



“THE SKIN I AM IN”: OUR REFLECTIONS AS NON-MAINSTREAM RESEARCHERS IN BRAZILIAN ACCOUNTING ACADEMIA

“A PELE EM QUE HABITO”: NOSSAS REFLEXÕES COMO PESQUISADORES NÃO MAINSTREAM NO MEIO ACADÊMICO CONTÁBIL BRASILEIRO

“LA PIEL QUE HABITO”: NUESTRAS REFLEXIONES COMO INVESTIGADORES NO MAINSTREAM EN LA ACADEMIA CONTABLE BRASILEÑA

« LA PEAU QUE JE PORTE » : NOS RÉFLEXIONS EN TANT QUE CHERCHEURS.ES NON CONFORMISTES DANS LE MILIEU ACADÉMIQUE BRÉSILIEN SPÉCIALISÉ DE LA COMPTABILITÉ

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Abstract

We discuss and analyze how being a non-mainstream accounting researcher shapes our professional identities and careers. Methodologically, we draw upon auto-ethnographic narratives of our trajectories highlighting critical episodes that happened throughout our careers and that have shaped our identities. We argue that the social norms established by the Brazilian accounting community relies upon normative and symbolic violence to sustain the “ideal academic” mold, that is, positivist, sexist, racist, and heteronormative molds. Our findings demonstrate how symbolic and epistemological violence is mobilized to marginalize academics outside the “ideal academic” mold and how the Brazilian accounting academia builds, legitimizes and sustains a normative ideal of what constitutes both accounting research and accounting researchers. In this sense, we unveil how universities construct and sustain sexist, racist, and heteronormative molds imposing the cost of being “The One” for all those who challenge/sit outside the status quo. On the other hand, we account for the importance of resisting through caring and rebelling in order to change the current normative and violent mold. We hope to contribute to the literature about academic identities by adding evidence from the Brazilian context, where the academic career differs from those in Global North countries. Moreover, we hope to contribute by illustrating how neoliberal and performativity pressures are endangering academic freedom and profession. Lastly, we hope to contribute

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to accounting literature by accounting for the hostile environment faced by academics from non-hegemonic groups.

Keywords: Academic Identity, Epistemic Violence, Writing Differently.

Resumo

Discutimos e analisamos como o fato de ser um pesquisador ou pesquisadora não *mainstream* em Contabilidade molda nossas identidades e carreiras profissionais. Metodologicamente, nos baseamos em narrativas autoetnográficas de nossas trajetórias, destacando episódios críticos que ocorreram ao longo de nossas carreiras e que moldaram nossas identidades. Argumentamos que as normas sociais estabelecidas pela comunidade contábil brasileira se valem de violência normativa e simbólica para sustentar o molde “acadêmico ideal”, ou seja, positivista, sexista, racista e heteronormativo. Nossos achados demonstram como a violência simbólica e epistemológica é usada para marginalizar os acadêmicos e acadêmicas que estão fora do molde de “acadêmico ideal” e ilustramos como a academia contábil brasileira constrói, legitima e sustenta um ideal normativo do que constitui tanto a pesquisa contábil quanto os pesquisadores e as pesquisadoras em contabilidade. Nesse sentido, revelamos como as universidades constroem e sustentam moldes sexistas, racistas e heteronormativos, impondo o custo de ser “O Único” ou “A Única” para todes aqueles que desafiam e/ou se posicionam fora de o status quo. Por outro lado, explicamos a importância de resistir por meio do cuidado e da rebeldia a fim de mudar o atual molde normativo, violento e violador. Esperamos contribuir para a literatura sobre identidades acadêmicas acrescentando evidências do contexto brasileiro, onde a carreira acadêmica é diferente da dos países do Norte Global. Além disso, esperamos contribuir ilustrando como as pressões neoliberais e de performatividade estão colocando em risco a liberdade acadêmica e a profissão. Por fim, esperamos contribuir para a literatura contábil, explicando o ambiente hostil enfrentado por acadêmicos/as/es de grupos não hegemônicos.

Palavras-chave: Identidade acadêmica, Violência epistêmica, Escrever de forma diferente.

Resumen

Debatimos y analizamos cómo el hecho de ser un investigador o investigadora contable no *mainstream* configura nuestras identidades y carreras profesionales. Metodológicamente, nos basamos en narraciones autoetnográficas de nuestras trayectorias, destacando episodios críticos que han ocurrido a lo largo de nuestras carreras y que han moldeado nuestras identidades. Argumentamos que las normas sociales establecidas por la comunidad contable brasileña utilizan violencia normativa y simbólica para sostener el molde del “académico ideal”, es decir, positivista, sexista, racista y heteronormativo. Nuestros hallazgos demuestran cómo se utiliza la violencia simbólica y epistemológica para marginar a los académicos y a las académicas que se salen del molde del “académico ideal” y ilustramos cómo la academia contable brasileña construye, legitima y sostiene un ideal normativo de lo que constituye tanto la investigación contable como los investigadores e investigadoras contables. En este sentido, revelamos cómo las universidades construyen y sostienen moldes sexistas, racistas y heteronormativos, imponiendo el coste de ser “El Único” o “La Única” a todos aquellos que desafían el statu quo o se sitúan al margen de él. Por otro lado, explicamos la importancia de resistir mediante el cuidado y la rebelión para cambiar el actual molde normativo, violento y violador. Esperamos contribuir a la literatura sobre identidades académicas añadiendo evidencias del contexto brasileño, donde la carrera académica difiere de las de los países del Norte Global. Además, esperamos contribuir ilustrando cómo las presiones neoliberales y de performatividad ponen en peligro la libertad académica y la profesión. Por último, esperamos contribuir a la literatura contable dando cuenta del entorno hostil al que se enfrentan los/as/es académicos/as/es de grupos no hegemónicos.

Palabras clave: Identidad académica, violencia epistémica, escribir diferente.

Résumé

Nous discutons et analysons comment le fait d'être un chercheur ou une chercheuse en comptabilité non conventionnel(le) façonne nos identités et nos carrières professionnelles. Sur le plan méthodologique, nous nous appuyons sur des récits autoethnographiques de nos parcours, en mettant en évidence les épisodes critiques qui se sont produits tout au long de nos carrières et qui ont façonné nos identités. Nous soutenons que les normes sociales établies par la communauté comptable brésilienne utilisent des poussées de violence symbolique pour maintenir le modèle de « idéal académique », c'est-à-dire positiviste, sexiste, raciste et hétéronormatif. Nos conclusions démontrent comment la violence symbolique et épistémologique est utilisée pour marginaliser les académiciens et les académiciennes qui ne correspondent pas au modèle de « idéal académique ». Tout au long de nos récits, nous illustrons comment le monde universitaire comptable brésilien construit, légitime et maintient un idéal normatif de ce qui constitue à la fois la recherche comptable et les chercheurs comptables. En ce sens, nous révélons comment les universités construisent et soutiennent des modèles sexistes, racistes et hétéronormatifs, imposant le coût d'être « le seul » ou « la seule » à tous ceux qui remettent en question le statu quo. D'autre part, nous expliquons l'importance de résister par le soin et la rébellion afin de changer le modèle normatif actuel, violent et violateur. Nous espérons contribuer à la littérature sur les identités académiques en ajoutant des preuves du contexte brésilien, où la carrière académique diffère de celle des pays du Nord. En outre, nous espérons contribuer en illustrant comment les pressions néolibérales et de performativité mettent en danger la liberté académique et la profession. Enfin, nous espérons contribuer à la littérature comptable en rendant compte de l'environnement hostile auquel sont confrontés les universitaires issus de groupes non hégémoniques.

Mots clés: identité universitaire, violence épistémique, écrire différemment.

1 INTRODUCTION

The academic environment has changed profoundly in recent decades, reflecting broader social and economic transformations, primarily driven by neoliberal discourse and managerial practices (Gendron, 2008, 2015; Res-Sisters, 2017). Among these changes, we highlight the pressure to publish in top journals, which underpins the “publish or perish” policy that has evolved into “be cited or vanish” (Broad, 1981; Garfield, 1996). This increasing pressure is profoundly affecting academics' lives, as we are gradually forgoing what we truly want in order to focus on what is trending and most likely to be published in top-ranked journals. In this sense, we are becoming “academic prostitutes” who disregard our values and beliefs to get published and avoid engaging in conflict with editors and reviewers (Frey, 2003, 2005). In other words, we are adhering to a “paying-off” mentality (Gendron, 2015), a process that may contribute to fragile academic selves and insecure work identities (Knights & Clarke, 2014).

Accounting research has historically shown a predilection for subjects related to financial reports and their indicators and, more recently, how the changes in International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) may influence such reports and indexes (Dyckman, & Zeff, 2015; Homero Jr., 2017). These research topics, combined with positivist epistemological assumptions, and aligned with quantitative methods, constitute the “accounting mainstream research” (Chua, 1986). Nonetheless, accounting is a social science, hence, we are constituted by people, not by such reports and indexes (Young, 2018).

Consequently, people should matter, and accounting research should embrace socially based theories and qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012; Silva, 2019).

Accounting research based on social theories and qualitative methods faces many difficulties securing a place in the largest conferences and top-ranked journals, as these venues are dominated by mainstream research. Some argue that there are still tidy boundaries defining what should be considered accounting research, which endangers the development of new ideas and innovations (Gendron & Rodrigue, 2021) and the socialization of new academics into the community (Bartoluzzio, Lima & Sauerbronn, 2025).

Still, non-mainstream researchers face the same pressure for publication as mainstream researchers. That being so, we face a fork in our professional road: should we try to publish a mainstream paper to “buy” our academic freedom, or research what interests us most and risk being punished for possibly not publishing enough? These dead-end leads us, especially early-career academics and researchers from non-hegemonic groups, living in the margins, distant from the Global North to academic anxiety put by Chowdhury (2017, p. 1115)

I argue that this puts a junior researcher like me (non-white, from an ethnic and religious minority, non-tenured) in danger of double alienation. It causes what I call ‘academic anxiety’, where no one forces me not to write but they could potentially punish me for doing so. I am leading a double life, trying to juggle both the truth and the peers and senior colleagues who will shape my career. I am at the mercy of others.

Non-mainstream accounting researchers are continually interrogated: “Where is accounting in your research?” or being told, “This is not accounting research” (Ganz, Lima, & Haveroth, 2019, pp. 9-10). Such persistent questioning can even be aggravated into more blatant violence in questions as “What are you some kind of ‘bra burning feminist’!?” (Lehman, 2019, p. 1). These experiences are embedded within broader institutional pressures that increasingly position academics as ideal workers and performers, expected to set aside their emotions, family life, and personal commitments (Gendron, 2008; Winslow & Davis, 2016). Beyond generating anxiety, we argue that such performativity pressures contribute to the fragmentation of non-mainstream accounting researchers’ professional identities (Malsch & Tessier, 2015), rendering them progressively more fragile (Knights & Clarke, 2014).

Building on these dynamics, we draw on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1991) to provide a theoretical lens for understanding such experiences. Accordingly, Bourdieu (1991) conceptualizes symbolic violence as a form of non-physical, often invisible or subtle coercion imposed by the dominant on subordinate social groups, thereby legitimizing and naturalizing social hierarchies. From this perspective, we argue that the social norms established by the Brazilian accounting academic community draw on manifestations of symbolic violence to sustain the ‘ideal academic’ mold. This ideal academic profile aligns with that of a mainstream researcher, shaped by positivist, sexist, misogynist, racist, and cis-heteronormative assumptions.

Considering the context above, we aim to discuss and analyze how being a non-mainstream accounting researcher in the margins³ shapes our professional identities and careers. To do so, we draw on the concept of self-identity proposed by Giddens (2002), which

³ We wanted to reflect on how being non-mainstream researchers molded our trajectories, but yet we acknowledge that they were also affected by the fact that we come from non-hegemonic groups or to our affiliation to marginalized social groups, as posed by one reviewer. Those two facts are mingled in our life stories and careers. But still one may argue that “the skin we are in” drove some of our career decisions, as for instance, the decision about researching gender issues or, as Butler says, “gender trouble”. Importantly is to reinforce that becoming qualitative researchers were understood and communicated to us, in many moments and distinct situations, as being easier and not holding to the “real” accounting research ideal. And not only to us, as proven by the many of the researchers and researches that we cite, who also are interested in the “gender trouble”.

may be understood as the private notion of who we are and the reflexive understanding of our own trajectories. As pointed out, such discussion is already found in the international literature (Malsch, & Tessier, 2015; Raineri, 2013, 2015). However, the Brazilian context is unique, as academic careers differ from those in Global North countries⁴. Research reflecting on the peculiarities of the Brazilian and Colombian context is recently beginning to emerge (Lima, Casa Nova & Vendramin, 2024; Quintero et al., 2024; Silva & Casa Nova, 2024; Vera-Colina et al., 2025).

Drawing on autoethnographic narratives of our career trajectories, we highlight critical episodes throughout our careers that have shaped our identities. Our narratives illustrate how Brazilian accounting academia builds, legitimizes, and sustains a normative ideal of what constitutes both “real” accounting research and the “ideal profile” of accounting researchers. In this way, they unveil how universities and other academic institutions construct and sustain sexist, racist, and cis-heteronormative molds. These molds impose the cost of being “The One” on all those who challenge the status quo. On the other hand, at the same time and in a subversive way, we try to document and to account forms of resisting through caring and rebelling in order to cha(lle)nge the current normative and violent mold. Our findings demonstrate how symbolic and epistemological violence are used to marginalize academics who do not fit the “ideal academic” mold.

We hope to contribute to the literature on academic identities by bringing more Latin American voices to the discussion. Moreover, we hope to contribute by illustrating how neoliberal and performative pressures are endangering academic freedom and the profession. Lastly, we hope to contribute to accounting literature by accounting for the hostile environment faced by academics from non-hegemonic groups.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To achieve the research purpose, we have adopted an autoethnographic approach. Wall (2006) presents autoethnography as an emerging qualitative research method that allows “to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a societal phenomenon” (p. 146). The societal phenomenon under scrutiny is how changes occurring in academia influence the socialization processes that mold academic professional identities.

To do that, we present and contrast our academic trajectories: from an early-career academic and a full professor with almost 30 years of experience at a Brazilian public university. We have both reflected on our trajectories and interpreted them through narrative analysis of critical incidents, as proposed by Sauerbronn (2009) and already mobilized by Silva & Casa Nova (2018).

Moreover, we rely on the importance of oral histories, as discussed by Haynes (2010), which emphasizes that they “allows the voices of those who have arguably been ignored, marginalized or silenced within particular contexts to be heard”. Addressing

⁴ Some of the main differences between the Brazilian academia and those from North could be summarized as: (a) the huge differences between public and private institutions; (b) the absence of the “tenure-tracking” system, or more precisely, that tenure comes along with the approval in the hiring process of public universities; (c) the role of CAPES in promoting the “publish or perish” or “be cited or vanish” cultures – which could be restricted to academics involved with graduate programs, whereas it is possible to follow a career path focused on teaching, outreaching, and consulting without ever bothering to “get the points” for your CV Lattes. Still, it is important to pose that public universities might differ for being federal, state or municipal, in terms of their career system. For instance, in the public universities of the State of São Paulo, for achieving the full professor position, one must first succeed in the Habilitation Exam, by presenting a Habilitation thesis (*Tese de Livre Docência - LD*), and then being nominated as Associate Professor. Also, in the public universities of the State of São Paulo, the Full Professor’s concourse is a hiring concourse, so that anyone who has the Habilitation or *Livre Docência* title can apply and start a career.

autoethnographic research, she explores some challenges while acknowledging the “potential of autoethnography in exploring the presentational and performative context of academia” (Haynes, 2011).

Based on Haynes (2010, 2011), for our data construction, we adopted a conversational interview approach and written reports, both of which shared academic experiences, conflicts, and expectations; in this way, we sought to identify critical episodes. Critical episodes were those related to a non-mainstream researcher's experiences negotiating their presence and permanence in the field while also reflecting on their academic identity. Exemplary (auto)ethnographic research on the topic can be found in the international accounting research (see Reedy, & Haynes, 2023; Dambrin, & Lambert, 2012; Doloriert, & Sambrook, 2009), but they are still scant in Brazil. We acknowledge that we still have a long way to go. But we also agree with the importance of sharing our reflection with a broader audience in Brazil, a continental country where accounting research is recently expanding and establishing itself. So, we've decided to tell their stories so that other researchers undergoing the same struggles can see themselves reflected, rather than constantly feeling that they don't belong (Style, 1996).

For publication and review purposes, we adopted pseudonyms based on two Brazilian singers: Marisa Monte and Silva. Both were facing, in different phases of our careers, the pressure to conform to what is considered “true” accounting research. Marisa Monte has been a faculty member at one of the main Business Schools in Brazil since the early 1990's. For much of her career, she had been a mainstream positivist quantitative researcher. Then, the Graduate Program of her institution hosted a young visiting professor, who taught a course on Interpretive and Critical Research in Accounting. She decided to audit the course and for the first time in her trajectory, she was introduced to another possibility of doing research and be(com)ing a researcher.

Silva is an early-career academic whose research agenda is centered on accounting education and diversity in accounting. When he started his research career during the undergraduate studies, he was taught that using quantitative methods was the only way to conduct research in accounting. However, since then, much has changed.

They first met through a mutual colleague, who introduced them while celebrating the completion of a master's thesis at their alma mater (a strongly positivist research center), which adopted a case study research design. Silva was asked to send the document, and from that, the three of them started a partnership and a friendship. This meeting represented the beginning of many discussions and reflections on what accounting research can be and who we are as accounting researchers.

The paper first presents episodes from Silva's experience and then discusses episodes from Monte's trajectory. The accounts are presented in the first person, honoring that they are, in fact, pieces of our personal recollections and, therefore, of our authorship.

3 BEING AN EARLY CAREER ACADEMIC IN ACCOUNTING

I wanna be defined by the things that I love
Not the things I hate [...]
I just think that you are what you love
[Daylight by Taylor Swift]

When I decided to write this section, I knew it would be one of the hardest parts of any paper or dissertation. Why? Because reflecting on who I am, who I was, and who I want to be requires a high level of vulnerability and openness, and that is why I decided to start it with an excerpt from “Daylight”, a song by Taylor Swift. This song inspired me since the

very first time I listened to it. This song speaks to my deepest feelings and supports my vulnerability. So, I thought it would help me to go through this exercise.

My journey with accounting began in 2008, when I was a high school student, and I took a technical course in management. Back then, I took accounting classes that introduced me the first notion of accounting I ever knew: a way of keeping track of money and properties. This vision would only change after 2012.

3.1. Publish or perish: learning the game's rules

I started my undergraduate course in 2012, when I began to see accounting as a broader, deeper subject, much more than just a tool for keeping records of money and properties. Also, during this first year, I was very interested in learning more about the academic career, and that's when I got the message: you either publish extensively, or you don't get to be an academic.

Following this message, the next year I had my first research experience in accounting: I interned at a finance research center. This first experience was terrifying: I had read papers before, but I had no idea how to start one or how to become a knowledge producer rather than just a knowledge consumer. Despite my panic, my supervisor at the time was really patient and helped me all the way until I finished my first paper.

After several rounds of review with my supervisor, we finally submitted it to an academic journal. It took a few long weeks for the reviewers to reject it, and with this experience, I first learned that papers are not always accepted, even when they are mainstream. Such rejection also taught me that publishing is actually a game played by three parties: authors, editors, and reviewers (Moizer, 2009), and that publishing nowadays is getting even harder, considering the growth of accounting and business master's and doctoral programs.

I stayed at this internship until 2015 and left it with three papers published in Brazilian academic journals and with my first conference presentation. The first conference presentation was a remarkable experience because, as an undergraduate student, I was nervous and felt vulnerable presenting a paper in a crowded room with people much more experienced than I was.

Still, in 2015, my academic identity faced a big change: I decided to research accounting education, which turned out to be one of my greatest passions - alongside diversity research, which I discovered later. The decision to change my research interests was based on my view of how I could contribute socially and improve people's lives, so I decided to focus more on people, which is why accounting education and diversity is at the center of my current research agenda. During my undergraduate course, I felt underrepresented by being gay and coming from a public school.

It was remarkable that nearly all the students were from private school backgrounds, and this underrepresentation made me feel I did not belong there. Besides questioning my belongingness, this experience also showed the importance of being there: I could change the university from the inside out, and my existence there was a political statement in the sense that the personal is political (Lehman, 2019) and in the sense of breaking the myths about public school students (Miranda, Lima, & Marinello, 2017).

The year 2015 was also important because I decided to apply to a master's program, and from that moment on, I chose to become an academic so I could continue researching and start teaching. My application was approved, and in 2016, I started my master's program.

3.2. Be(com)ing the ideal worker: is there time to grieve in academia?

At that moment, I gained a deeper understanding of accounting and accounting research. During the first semester, one professor introduced us to the idea that positivist quantitative research was not the only way to conduct accounting research, instead, there were other possibilities, such as critical and interpretive qualitative research. This moment may be considered a game-changer because it showed me that accounting research could deal with social problems and theories.

My personal and professional life changed profoundly at the end of this semester. My mom passed away, and, after that, I felt lost. It seemed that the ground beneath my feet had swallowed me. This fact deeply changed my professional identity: just a week after my mom passed away, I had to take tests, submit papers, and make presentations that I was not ready to do. And I was not ready to do it because I was not ready to return to the real world. At that moment, I really thought about quitting academic life because I felt that this situation was academia telling me that I do not get to be human, that I do not have the right to have a life outside the university walls, and that I should deliver not only my knowledge and effort but also my soul and everything else I got.

This experience made me realize that academia expects you to be the ideal worker, so you should forget about life outside the university's walls and put aside your feelings, concerns, and anything else unrelated to academia itself (Winslow & Davis, 2016). Such experience showed that feelings don't matter when you're an academic. Facing this situation, I had two options: quitting and allowing the academic environment to continue this toxic way or staying and trying to change it. I decided on the second option. I decided to stay and fight to make academia a better place and to understand how it works and how it changes people's lives. But, foremost, I stayed so that I could understand how we may change academia.

3.3. Hoping for better days: I will survive

The second semester of the master's course was not easy because I was still grieving and taking four different courses at the same time. By the end of that year, I was thinking, “I survived! I made it through it, so it's time to plan the next steps.” Therefore, at the beginning of 2017, I decided to finish my master's as soon as possible so I could become a doctoral student elsewhere and move on from the place where I learned a lot but also got hurt a lot. That decision led to leaving my academic home and trying to make a living in another city. My plan became clear: I had to take the qualification exam, finish the research, apply for the doctoral program, and defend my master's thesis.

Aiming to make the transition easier, I decided to take a course as a special student in the program I wanted to enroll in as a doctoral student. This course was about qualitative research, and during the semester, the program was a friendly environment for everyone and much more open to diversity than my old program. Such openness to diversity was not only about research methods and paradigms but also about people. For the first time in my academic life, I was taking a class with a black professor and had other LGBTQ+ academics among my peers. This experience showed me that although business schools were mostly white, male, and heteronormative (Rumens, 2016), there was room for me – or so I thought.

During this course, I was even more certain about the next steps in my academic career: I wanted to be in that program and have Marisa Monte as my supervisor. This experience made me build expectations that this new program would welcome me as I am: a gay man, a non-mainstream researcher. Being among people who understand and accept non-mainstream research and other LGBTQ+ academics made me feel safe and think that I finally found somewhere I belong. It brought me hope for better days. Thus, I continued my master's research and finished it by February 2018. A week later, I was moving to another city, another program, and another challenge.

3.4. Will I survive?

My classes in the doctoral program started in late February of 2018, with a two-week course on quantitative methods and mathematics. It was very hard – especially for me, who has always hated quantitative methods and mathematics. After this two-week course, the regular courses began, and so did contact with new people, new experiences, and a long learning process. While I felt I was at home in my previous city, in my new one, I was a newcomer, a strange in the nest. In the first semester, I decided to take five regular courses so I could finish the mandatory courses as soon as possible and focus on research. During this first month in São Paulo, I decided and confirmed with Marisa that she would be my supervisor. We decided then to engage with the dissertation proposal by submitting it to a doctoral consortium at an accounting conference. This would be the first of many doctoral consortiums in which I would submit and discuss my proposal.

The classes took up a lot of my time and drained much of my energy, but not because there was a lot to study or new things to learn; I felt rejected by most of my peers. Until today, I do not know if the rejection was because I was one of the youngest students in the program, if by being one of the only qualitative critical researchers, or by being gay – perhaps it was because of it all. It was exhausting to prove myself class after class, to prove that I deserved to be there, that I was as good as everyone else. But thankfully, I was not the only one who felt like this: a close friend shared the same feelings – and she was also one of the program's youngest students and a qualitative critical researcher.

By June of 2018, I traveled to present and discuss my dissertation proposal at a doctoral consortium. It was a terrible experience. There was this one professor in the audience who said a lot of violent things about my proposal. He disqualified my proposal by saying that I had wasted 20 minutes talking about it and wasted the audience 40 minutes listening to a proposal that was not worthy of being researched. At that moment, I wanted to cry and run away, but I stayed and thanked the professor for his contributions. Once again, I was very lucky to have someone there who stood up for me and said that I was very brave to be there in such an early stage of my research and that I should not give up on that proposal.

This doctoral consortium made me feel like I was being punished for not being a mainstream researcher. For the first time, I felt that the conferences were not safe environments for discussion, but rather environments permeated by uncivil attitudes among different schools of thought as they fought for a monopoly on scientific competence (Bourdieu, 1983). I returned after the conference, and Marisa told me not to give up on the proposal. She advised me to submit it to another doctoral consortium so we could have a different perspective.

I was afraid and insecure about submitting the proposal for another conference, after all, I didn't want to have another public humiliation experience. After talking for hours with Marisa, I decided to try a new doctoral consortium, so I did. I wrote a new version of the proposal and submitted it to a business conference. Finally, July came, and my first semester as a doctoral student was finished, and a new doctoral consortium accepted my proposal. I had survived again.

I hoped the second semester would be easier and less violent. However, I was sadly mistaken. I was taking six courses – four of them with peers who had already rejected me. Every week was a battle. Every class was one less class to attend. At the same time, my proposal was growing in scope and depth as Marisa and I decided to submit it to more doctoral consortia, and even the first English version of the proposal was written. This second semester was crazy because, besides taking so many courses, I had papers to present at different conferences in various cities. After all, I did not want to perish.

3.5. What academic do I (not) want to become?

Through these experiences, I met people who changed the way I see and live academia, both positively and negatively. During my short experience as an academic, I also learned something about myself: I like to do meaningful research; for me, meaningful research is any research that tries to improve someone’s life. But doing the research I do is not easy in Brazilian accounting academia because people do not see it as accounting. As a matter of fact, I remember two episodes that happened between the master course and now.

In the first episode, I was having lunch with a friend and a professor, and discussing plans for the future about submitting papers to conferences and journals, so the professor looked at me and said, “You have so much potential to be wasted on accounting education, you should start researching what I research so you could really become someone.”

The second was during a happy hour after a conference when a professor asked me who my doctoral supervisor was. When I told him that it was Marisa Monte, he instantly replied: “So, you’re also researching this gender buls**t?”.

3.6. What academic am I becoming?

When I started my Ph.D. research, I focused on understanding how the socialization process (re)produced social hierarchies that silenced and marginalized different social groups. It was a broader project than the present research I ultimately developed. I still believe that the socialization process reproduces social hierarchies. Still, as I was experiencing the academic environment, I felt the need to understand how I - an openly gay academic - fit (or not) into this context.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the opportunity to participate in several online courses, some of which focused on sexuality. It is from taking part in these courses that I started to put together the puzzle of how my sexual orientation influenced my socialization process. From this moment on, I realized the different nuances of this process. I decided to focus my research project on better understanding the relationship between sexuality and the socialization process. I consider this process a moment of becoming more explicitly aware of a social structure that I intuitively recognized but preferred to deny, perhaps as a defense mechanism.

One of the main reflections I had while taking the courage to reformulate the previous research project into this one was the lack of representation of openly LGBTQIAP+ people in accounting academia. I then started to dig into my memories to find moments in which my sexuality influenced my academic trajectory and stories of peers who had also suffered some violence due to their sexual orientation. I then realized I could gather these memories through interviews to build the research.

After the first interviews, I realized that talking openly about sexual orientation was still taboo for some interviewees. I felt a need to develop a relationship of care and trust with all interviewees – hoping they would perceive the interview as a safe space, as I myself could afterward. To do this, I adopted a strategy of sharing my own research experiences with research participants. Overall, these interviews were constituted through bond building, and the awareness that neither the interviewees nor I were alone (contrary to what the cis-heteronormative regime would have us believe). Some interviews were more difficult than others. The interviewees and I shed tears, but with each completed interview, the certainty of the importance of this research grew.

Overall, this research has greatly influenced me in the process of recognizing and constituting myself as an openly gay accounting academic. The process of constituting oneself is sometimes painful as it requires abandoning some beliefs and questioning certainties. In conclusion, this research has reinforced my conviction that to continue fighting against marginalization is a political and academic duty and that accounting and its relationship with sexuality are indeed complex and need to be discussed deeply and constantly by me, by us, and by others.

In this personal narrative, I tried to express feelings and experiences I believe have (re)shaped how I see myself as an academic and a person. Being an academic is hard and has taught me a great deal. Being an academic made me more resilient. Being an academic at one of the best universities in your country is challenging, but at the same time is a meaningful experience – especially for someone whose parents only studied until the 4th grade. Being an academic is being political. Being an academic is part of me.

4 THE ACADEMIC I'VE BECOME AND WHO I AM STILL STRUGGLING TO BE...

I am a almost 60-year-old, white, cisgender, heterosexual, Latina woman, a mother, and a university professor. I am aware of my gender and what it entails since my grandfather answered emphatically my statement that I wanted to study Engineering at ITA (*Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica*, therefore a military educational institution), and, I think, to my unexpected insistence on the subject, with the sentence: “You can’t! There isn’t even a women's bathroom there!”

This showed me that there are some forbidden spaces for women, and this discovery has worried me. I remember asking: “Why?” Only many years later did ITA start to accept women candidates. Of course, not without first providing the women’s toilets.

4.1. The beginning: “There isn’t even a women's bathroom there!”

I have always been attracted to typically male environments, professions, and activities. I remember when I decided during High School to major in Exact Sciences. I loved the classes about Mechanics, and I was fascinated by the idea of disassembling a car. My teacher laughed at me but seemed to receive this “unusual” interest from one of the rare female students well. But he never kept his promise to take me to dismantle a car.

In college, in Public Administration at a prestigious private business school, we were eight women among 50 students. For me, there were a lot of us. A long time later, I realized that no, usually there had been only a few of us. I remember that during the hazing, we were “invited” to “drive” a wax machine, and we were judged on issues like “front commission,” “evolution,” and “school percussion band performance,” as if we were samba schools, but with clear allusions to our bodies. Some of the “jokes” were not at all better: we needed to enroll in a “waiting husband” course, and we would go up in life if we got a job as an elevator operator. Also, only later did I understand that they were not “innocent jokes.” They were paving the way for a predominantly male environment in a quest to maintain the privileges of the old-boys club (Casa Nova, 2022; Silva & Casa Nova, 2024).

After graduating, I had a short internship in a foreign bank before pursuing a career in auditing. When I entered auditing, I was forced to feminize my way of dressing (always jeans and wide T-shirts): being a woman, I was “guided” to adopt skirts, preferably the *tailleur*, the female counterpart of the suit. Since the interview with the partner, it was clear that my wardrobe was out of place: I left the bank directly for the interview, wearing jeans and a wool blouse. I was late. When I was called for the interview, the partner looked at me upside down and complained about my delay, demanding an explanation. I thought I had already lost the

job offer, even after running so fast, and I was tired. Therefore, I answered, without blinking, firmly: “I was working!” He replied, still showing irritation: “And what do you think we are doing here?! You’ve disrupted my day.” It was a surprise when they called me to offer me the job.

The beginning of Auditing was very intense, and I confess that I complained in the first days. I thought I had left a friendly group in the bank’s Controller’s Office for a competitive and tense environment. But then that feeling changed; I can’t say why or when. I also clearly remember our training course and being called upon to present a situation to a client. The senior auditor responsible for the training was performing the male client, and I was the female auditor. In the middle of the conversation, he (the client) invited me to dinner. That’s right, a client-auditor harassment situation. I remember reacting irritably, and he must have found that sufficient, as he ended the role-play. Research on female experience in auditing reinforces both: an ethics of endless working hours, and the reactions to the presence of “strange” female bodies (Lupu & Empson, 2015; Bitbol-Saba & Dambrin, 2019).

Despite working in auditing teams with clients outside the city and the estate, I was never part of the traveling groups. The justification was first my classes at the college and my priority to graduate, then the cost of having a single room for me. I remember questioning them a few times, even telling them I could share a room with a male colleague. After that, I started being scheduled for tasks outside the city, mainly to audit inventory. And I confess I loved it!

I did a bit of everything in auditing: industry, banking, and services. I think they were a little short-staffed. I found the routine interesting and motivating exactly because there was no routine. I used to arrive early and leave late. Usually, always work with my team. Working as part of a team fascinated me. The senior I worked with the most was patient and demanding, an ideal combination. When passing a job to be done, he would explain its importance and its impact on other areas of auditing. He was totally willing to listen and answer questions, which for me was the most important thing. He had almost infinite patience and, I would say, pleasure in teaching. So, with him as a role model, I became addicted to Auditing: I lived and breathed it. But I decided I needed to learn more about Accounting, and since I had already completed a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration, I thought I should pursue a master’s in Accounting. I want to emphasize this point: My interest in pursuing a master’s degree was to deepen my understanding of accounting so that I could be a better auditing professional. Period.

I decided to apply to the accounting master’s program at one of the most prestigious Brazilian universities. It was an almost impossible dream for me, but anyway, the “no” I already had. I didn’t even think about the difficulties in reconciling work and study. I didn’t even think there would be problems. For me, it was obvious that my superiors would support me, just as it was logical that ITA would accept women. After all, it was for my professional improvement. I applied without high expectations, even though I didn’t have an accounting background. And when I was accepted, it was my mother who brought me the news: yes, I had been accepted into the master’s program at a prestigious public university.

Well, there weren’t any women’s toilets in auditing either. When I told my manager about my approval, he congratulated me, reviewed the coursework plan, and commented on how interesting disciplines such as “Accounting Theory” or “Price Level Accounting” should be, but he told me I should first talk with a partner. Well, I went and talked to my partner. He talked about the importance of the university and how strong it was in Accounting, but (again, the “but”) asked a critical question: I would be promoted to senior in the near future and would be in charge of auditing teams. What would I do when there was a problem with the job, and I had a class? What would I prioritize: the team or the class? It was a question impossible to answer. And despite my passion for Auditing, I didn’t want to give up studying

at the university. So, I started looking for a job with which I could reconcile with my master's. Because I also didn't want to stop working, it was important to me to be independent.

I went back to work in the Controller's Office of a bank, now for one of the biggest Brazilian banks. During the hiring process, they had guaranteed me the availability of time and dedication to pursue my master's because, they said, it was a bank that valued the continuing education of its employees. It was also a bank whose Controller's Office was recognized as a school, from which I listened since I had been a trainee in a foreign bank, and always with a tone of admiration. Now, it seemed that it would be possible to reconcile work and study, that being a master's program, with my professional activity. But it was not.

In the Master's program, the demands were also high. Even higher for someone who had no background in accounting. The study, reading, and writing loads were intense. There was no weekend. I was lucky to have a study group with colleagues who were always very dedicated and had backgrounds in Accounting, some of whom had many years of professional experience in the field. Even so, if the ropes pulled both sides, it was I who was responsible for resisting (or giving up).

I was one of two women in my cohort. The other female colleague soon dropped out. I remained the only woman in the cohort. Our group was cheerful and motivated. We were lucky to have one or two colleagues who set the tone for such enchantment. In some courses, I remember PhD students joining our group. This is how I first came into contact with the idea of pursuing a doctorate. I remember being amazed at the level of discussion they had with the faculty on subjects that were still distant to me. Yes, I do think that's what awakened me to the possibility of doing my doctorate. I say that because during my undergrad, no one told me about the possibility of entering an academic career as a professional choice, and no faculty member explained to us what it would mean to be an academic. So, during my master's, I had my first sight of this possibility.

I soon found myself feeling guilty for not doing anything right: neither my work at the bank nor my master's degree at the university. I started to think about quitting my job. My family, who valued studying very much, fully supported me. I still lived in my parents' house and, even if I didn't get a scholarship or some paid research or teaching activity, I would be able to keep it up financially. But it was not a situation that I liked. Ever since I started working in my second year of college, I have felt the taste of independence and enjoyed it. Well, if there are sacrifices to be made... I would sacrifice my independence.

By dedicating myself totally to my master's, two opportunities soon appeared: the first was to participate in research with a university support foundation for the elaboration of the Manual of Bank Accounting. The second one was voluntary teaching. After some time, one day at the door of the college's main building, one of my professors asked me if I would like to teach as a volunteer. I promptly answered: "Yes!" He immediately took me to the undergraduate coordinator, who was one of the few women in the department. She looked at me and replied, "You're not going to get married, get pregnant, and leave me hanging, are you?" One day, I relived that conversation with her. She couldn't remember, and she seemed really surprised to hear it. But I remember it like it was yesterday, exactly like that, even the words.

4.2. For each pregnancy, another academic graduation: life brings its compensations

In my personal life, the pace has not been any slower: moving cities, marrying, a highly risky, unexpected pregnancy, and the premature birth of my first son. There were many emotions. I finished my master's degree in 1996, taking almost 70 months, that is, six years. The colleagues who finished in the shortest time took almost four years. Anyway, I was

already beginning to feel that my career was advancing at the pace of a limping turtle. Analogies are frequently used to describe the career experiences of women, such as the glass ceiling, stained glass ceilings, glass walls, sticky floor, labyrinth, and frayed careers (Broadbent & Kirkham, 2008; Lupu, 2012; Silva & Casa Nova, 2024). I was living many of these analogies, without yet researching them, and also creating my own.

The topic chosen for the dissertation was Accounting and Small Businesses. When I told my advisor that this would be my topic, he readily accepted. I see now that it was a courageous attitude. It was a marginal topic that had never received much attention in our department. Some faculty openly and frankly advised against it. Although the Master ended in a very difficult way, the defense was very calm, witnessed by my son with a few months old, and by my mother.

The doctorate began in the sequence, with no pause for breath or time to think, reflecting perhaps an expectation of “wait, and you will give up on doing it.” Courses were taken, already hired as a faculty member, and now with a baby boy. At the same time, I kept my professional activity at the support foundation and made a decision, not very rational as now I see, to live in a city that is 60 kilometers away from São Paulo. So, it was 120 kilometers per day, driving to work and back home, besides the distressing distance from my son.

In the PhD program, conviviality with colleagues depended on the group formed for each discipline. I did not feel part of a cohort, as I had been during my Master’s. The coursework passed very quickly. It felt like a race with obstacles. The presence of colleagues in the courses relieved the burden, but I was not running fast enough. I always felt like running late, insufficiently. While doing the coursework, I shared my anguish and victories with my classmates. What I hadn’t wanted during my master’s, the reason why I abandoned my “professional” life, so that I could not have the feeling of not doing anything with the necessary dedication, was a constant, even though my whole routine was centered on activities at the University.

It took a long time to realize that I was not completing my doctorate as a full-time student. Working where you study causes this kind of illusion. But since I had colleagues who did the same and didn’t seem to feel the burden, I wasn’t comfortable expressing my feelings or even asking for help. It took even longer for me to acknowledge that my situation and that of my colleagues, mostly men, were not exactly equivalent. My doctorate was completed in 5.6 years. A much better mark than the one for my master’s, although still much higher than the average of male colleagues (4.8 years).

I defended my dissertation with my little daughter, a few months old, in my arms, born after another risky pregnancy. My son was six years old and running through the building’s corridors while the defense was underway.

My research topic in the PhD was again not seen as aligned with the department’s tradition, because I chose to adopt a mathematical model to study efficiency and drew on mathematics and economics. Although the advisor, still the same as the master, seemed to support me, he told me that the risk of choosing a model distant from the traditional ones was mine and that I had to look for support elsewhere.

The qualifying exam was hard; only the member from outside the department, the one whom I looked for support, really offered help. The same happened in the defense, except that he was not there because of a health problem. Again, only members from outside the department supported my proposal and gave me valuable feedback. A member of the department was so uneducated that my family members, who were watching the defense, asked me why he behaved that way, and nobody reacted to it.

This person, throughout my career, was unfairly critical of the research I’ve conducted and that of my advisees. This criticism went so far that once he affirmed, during a class, that

“This should be one of the crazy ideas of Marisa Monte. Do not follow her crazy ideas.” This was one of the many strategies of epistemological violence employed by him and the department, once no one stood against it, both in the graduate program and at the conference.

In the graduate program, this faculty member was one of those responsible for a mandatory course that was planned to “support” PhD research development and played a key role in “setting the tone” for what should be considered accounting research. In the conference, one of the first and more traditional conferences in Accounting Sciences in the country, he was also in charge of the coordination, and the choosing of stream convenors, and it was where many submissions were reprovved still as an abstract, to avoid “loosing time”, with reviews as succinct as “it has no potential to contribute or surprise”, or “it does not present anything new”.

Many of my submissions were not accepted at this conference for many years, with reviews like these. Because of this, I soon started to invest in international conferences, huge ones as some were organized by academic associations, such as the American Accounting Association and the European Accounting Association, and smaller and more focused ones, as organized by the International Critical Management Studies. Some of my submissions were not accepted at the department’s conference, but were accepted at some international conferences, which made me realize that my ideas were not so crazy.

Now I understand this as a resistance strategy, trying to find a place where I could fit and resonate with my research projects. Also, finding colleagues with whom I could share my ideas and feel respected. It was symptomatic, and sometimes I found it contradictory, but having to go abroad to find a place where one could feel respected, it felt as if I were a stranger in my own home.

Even so, my career at the University was evolving. Soon, I was invited to “reactivate” a course on teaching methods. I had been responsible for this course for many years. In one of the last cohorts, I included, as a learning activity, a proposal for students to work in pairs to design a research project, conduct it, and write a paper based on it. As I had many master’s students, for some it was the first research experience, something that can be related to the topic of the dissertation, and that can serve as a laboratory, a pilot, for when it is time to develop it in fact. On the other hand, it was an opportunity to put into practice some of the topics discussed in the course. I have had grateful joys with these “experiences.” Several of the research proposals developed in the course were converted into papers accepted in conferences and later published. It is gratifying to see the genuine interest in research appear and bear fruit.

But after some time, in reason of a tragic sequence of medical errors, I lost my baby girl. It was a very difficult period, a hole in my life, that only family and work could help to bear. But, like my grandmother used to say: “We are like cockroaches.” And after I got to the bottom of it, I came back to return the love of those who took care of me. Also during this period, I divorced, ending a long relationship that had begun during my master’s.

As a way to recover, I returned to the college where I graduated in Public Administration for a post-doctoral internship in Quantitative Methods Applied to Accounting. My supervisor was someone with whom I shared the hardest experience anyone could have: losing a child. We talked about everything, including research. It was very important to walk part of the path with my supervisor. It helped to heal some wounds.

From him is the saying that always comes to me when I am trying to give comfort to someone in need: “Life brings its own compensations.” That’s what he told me when I found myself pregnant with my second daughter, my gift. That’s what I thought when he told me he would have a granddaughter. Yeah, life brings its own compensations.

I completed my postdoctoral work in four years, after giving birth to my daughter. With my Master’s thesis, I had a son. While working on my PhD dissertation, I had a daughter.

During my postdoctoral research, I had another daughter. And a career that was advancing at a limp turtle’s pace.

4.3. The limp turtle: a woman’s career

*I’m so sick of running as fast as I can
wondering if I’d get there quicker
if I was a man*
[The Man – Taylor Swift]

When I speak of a limp turtle, it may sound like an exaggeration. But if I make a comparison with my male colleagues’ careers, it will be a two-legged limp turtle. If I compare it to the plans I made for my career, the turtle remains limp. Even when I was planning myself, I invariably forgot that there were a few female toilets in my academic career, and sometimes they were locked.

The rites and drivers are all linked to productivity indicators that are far more difficult for women to achieve. If there is not an environment of cooperation and collaboration, which I only came to experience later in my career, it becomes practically impossible. Failure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. And “success” only comes at the cost of much sacrifice, personal and family life sacrifices. Or, better said, it is a “success” with a very particular meaning, which entails many failures in other dimensions than professional ones (Hoskins, 2010, 2012; Casa Nova, 2024).

4.4. Researching gender in accounting: being a bra-burning feminist

You can become a problem by naming a problem
[Sara Ahmed]

In the course of this trajectory, there was the opportunity to apply for the first time for Full-Professorship. Here I have to take a break and take a deep breath. First, in Brazil, considering some public state universities, this is the first situation in our careers, after the hiring process, in which colleagues have to compete to advance to the next level. And it is an open, public hiring process so that someone external to the university can also apply. Second, to point out that the other three colleagues running for the same position were men, as it couldn’t be otherwise, and all had much less time in the university than I had. Back then, I had completed more than two decades of work at the same institution. Third, to inform that there was only one woman on the committee, as there were hardly any other female full professors in accounting.

Pause to breathe , I’ve prepared my presentation focusing on the theme that concentrated my actions, activities, and research in the most recent period: the presence of women in Accounting Academia. For me, it was coherent with what I’ve done lately, even if my career, *lato sensu*, was more appropriately related to accounting education. Here is the point, which I want to reflect on. A person in the audience sent me his notes about the presentation and Q&A from the committee members after it:

Gender: Counterpoint or sum of efforts... Does gender divide us or unite us?
Is gender a boundary?
A fall in women’s enrollment in the undergraduate course.
Increasingly independent women represent a group that cannot be ignored. Does analyzing people as numbers equalize inequalities?
Gender = Fear, attention, worries, risk. Accounting as a tool for social improvement.

Does teaching need to reflect and understand social movements?

I won't dwell on commenting on this process anymore. I just concluded that it was a unique learning experience. But I highlight only two of the reflections: "Accounting as a tool for social improvement" and "Does teaching need to reflect and understand social movements?" Even today, when I think again about these reflections, I conclude that we need to (re)found the research stream on human accounting and reinforce that accounting has to be, above all, a social practice.

4.5. Nevertheless, she persisted

Full professor positions are rare and contested in Brazilian state public universities; as noted before, applying for them is competitive, both internally and externally. So, I was in doubt about applying a second time if the chance arose.

When it appeared, I dwelt on this decision for a long time, sharing it with close friends and family. The day before the deadline, I had all the documents prepared to upload to the system, but hadn't decided yet. But finally, it felt coherent to apply for it as many times as the chance appeared, if not for me, for those coming after me.

Everything is contested terrain in this process, from uploading the documentation⁵ into the system, through the committee members' composition decision⁶, the days of the selection process⁷, to the delivery of the decision by the chair of the committee.

When I was preparing the defense of my academic work, I decided to detail my trajectory from a mainstream scholar to a turning point in investing time and effort in gender issues in accounting. It felt right to be true to myself and the others who accompanied me on that pathway. It was a risky decision, but I thought that if it were to be me, it must be the "real" me, the authentic me, not the "digestible" me.

It was a collective endeavor because I had some of my dearest friends and relatives with me all the time: during many simulated defenses, with time pressing and topics needing to be connected in the storytelling of my decades of academic life. It was like a patchwork blanket, many pieces of fabric which seemed meaningless, but when they were sewn together, they revealed my trajectory, even and mostly to me.

One of the more meaningful moments was when I was asked how it was to be me while researching the topics that interest me most at the department I have been working in. An unanswerable question, as key questions should be.

I was also asked about the many turns and changes in my career and requested to state what I wanted to pursue in this new stage as a research topic. My answer was that I would dedicate the rest of my career to the quest for a better understanding of how the academic environment, rather than being a nurturing ambiance, sometimes ought to be a violent and unbearable space, expelling rather than attracting: I wanted to study academic incivility. So, this is why this article is so dear to me.

⁵ The documents should be representative of the academic trajectory, mainly considering the last five years.

⁶ The committee members must be all full professors and independent in relation to the set of candidates but still representing their research topics.

⁷ The selection process, usually called full professor concourse, comprises a set of exams, or stages, for all the candidates, in the order of their application. It typically involves a thorough evaluation of the candidate's curriculum vitae (called *memorial*, which has to be documented), a simulated graduate class of a topic sorted from a list, a written examination, a public defense of their academic work, and an interview with the selection committee.

One of my colleagues, a close friend of mine, also applied for the same position. After the application process was complete, I did not want to wait until the committee chairperson announced the final decision. Instead, I left the premises feeling satisfied that I would be happy with either of us being nominated. Later, I received a phone call at home, surrounded by my friends and family. My colleague was also connected to the call. It was then that I learned I had been nominated by a single vote of difference. It was unexpected and had a bittersweet taste; moreover, considering that the two nominated in the first concourse had left the department months after the full professorship, taking their positions with them, and my colleague and I stayed.

Many years later, I was there in the audience when my colleague applied again for a full professorship. Now, there were three candidates, all men, and only one position. Different candidatures and a feeling that history would repeat itself, and the younger, quantitative, mainstream candidate would be nominated again. But it was not the case.

And I got the chance to write a message to my colleague as soon as I learned about the outcome: “Congratulations, I just got the news. The first full professor in Actuarial Sciences at the department. I hope you are celebrating; we need to celebrate.” He replied he was too tired, because it was an exhausting process, and still didn’t believe he got it. What kind of academic ambiance takes so many of us and still leaves us in disbelief about our own capacities?

5 FAKING OUR OWN TRAJECTORIES

The last episode of symbolic violence we experienced together, Silva and Marisa - as co-authors - occurred when we submitted this paper, then still a work in progress, to the conference organized by the department. Since the event is now under new coordination, we expect a different, more inclusive experience.

For the very first time in the history of this conference - one of the most traditional in the field of Accounting in Brazil - a plagiarism check was introduced using a widely recognized similarity check software. Submissions flagged by this software were automatically excluded.

However, several procedural errors compromised what was ostensibly an attempt to bring greater rigor and recognition to the event. First, the plagiarism check was conducted **after** the review process had been completed. Second, it was overseen solely by the general coordinators and carried out by their administrative staff, with **no involvement from the stream convenors**. Third, authors were not given prior access to the similarity report nor any opportunity to respond and clarify. Fourth, the procedure lacked any pedagogical framing - it failed to distinguish between experienced researchers and undergraduate students submitting to a conference for the very first time.

Further compounding the issue, the excluded submissions were removed from the system without notification to the stream convenors. An email was sent solely to the authors, revealing the reviewers’ names and their evaluations. This message arrived just one day before the final announcement of the approved papers. It reads as follows:

Submission REPROVED by administrator - Abstract APPROVED by stream convenor [NAME OF THE STREAM CONVENOR] on 13/03/2023 (Comments for Authors: | Administrative Comments:) - Submission reviewed and APPROVED (4) by #9949 [NAME OF THE REVIEWER #1] - Submission reviewed and APPROVED (4.8) by #3314 [NAME OF THE REVIEWER #2]

Comments to the author(s):

Dear Author(s),

Thank you for submitting your article for consideration at our conference. After carefully analyzing the material, we regret to inform you that your article has not been selected for presentation. If you

João P. R. Lima, Silvia P. C. C. Nova

would like further information, we are at your disposal. Thank you again for your submission, and we hope to have the opportunity to receive new papers in future editions of our conference.

Yours sincerely,

After forwarding this message to the general coordinators, requesting clarification about why the submission had been “reproved”, we received the following response:

Dear Authors, good evening.

On behalf of the Conference coordinators, we thank you for submitting your article . However, after carefully analyzing the material, we regret to inform you that the submission has not been accepted for presentation, in view of the Conference’s guidelines.

All papers are checked for plagiarism using Turnitin® software, which in this case identified significant similarity with other papers and/or substantial excerpts lacking appropriate citation.

If you wish to discuss the review process, please feel free to contact us to schedule a meeting.

We are always happy to provide clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Conference Team

We then had to formally request access to the similarity report. Upon review, it became clear that the report indicated overlap with a previous version of our own article, which had been presented at a different academic event. Crucially, the conference’s own submission guidelines explicitly permitted this:

“Articles that have already been presented at events (congresses, seminars, workshops, panels, etc.) and have not yet been published or submitted to journals may be considered. In this case, it is mandatory that the text has evolved significantly as a result of criticisms and suggestions made by the author(s)/author(s) in previous presentations.”

This was precisely the case. Our submission was a revision of a previously presented one, as the similarity report itself confirmed. Yet, like the authors of the other 13 submissions, we had our papers summarily excluded and were denied any chance to appeal, justify, or revise. In effect, violently, we were implicitly accused of plagiarizing - or worse, faking - our own academic trajectories.

Our response was to submit the revised paper to another conference, where it was welcomed, well reviewed, and fast-tracked for publication. This act of refusal - of continuing to write, revise, and publish - was, for us, a rebellious and reparative strategy. It was a way of resisting academic violence and ensuring that episodes such as this one are documented, publicly acknowledged, and never repeated.

6 FINAL REMARKS

The reflections and narratives presented in this paper illustrate the challenges accounting non-mainstream researchers face during their academic careers. Theoretically, we position this study within the tradition that questions the institutionalized academic practices that build “the good accountant academic” (Panozzo, 1997), which are based on racist and sexist practices (Silva, 2016; Nganga, 2019). Methodologically, we draw upon (auto)ethnographic narratives of our trajectories. We believe that by adopting this methodological strategy, we reinforce our agency and voice by contesting the imposed, masculinized, voiceless traditional methodologies (O’Shea, 2019; Boncori & Smith, 2019).

As we presented some critical episodes from our careers, we intended to demonstrate the symbolic and epistemological violence we have faced for remaining true to ourselves as an act of resisting performative pressures, competition, and complicity with the violent system that puts academics against each other.

In the episodes, it is clear that we were “The One” in many contexts. Peña (2022) argues that academics from non-hegemonic groups experience academia being “The One” and that universities reinforce that in multiple ways – since the admission process to Ph.D. programs, faculty hiring, and tenure promotions. Being a non-mainstream accounting researcher, being a woman, being a gay man, being a trans person: it all comes with the price of be(com)ing “The One” and having to fight the system to survive and resist when it tells you “You are the exception. You are The One, and being The One comes at a cost” (Peña, 2022, p. 18).

In this sense, similar to many other academics from non-hegemonic groups, our “unbelonging to the university shaped my [our] relationship to colleagues, the administration, and the institution to one of tacit, yet mutual, discomfort” (Peña, 2022, p. 8). To change that, so that the next generations of academics do not have to deal with the same problems, we resist and persist, hoping for better days, for days that academia will have values grounded in the ethics of caring.

We also hope that the fights we have faced help our peers and future generations be more sensitive to the topics we have presented here, so that no one feels marginalized, whether they are a non-mainstream researcher, an academic woman, or an LGBTQIAP+ researcher. We hope that in the future, the Brazilian accounting academy will be able to recognize other ways of building knowledge and experiencing the world.

Until that happens, we will resist and rebel against the system because we believe that caring for one another, building communities, and reclaiming our denied voice and agency is the way to change this masculinized, neoliberal, and normative academia. As Peña (2022, pp. 30-31) echoed:

[W]e must rebel—collectively, loudly, tirelessly—against the toxic logic of The One that threatens our careers and our lives. Rebelliousness is a communal process [...] We must thus rebel together, shattering silences, responding loudly to return the discomfort we are made to feel as we exist as strangers within the university.

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