



Editorial

## Feminist and Gender Studies

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When considering gender studies, there is a tendency to reduce them to research exclusively related to women, particularly cisgender women, or topics related to socially and culturally constructed notions of “the feminine.” Similarly, when discussing feminist studies, it may seem unusual because feminism is often perceived solely as a social movement rather than an epistemological perspective. Another relevant aspect of these studies is that we place them in contemporary times, which hinders understanding why we are only now becoming familiar with them despite their long trajectory. In this issue of Calarma Journal, we aim to challenge these misconceptions and demonstrate how gender studies and feminist studies address diverse themes and issues across multiple areas of knowledge. What matters most is the viewpoint and epistemological stance these studies propose and allow us to adopt.

Gender studies began to gain more visibility in Latin American academia in the 1980s, preceded by women’s studies, which marked a turning point by highlighting the importance of understanding that the situation and condition of women were not individual experiences but reflections of a complex system of power. From this context, the concept of gender emerged as a fundamental pillar to overcome biologicistic and essentialist arguments that justified the oppression and discrimination of women. As a result, gender studies go beyond merely focusing on “women” or “the feminine” and instead provide a profound understanding of power relations, social asymmetries, representations, and the structures of oppressive systems. A crucial aspect of these studies today is their recognition that gender, as a device of capture and control, is intertwined with inequalities of class, race, age, and varying abilities. These categories intersect in concrete experiences of domination and others that reflect different systems of oppression. Hence, gender studies allow for a comprehensive analysis of these complex interactions and their effects on individuals and society.

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Feminist studies, in turn, put feminist epistemologies into practice, which for several decades have been questioning how knowledge is produced, the influences that shape it, and their repercussions. Rather than merely seeking to include “new” topics or subjects of knowledge, feminist studies challenge the pillars of so-called scientific knowledge: neutrality, objectivity, universality, and rationality.

In this sense, feminist epistemologies examine the androcentric, sexist, racist, classist, colonial, and heteronormative biases in the foundations upon which scientific knowledge is built. They unveil its biases, ideological underpinnings, power relations, and the criteria used to determine what can be considered knowledge. Additionally, they critically analyze the position of knowledge producers, making visible the different interests and social relations that shape and constitute knowledge. They also emphasize the subjective elements that play a determining role, the institutional contexts in which knowledge is produced, and the implications of the various privileges held by those in these contexts. By engaging with feminist epistemologies, feminist studies offer a transformative approach to knowledge production, dismantling traditional hierarchies and uncovering the hidden dynamics that have historically marginalized specific perspectives and perpetuated systems of oppression. This critical lens helps create a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of knowledge and its role in shaping societies and individuals.

For all these reasons, it is possible for feminist epistemologies and the analytical categories proposed by gender studies to be applied to any field, recognizing their relevance in constructing non-androcentric knowledge that contributes to the depatriarchalization of sciences and arts. Opening the way for these academic studies has been difficult because it involves questioning our privileges in these spaces. However, when we understand their importance, we take the necessary steps to (re)acknowledge them and give them a central place in the transformation education needs.

The University of Tolima (UT) has included the line II of action in the Institutional Gender Policy, which focuses on research, knowledge production, and management from a non-androcentric perspective. Another significant step forward that UT has taken is the establishment of the Gender Unit, a department under the Vice-Rectorate of Human Development responsible for planning and guiding actions to mainstream the gender approach in various areas of university life. With this institutional support in place, it paves the way for gender and feminist studies to flourish in all fields of knowledge within our university. Now, the task is to become familiar with, embrace, and implement these perspectives in our day-to-day activities, starting from the classroom and extending to the research endeavors that our region needs, all grounded in these approaches.

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Ana María Castro Sánchez  
Guest Editor  
PhD in sociology  
Master in Gender and Development  
Master in Cultural Studies  
Gender Unit Coordinator  
Vice-Rector of Human Development  
University of Tolima