

85. Letter from Carla Barbieri



“The open-endedness of thinking is connected to an openness to otherness.”

(Berg & Seeber, 2017; *The Slow Professor*, p. 60).

Queridas Colegas,

We seldom have the opportunity to write freely about what it entails to be a woman tourism scholar. Yet, this is a paradox when so often we need to explain that our work transcends in-the-classroom instruction (*‘so, what do you do when you are not teaching?’*) or leisure travel (*‘so, your job is to travel all over?!’*). Even rarer is having the luxury to reflect upon the factors that have shaped our scholarly path. Thus, I am jumping at this opportunity to write a *manifesto* of what means for me to be a Latina tourism scholar. I am sharing the stands, principles, and practices that I believe have sustained me over time. Although this writing exercise is intended to serve as a collective mentoring to inspire the next generation of women tourism scholars, I suggest taking my words with caution and even skepticism, as you will.

Being a Scholar, in my view, embodies an entity greater than our duties that requires pursuing, nurturing, and sustaining a holistic mindset, a critically candid attitude, and high ethical standards in all our life domains. Under the risk of being called a romanticist (again), I believe the value of being a scholar is not the recognition (or financial returns), but rather *the* responsibility of being accountable to our students, colleagues, discipline, stakeholders, and ultimately society. At times, such a sense of responsibility, which often adds to the culture of care women hold, can asphyxiate us or make us lose our sense of purpose. The following principles inspire me to stick as a scholar.

- Seizing fun and realizing happiness while maintaining intellectual rigor. Indeed a cheesy and overused statement. Yet, it is the pleasure I grasp when teaching, running statistical analysis, cooking at the end of the day, or spontaneously dancing when I hear a *merengue* or *cumbia* that invigorates my work and makes me whole.
- Letting it sink before speaking. We live on rushed times that have instilled our urgency to respond on the spot, and that may not always be wise. Taking the time to react to a difficult situation has helped

me broaden my perspectives and options.

- Being opened to compromise without betraying my personal or professional beliefs.
- Asking for advice. We are expected to be scholars, not perfect scholars. I have a handful of mentors and colleagues that I approach when I need light in a range of issues, from making sure I am not out of place when assessing a situation to discussing whether a statistical procedure is sound. And, I especially trust my women colleagues when I just need to vent.

Being a Latina Scholar outside my native country (Peru) was both, a challenge and an opportunity. I carried the internal burden of *tener que lograrlo y hacerlo bien* while navigating a foreign culture and language. Yet, it broadened my perspectives, mindset, and ability to appreciate beyond my own. Below are some practices that helped me navigate—successfully I believe—my path.

- Nurturing the cultural traits from both, my past and present homes, helped me to increase contentment in my personal, family, and professional life spheres.
- Accepting that I'll never master the new language, especially the accent, pushed me to speak out. Borrowing from a movie line, it helped to realize that *hablo, pero no pienso, con acento*.
- Indulging my current ethos. The world, no matter the place or time, has rich and wonderful flavors, traditions, and especially people. Embracing it at full extent, either by accepting or challenging norms, gives me purpose.

Being a Researcher, for many, is the core of what we do and where we invest most of our time; whilst, the most gratifying. I have engaged in many projects throughout my career and I still celebrate every accomplishment and still get down with every failure. Yet, I have learned that celebrations, which are as valuable as my failures, are the result of these principles.

- Embracing challenge. My most rewarding projects are the ones that required learning a new set of skills, approaches, or knowledge, despite the additional time and energy invested.
- Taking risks, yet remaining true to my beliefs. My main research theme is agritourism, which I started out of conviction and stubbornness during my doctoral studies. Even though it was a risky decision at that time ("*there is no future on agritourism; family farms will vanish*"), it was right for me and gave me purpose throughout the years.
- Not rushing. When I submitted maybe my fifth paper (and mistakenly thought that I had nailed the publishing business), I got a rejection that I hold in mind-and-soul. One reviewer, evidently a wise one, commented that the paper was rushed and submitted before being ready. They were right!

Being a Social Scientist demands to be present in society by contributing to and learning from our communities. To do so, I try my best to engage in the following practices.

- Learning! An old mentor, Jim Bristor, told me when I graduated to remember all I have learned during my program... Good things to maintain or improve and bad things to avoid or correct. I carry Jim's wisdom into every scholarly experience.
- Being flexible and creative. No matter how rigorous and careful my research design might be, having social phenomena as the study object often carries unforeseen complications. Beyond the initial hopeless thought, I [almost] always found a detour to continue my work. Or did scholars stop investigating during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Integrating outreach into my research. I believe that making key research findings accessible to target audiences beyond peers is a major duty of tourism researchers. Although that effort adds to my burden and may not be highly valued, it makes my job more gratifying.

I used this *manifesto* to reflect on what I believe a woman tourism scholar, who happens to be Latina, embodies. I have also shared some principles and practices that have inspired me to be and continued being a woman tourism scholar. Although these might appear intuitive, the rush and multi-role essence

(teacher, researcher, manager, mentor) of the current academic world calls for seeking balance. Thus, let us pledge to infuse happiness into our quest of seeking self-reflective silences and strong voices, attaining and sharing knowledge, embracing *ourness* and *otherness*, asking advice and welcoming challenge, while being flexible and rigorous.

¡Mis mejores augurios a todas ustedes! And wishing our paths cross many times in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is cursive and reads "Carla Barbieri".

Carla Barbieri

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