Youth and patriarchy in the ICT society: A reflection on symbolic gender violence in social media*

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- ***Abstract (analytical):*** *This article analyzes how representations of gender violence - a result of patriarchy - are transformed in a society influenced by information and communication technologies, a process in which young people are protagonists. The article specifically focuses on social media, as their level of use by Chile's young people has reached a transcendent level that reconfigures identity processes and relational paradigms. A scenario is configured that magnifies or annuls expressions of gender violence (both explicit and symbolic). The authors carry out an analytical theoretical reflection using the literature review methodology, highlighting the need to question how the Internet impacts the way in which young people construct their gender identities and social relationships as actors within a paternalistic culture.*

Key words: Patriarchy, gender violence, youth, communication technologies, social media (Gender Thesaurus: language with equity. National Institute of Women, Mexico).

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1. Introduction

Gender violence is a phenomenon that has achieved significant notoriety in the media in recent times. However, it has been a part of women's lives throughout history. This is a type of violence that, under the protection of patriarchal ideology, has found various channels and ways to manifest itself, permeating public and private spaces to the extent that it has become invisible and habitual. In contemporary cultures, this type of violence finds new means to reproduce itself, given that the high level of techno-centrism has positioned the Internet as a fundamental communicative field, with properties capable of magnifying the expressions marked by the hegemony of the male gender.

In this scenario, younger generations develop naturally, using online interactions to conform/consolidate their interpersonal relationships, reaffirm identities and share manifestations related to their daily life. In this context, stereotypes and gender violence appear to be gaining strength.

The reflections shared in this paper are the result of a methodology based on documentary analysis. This article draws on the theoretical framework developed for the doctoral research titled "Understanding the Impact that the consumption habits of Social Media have on the (Non) Perpetuation of Symbolic Gender Violence among adolescents in the Los Ríos Region". The study brings together and interweaves theories developed by leading authors in this field.

2. Youth in the Network Society

In order to understand the dynamics of social media, we will begin by considering that they are members of the knowledge society, which, in the words of

Manuel Castells, refers to a new technological paradigm, where the Internet emerges not just as a simple technology but as a cultural production that exists in different layers: the university (culture of research for research's sake); the hacker (passion to innovate and create); alternative cultural forms (people dissatisfied with the current society who find alternative ways of living on the Internet); and the business culture (represented by risk-averse entrepreneurs with a great capacity to innovate) (Castells, 2002).

Placing ourselves in this framework developed by Castells almost 15 years ago, today we witness the mass use of tools provided by the Internet. As of the third quarter of 2015, the Facebook[1] platform had more than 1.55 billion users worldwide. Like Twitter, Instagram and others, this social network owes its popularity to the tools it provides for users so that they can generate and share related content, strengthen existing social ties, connect with new people, display their interests anonymously and value information, among others (Schneider, Feldmann, Krishnamurthy & Willinger, 2009).

This figure confirms that the Internet has become a preferred space for developing different socialization skills - an example of this is that a high number of users use social media for social contact (Kadushin, 2013) and that social media is a way for young people to increase their social capital (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

It is estimated that 75% of Internet users under 25 years of age have at least one social media account (Lenhart in Dueñas, Pontón, Belzunegui & Pastor, 2016). Since the emergence of Fotolog (a pioneering platform where each user uploaded their photographs and could comment on other people's photos), the social media path has been one of no return. People spend more and more time

being connected. Intimate details of everyday life are shared on social media and instant messaging applications, with users waiting for responses and evaluations in this different reality that has taken on a transcendental role:

Precisely, the seduction that young people feel for online social media can be attributed to the fact that it satisfies their need for communication and contact in an immediate, effortless and fun way. At the same time, social media is an excellent tool for those who want to make themselves known and be recognized by others. As is the case with cell phones, many young people think that being on social media is essential for having a complete social life (Espinar & González, 2009, p. 103).

Along the same lines, Dueñas et al. (2016) state that Web 2.0 is a necessary place for the socialization of young people, offering scenarios to relate to others in which they insert themselves, build identity, construct representations, discuss the issues they face and acquire skills for individual and social growth. As a response to this reality, there is a need to consider how the shaping of identity and the establishment of relationships are processes that are reconstructed in the online landscape, generating new characteristics for socialization.

Espinar and González argue that, among the possibilities offered to users by social media, two particularly common activities stand out: "the first is 'posting' photos, sharing and commenting on them with friends, while the second is using a social network as a means of communication, either directly through personal messages or indirectly through public messages" (Espinar & González, 2009, p. 101). Both trends involve daily activities related to the search for social integration and approval. If we look at the regular publication of photographs by adolescents, we can also identify a desire to seek validation from

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1   On this particular topic and the influence of Facebook on contemporary societies, see Serrano-Marín (2016).

their peers through the objectification of the body, which in turn responds to the aesthetic standards established by patriarchal society.

The conformation of this landscape leads us to reflect on the impact that new forms of communication have on young people, who cannot conceive life - both intimate and social - without the presence of social media. Martucelli (in Dueñas et al., 2016) states that the Internet plays a transcendental role in the individuation process for subjects, a situation that is an essential part of the formation of adolescents and young people who communicate, feel and experience their interpersonal relationships through the Internet, leaving physical communication on a complementary plane (Castells, 2001).

In this context, and in order to understand the scope of the influence of digital communication on young people, we will examine the mechanisms that form identity and the elements that influence this period of the life cycle when this population is particularly vulnerable to political, economic and historical paradigms. Given the effectiveness of the Internet in facilitating mass communication, this can be highly risky or advantageous, depending on how it is used.

3. Identity and adolescence in the Network Society

The fact that technology is a basic necessity for young people (Fundación Telefónica, 2010) is particularly important when thinking about how identity is constructed, taking into account the enormous influence of their experiences on the Internet and, more specifically, on social media.

Adolescence can be thought of as a cultural-cognitive stage and the result of a social construction in which young people evolve in accordance with the changes that are occurring in their culture. This is a dynamic-evolutionary stage of life, as it involves "cultural elements that vary over time, from one society to another and, within the same society, from one group to another" (Dávila, 2002, p. 92).

For Dávila, the concepts of adolescence and youth are social, historical, cultural and relational constructions "that through different periods and historical and social processes have acquired different denotations and delimitations" (Dávila, 2002, p. 87). Native generations acquire traits that form part of the society and culture in which they are immersed. In Chile, this context is notable for its free market logic, in which the consumption of technologies is frequent and accessible.

In the current scenario, crowded with different digital communication spaces and mechanisms that reproduce patriarchal traits in their relational logics, we can approach the construction of identity as one of the most transcendental phenomena experienced by an individual. Based on the theories developed in the field of psychology, identity has been understood as the personal sense of being oneself over time and thus differentiating oneself from others. However, the definition of this complex term has undergone constant modifications. This concept is presented as a paradox when contemplating the idea of singularity, while at the same time alluding to the homogeneity that allows a person to identify as belonging to a collective group.

Specifically in relation to gender, the social definition of what it means to be a man and a woman comes from the stereotypes that patriarchal culture has built through symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998 and 2002). This pigeonholing of the genders uses the advantage of its hegemony to spread these ideas and beliefs with impressive force and speed among peer groups, traversing and reproducing inequalities and perpetuating the submission/domination dyad in new generations. Young people try to fit in among those closest to them (through homologation), and at the same time try to stand out by using multiple socially accepted mechanisms that are also violent.

The identity development process involves two main areas: a) individuality, achieved by recognizing oneself as a unique person who is different from the rest; and b) the social construct, which takes into account the

internalization of social norms that allow an individual to recognize themself as being in a specific category of people and belonging to a specific group.

From a sociological point of view, identity is a central system of meanings within an individual personality that normatively influence and give meaning to people's actions. These meanings are the result of the internalization of values, norms and cultural codes that are agreed upon and shared by a social system. How a person defines themselves is not just a result of their daily interactions (how they observe the world and act in it), but is also influenced by the aspects that they culturally and socially internalize (Parsons, 1968a, in Rocha, 2009).

As a result, culture is a transcendental factor for the development of identity in which the construction of a self-definition is determined by the social-historical character of a person's context. How a subject comes to define/conceive themselves is subject to the socio-cultural conditions of that moment in time. In this case, these conditions are marked by male chauvinist systems. Taking into account these considerations, it is possible to examine the conceptualization and development of gender identity, which is transcendental in people's individual and social development. Gender identity is forged in the framework of a biologically defined body and a set of values and meanings for this body.

Trew and Kremer (1998) report on several approaches associated with the study of gender and identity construction, the results of which have confirmed that the process of developing this type of identity is impacted by a number of simultaneously occurring variables. The authors divide these approaches into the following groups: (a) Multifactorial approaches that consider gender identity as a form of self-categorization in a multifaceted construct including personality traits, attitudes and self-perceptions; (b) Schematic approaches that involve the formation and development

of gender as a schema that permits a categorization of the self; (c) social identity approaches that see gender as a way of being part of a social group with a collective identity, and (d) self-constructive approaches that recognize how the self-concepts developed by men and women differ in their content, structure and function (Trew & Kremer, 1998 in Rocha, 2009).

Some integrational perspectives (Rossan, 1987) refer to the idea of global identity, defining it as a complex and partially integrated conglomerate of attitudes that someone has about themself. According to this author, identity consists of sub-identities, which are a product of the roles that people play in society and are modified according to their local context and moment in the life cycle.

Society, stereotypes, personal and social experiences and expectations are seen as transcendent variables in the construction of gender identity. This process can be understood as a complex, changing phenomenon with multiple factors that involve cultural, social and personal variables. As long as the current culture is steeped in hegemonic behaviors, we can assume that - either in virtual or analogous experiences - young people are condemned to having their identities invaded by the patriarchy. This is why there is a need to raise awareness that challenges this normalization and highlights all of the vices inherent in history and the current social system.

Society currently faces challenges as transcendental as guiding young people towards adopting a critical stance, at least, in relation to the content they consume and create on social media every day. This would counteract the effects of phenomena such as expectations imposed by gender stereotypes, agglomerated myths regarding romantic love and violent behaviors normalized by the patriarchal hegemony, which are becoming more and more legitimized, a situation that we will analyze in the following section.

4. Gender in social media

In order to understand online experiences from a gender perspective, it is necessary to first point out that this concept is the result of a socio-historical construction that has little to do with a person's biological condition. Gender establishes hierarchical differences between men and women, differences that over time have been normalized and legitimized by different social orders within a patriarchal hierarchy.

This paternal domination is expressed in private, social and political spaces where the male figure is imposed on that of women, monopolizing power structures and subordinating the female role in settings ranging from the family to public institutions and political processes. In this sense, two separate and independent spheres of action and symbolic production are understood: "One, the public sphere, is reserved for men for who exercise their political leanings, social knowledge, economic power, etc. The other is for women who assume the subordinate role of wives and mothers" (Facio, 1999, p. 6).

Thus, a relationship of permanent tension is established between men and women, where the former institute symbolic pacts to perpetuate their domination over the public sphere, while the latter continue to be relegated to the private sphere and their roles of reproduction and submission:

"patriarchy can be defined as a system of social sex-political relations based on different public and private institutions and on interclass and intra-gender solidarity established by men, who as a social group and individually and collectively, oppress women individually and collectively, as well as appropriating their productive and reproductive power, their bodies and their products, either by peaceful means or through the use of violence" (Fontenla, 2008, p. 3).

The above is especially relevant when we consider that the guidelines that characterize our socioculture - in relation to dominant structures and power relations - can be embodied in interpersonal relationships developed online, a space that according to Puente, Fernández, Sequeiros and López is used by 9 out of 10 young people to keep in touch with friends, share practices and make plans with them (Puente, Fernández, Sequeiros & López, 2015). We can assume that the popularity of this platform leads to the reproduction of gender stereotypes, as well as the emergence of ideas that are contrary to traditional thinking. This situation occurs due to the enormous impact that social media has on socialization, and particularly on gender socialization (Gómez, 2010, Huffaker & Calvert, 2005, Bortee, 2005, Thelwall, 2008, in Dueñas et al., 2016, p. 69).

Based on this idea, we analyze some aspects of gender theories and studies that are focused on domination through symbolic violence, a paradigm that allows us to understand how a social model based on inequality and subjugation has been normalized and legitimized. These processes carry such a powerful hegemonic weight that they have been incorporated into people's unconscious.

For Bourdieu, symbolic violence is a type of socially permitted intimidation that seeks to install a determined group of meanings and can be applied only on cognizant subjects, "but its knowledge, however partial and falsified, contains the tacit recognition of the domination implied in ignoring the true foundations of domination" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 22). This concept refers to a symbolic power supported by practices in our societies that are capable of establishing order and realities, given that "symbols are the instruments par excellence of

social integration: as an instrument of knowledge and communication (...) they make it possible to reach consensus about the meaning of the social world..." (Bourdieu, 2000b, p. 67-68).

The type of violence theorized by Bourdieu involves high levels of risk. When applied in the field of patriarchal domination, symbolic violence allows for the historical reproduction of harassment models where women are subtly relegated and subjected to the space of motherhood, heterosexual norms, the private sphere, and dominion over their bodies. Normalized expressions such as the valuation of their bodies as objects of desire, control of their lives through messages sent via cell phones, the lack of access to the right to decide about their own body in relation to abortion, the extra burden on the health system for being a woman, wage inequality, repressed sexuality, and many others, are situations that we witness every day and evidence the effectiveness with which symbolic violence infiltrates our society, as well as the occasions when it doesn't.

5. Gender: notions of symbolic and explicit violence.

Since its genesis (Rubin, 1975), gender theory has focused on establishing distinctions between sex and gender, understanding the former as a biological condition expressed through hormonal systems and genital organs, while the latter involving the social processes and behaviors that create and maintain differences between the feminine and the masculine. The emergence of this field of study made it possible to question the roles assigned to each sex in social environments, understanding them as artificial behaviors that are constructed under the shadow of male dominance.

Authors such as Bourdieu (2000a) and Rodríguez (2004) confirm the predominance of male power in society as a legacy of the patriarchal system, signifying subordinate groups - primarily women and children - as submissive objects who are forced to normalize paradoxical behaviors that

contain implicit statements of violence and abuse.

This means that we have transitioned from violence defined a priori by our sexual condition to violence generated by sociocultural stereotypes. The current role of violence is to reinforce and reproduce the system of sexual inequality (de Miguel, 2005). We do not need to live or witness direct abuse, because – and even though it is extraordinarily invisible to our eyes – we are constant victims of what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence, a subtle and insensitive form of violence that is perpetrated through purely symbolic channels of communication and knowledge/ignorance (Rodríguez, 2004). Vázquez & Castro state that women are confronted with legitimized barriers when they try to overcome the violence of which they are victims, because:

> "in addition to fear, there are the gender norms instilled since childhood, which encourage female subjugation: the belief that 'love conquers all', the value of their virginity and the feeling of guilt when losing it, which undoubtedly contribute to the prolongation of violent relationships over time". (Vázquez & Castro, 2008, p. 734).

As a result, patriarchal history is transformed into "second nature" and, immediately after, cultural arbitrariness becomes natural. From the moment we are born, culture imposes norms and behaviors appropriate to the sex and condition with which we come into the world (Butler, 2006). At that time, a new reproduction of inequitable behavioral rules begins. Each gender begins to carry a backpack that implicitly contains infinite guidelines on violence and inequity. Within disciplinary societies, Michel Foucault differentiates between sex and sexuality, since the latter is a power device that stereotypes and demonizes sex in its broadest sense: "Sexuality is something that we ourselves create (...) We must understand that with and through our desires, new forms of creation are established.

Sex is not a fatality, it is a possibility of accessing a creative life" (Foucault, 1999, p. 417).

Referring to society's androcentric perspective, Pierre Bourdieu (1998) notes that this is established as impartial, which, sustained by division of sex, has no need to be legitimized through discourses. "A symbolism is attributed to the different sexes, a symbolism that is perceived as almost natural, but, instead, it is something that comes from a social construction" (Blanco, 2014, p. 4).

The gender system makes it possible to understand a model of society in which biological dissimilarities between men and women are projected as social, political or economic inequalities, with women being the most disadvantaged (Rubin, 1975). The aforementioned elements contribute to the construction of universal structures that organize human behaviors and sociocultural practices focused on differentiation between men and women (Bourdieu, 2000a) and end up configuring two classes of people: women, who have developed as such because they have a shared and consensual conceptualization of what it means to be a woman; and men, who express themselves as such under the same prism. An example of this is that society currently tends to emphasize authority, autonomy and self-sufficiency as characteristic elements of hegemonic masculinity, while idealized femininity is related to the satisfaction of men's needs and desires (Connell, 1995).

The roots that sustain the differences that have been historically developed around gender stereotypes are a product of the patriarchal model with which our culture has been formed. Society's political, economic and social spheres hide long traditions of male chauvinism, a habitus that has relegated the role of women to being the least significant in the social scale. Simone de Beauvoir observed that the education of women is completely different to that of men, as it is focus on subordination and a permanent state of immanence.

This evidences the presence of traditionally feminine attributes such as modesty, pride and extreme delicacy which, in the author's words, "are - in a certain sense – defects acquired through socialization, born as a result of acquired dependence" (Beauvoir, 1999). The femininity to which women are relegated is projected from Beauvoir's times to our times, where new generations express themselves on social media by demonstrating the obvious influence of their respective gender stereotypes, which produces:

"highly sexualized self-presentations through both aliases and images. The aliases reflect a gendered pattern of active/passive sexual roles in which boys indicate what they can do to girls (according to traditional attraction models). Through photographs, boys portray themselves in active poses, placing special importance on showing body parts that convey strength (torso, muscles), while girls focus on beauty and intimacy, through cleavage, legs, lips, back and shoulders" (Puente et al., 2015, p. 165).

Male domination highlights the need to look beyond the apparent, because even though we can now recognize the explicit marks of violence between genders inherited from patriarchal culture, there is also invisible violence that is intrinsic in social structures and the unconscious. This type of violence has the same potential force as acts of violence that are easy to recognize, because it emerges from the foundations of our social structures. We learn to legitimize it from the moment we are born, which means that it is almost impossible to perceive. Vázquez and Castro remind us of the importance of observing how society teaches us to legitimize ourselves as men and women, since studying this phenomenon - especially among young people - allows us to analyze:

"the genesis of inequalities in couple relationships, the ways in which learned gender determinations are put into practice

beginning in childhood, as well as the degree to which adolescents and teenagers are willing to play by these gender rules" (Vázquez & Castro, 2008, p. 716).

This gives rise to the phenomenon of power dynamics, where men naturally have intellectual, physical, emotional, political, economic and social advantages, while women should find their personal fulfillment by satisfying men's expectations. Although we can see that some gender gaps have diminished, there are still infinite ways of exercising violence "between the lines". This is why Bourdieu stresses the need to make the aforementioned values explicit, so that - once they are discovered - it will be possible to break down symbolic violence:

> "muffled violence, insensitive and invisible to its own victims, which is essentially exercised through the purely symbolic paths of communication and knowledge or, more precisely, of ignorance or, ultimately, of feeling" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 12).

The low level of awareness of the phenomenon described by the author is exemplified in cases in which young people do not notice the contextual factors that precede episodes of violence, despite the fact that:

> "the main factors that influence violent behavior are of a social nature. These factors are not usually taken into account when it comes to defining violence, which focuses more on its manifestations and consequences than on the factors prevailing in a society that may influence the occurrence of these phenomena" (García-Villanueva, De la Rosa-Acosta & Castillo-Valdés, 2012, p. 507).

Bourdieu points out that the achievements of feminist movements fail to address the basic problem, which is that patriarchal society is perpetuated through its actions in different symbolic mechanisms:

> "If in the past women were explicitly conceived of as inferior,

and there was no problem in contrasting supposed male intelligence to the supposed intellectual deficiency of women. Nowadays, this open and direct contempt for the feminine is presented as politically incorrect, which means that this same contempt has to be filtered in a disguised way through implicit mechanisms. The result is that androcentric values are perpetuated in one way or another (Acosta, 2012, p. 250).

The objectification of women, the subjugation of their bodies, the hypersexualization of girls at an early age, verbal, psychological, physical and cyber harassment, lower wages, difficulties in health coverage, obstetric violence, the validation of adolescent girls based on aesthetics, and many other cultural expressions are modes of violence established by male domination, a phenomenon that feminist movements seek to eradicate.

6. Social networks as a space for gender (counter) hegemony

Based on the above, we can assume that patriarchal traits are transferred to these new communicative spaces. Thus, the Internet can be considered an interactional universe where intergender violence is constant, and in which symbolic mechanisms that threaten equality can be made visible. This is because the online space is no longer only presented as a material object or as an end in itself, but also as a representation:

> a symbolic space with mediating and crosscutting capacity to contain a multitude of spaces, times, relations, institutions and relationships that constitute our everyday life. This plurality allows other meanings to operate in a paradigmatic way with the concept of the Internet (Puente et al., 2015, pp. 156- 157).

It is important to ask whether social media is a

formation space as transcendent as school or the family in which male domination is exercised permanently (Bourdieu, 1998). If this is the case, the Internet can be considered a platform where this hegemony could either face obstacles or continue its historical legacy. Bourdieu agrees with this hypothesis when referring to the socializing media because the Internet - as a socializing agent - has the capacity to maintain the status quo of machismo, achieving a permanent state of female subordination. Acosta summarizes this re-reading of Bourdieu in the following manner:

> "This means that through symbolic violence, at an unconscious level, women are expelled from positions of authority and credibility. They are openly ridiculed and, as a consequence, their demands are reduced to mere whims or childish tantrums. It is in this inertial manner that everyone tends to perform all of the acts assigned to gender through the so-called Pygmalion effect, i.e., women and men will act on the basis of what is socially expected of them" (Acosta, 2012, pp. 261-262).

Patriarchy and its intrinsic modes of aggression filter into the information society, using technologies and applications to deposit their expressions. The way in which young people experience interpersonal relationships on social media is mediated by the macho tradition, by the concept of romantic love that makes its way into the online space and reveals precisely those differences that Pierre Bourdieu warned about.

The repercussions of this way of conceiving romantic relationships have been so transcendent in the perpetuation of male dominance that they were rejected by feminist theories during the 20th century. This was due to the social role played by romantic love as a tool of domination, interpersonal submission, socio-cultural control and patriarchal disciplining to influence and construct people's emotions and feelings, particularly women and men.

This paradigm is presented as the basis for many expressions of violence and "macho micro-behaviors" (Bonino, 2004)[2] that today's young people are reproducing both online and offline.

In this scenario, women - girls, adolescents and young women - find their personal satisfaction in the satisfaction of the other, in total surrender, passionately demonstrated love, depersonalization and loss of privacy, as well as the acceptance of control and jealousy. The permanence of their relationship justifies any behavior that occurs within it. Beginning in childhood, people are taught to feel and act in the framework of the roles of the dominant and the dominated, putting - in the case of women - their bodies and emotions at the service of submission, and in the case of men, fulfilling the role of emotional, physical, intellectual and political strength.

Blanco notes how cultural phenomena such as the Violetta series and the Twilight Saga[3] perpetuate and legitimize the myths of romantic love, where "in more or less explicit ways, sexist clichés are enhanced, women's submission and surrender are eroticized, and aggressiveness and dominance in men are enhanced" (Blanco, 2014, p. 14).

The online landscape seems to faithfully reflect reality and even exacerbate certain conduct, as permanent connectivity produces behaviors that include control, violations of privacy, harassment, psychological violence, and accompanying threats. Thus, macho micro-behaviors include "why are you friends with your ex on social media?", "who are you chatting to?", "give me your Facebook password", "why are you online so late?", as well as expressions of explicit violence such as public messages denigrating the other - or direct messages that contain explicit violence – that perpetuate the hegemonic domination model:

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2   The author Luis Bonino developed the concept of macho micro-behaviors to refer to actions that abuse the trust and credibility of women while hiding men's true desire to dominate. These actions are more common than people think and, in the end, are close to a type of traditional sexism that is part of daily life.

3   Series and movies that were successful worldwide in which the romantic love myth is explicitly expressed.

"People who exercise violence through social media, and on the Internet in general, use the anonymity, speed and personal content of 'online communities' (photos, videos, personal data such as telephone, email, city, etc.) to extort, threaten or mock their victims with just a keystroke and without anyone being able to see them" (Blanco, 2014, p. 16).

A study examining the behavior of young people on the Internet (Estébanez, 2012) confirmed that there is a significant difference between men and women in their perceptions of the need for relationship boundaries They tend to confuse controlling behavior as a sign of love, and not as control, which can act as a gateway to more explicit forms of violence:

> Sometimes it goes from controlling behavior to online violence while the couple continue their relationship, such as public humiliations (publication of humiliating photos, or comments that try to ridicule her), and threats ("if you leave me, I will publish the photos that you and I took"), which when the relationship ends are actually manifested through the publication of intimate photos or videos on her social media accounts, or online harassment (sending her constant messages through social media even though she doesn't answer, or continuing to harass her on all her networks)" (Estébanez, 2012, p. 4).

Another study on adolescent online behavior observed that:

> "about 30% of the population in the study reported that they had controlled or been controlled by their partner in terms of who they have as friends or chat to on social media, the messages that they receive on WhatsApp and the photographs they have on their phones. This is generally mutual between the two young people who form the couple (even though it doesn't have to be mutual, we have seen that this is generally the case)

(...) 20% of young women and 30% of young men reported that they had been subjected to some kind of threat, insult or humiliation on social media" (Blanco, 2014, pp. 12-14).

This is how adolescents can find themselves in oppressive relationships where "the control exercised over the partner is justified by the feeling of love" (González & Santana, 2001 in Estébanez, 2010, p. 49). The previously described scenario - inequalities and different forms of violence are socially legitimized - can be explained in part by the full presence and validity of the discourse of romantic love among young people. The situation of young women trying to live up to myths such as being the perfect woman at all times, hypersexualization, personal fulfillment with finding "true love", the premise that love conquers all, jealousy as a sign of love and other vices of patriarchal relationships was identified in the majority of romantic relationships, especially in the initial stage of adolescence (Blanco, 2014).

This conceptualization - erroneous and unequal - where controlling your partner is considered a sign of love, may constitute the first link to gender violence that is completely unnoticed by the couple.

This demonstrates how forms of control and violent and intimidating situations are "digitalized". "Online" violence, which is more tenuous and goes more unnoticed - due to the symbolic mechanisms postulated in Bourdieu's perspective - becomes a forced situation that can potentially be present 24 hours a day through social media.

However, young people do not seem to realize that all of these behaviors are nothing more than expressions of symbolic violence, since, as Estébanez observed in his study, adolescents tend to deny and justify situations of violence:

> "this was the main argument used by young women to downplay the seriousness of their boyfriends' behavior: 'If you don't pay attention to him, then it's not violence', while at the same time normalizing the

control and jealousy expressed by their boyfriends based on habituality (Estébanez, 2012, p. 2).

Although society has made progress with overcoming a few gender inequalities - the most basic and notorious - the biggest asymmetries persist. As Bourdieu reminds us, it is not enough to become aware of the mechanisms and behaviors of symbolic violence that we observe and experience on a daily basis because this type of hegemony is incredibly difficult to eradicate. This is why it is necessary to create strategies that, with the same tenacity and effectiveness, change the traditional sociocultural order, starting with the way in which dominant political structures are conceived and organized, as well as the macho micro-behaviors that are rooted in our unconscious.

In this social fabric, the online world presents itself as an ideal space to - at least - begin to be transparent and scale up reflection about the hardships that patriarchy generates, with the goal of encouraging transformation Although young people - called digital natives - generally seem to reproduce the existing patriarchal system, and even exacerbate it online, we cannot ignore the potential that this scenario has for reformulating the ideologies that seek to achieve intergender relational equity.

7. Final thoughts

As has happened throughout history, new communicative spaces - that are now digital - are configured scenarios where violent expressions continue to exist. The effective and uncontrolled mass impact of the Internet makes it an ideal medium for perpetuating gender hegemony.

This phenomenon occurs because sexual stereotypes and symbolic violence between men and women form part of the foundations that support the pillars of society and can be found at school, at home, in the supermarket, in the health system, on the street, in advertising, on television, on the radio, in colors, and in life itself. Although the Internet presents itself as an opportunity for democratization,

opening and facilitating debate to shine a light on patriarchal vices, this does not seem to be enough to generate sociocultural changes.

We must recognize that progress has been made in the area of gender inequality, but as stated by Bourdieu, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, among others. there is a need to go beyond what is apparent. It is urgent that young people make changes to their daily actions, how they think about relationships and the mechanisms through which love is expressed. Currently, traditional actions in these areas kill hundreds of people every day, many of whom are women, while a significant number - who are just as relevant - do not identify with the norms that have been legitimized for each gender.

We are faced with the need to design symbolic strategies that are capable of transforming the mechanisms that produce social inequity. It is essential that we impose forms of organization and collective action that are capable of transforming the state and the legal institutions that contribute to perpetuating this situation:

> "a truly relational challenge to relationships based on domination between men and women, as established in all social spaces and subspaces. This won't just occur just in the family, but also at school, at work, in the bureaucratic universe and in the media. This will demolish the phantasmal image of an 'eternal feminine' to more clearly highlight the persistence of the domination-based relationship structure between young men and women, which is goes beyond the substantial differences between the genders in terms of historical precedents and positions in the social space (Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 126-127).

This is a difficult task. If we begin to overcome inequality, it will probably bear fruit in the lives of our grandchildren. So that we can witness this reality, we need to develop new ways of communicating and use communication channels in a more effective way to convey expressions with new meanings that are focused on respect for others, trust and

reducing the desire to control, thus moving towards gender equity.

If language creates realities, then communication must be able to generate the necessary rupture to disfigure existing gender roles. Jealousy, control, the objectification of women, the hypersexualization of girls, and the pressure on boys to show their strength and virility, are all vices that new generations should learn to recognize and then discard from their ways of relating and being in the world.

However, what has happened until now shows us that in digital culture, gender violence has been reformulated, adopting new forms of expression. Due to its normalization, it is still present in everyday life. Once again we can attest that this type of violence is scattered across all areas of our society, sometimes with a more obvious presence and sometimes imperceptible to our eyes.

Although the current context does not seem very encouraging, the Internet, social media - and all the new communicative realities that young people are experiencing - should be used to contribute to a paradigm shift. For those of us who are aware of this situation, we need to increase transparency and raise awareness about the infinite expressions of normalized violence. In this way, we will - at the very least - confront the permanence of sexism and possibly avoid some of the bitter and disastrous consequences that gender violence brings with it.

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