

# Media humiliation of the suitors in “Mujeres y Hombres y Viceversa” from the gender-based double discourse of its actors

## *La humillación mediática de los pretendientes en “Mujeres y Hombres y Viceversa” a partir del doble discurso de género de sus actores*



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### **Abstract:**

Reality shows provide learning based on real models as a source of entertainment. We aim to study the media articulation of the discourse concerning love, conquest, and sexuality based on the analysis of a longitudinal sample composed of 22 programs

### **Resumen:**

*Los programas de telerrealidad ofrecen al sujeto un aprendizaje basado en modelos reales en clave de entretenimiento. A partir del análisis de una muestra longitudinal de 22 programas de “Mujeres y Hombres y Viceversa” se pretende estudiar la articulación mediática*

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of *Mujeres y Hombres y Viceversa*. The results demonstrate that although both men and women are widely criticized, especially regarding their behaviour and personality, men are judged simultaneously more positively than women. The program shows a double discourse, which despite being articulated by the direction in a way that seems politically correct, is based on humiliation and masks an articulation fraught with microsexism.

**Keywords:**

Dating show; Reality show; Media Humiliation; Media discourse; Gender discourse.

*del discurso sobre el amor, la conquista y la sexualidad. Los resultados muestran que, si bien tanto hombres como mujeres son ampliamente criticados, especialmente sobre su conducta y personalidad, a los hombres se le valora de forma simultánea con más comentarios positivos que a las mujeres. El programa adolece de un doble discurso que pese a articularse por parte de la dirección del programa bajo la corrección política, tiene como base la humillación y enmascara una articulación plagada de micromachismos.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Dating Show; Reality Show; Humillación mediática; Discurso mediático; Discurso de género*

## 1. Introduction

TV programmes which centre on the search for love have proliferated in recent years, both at an international level and in Spain. The programme that could be considered as the paradigm of the format in our country is *Mujeres y Hombres y Viceversa*<sup>1</sup> due to its number of years on TV, success, and representativeness. It is produced by Magnolia TV and has been broadcasted uninterruptedly on *Telecinco* since June 2008. MYHYV is based on the supposed search for love between young people of different sexes, who have voluntarily entered the program in order to find a partner. In the format, adapted from the original Italian one *Uomini e donne*, the programme's participants are divided into two main profiles, the so-called *tronistas*, and the suitors. The former –*tronista*– is known as this because he/she occupies a metaphoric throne, which grants them full decision-making power.

The programme revolves around the *tronista*, who has a group of suitors of the opposite sex at his/her disposal. The *tronista* must choose from the suitors after getting to know them on dates on and off camera, challenges, and encounters on the set; the suitors aim is to win his/her heart. The ultimate goal of the program is the search for love, this is accomplished when the *tronista* chooses one of the suitors as his/her partner, together they leave the program to begin a relationship off the TV set, and another throne takes over. It is usual for the new couple to appear on the following programmes to discuss how their relationship is going off the programme, creating a massive following for former *tronistas* and suitors and as a result their subsequent trajectories, which usually serves to feed the contents of the channel.

On the other hand, the throne can be finalized hastily if (a) the *tronista* is left without suitors due to expulsion or abandonment; or (b) the *tronista* decides to abandon or is sent off the program for breaking the rules. These rules are the same both for *tronistas* and suitors and are based on the prohibition of having physical contact with each other off camera and the inability to have a partner or sporadic relationships while they remain on the programme. The failure to fulfil these basic rules results in the direct expulsion of the offender, although this can be pardoned by the *tronista* or the programme's direction.

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1 In the text, from now on, MYHYV.

The presenter and host Emma García has represented the programme's direction and its editorial line since its first broadcast. Secondary figures complete the dynamic of the programme such as love advisors and accomplices. The former is seated next to the *tronistas*, where they give them their advice and opinion about everything that happens concerning their passage to the throne. On the other hand, the accomplices are usual collaborators on the program, whose primary function is to disclose information about the suitors' private and public life beyond the program so as to ensure that they comply with the rules. Additionally, they can freely express their opinion about everything that occurs on the throne, they attempt to reveal secrets so that the *tronista* can be aware of what suitors do off camera, this information is usually a morbid element used for fuelling controversy and increasing public interest.

The program premiered on Spanish screens on June 9, 2008, since then it has been broadcasted continuously from Monday to Friday, each program lasting 75 minutes; its age rating is +12. The programs are presented in the format of a pseudo-live show, alternating between male and female thrones, usually with two *tronistas* per throne, each one with its respective suitors.

MYHYV strengthens the symbolic imaginary of what someone must or can do to arouse love in their object of desire and make it reciprocal. The media is one of the most powerful tools for the creation of our social reality through which to consolidate rules and social norms, stereotypes, and punishment and surveillance tools. They are a mechanism for articulating discourse and a vehicle for the legitimization of certain conduct and behaviour that (re)produces a hegemonic discourse consumed daily by the society, thus filtering this entire collective imaginary to the social body, allowing it take root in day-to-day life. This study aims to examine the stereotyped image generated by MYHYV of the conditions in which to successfully win somebody's heart, based on the main actors' discourse and the elements of the suitors which are evaluated positively and/or negatively.

## 2. Theoretical framework

For both social constructionism and symbolic interactionism, which are theoretical tendencies considered to be inherent in the interpretative perspective of communication (Rodrigo, 2001), reality is the product of continuous creation through the interrelation between different social actors (Blumer, 1982; Searle, 1997; Berger and Luckmann, 2011). Currently, the media is undoubtedly the largest source of discourse, whether they be the so-called traditional ones or the new channels of communication. If we are to examine the third model of the effects theory; the return on the powerful effects under limited conditions, we can understand the media as a vehicle for the creation and consolidation of the social reality, having a marked normative component (Noelle-Neumann, 1973).

This model is supported by constructionism and questions the weakness of the effects proposed by previous models (Klapper, 1960). At the same time, it accepts that the media are entities with the capacity to shape individuals in the long-term, their social relationships and their way of interrelating with reality due to the media's omnipresence and degree of cumulation. The media provides the individual with a constant series of discursive tools through their role of articulation (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), which strengthens their symbolic imaginary of rules and social codes. Whereas regarding symbolic interactionism, they shape the *Self* while confronting the *Generalized other* in the media.

Therefore, the media must be considered as collaborators in the construction of personal identity by taking on a socializing role (Giddens, 1997; Thompson, 1998) from positions as authority figures (Ericson *et al.*, 1989). The destabilisation of the self in a postmodern scene which is discursively fragmented (Gergen, 1992), the uncertainty of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2009), or the sensation of omni-crisis in the global risk society (Hardt and Negri, 2005; Beck, 2009), increase the media's power and its effects when faced with the subjects' needs for an articulated discourse. They show them who they can and/or must be, how they should act in the presence of the rest, and what is expected of them.

Vicarious learning (Bandura, 1982; Bandura and Walters, 1963) resulting from this entire process implies that the individual internalises what is and is not viewed favorably by society in determined situations. The media propose a series of conducts, behaviours, and opinions within a set catalogue to the individual, these are expressed in an exemplary way, using a corresponding punishment or reward. According to Guattari and Rolnik (2006), the exact role of some contemporary media is to be one of the many “collective facilities,” implying that they are a tool for social anchoring by means of an extension of power. This normative dimension inherent in the discourse is conveyed through the media's ability to shape the subject while anchoring it to the social body. This learning reduces uncertainty through information integration strategies and is broadcasted, consumed, and processed through symbolic plastic models that propose an identity configuration based on social codes of adaptation, which are shared through media (Fiske and Neuberg, 1990).

The television genre known as Reality Show is usually translated as *telerealidad* in Spanish, or the term “*espectáculo de lo real*” (Menéndez, 2016: 230). Although it can be divided into different subgenres, it encompasses “all those contemporary media manifestations in which what is real is substituted by fiction or confused with it” (Campos, 2016: 33). Perales (2011: 121) defines the genre more precisely as those “shows where cohabitation between non-professional actors who react spontaneously try to outdo and survive their opponents through constant competition and are exposed to the gaze of strategically placed cameras.” Reality Shows are the evolution from Paleotelevision to Neotelevision (Eco, 1986: 200), the cameras stop coming out to find what is happening in the real world to allow reality in television to (re)produce and (re)create itself.

The Reality Show originated from the North American programme *American Family* (PBS, 1973), in which the Loud family was filmed for seven months. The format has since introduced new focuses, which revolve around specific elements such as confinement or survival, the search for talent or self-improvement, the participation of anonymous people or the inclusion of famous personalities, the use of the audience as a judge or the participation of experts on a jury. This fragmentation of the genre into different subgenres has led to a terminological constellation or “taxonomic cosmos” (Menéndez, 2016: 232) which includes terms such as Talk Show, Docu Show, Coaching Show, Talent Show or Dating Show, among others (Ramírez and Gordillo, 2013).

The dating show focuses on the search for a partner among its participants and constitutes a format that is on the rise. At present, dating shows include several diverse programmes, which range from simple flirting on a blind date, the search for a serious partner to serious competition for a marriage proposal (Zurbriggen and Morgan, 2006). It is a subgenre that has traditionally explored heterosexual relationships between a man and a woman, although there are increasingly more programmes that have opened up this prospect to homosexual relationships. On the whole, the premises of the

programmes in this subgenre usually lead to the construction and consolidation of gender stereotypes regarding sexuality, conquest, dates and how to be more desirable for the opposite sex, thus implying that they can “promote negative and limiting messages about relationships with partners” according to modelling theory (Bandura, 1982) or the moulding of subjectivity and social anchoring (Guattari and Rolnik, 2006).

The symbolic models that dating shows provide and through which social reality is (re)created based on punishment and reward do not have a strictly educational function but are solely a form of entertainment. However, this entertainment means that a great part of learning by imitation is based on real models (Cuesta *et al.*, 2012), which can show the audience how to manage in specific situations in order to be socially rewarded or punished through indirect experience. Furthermore, according to authors such as Potter (2016) when the media construct the social reality and model the self, its power and effects increase precisely because they are transferred by “real people” and not actors.

Many studies critical of reality shows as a genre, and by extension, the dating show subgenre, have been carried out. According to Gardyn (2001), its rise is not due to the value of its content but the fact that it is a cheap product at an economic and production level. According to Reiss and Wiltz (2004), it is a genre that promotes models and codes with questionable social validity; for Kaminer (2000) it encourages the culture of exhibitionism and voyeurism, and for Mendible (2007) it revolves around the contests’ or participants’ humiliation by way of public redemption before being able to vie for victory. However, the criticism that seems most interesting to us is that which can be found in Baudrillard’s pioneering texts, based on his notions of hyperreality and simulation (Baudrillard, 1980, 2008).

According to the French sociologist, the aim of the reality genre would be none other than a “tremor of the real” (Baudrillard, 2008: 59) in transit towards the hyperreal, a scenario where there are no referents upon which to construct a discourse since the simulation came before the event. Therefore, what is broadcasted on television screens during Reality Shows would be none other than an illusion due to the presence of a camera. Regarding the programme about the Louds, Baudrillard states it as no longer dealing with truth nor lies in the old sense of media’s adaptation to reality, but rather a paradox enclosed within the utopia of the search for what is real in a simulated world (Baudrillard, 2008). However, if we are to consider that the ontological problems of what is real and its supposed media equivalent, it is therefore a possible way from which to address reality shows. This paper focuses on the ensuing reality of the media product and the construction of a media discourse, without entering into whether it deserves to be called real in the Lacanian sense of the term since the suitors experience it as real.

Despite the specific gravity of the Mediaset programme as a television phenomenon and model of the genre in the audiovisual ecosystem in our country, it has previously barely been an applied or theoretical object of investigation. Studies such as Cuesta *et al.* (2012) or Irigoyen’s (2016) are an exception in this academic void. These prior studies are focused on the influence MYHYV has on the codes of conduct mainly for adolescents from a constructionist perspective (Cuesta *et al.*, 2012). They also centre on the differences in gender stereotypes associated with love and conquest based on the insults and verbal aggression in the programme (Irigoyen, 2016). Accordingly, this study focuses on the analysis of the elements valued positively and/or negatively by the symbolic actors as a vehicle for the social media construction of the amorous conquest.

In particular, we examine the image of an idealized love conquest, which MYHYV transmits, as well as whether there are differences according to the gender of the person who intends to win the *tronista's* heart. Additionally, we explore the relative importance of physical, behavioural, and identity characteristics of the representations of the people considered as good and bad suitors. In this sense, this study aims to respond to the following specific questions:

- What image does the programme MYHYV transmit about love conquests?
- Are the suitors mainly evaluated positively or negatively?
- Are there different patterns according to the dimensions that are being evaluated?
- Are there different patterns according to the suitors' gender?
- In what dimensions are the evaluations stated by the different actors of the programme centred?

### 3. Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was used based on content analysis and the subsequent analysis of the distributions of value judgments made about the suitors in the programme HYMYV. The material analysed was a sample of entire episodes of the mentioned dating show. A variation of the constructed week (Krippendorff, 1990) was used as a sampling method, an approach that consists in selecting the episode broadcasted one day of the first week of a determined period, later the broadcast from the second day of the second week and thus consecutively until the end of the desired period.

In this research, the first entire episode broadcasted each month was selected, provided that it fulfilled the usual dynamic of the programme<sup>2</sup>. The sample comprises a temporary period from June 2015 to March 2017. In this sense, 22 entire episodes were analysed from the programme (see Table 1), encompassing an extensive interval of time, different thrones, *tronistas*, suitors, and various plots. This approach included 11 male *tronistas* and 11 female ones, therefore avoiding a biased gender sample, as well as possible biases from individual characteristics of a determined *tronista* or the specific dynamic that a particular throne had had.

The units of analysis were any of the meaningful phrases that the actors on the programme uttered, which included some value judgments about the suitors, whether they were positive or negative evaluations. Among the entire 22 episodes of the programme, a total of 945 assessments were extracted for analysis. The researchers classified each one of the units of analysis according to three criteria (1) valence of the assessments, whether positive or negative; (2) the gender of the suitors about whom the evaluation is being made, whether men or women, and (3) the actor that makes the assessment, whether *tronista*, presenter, rival, advisor, or others<sup>3</sup>. Afterwards the researchers classified the units of analysis according to the dimension of the suitor who was judged, assigning each evaluation one of the following dimensions and sub-dimensions: (1) physical appearance, including (1a) body and (1b) image and style; (2) behavioural, including (2a) the behaviour towards

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2 Only on one occasion did we dismiss the first broadcast of the month and choose to include the next broadcast. The episode number 1964 (01/04/2016) has been substituted by number 1965 since the former focused on Ruth's dramatic farewell and her problematic abandonment of the throne.

3 Occasional guests who have been asked what their opinion is and usually form part of the programme's world such as former *tronistas*, or from the channel's world in order to exploit different sensationalist plots as winners on realities.

the *tronista*, (2b) the behaviour towards the programme, and (2c) the behaviour towards oneself; and (3) identity, including (3a) personality and (3b) abilities.

**Table 1: Episode, broadcast date, and *tronistas* who comprise the sample.**

Program	Chapter	Date of issue	<i>Tronos</i>
1	1751	01/06/2015	(1) Manu (2) Labrador
2	1773	01/07/2015	(1) Stacy (2) Annais
3	1796	03/08/2015	(1) Manu (2) Labrador (3) Alejandro
4	1817	01/09/2015	(1) Jenni (2) Julen
5	1839	01/10/2015	(1) Ruth (2) Stacy
6	1860	02/11/2015	(1) Ruth (2) Stacy
7	1881	01/12/2015	(1) Ruth (2) Stacy
8	1903	05/01/2016	(1) Ruth (2) Elisa
9	1921	01/02/2016	(1) Labrador (2) Alba (3) Lucas
10	1942	01/03/2016	(1) Labrador (2) Alba (3) Lucas
11	1964	02/04/2016	(1) Iván (2) Sofía
12	1984	02/05/2016	(1) Iván (2) Sofía
13	2006	01/06/2016	(1) Labrador (2) Iván
14	2028	01/07/2016	(1) Jenni (2) Hugo (3) Sofía
15	2049	01/08/2016	(1) Labrador (2) Iván
16	2074	06/09/2016	(1) Jenni (2) Ana Anginas
17	2093	03/10/2016	(1) Iván (2) Suso
18	2113	02/11/2016	(1) Ana Anginas (2) Suso
19	2134	02/12/2016	(1) Xavi (2) Suso (3) Diego
20	2154	02/01/2017	(1) Claire (2) Rym
21	2175	01/02/2017	(1) Rym (2) Marta
22	2193	01/03/2017	(1) Diego (2) Fabio

Source: Author

Once all the evaluations were categorized, a frequency analysis was carried out which addressed the different registered criteria. Additionally, different Chi-square tests were applied using the SPSS.22 programme to contrast the homogeneity of proportions or the independence of the variables of interest through contingency tables, so as to answer the previously raised research questions. The level of significance accepted was 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) and in appropriate cases the coefficient Cramers'  $V$  as an indicator of the effect size was calculated.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. General Findings

The researchers identified, analysed and classified a total of 945 value judgments expressed by different actors on the programme MYHYV, regarding various aspects of the suitors. On the one hand, we have found a more significant number of assessments of negative valence with regard to total assessments (Positive: 33.2%; Negative: 66.8%;  $\chi^2 = 106.338$ ,  $p < .001$ ). On the other hand, significant differences were not found concerning the total number of evaluations expressed according to the suitors' gender (Men: 52.8%; Women: 47.2%;  $\chi^2 = 2.972$ ,  $p = .085$ ).

By taking both classification criteria combined, we can confirm how the valence of the evaluations expressed, and the assessed suitor's gender are significantly related to each other, although to a low degree ( $\chi^2 = 10.296$ ,  $p = .001$ ;  $V = .104$ ). As we can see in Table 2, the suitors of both genders tend to receive a similar absolute number of negative assessments (Men: 311; Women: 321;  $\chi^2 = 0.192$ ,  $p = .661$ ). However, if we pause on the positive assessments, we can see that men receive a greater number of compliments (Men: 189; Women: 125;  $\chi^2 = 13.045$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In this sense, although there seems to be a disproportionate tendency towards criticism regardless of gender, men tend to receive compliments more often than women.

Table 2: Valence of the assessments according to gender, the judged dimension, and the actor.

Classification criterion	Positive	Negative	Total
<i>Gender of the people evaluated</i>			
Men	189 (37.9%)	310 (62.1%)	499 (47.2%)
Women	125 (28.0%)	321 (72.0%)	446 (52.8%)
<i>Dimension evaluated</i>			
Physical appearance	60 (50.0%)	60 (50.0%)	120 (12.7%)
Body	39 (67.2%)	19 (32.8%)	58 (48.3%)
Image and style	21 (33.9%)	41 (66.1%)	62 (51.7%)
Behaviour	169 (35.1%)	313 (64.9%)	482 (51.0%)
Tronista	135 (50.6%)	132 (49.4%)	267 (55.4%)
Programme	18 (12.1%)	131 (87.9%)	149 (30.9%)
Him/Herself	16 (24.2%)	50 (75.8%)	66 (13.7%)
Identity	85 (24.8%)	258 (75.2%)	343 (36.3%)
Personality	66 (21.5%)	241 (78.5%)	307 (89.5%)
Abilities	19 (52.8%)	17 (47.2%)	36 (10.5%)

<i>Actors who made the evaluation</i>			
Tronista	144 (46.9%)	163 (53.1%)	307 (32.5%)
Rivals	6 (3.2%)	180 (96.8%)	186 (19.7%)
Presenter	49 (68.1%)	23 (31.9%)	72 (7.6%)
Advisors and accomplices	68 (25.3%)	201 (74.7%)	269 (28.5%)
Others	47 (42.3%)	64 (57.7%)	111 (11.7%)

Source: Author. Note. Positives:  $n = 314$ ; Negatives:  $n = 631$ .

## 4.2. Judged dimensions

The results obtained show that most of the evaluations made are related to the behaviour of the people judged, followed by identity evaluations and to a lesser extent, physical appearance (Behaviour: 51%; Identity: 36.3%; Appearance: 12.7%;  $\chi^2 = 211.740$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Each of these dimensions is developed below according to the elements that constitute them, the valence of the evaluations and the suitor's gender.

### 4.2.1. Physical Dimension

Most of the 120 judgements expressed about the suitors' physical appearance were made about women (Men: 40%; Women: 60%;  $\chi^2 = 4.800$ ,  $p = .028$ ). By analysing the valence of these judgments, we have verified how both types of evaluations about physical appearance are expressed with a similar frequency (Positive: 50%; Negative: 50%). This result is reproduced at this level of analysis by analysing the proportion of positive and negative evaluations according to the gender of the person being judged, both for men (Positive: 60.4%; Negative: 39.6%;  $\chi^2 = 2.083$ ,  $p = .149$ ), and women (Positive: 43.1%; Negative: 56.9%;  $\chi^2 = 1.389$ ,  $p = .239$ ).

Focusing on the elements of physical appearance, we have verified that actors make the same number of evaluations about bodies as the suitor's image (Body: 48.3%, Image: 51.7%). Taking gender into account at this new level of analysis, as can be seen in Table 3, the similarity in the proportion of positive and negative evaluations is partially maintained. Regarding the first element of the dimension, the body, we have found a significant relationship between gender and the valence of the evaluations ( $\chi^2 = 8.596$ ,  $p = .003$ ;  $V = .385$ ). With regard to the second element of the dimension, image and style, no evidence of such an association was found ( $\chi^2 = 0.193$ ,  $p = .661$ ;  $V = .056$ ). In this sense, men's bodies tend to be evaluated positively on most occasions (Positive: 88%; Negative: 12%;  $\chi^2 = 14.440$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, there are still criticisms and compliments that occur equally regarding women's bodies and both men's and women's image.

Table 3: Dimensions evaluated according to gender and the valence of the evaluations

Dimension evaluated	Evaluations towards men			Evaluations towards women		
	Positive	Negative	Contrast	Positive	Negative	Contrast
<i>Physical</i>	29 (60.4%)	19 (39.6%)	2.083	31 (43.1%)	41 (56.9%)	1.389
Body	22 (88%)	3 (12%)	14.440 ***	17 (51.5%)	16 (48.5%)	0.030
Image	7 (30.4%)	16 (69.6%)	3.522	14 (35.9%)	25 (64.1%)	3.103
<i>Behaviour</i>	110 (42%)	154 (58%)	7.333 **	59 (27%)	159 (73%)	45.872 ***

Tronista	88 (55%)	72 (45%)	1.600	47 (43.9%)	60 (56.1%)	1.579
Programme	14 (18.4%)	62 (81.6%)	30.316 ***	4 (5.5%)	69 (94.5%)	57.877 ***
Him/her	8 (28.6%)	20 (71.4%)	5.143 *	8 (21.1%)	30 (78.9%)	12.737 ***
Identity	50 (27%)	137 (73%)	40.476 ***	35 (22%)	121 (78%)	47.410 ***
Personality	41 (23%)	135 (77%)	50.205 ***	25 (19%)	106 (81%)	50.084 ***
Abilities	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	4.455 *	10 (40%)	15 (60%)	1.000

Source: Author. Note. Contrast =  $\chi^2$  test; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

These results must be nuanced based on the content of the comments made by different actors in the programme. In relation to the evaluation of bodies, although all the positive evaluations make reference to physical attractiveness, those directed towards men are somewhat more circumspect (e.g., “to have nice hair”, “to have beautiful eyes”, “to be hot”, or “to be a cutie”) than those directed towards women (e.g., “to have a nice bum”, “to have nice breasts”, “to look like a good girl” or “with that body it’s impossible to be ashamed”). Regarding image and style, the evaluations are usually focused on clothing (e.g., “to dress well,” “to look gay” or “to try hard to be a prince and end up looking like *Farruquito*”). Depending on the agent that makes the judgement, women’s clothing can be evaluated positively, especially when men make an evaluation (e.g., “to dress like a little princess”, “not to show off skin” or “today you’ve dressed really sexily, like the *tronista* likes”), or negatively when women judge other women (“you’re showing off your tits too much” or “let’s see if you cover up a little, you’ve got everything hanging out”). Other negative evaluations concerning women’s image focus on “looking older,” to be “too operated on” and “to be made out of plastic.”

#### 4.2.2. Behavioural Dimension

As we can see in Table 2 the actors in the programme make the most value judgments about the behavioural dimension, specifically concerning the behaviour that suitors show towards the *tronista* (55.4%), towards the programme itself (30.9%) and, to a lesser extent, towards themselves, including the personal decisions made off the programme (13.7%). On the whole, most of the evaluations related to this dimension are of negative valence (Positive: 35.1%; Negative: 64.9%;  $\chi^2 = 43.021$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This tendency in which negative criticisms prevail over positive ones especially occurs when the suitors behaviour towards the programme is judged (Positive: 12.1%; Negative: 87.9%;  $\chi^2 = 85.698$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as well as when the suitors’ behaviour towards themselves and their personal decisions are being judged (Positive: 24.2%; Negative: 75.8%;  $\chi^2 = 17.515$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The only behaviour that is valued positively and negatively with a similar frequency is towards the *tronistas* (Positive: 50.6%; Negative: 48.4%;  $\chi^2 = 0.034$ ,  $p = .854$ ).

According to the suitors’ gender, we can verify that the tendency towards negatively criticising the behaviour towards the programme and the behaviour towards oneself is maintained for both men and women (see Table 3). By analysing the proportion of negative judgements according to gender, we can confirm that both men and women receive a similar number of negative evaluations regarding their conduct towards the *tronista* (Men: 72; Women: 60;  $\chi^2 = 1.091$ ,  $p = .296$ ), towards the programme (Men: 62; Women: 69;  $\chi^2 = 0.374$ ,  $p = .541$ ) and towards themselves (Men: 20; Women: 30;  $\chi^2 = 2.000$ ,  $p = .157$ ). On the contrary, by analysing the positive judgements, we can verify that men receive a greater number of compliments than women both concerning their behaviour towards the *tronista* (Men: 88; Women: 47;  $\chi^2 = 12.452$ ,  $p <$

.001), and their behaviour towards the programme (Men: 14; Women: 4;  $\chi^2 = 5.556$ ,  $p = .018$ ). In this sense, while the suitors of both sexes receive a similar amount of negative criticism concerning their behaviour, men usually receive more positive evaluations than women.

The negative evaluations of the behavioural dimension focus on surrendering to the *tronsita* too soon (e.g., to be “obliging”, “easy”, that “they give their all, and they don’t even respect themselves” towards women; to be “orbiters” or “whipped” towards men), being on the programme to become famous and not for love (e.g., “do the challenges poorly”, “show little”, its “the fifth time you’ve been on here” or “make friends with each other”), and not maintaining their attention exclusively towards the *tronista* (e.g., “fool around with other men/women”). The positive evaluations, both towards men and women are focused on signs of affection and obedience to the *tronista*, as well as good behaviour on the programme and following all the rules since it implies “coming for love” or “being true.” In any case, there are certain differences in content according to the suitors’ gender. In this sense, when judging women “showing him your mobile so that he can read your *whatsapps* to prove that you don’t talk to other men”, “move so that you no longer live with other men and now only have female flatmates”, or “suffering is good because it shows that you care” were all evaluated positively. When judging men other types of comments were made, “being hard on the *tronista*,” “demanding respect” or “saying what you think without worrying about the consequences” were positively evaluated.

#### 4.2.3. Identity Dimension

According to the 343 evaluations in the identity dimension, we can verify that the actors in the programme express a similar number of evaluations for men and women (Men: 54.5%; Women: 45.5%;  $\chi^2 = 2.802$ ,  $p = .094$ ), which almost exclusively make reference to the suitors’ personality (Personality: 89.5%; Abilities: 10.5%;  $\chi^2 = 214.114$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and most of the evaluations are of negative valence (Positive: 24.8%; Negative: 75.2%;  $\chi^2 = 87.257$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As gathered in Table 2, the identity dimension is the one which presents a greater difference towards the constant criticism of the participant.

Focusing on the evaluations of personality, we have not found a significant relationship between valence and gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.789$ ,  $p = .374$ ;  $V = .051$ ). In this sense, we can verify that personality has mainly been evaluated negatively both for men and women (see Table 3). However, men still receive more compliments than women in absolute terms (Men: 41; Women: 25;  $\chi^2 = 3.879$ ,  $p = .049$ ), while suitors of both genders receive a similar amount of criticism (Men: 135; Women: 106;  $\chi^2 = 3.490$ ,  $p = .062$ ).

We have observed the absence of the mentioned tendency towards negative criticism regarding the valence of the evaluations about abilities, and we have found a significant association of moderate-intensity concerning gender ( $\chi^2 = 5.360$ ,  $p = .021$ ;  $V = .386$ ). In this sense, men’s abilities are usually evaluated almost exclusively in a positive way, while women’s abilities are assessed negatively and positively with a similar frequency (see Table 3). In this case, while the number of compliments is similar between genders (Men: 9; Women: 10;  $\chi^2 = 0.053$ ,  $p = .819$ ), women receive much more criticism than men (Men: 2; Women: 15;  $\chi^2 = 9.941$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

In this dimension we can find many insults, some of the more common ones made towards women are “false,” “chavette,” “liar,” “rude” “jealous” or “slut.” While for men the most common ones were “cocky,” “insecure,” “false,” “be full of yourself” or “wimp.” At the other end of the scale positive attributes for both men and women such as “romantic,” “fun” or “mature”

were gathered. In relation to abilities, we also found significant differences when establishing gender stereotypes that articulate a discourse about conquest and love. Women are positively assessed when they know how to “dance sexily” or “they sew their own costumes” and men when they know how to “sweet talk the *tronista*” or “steal a kiss because sometimes she’s prudish.”

### 4.3. Results According to the Actors

An analysis focusing on evaluations of the suitors made by the actors in the programme will be developed below. As can be seen in Table 2, according to the total number of evaluations, the most determinant and prominent actor is the *tronista* (32.5%), followed by the advisors and the accomplices (28.5%). According to the valence of the judgements about different actors, we can verify that the rivals and advisors usually express negative evaluations more often (Rivals: Positive: 3.2%, Negative: 96.8%,  $\chi^2 = 162.774$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Advisors: Positive: 25.3%, Negative: 74.7%,  $\chi^2 = 65.758$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The presenter is the only actor that makes more positive judgements than negative ones (Positive: 68.1%, Negative: 31.9%,  $\chi^2 = 9.389$ ,  $p = .002$ ), while the *tronistas* seem to make negative and positive judgements with a similar frequency (Positive: 46.9%, Negative: 53.1%,  $\chi^2 = 1.176$ ,  $p = .278$ ). The evaluations of each of the main actors involved are developed separately below, according to the different dimensions analysed and the suitors’ gender.

#### 4.3.1. *Tronistas*

As the reward of the programme is for the suitors to be the *tronistas*’ object of desire, their evaluations are one of the main sources of the articulation of the discourse. Their judgments especially effect and influence the suitors, since his/her success depends on how they are accepted from the throne. It seems that the *tronistas* do not dwell too much on evaluating the physical dimension since it only makes up 11.7% of the value judgments. Additionally, when the suitors’ physical appearance is judged, usually positive evaluations are made, both for men (100%) and women (84.2%).

The behavioural dimension is the most evaluated by the *tronistas*, amassing 59.9% of these actors’ evaluations on the programme. When *tronistas* are women evaluating the suitors’ behaviour, they usually make equally positive and negative assessments (Positive: 45.5%, Negative: 54.5%,  $\chi^2 = 0.818$ ,  $p = .366$ ). When the *tronistas* are men they usually assess women’s behaviour more negatively (Positive: 35.3%, Negative: 64.7%,  $\chi^2 = 7.353$ ,  $p = .007$ ). The tendency towards negative criticism is intensified when behaviour towards the programme is being evaluated, both when women judge men (Positive: 13.6%, Negative: 86.4%,  $\chi^2 = 11.636$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and men judge women (Positive: 4.2%, Negative: 95.8%,  $\chi^2 = 20.167$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, the identity dimension makes up 28.3% of the *tronistas*’ evaluations. We can confirm that female *tronistas* are the ones who make the most judgments about their suitors’ identity, even though equally positive and negative evaluations are expressed regardless of the suitors’ gender.

The most common criticism made by the *tronistas* towards the suitors comes from feeling ridiculed and normalizes jealous reactions (“you bookmarked one of her tweets, you know I can’t stand her”, “you don’t dance with me, and you dance with another girl”, or “you act cocky talking to all the other girls to stir me up and it works”). The male *tronistas* also need to be the centre of attention among the girls and demand exclusive attention, which also leads to possessive jealousy and control. Following these situations the *tronistas* always make the accusation of coming to the programme for fame,

not giving them the physical attention they require (“you’re not going to win my heart if you don’t cuddle up to me more”, “you should be happier after being given a date”, “don’t get angry if I get jealous, it’s because I like you (...) if I didn’t get jealous you should be worried” or “if you go out to party with another guy I already know what kind of girl you are”). On the other hand, the suitors are complimented for “getting on well with his mother”, “wanting to get married on the beach” or “wanting to have children”, while the male suitors are complimented for “wanting to focus on only one girl”, “stop being a party animal” or “never having cheated”.

#### 4.3.2. Rivals

As each suitor goes to the programme to win the *tronista*’s heart in order to be his/her partner, the rest of the suitors from the same throne become direct rivals. The tendency for these actors to criticize is maintained in the three evaluated dimensions, mainly identity (94 evaluations, 98.9% negative), followed by behavioural (70 assessments, 95.7% negative) and finally physical (22 evaluations, 90.9% negative). All the elements that make up the different dimensions analysed are a stage from which to continually attack their rivals, although personality is emphasized, negatively evaluated with a percentage of 98.9% or the behaviour towards the programme, with a negative percentage of 97.2%. In relation to the number of evaluations according to gender, we can confirm that female rivals make more value judgments than men (Women: 110; Men: 75;  $\chi^2 = 6.215$ ,  $p = .013$ ), in both cases, they are mainly negative.

With regard to the physical dimension, female rivals never value each other positively reaching 100% of negative evaluations both concerning body and image with comments such as “being ugly”, “having a big head”, “square faced” or “having roots.” The male suitors do not seem to focus their evaluations, nor their criticisms on this dimension, showing lower figures, despite this on the few occasions that they do criticise, noteworthy comments are made such as “dead face”, “coon”, “you look like fucking Forest Gump” or “you look like Ken, you look gay”.

In the behavioural dimension the male rivals’ criticisms focus on the suitors behaviour towards the *tronista* and the programme (e.g., “you don’t fight and give up quickly”, “not being a man and letting the programme outdo you” or “you’re a lap dog, you say yes to everything”), while the female rivals focus on this latter element (e.g., “you fight about everything except for the *tronista*”, “you did a shit challenge”, “the only thing you’re good at is turning them on” or “you’re making a laughing stock out of yourself just to be on TV”). The evaluations about the identity dimension focus on the rival’s personality as the central element. Here we have found numerous insults both among women (e.g., “pleb”, “stupid”, “fake”, “shit-stirrer” or “you are too well-known on the street”) as well as among men (e.g., “cocky beach dude”, “show-off”, “stupid”, “clown” or the all-rounder “unmanly”).

#### 4.3.3. Presenter

The presenter of the programme is another one of the main tools upon which the conquest discourse is articulated from the suitors’ evaluations. Although she focuses on conducting the programme and tries to downplay her function of giving her opinion of the rest of the actors, her speeches have a great impact as they imply listening to a dual power; her power and the direction of the programme’s, which is channelled through her. In all the dimensions judged by the presenter, there is a dynamic which is unique in the sample, in which positive evaluations prevail. The presenter places greater emphasis

on the behavioural dimension (44 evaluations, 68.2% positive), followed by the identity dimension (24 evaluations, 62.5% positive) and to a lesser extent the physical dimension (4 evaluations, 100% positive). The only sub-dimension where the criticism about the suitors' behaviour prevails is the behaviour towards themselves and decisions made outside the programme, with a percentage of 62.5% of negative evaluations. According to the presenter's evaluations, we have not found a significant relationship between valence and the evaluated suitors' gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.387$ ,  $p = .534$ ,  $V = .073$ ). The presenter's comments, however, articulate a very different discourse between sexes since the women are “pretty like a little princess” and the men are “very elegant”, the male suitors are reprimanded for “being boring” or “being uncultured” and the female suitors for being “too direct on the first day” or for “walking down the catwalk badly”.

#### 4.3.4. Advisors and Accomplices

Accomplices and advisors constitute a group of actors whose primary role on the programme is to liven up debate and present the suitors' most controversial aspects or secrets so as to unmask them, thus creating television moments. They are the counterpoint to the presenter despite being part of the programme and not having anything at stake, unlike the *tronistas* and the suitors. They are faced with the presenter's lack of freedom but can and must criticise any aspect that they want so as to carry out their function. Although their opinions are usually ignored and reprimanded by the suitors as they do not have the authority and power that the presenter has. Therefore, even though they can help the full articulation that is inferred from the programme, we must consider it as a secondary element and less powerful than the previous aspects.

Generally, more evaluations about men than women tend to be made (Men: 171; Women: 69;  $\chi^2 = 19.810$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Just as with rivals, negative evaluations are usually made about the three judged dimensions, namely, behaviour (141 evaluations, 69.5% negative), identity (104 evaluations, 80.8% negative) and physical appearance (24 evaluations, 79.2% negative). These high figures place the group made up of actors and accomplices as the suitors' most critical actor, followed by the suitors themselves when they act as rivals.

Concerning the behavioural dimension, we have found a significant relationship between gender and valence ( $\chi^2 = 7.897$ ,  $p = .005$ ;  $V = .237$ ). While there are no differences in the number of negative evaluations, men tend to receive more positive comments than women (Men 34; Women: 9;  $\chi^2 = 14.535$ ,  $p < .001$ ). With regard to the identity dimension, we have not found a significant relationship between gender and valence ( $\chi^2 = 0.317$ ,  $p = .573$ ;  $V = .055$ ), although men receive more negative comments than women (Men: 56; Women: 28;  $\chi^2 = 9.333$ ,  $p = .002$ ). In relation to the physical dimension, most of the comments concern the suitors' image, no comments about the women's bodies were found.

The advisors and the accomplices generally evaluate women negatively, criticising their behaviour towards the *tronista* and their way of winning his heart, based on comments such as “you kiss because you don't have any other means to win his heart”, “you seem very loose on the street” or “you're all over him too soon”. If they do otherwise, we find comments such as “don't avoid physical contact with your *tronista* or he'll think you don't like him.” Concerning personality, they are crushed with comments such as “despicable,” “you don't have any dignity” or “you don't have any self-esteem.” There is a great difference regarding the male suitors in this case, who are also targets of the advisor and accomplices who play a critical role in the programme, but the discursive content is totally different and not so humiliating. The male suitors

receive comments such as “you only know how to win her heart with presents”, “you don’t dare to take off your t-shirt and show off your abdominals”, “you seem more like a fan than a ladykiller” and the common ones “pay attention to other women” and “to be here just so you can be on television and not for the *tronista*”.

## 5. Conclusions

The results obtained allow us to respond to several of the research questions previously raised. First of all, the negative evaluations tend to have a more significant presence than the positive ones in the judgments made by most of the actors from the programme MYHYV. In line with Mendible’s (2014) and Menéndez’s (2016) academic papers, the suitors are humiliated publicly as part of the programme by way of media sacrifice before they win the redeeming prize. Therefore, the suitors’ lack of fighting spirit is not surprising although they are under constant criticism, since a media pact is established, exchanging fame and share of the viewing figures for the permission to be publicly humiliated through endless criticism and taunts.

Those that have been in the television business longer have embraced the pact, while the inexperienced still suffer in the face of the harassment they receive from the actors in the programme, especially from rivals and advisors. At which point, it is usual to hear veterans’ advice to the novices with statements such as “everybody is criticized here, you have to get used to it,” “don’t worry, they stir me up too” or “well, you know what to expect when you come here.” Those with more television experience, mainly the *tronistas*, deal with criticism better and although they can momentarily fall apart, they hold out and even fight back. Conversely, the novices do not show so much grit, and it is usual for many of them to end up crying on screen, they leave the set due to panic attacks or according to the suitors themselves ask for psychological help from the programme’s direction in order “to be able to endure the criticism”.

The humiliating treatment is not progressive, as if it were a crucial test to see who can withstand, or who is willing to endure it; the male and female suitors are confronted with this degrading dynamic from the very first day. The participants are not only evaluated negatively regarding their behaviour towards the *tronista* or other elements of the programme, but also allow this critical attitude to be extended to their personality, abilities, and past personal and present decisions concerning elements that have nothing to do with the programme. This routine of humiliation, which the suitors experience, is not only accepted but also strengthened by themselves, as they are the actors who are direct rivals of each other, they encourage a spiral of humiliation, and they attack their peers, reaching extreme limits. As would be expected, the rivals are the actors who have a higher percentage of negative evaluations.

The overwhelming tendency is direct criticism towards identity in the first instance and secondly towards behaviour, leaving physical appearance as the only dimension evaluated positively, albeit only for male suitors. If at some point these boundaries are crossed, this behaviour is condemned by the presenter and the rest of the actors. This is conveyed as an attempt at establishing false politeness regarding determined values, thus hiding an even greater humiliation of the subject. This could almost seem to be classified as the editorial line of the programme. It is strengthened by the *tronistas* since they present a high percentage of positive evaluations towards suitors concerning the physical dimension regardless

of whether they are men or women. Even when a new suitor has to be sent off, they try not to mention their attractiveness or lack of, even though it is the only element that they can evaluate as they do not know them at all.

In this sense, the presenter's speeches guide the double discourse the programme presents. They play to a desire to appear as refined content before public opinion and as a way to drop the impolite, male chauvinistic or reactionary tone encapsulated in the suitors' and collaborators' personal opinions. This double discourse presents the host as the voice of conscience or in the best case, as a high school teacher who should establish boundaries for the rest of the actors. In this sense, she asks them to be polite throughout the broadcast, to exert control even correcting them when they conjugate certain verbs incorrectly. This discursive schizophrenia is also revealed when political correctness forces certain limits to be established, which are ridiculously applied by the programme. Certain vocabulary such as “fuck”, “whore” or “I've fucking had enough” is censored, but a *tronista* is allowed to criticize a female suitor's conduct because she went to the cinema with a male friend as she should not meet with other men, she even apologizes and promises not to do it again for fear of being sent off the programme.

On other occasions, the presenter makes some comments that feign feminist proclamations for no reason whatsoever saying, for example, “girls can also do what they want” so that the public applauds, thus masking the latent degrading discourse for men and even more so for women. As a simulation, it aims to shake off *machismo*, which is the elephant in the room, exclusively through discourse and only occasionally, when the programme permits it. It applauds “*microsexism*” which consolidate and reproduce a distinction between genders surrounding love, sexuality, and even personality; these are fostered both by the male and female actors of the programme.

If the physical dimension seems like a taboo, the rest of the dimensions are not at all. The criticism towards the behavioural dimension is closely followed by the negative evaluations of the suitors' identity. This tendency to humiliate at all levels is still present, thus having an even greater impact on the suitors. The women are evaluated on more occasions and generally receive more criticism than compliments, most of the time regarding behavioural or identity dimensions. They receive negative and positive evaluations equally only concerning behaviour towards the *tronista* and their abilities. Moreover, there is no dimension where women receive more compliments than criticism, something which does occur when men's body and abilities are evaluated.

Although there are differences between the evaluations of male and female suitors, these differences are even more significant when they go beyond the mere analysis of frequency, when we dwell on the content of these evaluations. The male suitors are commonly discredited by most of the actors as “being unmanly.” A priori empty of all meaning, this statement can only be described as an insult in the world in which it is articulated, that is, based on the programme's discourse and values, which contemplate genders from a male chauvinistic and reactionary perspective. In the same sense, we must read other supposed criticisms towards women such as “being too masculine” or statements such as “at least I am a woman.” These statements project the programme's referents to the public and severely distort genders, their roles, and attributes.

The programme presents a series of desirable behaviours and features, whether physical or psychological, both for male and female suitors, although specific differences are found. It does not directly deal with whether an action is well done if

it is carried out by a man and poorly done if a woman does it or vice-versa, but with a subtler moulding regarding values associated with masculinity and femininity. MYHYV reproduces an exclusively monogamous and heterosexual love based on trust that ends up being control, surrender that ends up being submission, and sexual freedom that is never the same for men and women. The role reserved for the women is to need a man who is smarter than her to look after and stay by his side; a man who spoil her, who is understanding, but also “hard on her”. For the men, they must be fighters and independent, protective and providers, thus allowing them to be blunter and more demanding.

The programme attempts to present an equal relationship between its members which it later denies in the evaluations that strengthen and articulate the discourse. The media conquest results in an unequal relationship at several levels, one that is implicit in the rules of the programme and through which the *tronista* always has more power than the suitors. On the other hand, it is a somewhat understanding masculine power, protective, one in which stubbornness and jealousy are excused, as opposed to femininity that must always be reliable, attentive and sensual so as to retain the man. This inequality aims to be constantly masked behind a double discourse. It is articulated by the programme’s direction and surrounds the presenter who intends to be shown “on the cover” along with the name of the programme, MYHYV. The name of the show entices us to form a mental image of equality between men and women, although the actors deny this discursive content since they are always opting for humiliating the suitor.

We consider that the present study confirms the existing controversy surrounding the programme and its location in children’s time television and offers two interesting future lines of research. First of all, the humiliation of participants on dating shows and realities in general and its voluntary acceptance as part of the game and the reward. Secondly, the gender stereotypes that are constructed by the media in programmes related to love and sexuality and the effects that they can have on the public regarding vicarious learning and modelling, especially on adolescents who consume such content while searching for and constructing their identity.

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