

Women in Behavior Science: The Behavioral Analysis Laboratory

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this manuscript is to recognize the scientific, academic and social work of women who have dedicated part of their time to the understanding, description and modification of behavioral problems in their transit through the Behavioral Analysis Laboratory of The University Center of the South, belonging to The University of Guadalajara. A common aspect among them is that all of them have obtained or are in the process of obtaining an academic degree, either a master's or doctoral degree, or graduated from the undergraduate program in psychology. In addition to their academic degrees, emphasis is placed on the conceptualization that applied behavioral analysis allowed to them conduct systematic research to prevent, describe and/or intervene in the identified behavioral problems. All the works generated presentations in national and/or international events, most of them resulted in articles for indexed-arbitrated journals or book chapters, research stays, and in all cases, social retribution actions were generated. The role of women in behavioral science for the future of the psychological discipline is encouraging.

KEYWORDS: women, science, psychology, behavior, social retribution.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, women's participation in multiple activities was inconceivable, and of course, this included scientific activity. Their roles were limited to child rearing and housework. However, at the beginning of the 20th century in Europe, women were able to exercise their right to vote for the first time and, in 1947 they met for the first time in the Commission on the Status of Women. In 1953 this Commission drew up the first international conventions on women's political rights, and drafted the first international agreements on women's rights in marriage and equal pay, which enshrined the principle of equal pay for equal work. In 1972 this commission recommended that 1975 be declared International Women's Year. In 1979, the elimination of all forms of

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discrimination against women was declared, and more recently (1999) the right to file a lawsuit for women victims of discrimination was introduced.

On March 23, 1981, in Mexico and based on the first international conventions, this enactment was ratified and officially published on April 28 of the same year, with José López Portillo as President of the Mexican Republic and Jorge Castañeda as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The protection of these rights was certified by Aída González Martínez, Senior Official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to put into practice the principle of equality of the United Nations Charter. One of the greatest achievements of this commission occurred at the Beijing Convention in 1995 because it significantly advanced the global agenda on women's human rights and gender equality. This background laid the groundwork for the period 1996-2005 to strengthen progress towards women's equality, which accelerated between 2006-2015. In the latter year, during the twenty-fourth session, the 2015-2030 agenda for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls was finalized.

The goal is that by 2030 the Agenda will be in favor of sustainable development and the commitment to leave no one behind. The Commission on the Status of Women has proposed to strengthen, deepen, and expand this global standard for gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and the follow-up of agreed actions. Governments and civil society value this Commission as a unique space to unify diverse actors with a common goal: equality for all women and girls everywhere.

One way to contribute to the recognition of the work of women in science in general and behavior analysis, in particular, is to show their contributions. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to recognize the scientific, academic, and social work of women who have dedicated part of their time to the understanding, description, and modification of behavioral problems in their transit through the Behavioral Analysis Laboratory of the University Center of the South, University of Guadalajara. Since the contributions of women in behavioral science are circumscribed to the conditions historically experienced by women in general, we first present the general panorama of women in science and then the contributions of women in the Behavioral Analysis Laboratory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND/OR BACKGROUND

The history of women in science has great examples that are characterized by perseverance, innovation, and a personality with the most commendable attributes for the achievement of the proposed goals. At the international level, the best-known case is that of Marie Curie (1867-1934), among other things for her dual distinction with the Nobel Prize in physics (1903) and chemistry (1911), but there are more women in science who have contributed significantly to the development of humanity. For example, Rosalind Franklin (1920-1958) and her contributions to the structure of DNA; Margaret Hamilton (1936) and her work in developing the navigation software for the Apollo space program; Mae Jemison (1956) the first African-American woman to travel into space; Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova (1937) Russian cosmonaut, engineer and politician who was the first woman to go into space in 1963 completing 48 orbits around the earth during her three-day solo mission. Tereshkova was selected from over 400 female candidates to pilot Vostok 6; Mary Anning (1799-1847) was the first female paleontologist to be recognized as such; Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler better known as Hedy Lamarr (1914-2000) and her contribution with the first version of spread spectrum for the development of long-distance wireless communications or; Vera Rubin (1928-2016) for her pioneering work on measuring the rotation of stars, among many others.

In Mexico, the participation of women in science suffers from the same challenge as internationally: lack of recognition, which results in little or no visibility of their valuable contributions, despite the remarkable number of women who have dedicated themselves to the scientific endeavor. For example, Matilde Petra Montoya Lafragua (1857-1938) who was the first Mexican woman to graduate as a physician-surgeon and obstetrician, and promoted access to the same rights and obligations as men at the National School of Medicine; Helia Bravo Hollis (1901-2001) Mexican scientist and botanist who contributed, among other findings, knowledge of cacti; María Agustina Batalla Zepeda (1913-2000) biologist and botanist, founder of the Faculty of Sciences and the UNAM herbarium; María Elena Caso Muñoz (1915-1991) doctor of science and a reference in the study of marine biodiversity, specifically echinoderms at a time when diving was not possible; Enriqueta González Baz (1915-2002) first woman graduate in mathematics (1944) and member of the group of 131 members, only five of whom were women, who founded the Mexican Mathematical Society; María Teresa Gutiérrez Vázquez (1927-2017) geographer,

researcher and professor recognized by the Royal Geographical Society (1980) and the Société de Géographie (1983); Alejandra Jáidar Matalobos (1937-1988) first woman graduate in physics doing research work on experimental nuclear physics or; Susana Azpiroz Riveiro (1950) first woman graduate of the Escuela Nacional de Agronomía today Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo.

At the regional level, the recognition of women's scientific work has the same fate as at the international and national levels; it is characterized by sororities but lacks recognition. In Jalisco, the participation of women in science shares the same fate; this explains why in the Rotonda de Jaliscienses Ilustres, to date no woman scientist is considered, although personalities such as María Rita de la Trinidad Pérez Jiménez (1779-1861), an outstanding insurgent during the war of independence, stand out; Irene Robledo García (1890-1988) who promoted the participation of women in university life and received, among other distinctions, the International Year of Women Award in 1975; María Cenobia Izquierdo Gutiérrez (1902-1955) who challenged the cultural hegemony of her time through painting.

CONTEXT

The Universidad de Guadalajara and the Laboratorio de Análisis Conductual

La Universidad de Guadalajara (UdeG) is the university network of the State of Jalisco, Mexico, and is composed of 10 thematic centers, 9 regional centers strategically distributed throughout the state, the virtual university system, the higher education system and the general administration of the institution. In the most recent school year, 2025-A, UdeG's higher education enrollment is approximately 339,000 students (Gaceta UdeG 2025), with an approximate distribution of 47% men and 53% women. This magnitude of enrollment places UdeG as the second most important public university in Mexico, after UNAM, and in first place among state universities.

The institutional regulations recognize the Laboratories as Academic Units that are part of a Department; they are entrusted with the development of support functions for research, teaching, or dissemination. In the case of the Behavioral Analysis Laboratory (LAC), its creation (2010) and formalization (2019) respond to the need to have a space for the generation of psychological knowledge, considering that; 1.- the object of study is the behavior of organisms in interaction with the environment and; 2.- the conceptual basis in the reflex model allows the analysis of any

type of behavior because it integrates the three elements of the triple contingency relationship (Bruner, 1995).

Since its creation, the Laboratorio de Análisis Conductual (LAC) has been run mainly by women, who, through their dedication, work, and effort, have contributed to fulfilling the functions for which it was created. The purpose of this manuscript is to recognize the scientific, academic, and social work of women who have dedicated part of their time to the understanding, description, and modification of behavioral problems during their time at the LAC, attached to the University Center of the South (CUSur) of the University of Guadalajara. The CUSur was formalized as a university center in August 1994 (Espinoza de los Monteros, 2019). Its facilities are located in Ciudad Guzmán, the municipal capital of Zapotlán el Grande, Jalisco, located 123 km south of the city of Guadalajara.

METHODOLOGY

All research projects developed at the LAC are based on the experimental analysis of behavior and its logical derivation in applied behavioral analysis. The conceptual basis is the analysis of the interaction between environmental stimulus events, behavior, and consequence, which in Saxon is ABC and is explained as A for antecedent; (B) for behavior; and C for consequence or after behavior.

In all the works presented here, the social retribution actions achieved with each of the projects stand out. The approach is quantitative with a descriptive scope considering Danhke (1989) classification because it specifies the important properties of people and groups being analyzed; in this case the description of the works generated in the LAC highlighting the work of each of the authors, the academic achievements, research products and the social retribution actions that were returned to the sponsors for being beneficiaries of scholarships from public resources.

The order in which the projects are presented corresponds to the area of interest, so they do not necessarily coincide with the date on which they were developed. Some of the findings were

generated in infrastructure that, for various reasons (deliberately omitted), no longer exists or was destined for another substantive function.

For the commemoration of the work of women in LAC behavioral science, the different projects are grouped as follows: Variables related to food and consumption patterns (García, 2012; Guzman, 2012; Limon, 2015; Tovar, 2024). Sexual behavior and risk practices (Acero, 2019; Vergara, 2020). Personality factors in the workplace (Díaz, 2016, 2019). Applied behavioral analysis in infants and caregivers (Aréchiga, 2022; Arredondo-Urtiz, 2023; Gómez, 2023) and; other topics in behavior analysis (Vázquez, 2017; Zúñiga, 2015). The students who are currently developing their research work are integrated into some of these topics but the products are incipient (Cortes, 2024; García et al., 2024; López et al., 2024).

RESULTS

The first research works of women in science in the LAC are on variables related to food and consumption patterns. This line of research was logically derived after concluding doctoral studies. The analysis focuses on the link between experimental behavior analysis and motivation regarding eating behavior in experimental subjects (Díaz, 2013; Díaz and Bruner, 2007, 2014).

The first work systematically varied the duration of food deprivation periods in rats and their effect on body weight and the amount of food and water consumed. A contribution of this study was the analysis of these variables in female rats since they had typically been analyzed almost exclusively using males (Díaz et. al., 2010). Karen's work laid the groundwork for extending the scope of research generated at the LAC and contributing to the link between basic research and applied behavioral analysis. Karen graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology and continued her master's studies in the same line of research. She presented the advances of her work at national events such as the congress of the Mexican Society of Behavior Analysis (SMAC), which in Mexico is one of the few societies in disseminating behavior analysis.

After the work on food deprivation and during his master's studies in public health, Limón (2015) generated experimental findings with laboratory subjects (rats) and humans in which the

modulating role of the variables food deprivation, access to food, and type of food available on body weight, food consumption, and different consumption patterns was analyzed. One of the contributions of this work was to show experimentally that the same variables that are controlled in the laboratory are present in the feeding pattern of humans that, due to different circumstances, are complicated to analyze in feeding episodes in typical scenarios for food intake (kitchen, restaurant, dining room).

Vanessa's work stands out because aside from her background in nutrition and being in a master's program in public health, she showed the courage to start from scratch the experimental work in the laboratory with Wistar rats while, with her vast experience in working with humans, she collected data on the modulating variables of food intake. This allowed her to bring science-based knowledge to the area called translational studies, bridging or translational research. Although the conceptual problems in this gap between basic and applied knowledge are still under discussion as an area in its own right, Vanessa's experience allowed her to overcome with excellence the interaction with the evaluation committee in her master's degree exam. The family support that Vanessa received, particularly from her mother, who weighed, fed, and cleaned the experimental subjects on more than one occasion stands out.

Vanessa's work laid the groundwork for analyzing the interaction between food stimuli and consumption patterns emphasizing the evaluation of the emotional experience before, during, and after food consumption. As part of her doctoral studies and based on the work on the variables typically studied; food deprivation, duration of access to food, and type of food available, Erin added to the complex equation of eating behavior, the analysis of the emotional component present during feeding episodes. She conceptualized this component as part of the process that arises when interacting with food stimuli; in particular, the evocation that results from smelling, observing, touching, and tasting different types of food; she recorded the magnitude (activation) of the response oriented toward food consumption and the valence (valence) of each individual towards food in two contexts. A controlled laboratory setting and a typical food consumption setting (restaurant) using an intrasubject design (article in preparation).

From the review of the relevant literature, Erin (Tovar et al., 2022) realized the lack of scientific evidence comparing and evaluating the consistency of eating behavior and its assessment. One of the most valuable contributions of Erin's work was the analysis of the eating behavior of the same

subjects in the laboratory and the restaurant. Evidence is scarce in the literature because of the difficulty involved in assessing food consumption in real time (Kuppens et al., 2013).

Erin's research contributed to the understanding of consumption patterns as a function of typical motivational variables (deprivation access to satisfaction). With her clinical experience, Erin supported several users who requested psychological support from the LAC to address issues related to food consumption patterns, emotions, and psychological problems arising from this complex interaction. As part of her doctoral studies, Erin conducted a research stay in which she increased her experience with experimental subjects (Wistar rats) exposed to various food restriction procedures. This opportunity earned her a presentation at an international event and, the rest of her work developed in person at the LAC after the pandemic, allowed her to present her progress at the SMAC congress on more than one occasion.

As a result of the LAC experience during her doctoral studies and even though the first year was distance learning due to the CoVid-19 pandemic, Erin's exceptional skills earned her first place among applicants to the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley, due to her outstanding research and methodological skills. These qualities also secured her one of the few spots available to major in clinical psychology for the next six years.

The work on the analysis of variables related to food bifurcated into areas of research that allowed satisfying the epistemic curiosity of students who have focused on this problem. Thus, Yaneth (Guzmán, 2012) developed the first instrument to measure the valuation and frequency of food consumption in adults (FCA). Given the problems in this area and as a result of a presentation at the first congress of the Mexican Academy for the Study of Obesity [MASO] in 2011, the version to measure frequency and food consumption in children (FCA-C) was created.

Yaneth's work contributed to the first version of an instrument (Díaz et al., 2010; Díaz and Franco, 2012) in which the congruence between the valuation of the food and its frequency of consumption is evaluated. With a Likert-type scale, the valuation options range from not at all healthy to completely healthy; for the frequency of consumption the options range from never consumed to daily consumption (Díaz et al., 2018).

One of the most intriguing findings is that even though the more than 600 adults Yaneth included in her sample perceive the food as unhealthy or not at all healthy, they consume it very frequently.

The explanation for this inconsistency has been discussed in other manuscripts (Díaz et al., 2018) but it is worth noting that the problem of food, by deficit or excess, remains high on the national agenda and certainly for researchers.

In addition to food, the topic of sexual behavior and risk practices has been of interest to women in behavioral science who have been trained at the LAC. Thus, Camila and Gabriela investigated as part of their master's studies and bachelor's thesis respectively, the variables conducive to increasing the probability of emitting risky behaviors. The master's work (Acero, 2019) focused on studying using an experimental model the temporal distribution of sexual behavior in Wistar rats under controlled laboratory conditions. With a detailed preparation and programming of the equipment to analyze sexual behavior in rats, Camila investigated the function of the variables involved in the behavioral patterns reported as: dessert and Coolidge effect (Steiger et al., 2008).

The initial assumption is that feeding and sexual behavior depend on the same reinforcement parameters and underlying experimental operations. In brief, Camila manipulated Lee's novel sexual stimulus, receptivity, sexual behavior deprivation, and body mass index variables on preference, copulation rate, and duration of sexual episodes. The consistency of the data is overwhelming and emphatically shows the role of reinforcement parameters for the case of sexual behavior in experimental models.

Master's research on sexual behavior (Acero, 2019) attracted the attention of younger students interested in the prevention of risk behaviors that have already been shown to be a function of variables extensively explored in psychology. Thus, Gabriela (Vergara, 2020) developed a research protocol to know the attitudes of UdeG high school students about sexual practices. With the interaction between the LAC and the Konrad Lorenz Sexuality Laboratory. Gaby worked with more than 200 high school students who gave their opinions about sexual practices in adolescents and were asked about their level of knowledge about sexual health. The data corroborated Gaby's working hypothesis and paved the way for further research on how to improve the level of knowledge about healthy sexuality and, above all, demystify misinformation about it. Gabriela's thesis defense evidenced her mastery of the subject and provided an opportunity for other students to continue this work which, like many others, was interrupted by the pandemic.

A common variable in the topics described so far is how our experience facilitates or does not facilitate our interaction with the different contexts in which we operate, particularly in work and/or paid work scenarios. Thus, Susana developed a longitudinal research project that allowed her to explore the influence of personality factors in the work environment. Her dedication, which in the present work is being commemorated, granted her a degree in psychology (Díaz, 2016) through a thesis defense that she passed with honors and the degree of Master in Psychology with Orientation in Quality of Life and Health in 2019 along with the products that were expected (Díaz et al., 2019).

The first part of Susy's research consisted of describing the personality factors in psychology students based on the logic of Venn diagrams with the theoretical support of the personality factors described by Cattell and collaborators (2001). Negative characteristics were grouped into emotional expressiveness, intelligence, impulsivity, emotionality, cognitive attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety. In the norm, the factors of emotional expressiveness, intelligence, impulsivity, attachment to social norms, sociability, confidence, subtlety, self-confidence, and conservatism were grouped. The positive characteristics grouped the factors of emotional stability, emotionality, confidence, and self-reliance (Díaz Contreras and Díaz Reséndiz, 2017).

During her master's studies and based on the inconsistencies between the five personality dimensions (Big Five model) on job satisfaction, she analyzed these in workers of an organization in the commerce sector in southern Jalisco. She found that employees presented high Responsibility and Job Satisfaction although the structure of the inventory she used (i.e., NEO-FFI) was not replicated. She left the study open for new generations to investigate the variables in an organization that favors organizational goals. Susy's experience during her master's degree earned her a considerable number of jobs that she did not want to miss. After obtaining her academic degree, she joined an organization where, with her research experience, she successfully faced the challenges of working in an economically productive organization.

In topics derived directly from behavioral analysis, the work developed in the LAC was led by Nayeli (Aréchiga, 2022) and Mirella (Arredondo, 2023), who worked in a more complicated context for all humanity due to CoVid-19. The entries for both were recorded in 2019 and 2020. In the case of Nayeli, her entry occurred one year after the pandemic, and once her project was approved, she faced several complications, in addition to the challenges inherent to research. In

the case of Mirella, her admission to the Doctorate in Psychology with Orientation in Quality of Life and Health (DPCVS) occurred in the same year that the pandemic began. Both successfully overcame the vicissitudes imposed by the “new normal”, adapting to remote assistance through various technological platforms. However, one of the dimensions of psychological analysis is its behavioral character (Baer et al, 1968, 1987; Cooper et al, 2020), which requires the direct study of behavior in the scenario of its occurrence and considering the entire context.

With pertinent measures and once access to the LAC facilities were allowed, both generated knowledge based on the seven dimensions of behavioral analysis in infants and caregivers, respectively. Nayeli analyzed the effect of a remote program to modify behavioral problems in infants based on the procedure described and systematized in the skills training program. The incorporation of an American behavior analyst, certified by the Behavioral Certification Board (BACB) allowed Nayeli to show the necessary adaptations to the national context and to increase her expertise in behavior analysis through the research stay in December 2021.

Due to the health contingency, Nayeli had few opportunities to attend congresses, but her work, in addition to the effective intervention with the dyads she worked with, generated the expected products (Aréchiga et al., 2024). Nayeli's social retribution began before joining the DPCVS with the workshops for parents that she taught for 6 months at the extinct Estancia Infantil del CUSur. https://www.facebook.com/udg.mx/videos/guarder%C3%ADa-cusur/313540946138213/?locale=es_LA

In the case of Mirella and the work that is now being commemorated, as well as that of all the women in behavioral science who have contributed to the LAC, the context was particularly complicated, since it was the year in which the suspension of all human interactions outside the home was decreed. The use of technology (remote assistance) and the support of an American behavior analyst certified by the BACB allowed her to implement the strategies that behavior analysis works in life and favorable contexts.

Mirella's work highlighted the gap between the average North American context versus the conditions of a considerable sample of teachers in the southern region of the state of Jalisco. Despite these differences, Mirella showed that with reasonable adjustments, behavioral analysis is an opportunity to improve the quality of life of teachers, students, and consequently the families

of origin. Although the thesis writing work is in the final stage, the first product has already been published (Arredondo-Urtiz et al., 2023) and in addition to the academic stay at UNAM (2022) the contribution of Mirella's work is recognized by the large number of users she attended at the LAC, remotely and in mixed format (Arredondo, 2021, 2022).

The research work with teachers and the experience with parents encouraged more students interested in learning and putting into practice the dimensions of behavior analysis in underprivileged settings. Such is the case of the work now recognized with the contributions of Dayana Gómez in 2022, who supported a family in one of the regions farthest from services that benefit children. In Concepción de Buenos Aires, Jalisco, Mexico. Dayana successfully implemented behavioral analysis, which resulted in SMAC awarding her first place nationally for the best thesis in behavioral analysis in Mexico (Gómez, 2023). It is worth mentioning that this award was preceded by her obtaining a degree in Psychology with the only thesis produced at CUSur that year.

Currently, three students are working at the LAC, two of them in the undergraduate psychology program and one in the Master's program in Psychology with Orientation in Quality of Life and Health (MPCVS). The undergraduate colleagues, in addition to providing their social service, are developing thesis work on suicide risk topics such as self-injury (López et al., 2024) and eating behavior parameters (García et al., 2024). Carolina and Mariana already have experience exposing their work to constructive criticism at recognized national events (e.g., SMAC, 2024). The goal, in addition to the respective degrees and the distinction at the SMAC congress, is to join the MPCVS at the end of their undergraduate studies. Alejandra, a psychologist who is researching the perception of hearing impairment, a condition practically unanalyzed in the country despite its high incidence, works in this master's program.

In addition to the topics in behavioral analysis to the LAC, other topics have been incorporated (Vázquez, 2017; Zúñiga, 2015) that although not directly related to the central theme, have sought guidance to develop a systematic, orderly, and replicable work. In the first case, the work of Miriam (Vázquez, 2017) who described the impact of a public health intervention through a federal support program to minimize the effect of the burden involved in domestic work is recognized. Miriam delivered workshops once she established the relationship between life events, social support, and their relationship with burnout syndrome.

With a cross-sectional design and intervention, Miriam worked with 410 participants from the municipality of Sayula, Jalisco, with burnout syndrome, who were at risk due to the severity and frequency of life events experienced. After the intervention through the workshops she designed, the number of women at risk decreased to 181 and the management of social support for coping with life events increased by 26%. The social contribution of this master's work was invaluable if one considers the synergic work between federal support and psychosocial intervention because both reduce the emotional cost for the beneficiaries of such programs.

In the same vein of the tangent topics that have been developed in the LAC, the experience of working with children in situations of abandonment was beneficial for a population of children who, for various circumstances, are under the care of institutions that take care of those who live in this condition. During two years of professional experience, Ramona worked with the child population of Villa de los Niños (VN) Guadalajara applying the techniques and strategies that as a tutor, counselor, and advisor allowed her to improve the living conditions of the children.

Zúñiga (2015) fostered the development of educational areas, civic and ethical training, communication skills, and interpersonal relationships, among others that contributed to the mission of the VN and increased the likelihood of forming people who contribute positively to the society in which they were integrated when they came of age. There is no doubt about the social contribution of Ramona's work, which, in turn, allowed her to obtain a degree in psychology.

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of women in science in general and in behavior analysis in particular has not yet received the recognition it deserves; for this reason, this manuscript pays tribute to all the women who since the beginning of the Behavior Analysis Laboratory have dedicated their time and effort to generate research products, theses, books, articles, presentations at conferences and social retribution actions, mainly in the southern area of the State of Jalisco, although their contributions have transcended the border of Mexico.

There is no doubt that with more equal opportunities for women and men, the role of women scientists will be more notable; a promise that is still waiting to be fulfilled given that Mexico's first woman president was recently elected. The expectation is that this promise will become a reality during this six-year term. Let us hope so for the benefit of science, but above all for the benefit of humanity.

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