**Symbolic violence: The social reproduction of captivities**

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**Abstract**

Symbolic violence is present in different spaces of woman’s lives and it can be materialized in the form of what Lagarde (2015) calls under the concept of *Cautiverio -captivity-*, those are addressed in this paper, from the family as an scenario of transmission of responsibilities to women; education, as the beginning of a double or triple shift and romantic relationship as the way out of the responsibilities with the nuclear family and the origins of a new form of organization that continues to link women to reproductive work, but, at the same time, it locks them definitively in the ranks of productive work and therefore in an endless double shift without any recognition at all, this as the result of socialization and the reproduction of forms of symbolic violence that they face on a daily basis in different areas of their lives.

**Key Words**: Symbolic violence, Captivity, Family, Education, Romantic Relationships, Double shift, Reproductive Work

# 1. Introduction

It is necessary to mention that the information presented here is part of the work theoric and results empirical that we develop during our master´s thesis, in which we addressed the non-classical type of work carried out by women in the city of Leon, Gunajauto, México, during November 2022 to March 2023 in the marketing of products of Mary Kay. We employed “History” as a guiding concept developing three dimensions taken from *women´s gender conditions*, distinguishing between *family*, *scholar* and *in a relationship with a significant other* in order to collect information about them, further, that data was discussed from a theoretical perspective of *women´s captivities* and everyday life-world, in order to suggest how women that take part of this study constructs their own subjectivity, which would have implications in the way they took decisions, not only at work but in their every day life, using the triad of structure, subjectivity and action that *configurationism* propose. In addition to the above and as a part of our findings from that work, the concept of *symbolic violence* emerges as an articulating axis of these non-classical designed initially for women.

In this work we will discuss about the forms in which symbolic violence can manifest on a daily basis of woman´s lives, as in the case of the family, education, romantic relationships y and the weight that gender stereotypes are configured in which they associate a matter o subordination in relation to the males that Bourdieu (2015) called “masculine domination”.

It´s in this meaning that we develop our work about Bourdieu´s symbolic violence (1999), his relationship with the concept of women´s captivity (Lagarde, 2015) and their benefits on the construction of a stock of knowledge at hand (Schutz, 2003) that goes further in the reproduction of gender stereotypes of some form of generic condition as recognized De Beauvoir (2015).

After this, the methodology that guided this research is presented, that is of *configuracionism* that uses a triangle structure, subjectivity and action as analytical levels. This leads to the results, in which the dimensions of family, education and romantic relationships as a guiding concept of history for the reconstruction of symbolic forms of violence faced by women in such spaces. This is followed by a discussion on the scope of women´s captivity as scenarios for the transmission of symbolic violence in the reproduction of stereotypical gender roles, and finally the conclusion.

**2. Symbolic violence and women´s captivity.**

First of all, to speak about violence it is necessary to understand that such concept has multiple dimensions, in which the constant that stands out is the exercise of power by certain actors over others (López, 2015, thus, producing asymmetric social relations that can be presented in multiple ways, but for the purpose of this work we will focus on those faced by women but with a symbolic nature.

Its in this sense that we understand symbolic violence as the reproduction of an order established by male domination, and that is reproduced through a “lógica de dominación ejercida en nombre de un principio simbólico conocido y admitido tanto por el dominador como por el dominado” (Bourdieu, 1999: 5), lo que perpetua dicho orden con una facilidad que puede persivirse en muchos casos como aceptable e incluso casi natural (Bourdieu, 1999).

Symbolic violence gets reproduced in everyday life through what Lagarde called women´s captivity (2015), which refers to “a la expression politico-cultural de la condición de ser mujer. Las mujeres están cautivas de su condición genérica en elm undo patriarchal” (p.36), ), and so, Lagarde continues:

“La situación de las mujeres es el conjunto de características que tienen las mujeres a partir de su condición genérica en circunstancias históricas particulares. La situación expresa la existencia concreta de las mujeres particularmente a partir de sus condiciones reales de vida: la formación social en que nace, vive y muere cada una, las relaciones de producción-reproducción y con ello la clase, el grupo de clase, el tipo de trabajo o de actividad vital, los niveles de vida y el acceso a los bienes materiales y simbólicos, la lengua, la religión, los conocimientos, las definiciones políticas, el grupo de edad, las relaciones con las otras mujeres, con los hombres y con el poder, así como las preferencias eróticas, las costumbres, las tradiciones propias, y la subjetividad personal”. (p.34)

Women´s captivity serves as an scenario where subjectivity is constructed from implicit typification transmitted through experiences that serves as reference schemes to act in the everyday world (Schutz, 2003), which in turn is the result of the reproduction of specific logics of domination as stated by Bourdieu (2015).

Based on these statements, women´s captivities tend to manifest themselves in different ways, they begin from a premise in which a woman is always coming from nature and not as subjectivity in terms of a historical-cultural being with nuances in its caracteristics between societies and cultures (Mead, 1930 as cited by Segato, 2003), which has historically relegated women to a position of subordination, as existing only for the reproductive survival of the species (De Beauvoir, 2015.

Part of women´s gender condition gets configurated and reproduced from within the core of their families as a social form in which they are born and which gives concrete sample of the condition of women´s as mentioned by Lagarde (2015), since it is there where the first interactions and transmission of typification’s through an array of masked experiences of ‘normality’ takes place and therefore of the logics within symbolic violence as Bourdieu (1999) points out. Is in this sense that we can identify some other forms of women´s captivity, mainly when we talk about its history as a guiding concept with different dimensions in his gender condition between the family, education and romantic relationships, in how they have experienced the captivities, that is to say, the symbolic violence in these scenarios.

**3. Methodology**

This study is a development from *configurationism* as a conceptual referent composed of the triad structure, subjectivity and action as analytical levels. And at the same time, it is part of the corpus of critical epistemology due to its emancipatory interest: “la asignación de sentido de particularidades históricas, culturales y lingüisticas” (Cano, 2016:23). We also employ a method based on Zemelman´s proposal (1987a) understood as the articulated description, which proceed by defining the problem and its angle; the selection of large areas of social relations that are referred to the problem; the selection of guiding concepts for each area; a search for points of articulation and possible relations between the concepts through dis-articulated descriptions and the definition of theoretical options as the space of possibilities (De la Garza, 2018).

Our field strategy sought to carry out a study of women who were dedicated to the commercialization of products from multilevel companies such as Mary Kay, for which we took a chain sampling taking as criteria for the selection of cases the age of the participants (above 18 years old), at the level of consultants and independent directors, who had been doing this activity for more than 1 month and also that they lived in the city of León, Guanajuato. Two groups of women were considered for the survey, one from the northern part of the city and the other from the southern part, for which interviews and a focus group were conducted respectively.

**4. Results**

**The role of the family in the reproduction of symbolic violence**

It is inside the family where we can say that women´s captivity has predominantly remained as those structures seek to socially construct women as mothers, caregivers and those responsible for the preservation and reproduction of the family/species, as a part of a vision that tries to bring them closer to nature and to the fallacy of biologicism.

Regarding the forms of women´s captivity experienced by the research companions, women´s upbringing has been focused on them replacing the activities performed by the mother in terms of childcare, food preparation, housekeeping and other activities related to the domestic space. This is a scenario in which women -recognizing the fine design of women´s captivity- accept these activities as part of their obligations, and assume sole responsibility for them.

In the cases of the research companions, we can speak from the women´s captivities of a succession of responsibilities towards the older daughters. This occurs due a difference in circumstances, such as divorce -which implies the separation of the provider figure in the case of women who do not perform productive work or where the activity they perform is not remunerated-, the need to supplement the family income, etc.

In these situations, the responsibility for the care of the siblings -both male and female-, housekeeping, food preparation and all kinds of activities related to the care of the home and even that of the parents themselves, falls on the daughter, who does not necessarily tend to be the eldest in relation to the male siblings, but does tend to be the eldest in relation to the female siblings. Under such circumstances, it is also when the older daughter takes care of the parents and in doing this, they become authority figures even to them (parents).

When it comes to responsibilities in the home, daughters are the ones who assumes all the responsibility that has been ceded by the mothers. In this sense, the responsibilities are apparently shared with the male siblings, buy the male counterpart sees their retribution in the household as a “help” that they provide. This shows that, after going through the process of training in these centers of women´s captivity, they take charge and accept the administration and care of the household and family as a series of activities that imply a responsibility that falls solely on them “because they are women”, thus, reinforcing the gender condition and women´s captivity.

**4.1 From the succession of responsibilities to the fulfillment of parental expectations**

Speaking of the family environment from the point of view of the experiences of women involved in multilevel sales as a political concept of women´s captivities, implies dealing with structural conditions that lead them to the protection and reproduction of the family and the administration and care of the domestic space in most of the cases of the women who accompanied this research. Although there is also a minority of women who are kept away almost entirely from the care of the domestic space by their parents so that they could focus on their studies and obtain a university degree to work as professionals in the future.

This occurred in two ways, the first is where, the women were kept considerably away from the tasks of the domestic space, this happened with the figures of the father and the mother in charge of the private/domestic space; in the second way, this formation took place with a father as provider, and in the case of the mother, she also acted as provider, as the domestic task were assigned to the eldest of the daughters. This made possible the ideal scenario for some women that set them apart -at least in the social formation of the family- from the stereotypes of their gender roles.

It also should be noted that in the cases in which fathers and mothers keep women away from the care of the domestic space, this occurs in the case of the younger daughter -both sisters and brothers-, and where the older sisters are the ones who are in charge of the domestic chores, and the older brothers have not finished their university studies.

In this sense, “liberation” from women´s captivity for the younger daughters, at least in relation to the domestic space from the family sphere, implies the intensification of domestic work for the mothers, or the participation of the mothers in forms of precarious work and the obligatory assignment of the older sisters to the tasks of the domestic space without taking into account any goals, objectives or interests that they might have had. A marriage or free union as a romantic relationship are the means of escape from these dynamics, at least in relation to their nuclear family, but this does not ensure that anything changes in the formation of their new family due to the women´s captivities of their gender role.

Thus, although some of the women were removed from almost all domestic tasks, they were committed to their parents to continue their education and pursue a university degree. And, at the same time, they are burdened with the commitment to fulfill expectations that their older sisters and brothers “did not fulfill” with their parents when they left school. This is always from the point of view of trying to achieve the goals or objectives that the sons and older sisters could not achieve, even though the latter did not have the same condition as those of the younger daughter.

Therefore, domestic chores and family care are not the only forms of women´s captivity -speaking of the case of the research companions- from the family space, but other forms of pressure in the way they develop are added. In this case, this situation for the younger daughters occurs with their fathers and mothers as a form of retribution for being almost totally relieved of domestic chores, although, this means other forms of coercion in their family relationships to comply with expectations that the rest of the sons and daughters did not fulfill from the point of view of the parents.

**4.2 Reproduction of symbolic violence from schools**

When we speak of education, we refer to the formation that it is given at schools of our research companions, and, at the same time, as a space where these women have lived the captivities, from different conjunctural moments in the transmission of patterns of meaning and the construction of subjectivity.

Viewing from this angle, it should be recognized that, as soon as mothers enter the formal or informal labor market due to different circumstances, they begin to assign responsibilities to their older daughters. This begins with simple task such as preparing lunches for their siblings, then, preparing food for themselves and their parents as well.

The assignment of responsibilities has another side beyond substituting the mother from the domestic work, it also implies less frequent involvement in the education of the older daughters. This in terms of not attending meetings or parent´s meetings or handing in grades because of work, which, at least in the imagination of the daughter/student, relieves the daughter of responsibility for obtaining good grades as part of their roles as students.

**4.2.1 The emergence of the double and triple shift**

The difference of responsibility with the mothers implies that when some of the daughters finish high school they will not be interested in continuing with their studies. And, in the case of those who decide to go on, we can recognize two forms of education. First are those who enter a public high school; and then there are those who could not enter public high schools and had to enter private schools.

Those who had to enter a private high school had to interrupt their studies since their parents could not cover the costs. But these are also those who decided to start working in the informal sector to pay for their studies. From this perspective, we should mention that high school is a moment in the lives of some women when they ceased to be daughters whose main responsibility was to study, and became daughters who are involved in a double and, in some cases, triple shift.

Although, the origin of the double shift is mainly focused on the participation of women in productive and reproductive forms of work, it is necessary to mention that some of the research companions worked informally -mainly because they were minors- so they were in charge of domestic duties that came assigned by their mothers and also of their education, which indicates the participation of these women in a triple shift or workday as part of their daily lives.

In the construction of this double and triple shift, entering private high schools -as a result of not been able to enter public schools- informal work becomes a tool that allows them to cover the costs involved in attending high school and to support household expenses with an income. That is why, two parallel processes occur, where, on the one hand, there are women who have material conditions that allow them to use the income generated by their work only for their education; and, on the other hand, there are those who have different conditions that allow them to use the income from their work to cover household and school expenses.

These differences in terms of material conditions have an impact on the fact that some of the women -speaking of the research companions- are able to finish high school and university in private schools, while others are forced to temporally stop studying to seek to re-enter public school, because is more suited to their possibilities. It is noteworthy that, at the same time that schooling gets suspended they take over the head of the household, since, during this period, they are the ones who assume domestic responsibilities and family care, including that of the parents.

From these experiences we can say that leaving school to continue working and help the family income, apparently implies that they will be assuming the head of the household till they resume their studies. But, returning to high school means for them the decision between continuing to work, study and continue with the administration of the domestic space.

In some cases of those who finish high school, face the burdens of captivity, despite of lookin for universities to continue studying, the dichotomy of choosing between being a professional or being a mother is persistent. Therefore, they constantly face, on the one hand, the desire to continue their education, and on the other hand, the desire to stay at home and have children. They do not find compatible to be a professional woman while also being a housewife.

This represents the end of schooling for some women, but it also means the moment of marriage or free union in a romantic relationship, the end of responsibilities of domestic and family cares of their siblings and parents, and at the same time implies the beginning of these exact same responsibilities with their partner and the arrival of children around the age of 20 years old.

**4.3 Reproduction of symbolic violence within the romantic relationship**

When we speak of the couple as a dimension in the history of each of the research companions, we must say that the experiences that women recognize as significant in a couple are mostly anchored to the dichotomy between entering university or getting married and having children. This fact arises as women do not find compatibility between being a “prepared, educated” woman -as they mention- and being a housewife.

From this point on, in the dichotomy that emerges between entering university or getting married, the arrival of the first pregnancy it’s the watershed that breaks the discussion and leads women to discard university studies in order to get married and start their own family. The resolution of this dichotomy is accompanied by the captivity of their gender condition as women and the existence at that moment of a partner who, consciously or unconsciously, plans as a couple -which they consider normal, and as the next step in the relationship- contributes from the discourse -as part of that “naturalness” of taking the next step- in the materialization of marriage or free union, constantly hand in hand with the first pregnancy.

Speaking of these cases with or research companions, it is recognized that this consists of stages that begins from the engagement of getting married to being married with children. They must adapt to these different situations, and to whatever the couple is, with or without children, and to what the children themselves will be, so we can distinguish responsibilities alike to those that they had within the family, although it is also recognized that there are women in other conditions where the couple contributes to domestic activities prior to their work.

**4.3.1 The beginning of the double shift in marriage or free unions**

In this relationship of responsibilities, the husband or partner is seen by the research companions as the main provider in economic terms, but also, as part of these stages, the women recognize in some cases that they started their relationship when both were immature, so that the husbands or partners do not assume the role of providers from the beginning. This fact implies that, in periods of low intensity of work, unemployment or even addictions of the husband or partner, it is the women who “support” them economically while they resolve the issue.

This implies that since the husbands are not providers -for various reasons- it is the women who seek different ways of generating income from informality such as selling clothes, cleaning houses, selling furniture, and other activities related to sales -which could be a first approach to the experience of sales in their work with a company in a multi-level sales strategy- while at the same time they are in charge of the domestic space and caring for the children, working a double shift, where they continue to see their work and income as support to their husbands. Thus, they do not assume themselves to be providers or the head of the household, so that they express a position of subordination in relation to the partner -male- as an effect of the internalization of women´s captivities despite the fact that they are the ones who fulfill both roles in their relationship.

However, when husbands or partners find work, they stabilize in their jobs or get out of various complications and take on or resume the role of provider, women´s responsibility drops. This means that women who work double shifts reduces the amount or the load of activities and responsibilities thy had before this event.

The issue here is that, despite the fact that the husband or partner has taken or resumed the role of provider, the women´s burden in terms of work responsibilities decreases, buy they do not stop working, as “forms of support” for the family income, nor do they abandon the activities of the domestic space, the care of the children and the needs of the husband in the private space.

This shows a moment in which, because husbands or partners were not the providers of the household, women are the ones who have to look for different ways to generate income from sales as their main activity in order to cover family expenses, while continuing to cover household activities. At the same time, means the beginning of a double shift as married or in a free union, and therefore the intensification of responsibilities.

When the husbands are unemployed, the women -our research companions- felted dissatisfied, since they are not fulfilling their roles as providers, even when our research companions continued to fulfill their part of the agreement as couple, where he should be the provider, and she should be in charge of the domestic space and taking are of the children. And, when the husband resumes his role of provider, they rapidly change their dissatisfaction as they consider that their partner “is the pillar of the house, since he is the provider”. Although this occurs even though they continue to work a double shift and contribute to the family income, so that the productive and reproductive work of these woman is seen by themselves as a help to the completement of what is generated for couple.

**4.3.2. The reorganization of responsibilities (productive and reproductive work)**

Finally, the situation of responsibilities within the couple, siblings, domestic space and work are seen by women from two different angles that makes the case for the effects of women´s captivities on the formation of the social, but also, as they do this from conditions of production and reproduction pushed forward by the multilevel sales.

Having said the above, the first of this angle implies the vision of the woman who seeks and fulfill all the responsibilities as wife, mother, housewife and worker, but who is hardly satisfied with her performance because she assumes that she can give more of herself, since she knows that there are things she can improve in the development of her activities, reinforcing the role of the woman dedicated to the species and its reproductions as mentioned by De Beauvoir (2015). But this search for perfection is followed by stress that these women find in the self-recognition that leads them to feel important, and if they do not go through this process, they ask themselves questions such as “what was I doing?” as a kind of self-monitoring that translates to the next day in a search for that “constant improvement”.

The second angle involves more of a reconfiguration of the perception of responsibilities, since another part of our research companions understand them as something that will never end, since in the domestic space there are continually pending tasks that absorb them. Even when the house is clean and tidy, the food gets ready, or the children and husband are taken care of, new activities constantly arise, such as washing the curtains, etc. Such a banal task that may go unnoticed by most people, but represent a constant due in the home in the minds of these women.

Women also go through a learning process in terms of organization with their family, teenagers, children, toddlers and babies, as well as with the husband who goes out to fulfill his role as provider but also with their work, and in order to do so, they have to divide themselves. So they go from seeking to fulfill all their responsibilities as mothers, wives, housewives and workers, to consider a “lowering their guard” effect -as some of our research companions call it- in many other things, so they stop seeking to “be perfect” in the fulfillment of the things they cannot do, doing only what they achieve.

The process of “lowering the guard” implies re-educating the couple and the children in the cooperation of domestic work under the premise that women prioritize the care of the children and attending to the husband -before and after work-, and only then some other activities such as food preparation or working. Doing so, the try to ensure that the rest of the household activities are taken care of by the other members of the family.

This reorganization involves more the couple and the children so they can move forward with their responsibilities and work, but at the same time, they carry the stigma of “bad wives” in the eyes of their mothers, grandmothers or aunts, who frequently tell them that they should be at home all the time which they recognize as a form of social pressure, where they must fulfill all the activities as mothers, wives and housewives every day, leading to moments of frustration.

From the form of social pressure, our research companions, recognize that the women who judge them as “bad wives” for not fulfilling all the activities are from another generation, older women, who could spend all their time to cover domestic and family responsibilities, but even so, for them, this represents a form of distortion in their realities as mothers, wives, housewives and independent workers.

Being a woman entrepreneur opens a relief valve for our research companions from which the can get out -although not completely- at certain moments of domestic or family space captivities, but this condition of entrepreneur does not free them from other forms of captivities, like the one focused on the neoliberal market scenario of capitalism, where the exit -at certain moments- from captivities means an immersion into the ranks of contemporary capitalism. This, in turn, has been made possible by the regulatory framework that prevails in Mexico since the 1980s, which prioritizes entrepreneurship from the sphere of informality (Rojas, 2022) and which made possible the expansion of atypical and precarious forms of work such as the marketing of products from companies with a multilevel sales strategy.

**5. Discussion**

Women´s captivities are the materialization of their gender condition in the form of empirical data, which means that *women´s situations*, as stated by Lagarde (2015), and the reproduction from within different spaces of social life, like family -as the first group of interaction and transmission of the patterns of meaning that shows how to act in other social spaces-, school -in which personal interest and aspiration coexist- and the relationship with a significant other -as the experience of their knowledge at hand in the terms of Schutz (2003) of women´s captivities outside the domestical space of the nuclear family- derives in the construction of subjectivity.

Therefore, women´s captivities materialized in the forms of family, school and relationship with a significant other are the scenarios in which patterns of meaning of social relationships are reproduced and transmited on an asymmetrical form, as mentioned by López (2015), that are believed and assumed almost as natural as they allow the preservation of a logic of male domination that acknowledges Bourdieu (1999), that is, of symbolic violence masked on everyday practice.

It is under these logics that an imaginary is being configured and reproduced in which women must surrender to the species as mentioned by De Beauvoir (2015), and at the same time the acceptance of this condition by some as mentioned by Bourdieu (1999); by pointing out that this imaginary is a symbolic stance not only recognized by the dominator, but also from within, where the care of the family and domestic chores are activites that women place above any other in their daily lives as a result of socialization on a daily basis with forms of symbolic violence in different scenarios of life, thus preserving a position of subordination.

# 6. Conclusions

Even if we would liked to go deeper on those cultural aspects, we must recognized that, treating symbolic violence wasn´t part of our original goals, it remains as one of our discoveries that require more work, so our conclusion, here by presented, answer to the cases studied during the develop of this research in León, Guanajuato, México.

We can assume that the subordinate position in which women´s captivities are held is due to the fact that men have historically been linked to the production of society, culture and development through their participation in the accumulation of capital by means of their productive work. In this sense, women are positioned and excluded, left out to the domestic space and, as such, to reproductive work. An example of this is how the sexual division of labor implied for men the productive work and for women the reproduction of the species, which entails not only physical reproduction, but also the raising and care of children, the care of the couple and the domestic space. An scenario in which productive work is recognized and remunerated, and reproductive work is neither recognized nor remunerated because it is considered an activity that corresponds to women because of their gender condition or the situation as women as Lagarde (2015) points out in a biological sense that implies giving oneself to the species as mentioned by De Beauvoir (2015), that leads to the fact that in cases in which some women experience a double or triple workday, they do not recognize their own work to the extent of even considering it only as a support to what the husband or partner “provides” as a result of their work, even when the latter does not have one or struggle to find it.

In this sense, what we´re stating occurs as a result of the fact that flexible and precarious forms of work have expanded and integrated women into their dynamics, as in the case of multilevel sales, but in that insertion these forms of work has a historical-cultural background than in a certain way keeps them anchored to positions of subordinations at different levels.

Such effects arise because the insertion into non-classical forms of work such as multilevel sales become the result not only of changes in labor markets, but also of the socialization of symbolic violence transmitted and reproduced from within women´s captivities, since the jobs are offered as independent business opportunity with no link to the company, as that is case of Mary Kay, are designed from their very origins to be performed by women, because they focus on the marketing of beauty and personal care products for women using their family and social networks, promoting and strengthening the imaginaries of that women need to consume and how they should look, as well as which are the jobs created specifically for them. In such a way that these non-classical forms of work become a mechanism for reinforcing gender stereotypes, and therefore modern forms of symbolic violence that imply continuing with reproductive work and adding other forms of productive work, but without recognizing the role of women in development and public space by performing productive activities that have been culturally attributed to their gender condition.

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