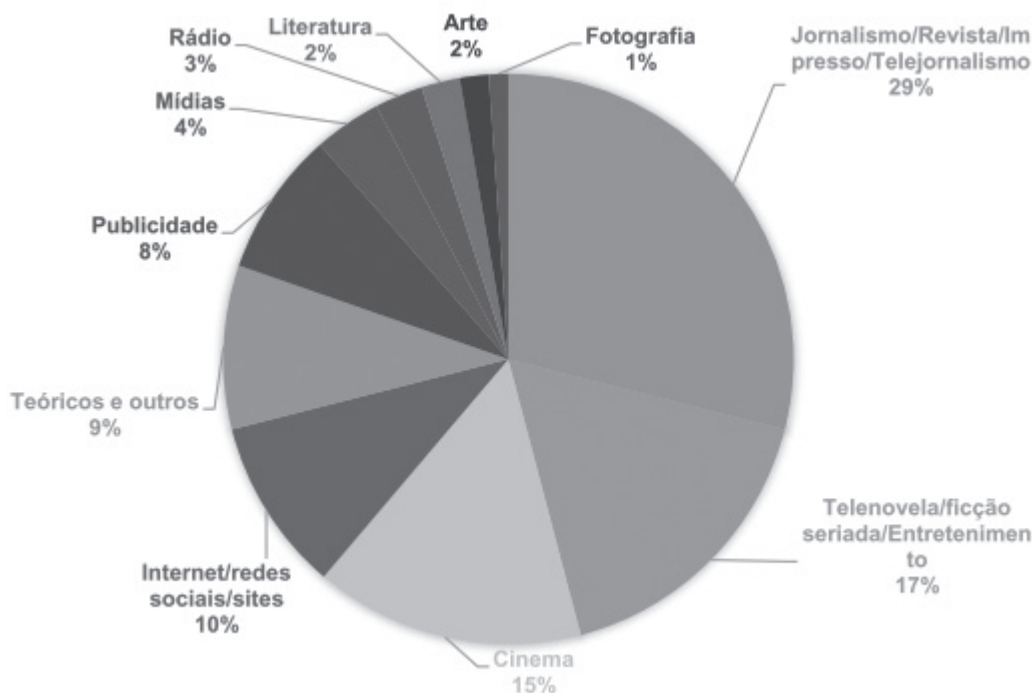
Territorializations: theoretical, empirical and methodological aspects

In addition to the general data discussed above, the reading of the theses and dissertations induced the construction of some correlations between them. These territorializations correspond to the common problematizations among researches, referring to the theoretical and empirical objects studied and it is about the force lines of the field. It is important to clarify that these territories are not being thought linearly in relation to the media or genres studied in the research, but on the problems by which the investigations are based, that is, what epistemologically these studies study. In this sense, if there is a possible confusion between one aspect and another of these territories in which it matches its clippings, this hodgepodge reflects the state of the field. Just look at the working groups of scientific events such as Intercom and Compós, which bring together research interests in the area, and we will see that these territories reflect exactly this non-linear, not even static, situation: at times more connected to the media, at other times to genres media, as well as concepts, theories and research methods.

As you can see in the graph below, the main issue of gender and communication studies in graduate research is journalism, whether as a field of thought or through a more empirical relationship with magazine journalism, print journalism, or tele journalism. Serial fiction, soap operas, and entertainment programs, mainly studied from the television perspective, are in second place followed by cinema studies. Then there are internet studies, social networks appropriation, and convergence. In fifth place there are theoretical studies and others, which are to a certain extent what those investigations are made of, by non-mediated problems with more sociological, anthropological, historical, and of course,

theoretical questionings. Then there are advertising studies, in different matters. Last comes consumption and appropriation studies of multiple media and less recurrent researches that reflect issues related to radio, literature, art, and photography.

Graph 4 – Common problems among surveys



Source: author.

Methodologically the ventures orchestrated in the research provide us with some data related to the main concerns of the research territories. Among the investigations of journalism and gender, as an example, there is a great and recognizable concern with speech, framings, and creation of news. In this sense, the questioning in this work field is mainly focused on the journalistic text and produces interpretations regarding their intentions with the enlisted representations. The problems of these researches are also intensely common among themselves. The gender issue for the journalism field is basically reflected in research about women and/or of feminist precedence¹¹, associated with the investigation of representation models and construction of the feminine or self-representation of women in alternative newspapers. The concept of gender, therefore, is limited to an identity emphasis and intersected with notions of representation and alterity.

¹¹ Researches on women are those that work with the women category as an identity spectrum, without specifically referring to feminism or gender relations. But researches of feminist precedence work with the women category within feminist theory, sometimes linked to the political vector of gender issues, and at other times to the deconstruction of power relations between the sexes.

Likewise, *gender investigations, soap operas and serial fiction* focus on the identity aspects that the narratives and the plot of the products in question express in the social context. However, these researches comprise a universe of more faceted methodologies, as there is a range of elements and appropriate techniques such as researches focused on reception and appropriation, which carry out ethnographic inspiration work, and researches that are focused on texts and production - and make elaborate mappings and analysis that understand the specificity of their questions with their own and creative ventures. Likewise, here there is also a subdivision between investigations of women and/or feminists and those of a LGBT or queer universe. The concept of gender is triggered, as in other territories, by the representation precedence, however, there is a greater emphasis on identity processes in the sense of recognition or politicization of the characters and investigated narratives. The methodological multiplicity of these researches also produces different reflections: on the one hand, the investigations of reception and appropriation of gender representations, which seek to understand how soap operas produce meanings and identifications in the daily lives of people at the microsocial level. On the other hand, research that reflects fictional texts and their production and seeks to understand the reasons for these representations at a more structural level. In these cases, then, methodological endeavors are extremely important, as they lead to the configuration of diagnoses and critical and/or descriptive interpretations of the relationship between these media apparatus and the cultural dynamics of sex, gender, body and desire.

In *genre and cinema* research, not much different, the problematizations are anchored in the film body, that is, in analyzes that focus on the aspects of ethical, aesthetic and narrative construction of cinema, in order to understand the processes of constitution of the selected plots and their representations. However, the gender issues that are orchestrated have two routes: on the one hand, studies on women and/or feminists and, on the other, those linked to the LGBT or queer universe. The research defends, in its majority, a historical look linked to the relations between the analytical markers of sex/gender, body and sexuality and the filmic structures. For this reason, the production processes have a greater role than in research in journalism, although, in the same way, the concept of gender is linked to the notion of representation. However, in these investigations, there is an emphasis on the political spectrum of this concept linked to the general idea that cinema produces knowledge in fractional processes and the choice of certain socialized models in order to be reproduced in the media.

The research on *gender, Internet and social media*, on the other hand, has both cuts, problems and methodologies that are different from each other, sometimes linked to the expression of social movements and citizenship in digital networks, sometimes linked to the convergence of discourses of traditional media on the Internet, or, linked to reflections on the formation of groups and spaces for discussion, sharing and socio-cultural dynamization of subjects in digital environments. Likewise, these investigations are divided between the studies of women and/or feminists and the LGBT or queer studies. However, even with

the heterogeneity of problems and objects, the research also revolves around identity processes, but which, here, gain strength of the thread when linked, mainly, to the notions of recognition, conversation and visibility policies. Thus, in general, the dynamics of research objects in digital environments make it possible, unlike the other territories described above, to emphasize subjects' actions in relation to the uses of communication technologies, to revitalize both the debate and the possible identity practices linked to gender relations, sexuality, body politics and desire.

The *gender* and *advertising* investigations of the investigated period have in common the chosen stereotypes' analysis in advertising narratives. Although with different methodological approaches, the discussions of the pieces of work critically reflect how advertising reproduces limited patterns on gender expressions, allocating the gender issue again in the spectrum of representations that acquire critical-descriptive potential because they are mostly linked to the advertising plots themselves. As the investigations are basically linked to advertising products, this scenario allows us to say that these surveys are permeated to a greater or lesser degree by the lack of diversity in the choice of empirical objects and by the choice of analysis aimed at speeches, meanings and the utterance of messages and advertising texts. An interesting aspect found in these investigations is that unlike the other subjects, they present a distinct subdivision in relation to the problematized identity categories: on one strong hand, there are researches on women and/or feminists, and on the other about men and/or masculinities, an aspect that is practically insignificant in other researches and, here it gains prominence being both theoretical and empirically incorporated.

Gender and multiple media investigations as named, are not linked to a specific object or theme as they highlight their focus on the surrounding processes of the subjects' relationship with means, technologies, communication devices or even interpersonal communication. Here we also find the subdivisions between research linked to women and/or feminists' studies, to LGBT or queer studies and also to masculinity studies. With much less traditional visions than those already established in other areas such as cinema and journalism, these researches trigger the communicational *processes* and their multiple circulations, especially social, political and identity strategies on the relationship dimension of gender and sexuality. With open and creative methodological ventures, investigations flirt strongly with other areas of study such as Education, Arts, Anthropology and Sociology. This fruitful relationship in most cases broadens the understanding of communication induced by issues also allowing a certain rupture with the empirical objects themselves and a certain independence to build and problematize the possible relations between gender and communication.

On this matter, it was also possible to observe some segments and trends, both theoretical and methodological, chosen by research in communication and gender of the studied period. An important element of this division was the discovery that the gender issues produced in the investigations correspond, mainly, to three theoretical aspects. The first and most expressive are the studies of feminist and/or women precedence, which

represent a total of 237 investigations and tend to reflect on the asymmetric conditions of representation, objectification, violence and emancipation of women and the female universe along with communication means or processes. The issues that drive these researches are, for the most part, linked to the denaturalization of power relations that determine gender inequalities or even the particularities of women's daily life, such as maternity, work and sexuality. Feminist studies are in all surveyed territories and represent 76% of the total studies in the analyzed period. These are extremely important reflections and it seems that they are consolidating in the field of communication.

On a second aspect there are those studies that seek to understand the relationship between communication, gender and sexuality differences, not only focused on women as gender but also as on processes of genderification, such as queer, trans, gays and lesbian's precedence research, corresponding to a total of 64 surveys, which are concerned with policies of representation and identity and the difference of LGBT subjects. These investigations are also spread across all studied territories and reflect a different plot, but focused mainly on the problematizations of hegemonic sexualities. The gender formulations of these studies break heterosexuality limits, revealing the potential of gender beyond man/woman binaries. The idea of embarrassment between these categories is used here.

On a third and not very significant aspect, there are research on masculinities totaling 14 investigations that reflects on the changing conditions of masculinity ideals, whose parameters respond to the legitimation and historical conformation of patriarchy. These studies, which are still scarce in the field, allow us to think that the genderification of man while being male is not closed to historical, cultural, discursive and aesthetic changes and it helps to denaturalize the idea of rigidity and immutability of male identities.

Another important aspect identified in the investigations is that the interfaces between communication and gender occur, primarily, from the concept of representation. Although the idea of representation itself is not often conceptually reflected in research, it usually infers arbitrary forms of thought constructed and socially shared. This tension operating in the investigations in some way ends up providing the concept of gender with a communicational power for rising a criticism to the socially activated models to be exposed by the media or means; and for serving as an operational term at the heart of a political process in search of visibility and legitimacy. This view becomes an important critical path adopted by investigations regarding hegemonic social speeches, especially when treated through stereotypes, thought of as crystallized and hierarchical representation strategies of gender and sexuality differences. In the political sense, there are researches that use the concept of representation as disputes articulator and social practices that can give an active voice to excluded groups. In these cases, representation involves the participation and manifestation of gender and sexuality identities in the media and communication spheres as a form of socio-political inclusion.

On the other hand, because it is a significant practice (HALL, 1997), representation cannot be seen as a social reflection but rather as a social form that is also a part of culture.

Thus, there are some limits that need to be considered regarding this association between gender and representation. Representation models are exclusive, they contribute to the maintenance of social order, especially with regard to the female-male, normal-pathological, acceptable-unacceptable binaries and so on. Both political representation and its criticism must therefore, face representations as practices of power that construct and establish normalities and asymmetries. In this aspect, the struggle for representation with the media has a function of normative incorporation that will always have constraints and rejections, as it does not correspond to the complexity of social articulations. And in this sense, if it is not reflected in historical processes that manage to glimpse at their ruptures, tensions and discontinuities, the representations have little explanatory value in relation to gender constructions, as they may fall on the specific character of essentialist identification. This is because representation as a discourse is a form of rationalized and unified symbolic power, which can freeze differences and identity complexities.

These matters also reflect in some way, a very relevant issue for the communication field with regard to what each research understands as communication. This understanding will link theoretical and methodological trends to investigations and induce the possibilities of problematizing gender issues. This is because each of them carries along theoretical aspects already incorporated or even naturalized in the field. Even though there is no explanation about the communicational in most cases, the investigations focus on reflecting the interfaces that arise from a relationship with specific means of communication, communicational genres or even communication processes and socio-communicative interrelation. In this sense, looking at gender studies in the communication field is also looking at the multiplicity of lines of thought that this field brings together - some with more tradition such as journalism and cinema studies when dealing with objects, or reception studies and semiotic or discursive studies when dealing with theoretical and methodological frameworks.

For a critical posture

I still consider the incorporation of gender studies into communication researches imprecise in terms of their production. There are few reflections in our literature that reconstitute such paths and their theoretical and methodological aspects, and this imprecision itself is a research data, since the moments of dedication to gender issues in master's and doctoral investigations were and still seem to be sporadic, punctual and without the due collective effort of the area for its consolidation.

Therefore, I would like to summarize some information: since 1972, when the first PPGs were founded in the area until 2015, approximately 13,265 master's and doctoral research in communication were produced. Of this total number, 316 surveys carried out some kind of interface with gender studies. These investigations are distributed in 28 of the 44 Graduate Programs that have had defenses in these 43 years. Geographically, gender and

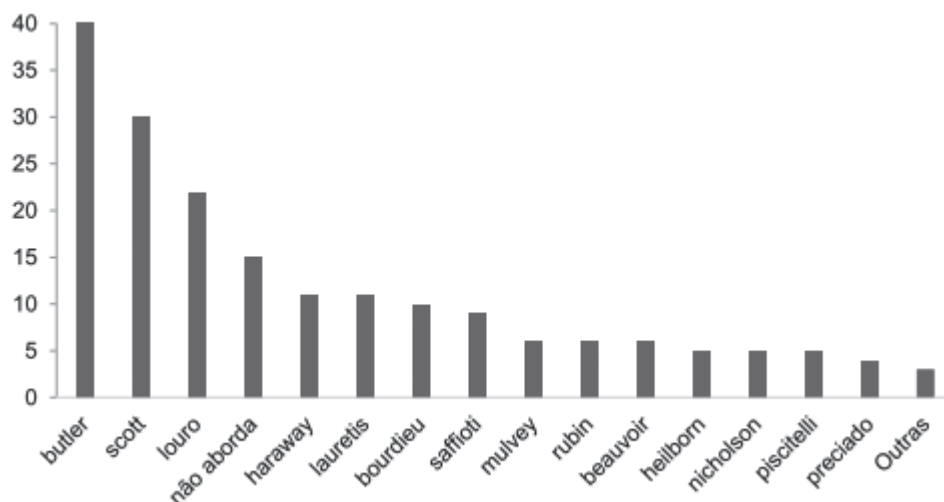
communication investigations are mostly located in the Southeast (66%) and South (19%) regions of Brazil.

The incorporation of the gender theme in the communication graduate program in Brazil starts in the end of the 1970s. Between the 1980s and 1990s the creation of investigations went through a certain linearity, from one to five gender researches defended per year until the 2000, this being the period in which there is an evident incorporation of gender theories and concepts in research. Between 2001 and 2009, that number increased slightly, around three to seven surveys per year. It is only from 2010 on that gender and communication investigations begin to form a denser investigation body, with 11 researches defended that year. From then on, the growth is exponential, making it possible to consider 2015 as the peak year with around 35 defended researches, practically double the number of investigations compared to the year of 2013, with 18 and the year of 2014, with 16.

When thinking about this constitution of greater appropriation density of gender studies in most recent research (2010-2015), I would like to make a critical reflection on the uses of the concept of gender in these investigations, above all, from a specific sense of its genesis: its political commitment to a project of social change and transformation. Between 2010 and 2015, the communication field produced 94 master's and doctoral research that approached gender issues and on because of this reflective exercise I would like to point out the referential sources from which the concept of gender is incorporated in these investigations. These choices tell us a lot about the epistemological lens of investigations.

Among the authors chosen for the conceptual construction of gender issues mostly cited are North Americans Judith Butler and Joan Scott and Brazilian Guacira Lopes Louro:

Graph 5 - Citation numbers by authors



Source: author

Butler is cited in 41 surveys, mainly from her book *Gender Problems: feminism and subversion of identity*, published in 1990 and translated in 2003 by the publisher Civilização Brasileira. Joan Scott is cited in 30 researches through her notorious article *Gender: a useful category of historical analysis*, originally published in 1986 and translated in 1990 by Guacira Lopes Louro for the magazine *Educação e Realidade*. Besides them, Guacira Lopes Louro is the most appropriate Brazilian author for research in communication and gender, appearing in 22 investigations, her most cited books are *Gender, sexuality and education: a post-structuralist perspective*, published in 1998, and *A foreign body: essays on sexuality and queer theory*, a collection of articles by several authors published in 2004.

Among other authors, it is possible to note the appropriation of important articles translated by North American Donna Haraway¹² and Teresa de Lauretis¹³, cited in 11 pieces of work, in addition to Brazilian Heleieth Saffioti¹⁴ and the French author Pierre Bourdieu¹⁵, with ten citations each. Most of the sources used to deal with gender studies are from American authors. In addition to Guacira Lopes Louro and Heleieth Saffioti, that are among the most cited Brazilian and Latin American authors are also Argentine Adriana Piscitelli and Brazilian Maria Luiza Heilborn, both with five citations each.

The extensive appropriation of the texts written by Joan Scott and Judith Butler indicates that the majority of research in communication and gender from the period is outlined by a post-structuralist or deconstructionist perspective of gender. These two authors, in particular, share certain epistemological positions and a critical relationship with the totalizing theoretical models, which seek to analyze and explain historical transformations through rigid social structures. Against this perspective, they work with a notion of fragmented power in social and institutional practices and in subjectivation processes (FOUCAULT, 2014). Furthermore, they combine with the idea of dissolving the notion of universal subject - whose identities are fixed, unitary and universal - carrying out genealogical pieces of work that value language and speeches as practices of knowledge that configure human relations and their historical, institutional and cultural processes.

In this sense it is possible to say that the idea shared in communication studies is that *the concept of gender represents an epistemological category of knowledge/power over social reality, being far beyond the biological inscription of bodies*. In general, Butler and Scott argue that the supposed neutrality of modern sciences, institutions and laws was/are, in reality, structured by a masculine, white and European perspective. In this way, guided by a Foucaultian thought¹⁶, they seek to demonstrate that these institutions have established truth regimes (knowledge/power) about the constitution of human identities. These truths, which are neither neutral nor universal, have at their core a mandatory law of desire, from a

12 On the article *Gender for a Marxist dictionary*, published in the magazine *Cadernos Pagu* in 2004.

13 On the article *The technology of gender*, published in a collection organized by Heloisa Buarque de Holanda in 1994

14 Mainly from the book *Gender, patriarchy, violence*, published in 2004.

15 Mainly from the book *The male domination*, published in Brazil in 1998.

16 Mainly from the publication *History of Sexuality I* in 1976.

heterosexual and gendered perspective according to a linearity between sex-gender-sexual practice (BUTLER, 2016).

For Butler (2016), gender is in charge of the legitimation of this order from a pre-cultural and pre-discursive *status* that is inscribed in sexual differences to support a supposed biological nature of social asymmetries. According to her, it is necessary to reformulate the idea of gender in order to demonstrate that its cultural artificiality is not an a-historical effect of the natural order of sexual differences, but rather the result of a cultural apparatus (knowledge/power) that reiterates and establishes these sexual differences. The role of the genre would be to produce, through bodily acts repeated in a highly rigid regulatory set, the false notion of the substantial stability of *being*.

In the same sense, Scott (1995) positions herself based on an eminently epistemological challenge for gender problems: the production of analysis focused not only on male and female experiences, but on their historical connections, which gives meaning to the organization of gender relations in the present. Breaking with what is considered descriptive gender ideas: as a synonym for women; as a relationship between men and women and as a sexual difference imposed on the body; genre, for Scott, must represent an analytical category that allows to glimpse far beyond dualities. On this line of thought, women and men would not be set and opposite categories, but ways of giving cultural meaning to hierarchical differences. For her, body, sex and gender are matters of state, power and social normalization. This means that the existence of penis and vagina, woman and man, male and female, only have historical meanings from a cultural and discursive hetero-centered look, such as body knowledge that guide power relations (SCOTT, 1995).

Thus, according to them, we are gendered the moment we identify our genitalia, even before we are born. From then on, we are differentiated between boys and girls and when we are born we are systematically trained according to this distinction and read by our genitalia in a compulsory and predominantly heteronormative order. The cultural norm, customized by androgenic thinking is then based on the power asymmetry between men and women and by a saving of sexual and reproductive exchange¹⁷ Therefore, everything that escapes this normality is considered abnormal, abject, dissident, marginal, being at the mercy of violence codes and discipline. The authors seek to look at the processes that generate human beings to dismantle their social and cultural artificiality. This means that it is necessary to recognize gender as a category of knowledge/power that underlies life, social/political, legal and economic relations. Despite the differences in production, lie in these authors a path towards the refinement of the gender concept towards a moving theory; that pays attention to multiplicity and the politics of difference beyond binarism.

However, the uses of these reflections in the communication researches in question do not always correspond to this epistemological constitution. In most cases, they are used to define a concept of gender in the pieces of work. The authors play the almost exclusive

¹⁷ As Rubin (1993) pointed out.

role of conceptual speakers for the formulation of theoretical chapters. In general, their reflections are not added to methodological and even epistemological questions, in the setting of looking at the empirical universe of research. With some divergent cases, they are appropriated with a certain discontinuity and fragmentation in the interpretation of the data and even in the analysis of the results. This demonstrates that there is an often sophisticated theoretical-conceptual intention that does not correspond to the details and reflection of the research data; data being generally correspondent to a universe of communication, may it be in the media, institutional or interpersonal, because they are related to the problematized research objects.

These uses can infer certain problems, mainly linked to the deviation from the gender concept as an analytical category within counter-oppressive struggles. Feminist authors such as Heilborn (1992), Costa (1998), Moraes (1998) and Piscitelli (2002) have been constituting important criticisms in this regard in the national territory since the 1990s. They reflect above all the depoliticized incorporation of the gender category, on a neutral ground of reflections that abuses the thoughtless and hasty substitutions of the term gender as a woman or a man:

The gender category should not be used as a reference substitute for women or men. Its use designates, or at least should, the inherent dimension of a cultural choice and relational content. On the other hand, it includes the articulation of this code that appropriates sexual difference, making it masculine and feminine with other levels of meaning in the universe (HEILBORN, 1992, p. 5).

In this sense, if the gender category is not used as a cultural difference marker within a criticism of the convention that builds men as masculine and women as feminine, it does not designate critical knowledge about culture, but simply indicates terminology of descriptive character. For Moraes (1998), the idea behind these substitutions corroborates the effect of binary thinking, making of the gender category an academically correct scientific terminology. In an interesting example, Moraes cites the appropriation of the term gender by sociologist Anthony Giddens in his book *Sociology: a brief but critical introduction*, where in chapter 5, *The family and Gender*, “the author refers to men and women all the time without even bothering to explain what he means by gender” (MORAES, 1998, p. 102).

These substitution marks happen at different levels and to a certain extent they end up naturalizing the term gender as an essentialist identity correspondent. In communication research this is recurrent in some studies that seek to research the femininity and feminine representation, thus in singular terms, in which these same terms are seen a priori as gender, when in reality they are in a limited way an isolated spectrum of a generalized constitution. Another interesting example of this type of use is that about 13.9% of the gender surveys carried out in the communication PPGs between 2010 and 2015 did not present any reference to gender studies, even if they repeatedly used this expression and pointed out a gender clipping in conducting research. In other words, they are pieces of work that have considered

studying gender issues, but omit their conceptual tension to the detriment of other categories. In these cases, even if not consciously an idea of gender category naturalization persists, which starts to be used as universal data based mainly on a biological distinction between men and women.

On this path, research that does not concern itself with conceptualizing gender relations in its undertakings completely disregards the intellectual production of this study field that has since the 1970s precisely contributed to dismantle the asymmetric and universal operational relations between gender and sexuality.

Amid the recognition of the counter-hegemonic possibilities of what we recognize as body, sex and gender, it is important to identify the power of spreading and reproducing media institutions in the knowledge construction on the practices that engender our bodies in general terms. In this sense, it is pertinent that our area of study strives to escape the essentialist dimensions that decree femininity and masculinity as set and established categories. Especially when we insist on talking about identities and representation, it is necessary to stick to the procedural, dynamic and intersectional character of human conduct, otherwise we fall into the problem of the universal fixation of categories.

This is because reflecting gender as an analytical category implies taking it as a knowledge that is not limited to biological references but to practices and social relations of inequality. The concept of gender when taken by its epistemological conception encompasses the organization of social life beyond bodies, implying an evident look at the power relations that generate and separate all social practices (BONETTI, 2012).

In another sense, this criticism may go beyond the priori use of the gender category in research but also to what relationships we have established between our own investigations. In this case, it is possible to point out a certain omission of a theoretical-methodological nature, operated mainly by two factors: 1) the lack of continuous production in the area, as demonstrated by Escosteguy and Messa (2008) and John and Costa (2014), and also 2) the lack of reading and research appropriation that has already been produced in the development of new investigations. It is as if we were suffering from a victim syndrome within the social and human sciences academic staff. The most referenced authors do not establish in their studies relations with objects and communication themes, configuring their reflections from their own disciplinary perspectives, such as philosophy, history, education, anthropology and sociology. However, due to the very interdisciplinary nature of the gender and communication fields, the search for exogenous sources is not in fact an obstacle to the development of more fruitful theoretical tensions. However, the evident problem is that as a scientific field, we refer very little, giving conceptual and methodological predilection to other areas in our theoretical frameworks. This brings us to a disadvantage, as we do not advance in the problems that we formulate ourselves. In addition, this omission causes research to become isolated reflections, even when there are highly similar objectives among them.

There is also an erasure of certain media traditions, communication and gender research that must be considered. Escosteguy and Messa (2008) have already demonstrated

the historical articulation that media studies have with feminist theories since the 1970s along with research developed at the *CCCS (Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies)*, in England. These reflections are consistent with the setting of the *Women Group* in 1974 and the publication of the *Women Take Issue* edition. This volume of work brought together results and research experiences from authors such as Angela McRobbie, Charlotte Brunsdon, Dorothy Hobson, Janice Winship, Christine Geraghty, Charlotte Brunsdon, among others, revealing a first attempt at feminist intellectual production with an academic scope concerned with the media (ESCOSTEGUY, 2001, SHULMAN, 2004). The essays presented in the volume deal with working class women and face above all the ideologies that comprise the production relations in the sexual division of labor and in the naturalization of asymmetries between genders (BRUNSDON, 1978).

The authors also demonstrated the continuous academic creation that was established in the 1980s and 1990s, pointing to the reconfiguration of feminism itself as an institutionalized academic practice in universities around the world¹⁸. The analysis produced in the period are particularly concerned with the representation of the female universe in the cultural industry context. Reflecting media audiences and texts through open methodologies and with an interpretive nature, such as ethnographies. Therefore, it is possible to note that the communication theories, especially those produced by cultural studies, were not omitted from gender studies. Feminism and its problematizations even constituted new paradigms to think about the mass media criticism and their interfaces with the gender, social class, and cultural identities relations (TOMAZETTI; MARCONI, 2017).

However, our theoretical elaboration is still at the mercy of a scarce foreign translated production. On the other hand, the neglect of national production must also be considered. In Brazil, there are groups, researchers and publications dedicated exclusively to the subject, such as the magazines *Estudos Feministas* and *Cadernos Pagu*, in addition to postgraduate research in several areas, such as the PPGs in Education and Anthropology at UFRGS; the Interdisciplinary PPG in Human Sciences at UFSC; the PPGs in Social Sciences and Anthropology at Unicamp, to name just a few. In practice, these productions are being little explored in our investigations, which should not happen especially because they take place in a national context, reflecting the socio-cultural universe of our research.

18 Messa (2008) points out this production in detail, listing the main works: Janice Winship, *Sexuality for Sale* (1980); Angela McRobbie, *An Ideology of Adolescent Femininity* (1982); *Feminism and Youth Culture: from Jackie to Just Seventeen* (1991) and *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (1994); Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: the Drama of a Soap Opera* (1982); Annette Kuhn, *Women's genres* (1984); Yen Ang; *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and Melodramatic Imagination*; Carol Lopate and Tânia Modleski, Michèle Mattelart, *Women and the Cultural Industries* (1982) and *Women, Media and Crisis: femininity and disorder* (1986); Christine Geraghty (1990; 1995); *Women and Soap Opera* (1990) *Feminism and media consumption* (1995); Andrea Press, *Class, gender and the female viewer*, Andrea Press (1992); Charlotte Brunsdon, *Crossroads: notes on soap opera* (1981), *Women watching television* (1986) and *Feminism and Soap Opera* (1988).

By way of conclusion

Lastly, there is a specificity in our production that says a lot about our usage and abuse of the gender concept. If gender studies arrived in Brazil in the 1980s, it is still new for us in the communication field and it has been arrived with little adherence and sporadic production since the mid-1990s. Can we consider ourselves a lagging field? I believe that we are in the process of learning and this delay can precisely allow us to float in places that have not yet explored and enhance our research efforts in an epistemological development. Even though our knowledge is still at the mercy of canonical sources - Butler and Scott - and translated articles from the 1980s and 1990s. These authors would probably hate to be called that - but our deliberate use makes them seem bureaucrats of this theory. In fact, in most cases we do not move forward with appetite in its conceptual problems, which are formulated in the tension between the construction of our reflection objects and the methodological and theoretical appropriation borrowed from other contexts. To that extent, I imply some questions that will not be answered here but allows us to reflect on our scientific practices: why is our paradigm still representational, if these authors reside precisely on a criticism of the political limits of representation? Is communication representation? If it is, it is probably a photographic image of reality: it is a translation, a version, and it must be thought of in transformation as the object it tries to elaborate. Our challenge as suggested by these authors is to spread the notion of rigidity in the representation identities, in order to discover the nature of the debate or repression that leads to the binary representation of the genre with a timeless appearance.

This type of analysis must include a political conception as well as a reference to the institutions and the social organization from which power relations emanate. So, I believe, to quote Scott (1995), that we must change some of our work habits. We must carefully examine our methods of analysis. Instead of looking for unique origins we have to think of power relations and asymmetry as being so interconnected to gender problems that they cannot be separated. It is evident that we have isolated certain problems to be studied and that these problems are starting points. However, we must ask ourselves more often how things happen to find out why they happen.

Perhaps we should return to the principle of this criticism, stop the usage and abuse of the gender concept, challenge the bureaucratization of the theories and concepts articulated within, because none of them is a canon and none of them has a closed epistemic root. There are no certainties in these theoretical lines, just doubts, tension and friction. Perhaps we should learn more, listen more, relate more, leave our rooms and screens, do our theses and dissertations with society. Perhaps our beginners' place is the best place to be in these times, as we are open to learning.

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Received on: 07.11.2019

Accepted on: 07.06.2020

