


# LGBTIQ+ Communication Studies in Spain: Experiences and Challenges

ESTUDIOS LGBTIQ+ EN COMUNICACIÓN EN ESPAÑA: EXPERIENCIAS Y RETOS


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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to gather experiences regarding the origins and evolution of LGBTIQ+ communication studies in Spain. Surveys were conducted with experts in the field (n=37). The responses were analyzed using inductive qualitative coding and are presented in the article in three chronological sections: (1) origins of the field; (2) evolution; and (3) current main challenges. Among the key findings, the field's origins are highlighted as being marked by ostracism, but also by resilience and the building of an academic community. This initial stage was followed by greater acceptance and growth. The main challenges identified include lack of financial support, difficulties in achieving job stability, and institutional consolidation, particularly in a context of conservative backlash. This research contributes to self-recognition and intergenerational dialogue within the field of study.

**Keywords:** LGBTIQ+ Communication Studies; Spain; Communication; History of Research; Genealogy; Survey.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este artículo es recoger las experiencias en los orígenes y la evolución de los estudios LGBTIQ+ de la comunicación en el Estado español. Se llevaron a cabo cuestionarios con personas expertas (n=37). Las respuestas se analizaron siguiendo una codificación cualitativa inductiva, y se presentan en el artículo en tres bloques cronológicos: (1) orígenes del campo; (2) evolución; y (3) principales retos actuales. Entre las principales conclusiones, se subraya un origen del campo marcado por el ostracismo, pero también por la resiliencia y la construcción de comunidad académica. A esta primera etapa le siguió una mayor aceptación y crecimiento. Entre los principales retos se menciona la falta de apoyo económico, las dificultades para la estabilización laboral y la consolidación institucional, particularmente en un contexto de reacción conservadora. La investigación contribuye al autorreconocimiento y el diálogo intergeneracional en el campo de estudio.

**Palabras clave:** estudios LGBTIQ+ en comunicación; España; comunicación; historia de la investigación; genealogía; encuesta.



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## 1. Introduction

The field of LGBTIQ+ media and communication research in Spain is starting to consolidate its identity, as demonstrated by the recent publication of several meta-analytic studies (Sánchez-Soriano & García-Jiménez, 2020; García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2021; González-de-Garay, 2024; Herrero *et al.*, 2026). These publications chronologically coincide with milestones in Spain such as the completion of relevant research projects, including *LGBTIQ+Screens* (PID2019-110351RB-I00) and *TRANSGELIT* (PID2020-115579RA-I00), and the launch of the academic publication *Estudios LGBTIQ+, Comunicación y Cultura* by the research group GECA (Complutense University of Madrid). These events reflect a period of effervescence in LGBTIQ+ media and communication studies in Spain (Blanco-Fernández & Fernández, 2025).

Many of the meta-analytic publications we mention in this article describe the evolution of the field through a chronological analysis of bibliographies, groups, or projects (Sánchez-Soriano & García-Jiménez, 2020; González-de-Garay, 2024; Herrero *et al.*, 2026). García-Jiménez *et al.* (2021) also complement the historical narrative with a Delphi technique that gathers the perspectives of people involved in the field.

This paper also adopts this approach: its main objective is to review personal experiences regarding the origins and evolution of LGBTIQ+ communication studies in Spain. This objective addresses several aspects, including the incorporation of experiential perspectives into the field's meta-analysis, the promotion of intergenerational dialogue in research, the preservation of collective memory beyond bibliographies, and the fostering of a shared sense of identity as a research community united by themes and commitments (Irmak *et al.*, 2024).

## 2. The Epistemic Communities of Communication and Media Research

Defining a field's identity is an essential part of the formation of any discipline. Every epistemological community is, ultimately, an imagined conglomerate engaging in continuous dialogue through which knowledge is generated. As such, it is both a symbolic construction built upon what came before (Merton, 1993) and a means for collaboration among knowledge producers (Hood, 2019).

Recognizing our own history, in the academic and intellectual context, also involves constructing a specific narrative about who we are, where we come from, and where we are going (Pooley, 2008). Historiographical narratives about the identity of epistemological communities, however, tend to be simpli-

fied and retrospectively constructed rather than emerging from dialogue among their members (Livingstone, 2006). Frequently, recognizing an identity for a knowledge area also generates exclusions, not only of certain groups —within the dominantly white, male, and Anglocentric history of the communication field, women (Dorsten, 2012), racialized people (Chakravartty *et al.*, 2018), and thought from the Global South (Park *et al.*, 2024), among others, have been erased)—, but also of certain objects of study and research interests.

The history of media and communication research is marked by its novelty, emerging in the Anglo-Saxon and European spheres prompted by the growing interest in the effects of mass media during the first half of the 20th century. If the field is young at an international level, it is even more so in the Spanish context, where interest in communication research arrived late due to the Francoist dictatorship (García-Jiménez, 2007). This has significantly delayed our historiographical reflection. LGBTIQ+ media and communication studies arrived even later, developing from the late 1970s onwards in the Anglo-Saxon context (Chan, 2017), and then in Spain and Ibero-America. Nevertheless, today, these studies constitute one of the most vigorous and productive research areas in the field of communication (Chan, 2017), where interests in communication, media, popular culture, and, more generally, LGBTIQ+-related research intersect. To avoid perpetuating existing exclusions, it is a historiographical imperative to recover this history also for the general body of communication research.

### 3. LGBTIQ+ Media and Communication Studies in Spain

The development of LGBTIQ+ media and communication studies in Spain is linked to the socio-historical evolution of the LGBTIQ+ community in this national context (see Martínez, 2017). During the Francoist dictatorship, the persecution of homosexuality was supported by the «Ley de vagos y maleantes», replaced in 1970 by the «Ley de peligrosidad social», a law that continued to penalize people who committed «acts of homosexuality» until 1978. The 1970s saw the emergence of the first LGBTIQ+ collectives in Spain (such as the Front d'Alliberament Gai de Catalunya), as well as the first demonstrations (for example, Barcelona 1977). Since then, there have been legislative advances (such as equal marriage in 2005 and gender self-determination in 2023), which have been accompanied by new demands and struggles (such as the rights of racialized and migrant LGBTIQ+ people).

Previous meta-analyses of the field have identified several causes for the delay in the development of LGBTIQ+ media and communication studies in



Spain, including the Francoist dictatorship (García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2021) and the subsequent process of democratic transition (Langarita-Adiego & Mas-Grau, 2017). Various research works place the timid beginnings of these studies around the 1990s (García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2021; González-de-Garay, 2024; Herrero *et al.*, 2026), a decade after their Anglo-Saxon emergence.

In Herrero *et al.* (2026) we establish a first stage in LGBTIQ+ media and communication research in Spain, beginning around 1990 and concluding in 2004, which they describe as an «extra-disciplinary stage». «Extra-disciplinary» is understood to mean that communication-specific issues were addressed transversally, mostly through other disciplines (García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2021; Herrero *et al.*, 2026). González-de-Garay (2024) highlights the fundamental influence of both Anglo-Saxon literature and specialized LGBTIQ+ bookstores in Spain, while noting that communication studies at this time were limited to the study of cinema and male homosexuality (e.g., Smith, 1992). Describing these origins in the first person, Zurian (2021) speaks of academic exclusion and homophobic backlash.

According to Herrero *et al.* (2026), the publication of *De Sodoma a Chueca* (Mira, 2004) and the approval of equal marriage in 2005 marked the beginning of a new stage in LGBTIQ+ communication studies in Spain. In fact, an increase in original bibliography can be observed (Turiel, 2006), along with the growing diffusion of queer theory across Spain (Córdoba *et al.*, 2005; Buxán-Bran, 2007). This would lead to the first instances of self-recognition (Alfeo, 2007), as well as an increase in the number of scholars participating in the field (Pichardo, 2007). González-de-Garay (2024) highlights the importance of the Faculty of Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid in this consolidation: it was here where the first methodological meta-reflections emerged (Alfeo, 2007), objects of study and approaches multiplied (Pelayo-García, 2009; González-de-Garay, 2012; Zurian, 2013), and, in 2011, the research group GECA (Gender, Aesthetics and Audiovisual Culture) was consolidated. During these years, works presenting intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches were also published. These works addressed racialization, sex work, confinement, capitalism, AIDS, and functional and bodily diversity in relation to queer and dissident sexualities (Platero, 2012; Solá & Urko, 2013).

From 2015 onward, we witness a consolidation stage, marked by the exponential multiplication of literature, methodological systematization and diversification, the publication of meta-analyses, and the expansion of the LGBTIQ+ identities studied to include trans, intersex, and non-binary people,

etc. (Herrero *et al.*, 2026). Other work describes a rise in institutional support, the emergence of specialized master's programmes, and increased private funding (Zurian, 2021; González-de-Garay, 2024). Nevertheless, in their quantitative analysis of doctoral dissertations and funded research projects, Sánchez-Soriano and García-Jiménez (2020) still identify in this stage a marginalization of LGBTIQ+ studies within communication research.

Even in this consolidation phase, LGBTIQ+ communication studies face numerous challenges. Among these, García-Jiménez *et al.* (2021) mention the primacy of analyses of male homosexuality and representation studies, an excessive focus on the media compared to non-mediated communication processes, methodological diversification, intersectionality, and the consolidation of the field through international networks. Other challenges include the pedagogical aims of the field, as well as the need to address the consonances and ruptures between academia and activism (Herrero *et al.*, 2026).

#### 4. Methodology

We employed a qualitative questionnaire methodology directed at experts in LGBTIQ+ communication studies in the Spanish context, focusing on their personal experiences during the foundation, development, and current state of the field. While this method shares certain characteristics with the Delphi methodology (Cabero Almenara & Infante Moro, 2014; Reguant-Álvarez & Torrado-Fonseca, 2016), it does not fully adhere to it. Our approach coincides with the Delphi method in its interest in experts' testimonies and viewpoints; however, it differs in the depth of the exploration, the frequency of exchanges with participants, anonymization, and sample size (Reguant-Álvarez & Torrado-Fonseca, 2016). In our case, there was only one feedback phase with the interviewees, the questionnaire is not anonymous, and the sample includes a total of 37 questionnaires (Table 1), which is higher than recommended for the Delphi method (Reguant-Álvarez & Torrado-Fonseca, 2016). Moreover, whereas Delphi aspires to consensus, our approach remains open to both differences and convergences of opinion within the pursuit of knowledge about the field.

**Table 1.** List of surveyed people (n=37)

Name	Year of Ph.D. defence	Research interests
Paloma Ruiz Román	NA	Sexuality of lesbian women; representation on the Internet; sexual health
Nerea Aresti Esteban	1999/2000	History of gender, sexuality, feminism, and masculinities
Dieter Ingenschay	1979	Peninsular and Latin American literature; film; autobiographies; HIV/AIDS
Paul Julian Smith	1984	LGBTIQ+ film and television in Spain and Mexico
Juan Vicente Aliaga	1989	Contemporary art, queer theories and feminisms; decoloniality and modern and contemporary art; feminism and Arab cultures in the visual arts
Raquel Osborne	1989	Non-normative sexualities; gender-based violence; positive discrimination; historical memory
Alfredo Martínez Expósito	1991	Spanish homosexual literature; queer theory; queer representations in audiovisual media
Juan Antonio Suárez	1993	Experimental film; queer theory; Anglophone avant-garde; contemporary North American literature
Alberto Mira	1995	Cultural history; representation; film; literature; theatre; experiences; camp
Francisco A. Zurian	1995	Queer cinema; LGBTIQ+ audiovisual media; masculinities; cultural studies
Javier Ugarte Pérez	1996	LGBTIQ+ Human Rights; LGBTIQ+ history
Xosé Manuel Buxán Bran	1996	Visual arts and LGBTIQ+ culture
Juan Carlos Alfeo	1997	LGBTIQ+ representation in film and television
Rafael Mérida Jiménez	1998	Spanish and Latin American literature; women's, gender, and sexuality studies; LGBTIQ+ studies
Iolanda Tortajada	2000	Gender, sexualities, and communication; LGBTIQ+ production on social media
María T. Soto-Sanfiel	2000	Reception and analysis of LGBTIQ+ messages; reduction of prejudice
Santiago Fouz	2002	Masculinity studies and film; homosexuality and film; age
Kerman Calvo	2004	LGBTIQ+ studies; electoral studies; equality policies; social mobilization
Gracia Trujillo	2007	Archives and memories; feminist, LGBTIQ+

		and queer activism; queer education; non-cis-heteronormative reproduction and kinship
Rafael Cáceres Fera	2007	Repression and sexuality; tourism and sexuality; LGBTIQ+ heritage
José Ignacio Pichardo	2008	LGBTIQ+ families; LGBTIQ+ Human Rights; LGBTIQ+ situation in the educational/labour sphere; masculinities; LGBTIQ+ tourism; LGBTIQ+ friendship
Virginia Villaplana	2008	Communication; gender studies; LGBTIQ+ activism; queer theory
Cilia Willem	2010	Feminist media studies; trans studies
Ana Isabel Simón Alegre	2011	Gender; masculinities; sexuality; queer spatial studies; relationships between women
Adolfo Carratalá	2012	Journalistic representation of LGBTIQ+ people
Beatriz González de Garay	2012	Sex-gender dissidence in Spanish television fiction (particularly lesbianism)
Geoffroy Huard	2012	LGBTIQ+ and Francoism; film
José Antonio Ramos Arteaga	2012	Memory of dissidence from the Middle Ages to Francoism; violence and closet strategies; theatre and performance
Lucas Platero	2016	Gender and sexuality; LGBTIQ+ childhoods and adolescences
Isabel Villegas-Simón	2019	LGBTIQ+ content and popular culture; audience, representation, and production studies
Javier Fernández	2019	History and archives; resistances; queer culture; obscenity
Rafael Ventura	2019	Analysis of LGBTIQ+ representation and reception (primarily fiction)
Daniela Ferrández Pérez	2020	LGBTIQ+ history in Galicia (20th century)
Bárbara Ramajo García	2021	Feminist lesbianism; feminisms; LGBTIQ+
Juan José Sánchez Soriano	2021	LGBTIQ+ media discourses; LGBTIQ+ communication research; audience studies
Lucía Gloria Vázquez Rodríguez	2022	Queer film and television; social media; LGBTIQ+ youth
Moisés Fernández Cano	2024	LGBTIQ+ history during Francoism; archive; recovery of everyday lives, intimacies, dissident sociabilities

Source: Own elaboration.



Questionnaires, typically associated with quantitative methodologies, have also been considered a qualitative methodological tool (Cayssials, 2006). Given that our questionnaire was aimed at people with expertise, it was structured in a limited way that excluded topics unrelated to the research objective (Flick, 2004). Compared to personal interviews, the advantages of qualitative questionnaires include their functionality with a geographically dispersed and heterogeneous sample, their speed of response, and the personalized management of response time and the data provided. A qualitative design based on open-ended responses guarantees that respondents can express themselves fully as there are no spatial or content limits for the answers. However, this methodology has certain limitations: the design and analysis reflect more targeted points of view, and the approach lacks the qualitative depth that an interview would allow (Kvale, 2011). As one of the respondents said: «Stories always have ramifications. There is no way to summarize complex experiences, wounds, pride, anecdotes, in an interview. [...] No answer is definitive.» In this sense, we recognize the limitations of our method and our sample, which has undoubtedly and unintentionally excluded some voices. At the same time, we remain convinced of the potential contribution of this type of research to continue mapping out a more subjective and experiential genealogy of the field.

The qualitative questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms. First, we included an introduction about the study, our objectives, and the conditions for participation, as well as personal data and an invitation to ask questions and make suggestions. Next, we added a tab with informed consent information, including various statements to be accepted by each participant, confirming that they had received sufficient information, had been able to ask questions, and gave their consent to participate in their own name, not anonymously, and without financial compensation. This introductory section was followed by the first area, «Academic and personal profile», in which we asked for information about the academic profile of the interviewees and their participation in research groups and funded research projects related to LGBTIQ+ issues. The second area, «Personal experiences in academia», asked questions about the lived experiences of establishing this field. Finally, the third area, «Reflections on the field of study», focused on perceptions of the current state of the field, prominent figures, future challenges, and an open-ended question for each participant to provide additional information. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix I.

The qualitative questionnaire was tested with an expert in the field. After receiving a positive evaluation, it was sent to an initial list of participants

compiled based on previous literature reviews in the field drawn from available bibliographies (e.g., Herrero *et al.*, 2026). From this initial list, a qualitative snowball sampling was carried out, through which we contacted the experts suggested by the respondents, after verifying their effective collaboration in the field (through publications, participation in conferences, or other similar criteria). This openness raised epistemological and methodological dilemmas regarding the disciplinary boundaries of the field of communication, as well as the boundary between the academic field and activist-oriented theoretical contributions. While we maintained an open perspective, we narrowed our focus to exclusively include the academic sphere and studies substantially related to the field of communication.

The final sample consisted of 37 participants, out of the 51 people contacted. Responses were collected between October 2023 and June 2024. The responses were coded inductively (Katayama Omura, 2014). Each question was coded individually by analysing all responses to determine and group points of agreement and disagreement among participants' experiences, as well as emergent explanatory themes. The first coding was done individually. It was then discussed until a consensus was reached. The codes derived from this consensus were subsequently applied to analyse the responses. After coding, analysing, and writing up the results, we sent the text to all participants for feedback and to confirm that our interpretation accurately reflected their intended meanings. In writing up the results, we avoided indicating the authorship of direct quotations. This decision was made to facilitate reading and to convey a more communal sense of the field, emphasizing its collective construction.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Experiences in the Origins of the Field

When compiling the results on the origins of LGBTIQ+ communication studies, we limited our analysis to those profiles that report active participation in academia during the 1990s and early 2000s, which is the decade that Herrero *et al.* (2026) describe as the first stage of the field.

#### 5.1.1. Rejection and Ostracism

Responses describe an initial period of rejection and ostracism by academic institutions, consistent with previously published accounts (e.g., Zurian, 2021). This period is described as «hard» or «difficult», with institutions showing reluctance to engage.



Part of the rejection stemmed from a lack of knowledge about LGBTIQ+ issues among universities and their members, which resulted, at the very least, in indifference, misunderstanding, and a lack of trust or support. For example:

In Spanish universities, there was a culture of discretion on the matter (read: closets) that led to silence, disregard, etc. The (initially named) *Gay* studies (later called *queer* studies) involved knowledge and readings that no one in the humanities departments (again, in the 1990s) wanted to learn about or read. And they didn't have to, since the system didn't require it.<sup>1</sup>

To this we must add the «scepticism» towards LGBTIQ+ studies which, because they were considered activist or social struggle lines of research, were received with scientific distancing and considered «less objective» or «professional»: «[...] added to the fact that some of us were and are activists, this detracted from our value: our research has often been seen as less “serious” and objective, and more politicized. This situation means that the origins of the field can be described as times of loneliness». There was also explicitly or implicitly LGBTIQ+ phobic attitudes: «At first (and to a large extent today as well) we had to face a lot of academic homophobia», which was aggravated by the fact that studying LGBTIQ+ issues was normatively interpreted as «coming out».

These conditions of rejection and ostracism translated, in turn, into obvious precariousness, which meant a lack of projects, funding, and contracts associated with the field.

### 5.1.2. Slowdown in Academic Careers

The discriminations described above explain why participation in LGBTIQ+ communication studies appears to be linked, in several of the responses, to the sacrifice of academic careers. For the researchers surveyed, participation in the field was detrimental to their job and academic stability, «slowing down» the various promotion or consolidation processes. This led them to pursue different lines of research in parallel. «In a way, you had to choose. Either you pursued an academic career in the traditional way or you engaged in LGTBIQ+ research; the latter meant you had to give up any prospect of a university position.» Consequently, it is understandable that participation in the field is described in terms of vocation and commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

### 5.1.3. Experiences of Community and Support

Despite experiences of rejection, LGBTIQ+ phobia, and precariousness, one of the survey's main contributions is revealing the diverse experiences of acceptance and community that also emerged in these early stages. While understanding that these stories are anecdotal or parallel to an eminently violent context, we also understand that they bring narratives of resistance, resilience, and community to the historiography of the field.

For example, some responses portray an environment without explicit experiences of rejection, explaining that the field of communication has traditionally «been much more receptive than other areas of knowledge to incorporating LGBTIQ+ studies». Whatever the case may be, some responses report having found community and fellowship in the field:

It was an exciting start, with motivation not only from me, but from all the women who participated in the project, focused on providing a necessary and meaningful visual counterpoint. The university welcomed this project with great openness and enthusiasm. This, of course, was due to the support of certain professors, who acted as key agents.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the experiences of community and support originated in gender and feminist studies networks, where a large proportion of the respondents began their research. This is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Langarita-Adiego & Mas-Grau, 2017). As one respondent said, «feminist women and academic feminism (such as the Institute for Women's Studies) [...] were the main allies in bringing these issues to the forefront».

### 5.1.4. International Experiences

As indicated in previous meta-analyses (e.g., González-de-Garay, 2024; Herrero *et al.*, 2026), some of the positive testimonials correspond to Spanish profiles who had contact with Anglo-Saxon academia, where the field of LGBTIQ+ communication studies was more developed. Among the responses, we find links to universities in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. For example:

I was fortunate to begin my research on LGBTIQ+ issues in Australia, where I have spent my entire professional career [...]. I think that in the 1990s it would have been difficult to undertake this type of research in

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<sup>2</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

Spain, where it would have been highly unlikely to receive public funding.<sup>3</sup>

Such testimonies point to the paths of internationalization made necessary by the context. At the same time, there are positive experiences of return:

I completed my doctoral thesis on the queer underground of the 1960s in the US (Indiana University). When I returned to Spain, I continued working in this field, which I had already begun during my American education. I suppose it was well received at the university (I didn't ask what they thought of it; I just kept doing what I wanted to do). I don't think anyone had a problem with it.<sup>4</sup>

## 5.2. Experiences in Field Development

Numerous responses describe the development of the field as a slow and tedious process. At the same time, the consolidation of the field is linked to socio-cultural and political changes in Spanish society in terms of gender and sexuality, highlighting its gradual openness to LGBTIQ+ rights and increased media visibility:

I have noticed that there is growing interest in this topic in the fields of communication and cultural studies. This is almost definitely related to the greater visibility of LGBTI issues in both the mass media and social networks.<sup>5</sup>

### 5.2.1. Quantitative Growth

Most responses describe quantitative growth in the field, highlighting the proliferation of researchers, groups, and projects, to the point that «[...] it is now much easier to find groups and individuals who are very committed to this field». In general terms, the quantitative increase in researchers allows us to trace, for the first time, a division into generations: the first, active during the 1990s, and the second, which began immediately afterwards, under the auspices of the first (Pichardo, 2007).

The third generation is conceptualized as the «new» or «young» generation. The assessment of this generation is positive, as there is a community of young researchers who have acquired training in LGBTIQ+ studies and who can provide continuity. This situation translates into larger research groups,

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<sup>3</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

as well as a greater number of papers and doctoral theses in the field. It also implies the diversification of academic profiles, incorporating researchers from both academia and activism, as well as transgender scholars.

The increase in researchers is usually welcomed with optimism in view of an «intergenerational» and «critical» network of active research with social impact: «The evolution has been spectacular and completely unexpected [...] I don't know of any other case that can be compared in terms of theoretical depth, institutional speed, and sociocultural impact».

However, some responses warn of insufficient growth, persistent barriers, and a lack of guaranteed permanence. There is also suspicion that the consolidation of the field may involve certain forms of intrusion, whereby «projects are proposed that include "LGBTI" in their name although they do not have an LGBTI focus».

In the field of employment, it is important to emphasize that, in parallel with the incorporation of new generations of researchers, there is a consolidation of previous generations: «[...] a significant number of people who 10 years ago had precarious positions have moved on to more stable positions in academia». However, the responses show that precariousness continues to be present.

### 5.2.2. Diversification of Research Areas

The evolution of LGBTIQ+ communication studies is also marked by a qualitative broadening of its areas of study: «The theoretical corpus provided has moved and continues to move between a range of topics that have never been addressed before». Although «there are areas that remain much less studied than male homosexuality, such as lesbianism, non-binarism, trans identities, bisexuality, intersexuality, etc.», the consolidation of the field has also involved the gradual inclusion of these identities, with trans studies being particularly noteworthy. Similarly, the respondents highlight the omnipresence of representation studies, as well as the recent incorporation of production and audience studies, and meta-analyses of the field:

I believe that now is a good time because, as the field is still in its early stages and everything remains to be explored, it is possible to approach most topics from different perspectives, making it easier to include innovative contributions. This is particularly true in the study of the creative process or the state of research in LGTBIQ+ communication. Discourse

studies are the most widely addressed, followed, to a lesser extent, by audience reception studies.<sup>6</sup>

However, the diversification of areas of study brings both thematic and methodological challenges. The diagnosis of the situation highlights future lines of research, as well as the need to consolidate spaces for dissemination:

I believe that emphasis will be placed on the following areas: longitudinal analysis of representations, (experimental) reception studies on the effects of exposure to LGBT+ audiovisual content, the creation of working groups and sections in Spanish communication research associations, addressing non-media-centric research (e.g., political or organizational communication), the creation of journals specialized in social studies of sexual and affective diversity with relevant impact factors on the national landscape, and the diversification of scientific methodologies for addressing the issue.<sup>7</sup>

Consistent with what Herrero *et al.* (2026) describe, the responses show how the field has evolved towards the social sciences from its beginnings in cultural studies: «I notice a certain dominance of the more experimental social sciences over studies such as cultural or literary studies, which were always more visible». In this vein, the primacy of cinema is shifting in favour of other objects of study, such as television or social media.

### 5.2.3. Emergence of Community Spaces and Educational Opportunities

Responses also highlighted the emergence of conferences and the development of educational programmes. «Specialized meetings have proliferated, the number of publications has increased, and programmes such as the Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary LGBTIQA+ Studies at the Complutense University have appeared». Regarding conferences and meetings, the emergence of Mari-Corners as a benchmark event is particularly noteworthy. In addition to Mari-Corners and the International Conference on Media, Gender, and Sexualities, held for the first time in Benasque (Huesca) in 2023, there are also:

[...] other international conferences on sexuality that have been held in Spain, such as the IASSCS in Madrid or the CIEDSI in Seville, Granada, and this year [2024] in Girona. [...] The existence of more networks is al-

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

so crucial for providing structure and identity. I am thinking of the LIESS network, ACIES, and even a European COST network.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding education, emphasis is placed on the increase in post-compulsory LGBTIQ+ studies. The launch of the Master's Degree in LGBTIQ+ Studies at the Complutense University of Madrid marks a turning point. Other examples include the Master's Degree in Sexual Identity and LGBTI+ Diversity at the University of Salamanca, the Master's Degree in Cultural Studies and Visual Arts (Feminist and Queer Perspectives) at Miguel Hernández University, and the Master's Degree in LGBTI+ Communication at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (which never came to fruition). In addition, these are complemented by research on LGBTIQ+ issues in bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Nevertheless, compared to the international landscape, the offer «remains quite precarious [...] considering how many years we have had it and seeing the evolution in other countries such as the United Kingdom, for example».

Certain responses also mention academic journals, notably *Estudios LGBTIQ+, Comunicación y Cultura* (2021-) from the Complutense University of Madrid, and *Arte y Políticas de Identidad* (2007-) from the University of Murcia, which publishes research on visual studies with LGBTIQ+ perspectives. *Orientations. Revista de homosexualidades* (2001-2006), published by the Triángulo Foundation, also deserves special mention. In July 2024, with the publication of its first issue, *MariCorners* magazine joined this list. Its first monographic issue, published in January 2025, was dedicated precisely to LGBTIQ+ communication studies (Blanco-Fernández & Fernández, 2025).

This offer of research and education would not have been possible without overcoming institutional and financial ostracism. «I believe, however, that resistance has now been eliminated in terms of access to research resources and promotions (credentials, etc.)». However, the increasing funding remains insufficient, as indicated in the following section on the field's current challenges.

### 5.3. Main Current Challenges in the Field

#### 5.3.1. Support, Funding, and Institutional Permeability

The growth in institutional support and funding is perceived as insufficient, «although this is an endemic problem in the Spanish science system». In some

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<sup>8</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

responses, the lack of funding is linked to evaluation teams who are resistant to the topics in this field, as a form of concealed LGBTIQ+ phobia, which needs to be addressed. In addition to the lack of institutional support, there is also a fear that «growing conservatism could lead to a setback». Faced with the threat of regression, it is becoming urgent to consolidate the projects, groups, and efforts that have already been started.

Institutional «permeability» refers to the challenge of moving beyond the «niche» space and impacting all disciplinary and educational aspects. In other words, in a context in which «LGBTIQ+ studies seem to orbit peripherally around the hard core of communication academia in Spain», the challenge is for LGBTIQ+ discourses to permeate the field of communication, rather than continue developing on its margins. Achieving this permeability is not limited to increased funding, it also involves greater recognition of this field's contributions, as well as its transversality in educational curricula.

Nevertheless, permeability seems unattainable in a precarious system that suffers from serious problems in terms of career stability. For instance, «Spanish universities grapple with job precariousness, low salaries, limited interest in research, and neoliberal policies». In addition, this instability generates mental health concerns and forced emigration, a persistent trend since the field's inception: «Out of every four young researchers I know, three have to consider going abroad, and one struggles to find a job, since the system remains impenetrable to them».

The deceleration in the consolidation of the field is also explained by the intrinsically queer challenge to the structural notions of knowledge and power:

Ultimately, the university has embraced these issues because the community itself demands them [...] but its old structures (and structures that are not old in terms of age) also ensure that the slightest disruption to the norm is fought off aggressively [...]. Queer studies [...] are promoting different approaches and practices in the university, questioning hierarchies and fostering alternative dynamics.<sup>9</sup>

### 5.3.2. Conservative Reaction

In general terms, concerns have been raised about a perceived reactionary shift, and a rise in anti-intellectualism, affecting academia in general, and LGBTIQ+ studies in particular. References are made to the erosion of LGBTIQ+ rights, the rise of extremism, and the proliferation of transphobic discourse.

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<sup>9</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

For example, «Another major challenge is posed by far-right groups that make anti-intellectualism one of their main focuses, attacking people who study LGBTIQ+ issues directly or indirectly, with blacklists and other measures».

Various responses refer to hate speech against transgender and non-binary people, with particular concern about its presence in self-proclaimed feminist spaces, which threatens alliances between feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements: «I am concerned about the rise of a section of the feminist movement that is transphobic. This is hindering alliances between the feminist movement and the LGBTIQ+ movement, which have been so fruitful in the past». To reverse this situation, some responses propose applying LGBTIQ+ communication studies to combat misinformation and hatred-based communication strategies on social media, such as attacks on the «Trans Law» (Law 4/2023, of 28 February).

Among the responses, we find the perception that changes in institutional policy in the near future could lead to a reduction in rights and, consequently, opportunities in the field. For example:

[...] I'm afraid that investment in the field may decline if we don't organize ourselves to resist the clear setbacks in LGBTIQ+ policies in regional governments, which threaten to take us back to past times of censorship and repression that seemed to have been left behind.<sup>10</sup>

Some responses refer to a current situation in which certain reactionary discourses are already present in university decision-making committees. They highlight that there is a «great deal of (political) pressure affecting universities and evaluation agencies, which could jeopardize the progress that has been made», in a context of «political polarization and a shift to the right in many Spanish universities».

### 5.3.3. Other Challenges

Currently, the feeling of loneliness persists: «We continue to work, in general, quite alone, in Faculties and Departments where, in many cases, we are still *“the queers”*. Hence the importance of projects and research groups».

Given this situation, there are proposals to create more networks or spaces for collaboration, particularly in forums relevant to the field of communication:

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<sup>10</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

To this end, I am in favour of creating a separate section within the AEIC [Spanish Association for Communication Research] and holding an annual or biannual conference dedicated exclusively to LGTBIQ+ studies and communication in Spain.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, responses recommend strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, partnerships with the third sector, and international networks. Other solutions point to participation beyond the LGTBIQ+ community, overcoming the feeling that «these studies always depend on being put on the table by LGTBIQ+ people themselves». Promoting intergenerational dialogue is also proposed. For example, «Working to recover and compare the work of different generations. There are many names that have been, are, or will be present in the evolution of these studies. This is also an exercise of historical justice in the recognition of our genealogies».

Effective communication and dissemination within the field also represent urgent challenges. First, this is essential for the proper functioning of the field, given that, according to the responses, there is dispersion of individuals, research topics, and research traditions. Second, dissemination needs to transfer research results to society to achieve a real and effective impact, especially through public policies: «Theory and practice, hand in hand». However, it is pointed out that the field «has lost its pedagogical capacity for audiences outside academic circles, and its connection with society in a broader sense». One of the causes could be that research is written in English. Among the solutions proposed is «developing a comprehensive public understanding of science system that includes different sectors (e.g., civil organization, science and technology entities, education, regulators, and the media)».

Other challenges identified include ethical issues (the overexploitation of trans people for research) and contextual factors (the growing distance from feminist studies, or the «hyper-segmentation of L, G, B, T, I into separate compartments»), disciplinary and epistemological conflicts (dependence on Anglo-Saxon models, tension between qualitative humanities and quantitative social sciences, or the difficulty of framing an interdisciplinary field within the structure of the Spanish academic system), and content-related challenges (notably the need for intersectional and decolonial perspectives).

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<sup>11</sup> Anonymized quote from the survey.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The testimonies and experiences of experts in LGBTIQ+ communication studies in the Spanish context allow us to trace the origins and development of the field to preserve and recognize a shared academic genealogy. This meta-analytical recognition invites us to construct a shared intellectual, plural and polyphonic history of the field.

The pioneering voices in the field express the ostracism and discrimination experienced in the early days, coupled with the difficulties of establishing academic careers, in contrast to the opportunities that were available internationally, especially in the English-speaking world. On a positive note, the respondents also recount experiences of acceptance, mutual support, and community in the early days of the field's development in Spain.

These origins were followed by greater acceptance and an increase in the number of researchers, greater diversification of areas of study, in terms of both topics and methodologies, and a proliferation of educational and academic exchange spaces. However, participants warn against celebrating quantitative growth too enthusiastically given that this is not always synonymous with critical LGBTIQ+ perspectives. On the contrary, this boom could lead to intrusion if it is not grounded in thorough and genuine commitment.

According to participants, the main challenges include a lack of financial support and difficulties in achieving job stability and institutional consolidation. In addition, precarious employment, mandatory internationalization, and increased job uncertainty are present in a political context of a conservative reaction both within and outside the university institution. Particularly noteworthy are the alliances and tensions between the fields of feminist and LGBTIQ+ studies. Although feminist studies initially enabled and promoted the emergence of LGBTIQ+ studies, we now find a more fragmented landscape and the emergence of transphobic positions within feminist studies (e.g., Blázquez López, 2024). Likewise, the respondents emphasize the need to incorporate decolonial and intersectional perspectives to a greater extent. To continue LGBTIQ+ communication research from these perspectives, we consider it advisable to revisit fundamental works in the field that combine queer sexualities and other axes of structural oppression based on racialization, immigration status, class, abilities, or corporeality, among others (e.g., Córdoba *et al.*, 2005; Platero, 2012; Solá & Urko, 2013).

At a meta-reflexive level, the field of LGBTIQ+ communication studies in Spain must undertake a process of self-recognition and self-reflection that has, until now, remained in an embryonic state. This involves developing critical



historiographies that construct and explore networks of collaboration, knowledge flows, and epistemic hierarchies. In all cases, analyses must engage in dialogue with broader historiographies of Spanish communication studies, thereby enriching dominant narratives with peripheral histories.

This research also echoes the permeability between academia and activism. Queer research was (and often continues to be) considered activist and understood as less academically serious. However, there are interesting activist-academic overlaps among researchers in the field, demonstrating the field's commitment to both scholarly rigor and social transformation.

The distinction between academia and activism is, therefore, one of the limitations of this study. Although we were able to access mixed profiles between academia and activism, people who contribute equally to the development of the field from outside academia did not participate in the study. Further research should go deeper into and legitimize contributions from outside academia, including activism. Similarly, using literature review and snowball sampling to construct the sample, as well as time constraints, means that the sample cannot fully represent the entire field. Finally, the online questionnaire methodology allowed us to overcome geographical barriers and increase the number of participants, but it also limits the depth of responses and hinders dedicated participation. Therefore, we have prioritized a descriptive overview of the results rather than a more specific and interpretive approach. However, we hope to address this limitation in future research by employing qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews and focus groups.

To conclude, this research contributes to academic efforts for self-recognition in the field of LGBTIQ+ communication studies in Spain and to intergenerational dialogue for developing collective memory and reflection. We believe these values are fundamental to approaching the field from a recognition of its genealogies, which in turn promotes the continuity of the field and its commitment to open, supportive, inclusive, and transformative horizons.

## Ethics and Transparency

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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### Author Contributions

Contribution	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Conceptualization	X	X	X	
Data curation	X	X	X	
Formal Analysis	X	X	X	
Funding acquisition	X	X		
Investigation	X	X	X	
Methodology	X	X		
Project administration	X	X	X	
Resources	X	X	X	
Software	X			
Supervision	X			
Validation	X	X		
Visualization	X			
Writing – original draft	X			
Writing – review & editing	X	X	X	

### Data Availability Statement

For data availability, please contact the authors.

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## APPENDICES

### Annex I. Content of the survey

Experiences in the establishment of LGTBIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain

You are invited to participate in this study entitled «Experiences in the establishment of LGTBIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain», carried out by [Anonymized].

Our objectives are: 1) to understand how LGTBIQ+ Studies and Communication originated and developed in their early stages in Spain; and 2) to create a map of key figures, groups, and projects that helped consolidate the field of LGTBIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain.

To this end, as an expert on the subject, we invite you to complete the following survey, which includes questions about your academic profile, your personal experiences in academia, and your reflections on the field of study.

Participation is not anonymous. For objective 2 (developing a map of key figures), the names of the people who founded the field are essential. In any case, regarding any information that you believe should not be published, please indicate this in the corresponding response and we will remove it from the results. Participation in the survey does not involve any financial compensation.

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you very much for considering participation in this research!

#### Informed consent

Full name:

I confirm that:

- a) I have read the information about the research and consider it sufficient
- b) I have been able to ask questions about the project
- c) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I will not receive financial compensation
- d) I understand that my participation is not anonymous, but that the confidentiality or anonymity of my testimony will be protected when explicitly requested
- e) I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without having to justify my decision



- f) I give my consent to participate in this project
- g) I give my consent to use my responses from this form for the present research

#### Academic and professional profile

1. Year
2. University where you defended your doctoral dissertation
3. doctoral supervisor (if you do not hold a doctoral degree, please answer NA).
4. Have you left the university at any point? Why?
5. Have you participated in research groups —formal or informal— related to LGBTIQ+ studies? If so, could you tell us which ones?
6. Have you participated in funded research projects related to this topic? If so, could you tell us which ones?

#### Personal experiences in academia

7. What was it like to initiate the field of LGBTIQ+ Studies and Communication, and how were these topics received within the university?
8. What are your most specific lines of research?
9. Have your research lines or interests changed throughout your career?

#### Reflections on the field of study

10. How would you describe the beginnings of LGBTIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain?
11. How do you assess the evolution of LGBTIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain over recent years?
12. How do you assess the current state of LGBTIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain?
13. What challenges do you foresee for the field in the future?
14. Do you have any suggestions of people whom we should interview as key figures in LGBTIQ+ Studies and Communication in Spain?
15. Is there anything you would like to add?

## Closing

Thank you very much for getting this far and for sharing your experiences and reflections with us!

If you have any comments or questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Would you like to receive the results of the research? If so, please leave us your email address:

