

En-Contexto: An Open Window for Women's Science Divulgateion

Editorial

Ana María Serrano Ávila*

Women's participation and involvement in scholarship and science is a recent phenomenon which emerged hand in hand with gaining their right to women's vote.¹ From that historic milestone women began to be formally educated by having access, for example, to college. Women's access to higher education was hindered by a number of obstacles and misfortunes. Many women who were able to go to college belonged to the elites and higher classes, but many others who also did, did so by putting their lives at risk, as they needed to disguise as men to sneak through that male-driven sphere (Serrano, Gutiérrez, 2018).

The story written by Virginia Woolf at the end of the 19th century, and published in New York for the first time in 1929, titled *A Room of One's Own*, highlights discriminations made apparent in her experience as a female writer at the time. Those were also a subject and a point of reference for feminists to list the barriers women faced when they dared to enter scholarly spheres. Two issues emerge from this reflection, which have been a subject of gender theories. The first is tied to the feminist assumption which claims that *What is not named does not exist*. Therefore in this essay the British writer intends to list the discriminations she faced because of being a woman and a writer. On the other hand, this reflects the challenges women at that time faced when their actions and activities moved beyond the private sphere to the public one, in spaces usually reserved to men.

* Economist, M. A. Public Management, Complutense University of Madrid. Full-time professor, member of Research group Observatorio Público at Tecnológico de Antioquia College, Medellín - Colombia.
amserrano@tdea.edu.co
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/00090806>

1 The first worldwide organized movement, made up by women was the Suffragists. Thanks to their fight and vindication, the right to vote, the right to be considered citizens with access to civil rights is a reality today in most countries around the world. New Zealand was the first place in the world where women were allowed to vote, in 1893. Between 1900 and 1910 in nine European countries (Germany, Netherlands, Iceland, United Kingdom, among others) women were acknowledged as subjects of rights and civil liberties. In Colombia, women gained our right to vote in 1954, but only in 1957 we could exercise it.

The feminist approach highlights the existence of a social structure, where men enjoy a hegemonic and privileged social status, with women having a subordinate lower status (Cobo, 2014); and that notion leads to support the idea that society relies upon chauvinist and androcentric ideas. Gender is then formulated based on this approach, as a historical and social construct, and as a category of analysis in social sciences breaking up with the biologist construction formulated since Darwin's times, which serves as a ground to build Western scholar and scientific knowledge.

Spain *El País* recently published a book review "Las mentiras sexistas de la ciencia" (The Chauvinist Lies of Science), about scientist and writer Angela Saini's latest book, *How science got women wrong*, where the author reflects upon the prejudices supporting the misconception of woman's intellectual inferiority since the times of Charles Darwin -the so-called father of contemporary science. British writer and scientist Saini reveals in her book how scientist women were considered intruders, and how, for example, London's Royal Society, one of the world's oldest science communities, founded in 1660, admitted women only from 1945 on. This paper ends with the author reflecting upon the historic debt science has with women when stating that: "*Science needs to be aware of the harm it has caused, of all racism and chauvinism that has been committed on its behalf.*"

Undoubtedly society at large is in debt with the 51 percent of the world's population, represented by us women, according to the World Bank's figures. However, we need to strive for making our work visible, too. In this line of thought, En-Contexto journal has done a significant effort, since of 102 scientific papers published from 2013 up to date, 67 have been authored by women. This means our journal has been a window for women-made science and scholarship, as they have contributed 65 percent of the academic content divulged throughout these five years of circulation. This fact should be praised and rescued, mostly in a country where, as per data from the Colombian Observatory of Science and Technology -OCyT, in 2018, only 38 percent of the 13.001 researchers registered and affiliated to Colciencias were women. Additionally, of 5.207 research groups acknowledged, only 34 per cent were coordinated or led by women (*El Tiempo*, 2018).

While it is true that the dynamics depicted in the first paragraphs have changed, and that these indicators show in some aspects gender gaps have shrunk, and in some fields we can even talk about moving forward, women inclusion and recognition in all social spheres is a challenge that calls specially for political will, social commitment, and the creation of gender-sensitive, inclusive, and democratic spaces. But it also shows women's greater empowerment to conquer spaces traditionally reserved to men.

I believe in the field of science and research it is of the utmost importance for women to understand the importance to leave our mark, to report on our contributions, our participation, and our reflection in the various academic processes we work in, and to make the most of these spaces for academic sharing and socialization, such as En-Contexto journal, with a clear aim to have our works spread to help build fairer and more inclusive societal imaginaries.

References

Cobo, R. (2014). *Aproximaciones a la teoría crítica feminista*. CLADEM, 2014. Recuperado de <http://www.cladem.org/campanas-y-publicaciones/publicaciones/publicaciones-regionales/30-feminismo/777-aproximaciones-a-la-teoria-critica-del-feminismo>.

El Tiempo, 2018. *Las mujeres siguen luchando por ser más en la ciencia*. Recuperado de <https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/ciencia/situacion-laboral-de-las-cientificas-colombianas-192602>

Fernández, L. (2018). *Las mentiras sexistas de la ciencia*. Recuperado de https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/09/18/actualidad/1537288829_533173.html?id_externo_rsoc=FB_CC

Serrano, A., y Gutiérrez, K. (2018). Género y educación: Apuntes y memorias de un proceso incluyente. En Serrano, A., Tobón, L., López, G., Correa, O., Álvarez, N., Gutiérrez, K., Botero, A. y Abadía, J. (Ed.), *La sistematización como experiencia pedagógica. Acercándonos a la perspectiva de género* (pp. 27-47). Medellín, Colombia: Tecnológico de Antioquia.

Para citar este artículo:

Serrano, A. (2018). En-Contexto: An Open Window for Women's Science Divulcation. *En-Contexto*, 6(8), 7-9

