



The Representation of Workingwomen in Spanish Television Fiction

La representación de las mujeres trabajadoras en la ficción televisiva española

 Dr. Charo Lacalle is Full Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) (rosario.lacalle@uab.es) (<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0024-6591>)

 Dr. Beatriz Gómez is Lecturer at the Universidad Internacional de la Rioja en Logroño (Spain) (beatriz.gomez@unir.net) (<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0557-528X>)

ABSTRACT

During the sixties and seventies the limited presence of women in the public sphere was reflected in the restricted repertoire of roles played by female characters in television fiction (mainly those of mothers and wives). The strengthening of the feminist movement in the following decades increased and diversified the portrayals of women in the workplace, and further encouraged academic research on the social construction of working women. Despite the relevance of female professionals in current TV shows, the importance of romantic relationships and sexuality has led to a decreasing number of studies on the subject. This article summarizes the results of a study on working women in Spanish TV fiction, part of a larger project on the construction of female identities. The research uses an original methodology that combines quantitative techniques and qualitative methods (socio-semiotics) to analyse the sample of 709 female characters. The results show a coexistence of the traditional stereotypes of working women in customer service and care-giving positions with those of highly skilled female professionals. However, the empowerment of women in positions of responsibility is often associated with a negative portrayal of the character, while the problems of reconciling family and work are systematically avoided.

RESUMEN

La reducida presencia de la mujer en la esfera pública durante los años sesenta y setenta se reflejaba en el limitado repertorio de roles (madre y esposa principalmente) que le atribuía la ficción televisiva. El impulso feminista de las décadas sucesivas estimuló las representaciones de los personajes femeninos en el ámbito laboral y la reflexión académica sobre la construcción social de la mujer trabajadora. Pero, a pesar de la relevancia del rol profesional en las protagonistas de la ficción actual, la relevancia de las relaciones sentimentales y de la sexualidad ha revertido en el reducido número de estudios sobre el tema. Este artículo sintetiza los resultados de un análisis de la mujer trabajadora en la ficción televisiva española, integrado en un proyecto sobre construcción de identidades femeninas. La investigación propone una metodología original, que combina métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos (socio-semiótica) para afrontar el estudio de 709 personajes femeninos. La investigación revela la convivencia de estereotipos ligados a las representaciones tradicionales de los empleos de las mujeres (trabajos relacionados con la atención al público y el cuidado de las personas) con otras profesiones altamente cualificadas. Sin embargo, el empoderamiento de las mujeres con cargos de responsabilidad se asocia frecuentemente con una caracterización negativa del personaje, al tiempo que los problemas de conciliación de los roles familiares y profesionales se eluden sistemáticamente.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Television, fiction, woman, gender, feminism, work, analysis, socio-semiotics.

Televisión, ficción, mujer, género, feminismo, esfera laboral, contenidos audiovisuales, socio-semiótica.



1. Introduction and current state of affairs

The active audience theory (Ang, 1985; Hobson, 1982; Morley, 1980) converged in the 1990s with the advent of the Second Golden Age of Television (Thompson, 1996) whose commitment to the aesthetics and narrative complexity of programmes (Mitell, 2006) earned it the title of «Quality TV» (Akass & McCabe, 2007). Prompted by the image of women that emerged from representations of female characters, a group of young academic women adopted the term «Third-Wave Feminism» to distance themselves from the historical presumptions about women (submissive-woman/domineering-man), adding a notable spin to certain aspects of research into gender and television fiction. In parallel, a line of post-feminism research, which celebrated women's agency and the empowerment of new female characters, gained strength¹.

Lotz (2006: 117) states that female characters in series such as «Ally McBeal» and «Sex and the City» represent a new generation that is redefining the socially constructed image of women. Stillion-Southard (2008: 164) considers «Sex and the City» to be a postfeminist text as it examines, from an original perspective, opposites such as feminism/femininity, individualism/collectivism and audacity/vulnerability. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) celebrate the advent of «young feminism», which questions historical clichés of femininity, such as weakness and subordination to men.

In contrast to postfeminist optimism, critics of feminism decry the strengthening of the neoliberal female icon: attractive, consumerist and willing to exert her sexuality at all times (Gill, 2007). For Gallagher (2014), discussions on new femininities are conservative and mainly revolve around notions such as women's individual choice, empowerment and personal freedom. Whelehan (2000) denounces the retro-sexism that is hidden behind postfeminist female characters, constructed, according to Attwood (2006), from iconographic models of pornography. McRobbie (2009) highlights the «double entanglement» of the attempt to juggle the values of traditional femininity with the desire to always be available for men. Tyler laments that society's generalised «pornographication» (McNair, 1996) represents «an increasingly acknowledged trend in both the mass media and the academy» (Tyler, 2010).

In contrast to male characters, the overrepresentation of female sexuality finds its corollary in the secondary role of female characters in the fictional professional world. At the same time, researchers' interest in the

representation of sexuality results in a lack of studies on the role of the work environment in the construction of female identity.

This study forms part of a project on the construction of female identities in Spanish television fiction and on the Internet. The investigation presents an original methodology that combines quantitative (SPSS) and qualitative (socio-semiotic) methods to analyse the narrative construction of the working woman. The sample is comprised of 709 female characters that appear, in various degrees of importance², in the 84 domestic fiction programmes first shown on public Spanish channels (national and regional) between 2012 and 2013 (series, serials, mini-series, made-for-TV films and comedies). The underlying hypotheses of this study are:

- H1: The greater narrative possibilities of working women result in their overrepresentation compared to unemployed, retired and student women.

- H.1.1: The workplace is usually fertile ground in terms of relationships (friendship, love and sexuality).

- H.1.2: Working women's problems balancing work and family life are practically absent from the analysis sample.

- H2: Despite the large number of qualified female professionals, most female characters carry out tasks traditionally related to women, such as customer services and caring for people.

- H3: Women's empowerment through holding positions of greater responsibility is associated with them being attributed characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity.

- H.3.1: Professional success appears frequently associated with negative characters.

1.1. The working woman in television fiction

In a pioneering 1964 study, DeFleur demonstrated that «the world of work on television is a man's world» (DeFleur, 1964: 65). Along the same lines, research carried out in the 1970s confirmed the predominance of wife and mother roles in television fiction compared to the importance of the workplace in the construction of female characters (Seggar & Wheeler, 1973; Downing, 1974; Manes & Melnyk, 1974; Tedesco, 1974; Turow, 1974; Beck, 1978). Furthermore, while professionally better qualified women were usually secretaries, teachers and nurses, men were usually portrayed as professionals, directors or police officers (McNeil, 1975), although in the same decade a few female characters played central roles in adventure dramas (Lotz, 2006).

Against the persistent stereotypes of the 1970s and 1980s (Davis, 1990), the academic output at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s «began to depict a transition, evident in the appearance of characters who occupied highly professionalized careers» (Lotz, 2006: 95). However, research carried out during this period confirmed the scarcity of female characters who worked outside of the home, and those that did were mainly portrayed as nurses or teachers (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984; Van-de-Berg & Streckfuss, 1992), while men continued to monopolise power in the workplace (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1982; Signorielli, 1983; Davis, 1990). Although the number of female characters in highly qualified positions continued to grow (Atkin, 1991), most of these professional women integrated their work into their own personal development (Butsch, 1992).

Successive studies showed that the fictional workplace was still a male-dominated environment (Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Elasmr, Hasegawa & Brain, 1999), that a significant percentage of female characters could not be defined on the basis of their occupation (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) and that a large number female characters were portrayed as either housewives or unqualified female workers (Greenberg & Collette, 1997). Moreover, female characters continued to be portrayed in professions associated with women, resulting in the persistence of gender stereotypes (Glascock, 2001 and 2003; Signorielli, 2009; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010). Nevertheless, although the percentage of male workers was still greater (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001) and continued to monopolise better-qualified dominant positions (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Glascock, 2001; Signorielli, 2009; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010), the numbers of female workers continued to increase (Signorielli 1989; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Signorielli & Kahlenberg 2001). A few studies have underlined the greater variety of professions represented by women (Atkin, Moorman, & Lin, 1991; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010; Glascock, 2001; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999), along with an increase in the number of female executives and a decline in the number of traditional female occupations such as secretaries (Atkin, 1991).

In general, it can be said that the representation of femininity in television seems to be conditioned by

interpersonal roles (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008). The link between occupation and being single is fairly frequent (Signorielli, 1982; Elasmr, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001; Glascock, 2003). In fact, the 21st century postfeminist woman continues to depend emotionally on men, despite the elevated socio-economic status of many female characters (McCabe & Akass, 2006). Moreover, the propensity to represent white-collar professions marginalises the working class (Ruido, 2007), an image in keeping with the tendency to omit representations of

In fact, television fiction rarely opts for the novel representation of a dominant, independent woman but rather opts for copying characteristics associated with masculinity, namely aggressiveness, individualism, competitiveness and decision-making.

women who do not fit current moulds (Gill 2007: 69), a recurring theme in representations in television fiction (Greenberg & Collette, 1997).

In Spain, various studies have shown that female characters usually have greater prominence in the private domain (CAC, 2013; Galán, 2007; García, Fedele, & Gómez, 2012). Similarly, a marked tendency to portray women in professions related to the attention and care of people was also observed (Tous, Meso, & Simelio, 2013). Nevertheless, the 2007 report by the Women's Institute highlights that, although female characters continue to assume domestic work, gender is not always a determining factor in the portrayal of women professionals. Similar conclusions were reached by Lacalle in an analysis of young women (Lacalle, 2013).

2. Materials and methods

Data coding was carried out in two simultaneous phases. In the first, the socio-semiotic template used allowed us to create an SPSS codebook and to apply the coding. In the second, the template allowed us to «interrogate» the analysed texts about those aspects important in the discursive construction of the fictional female worker and to complete the descriptive database. The 40 variables identified comprised three independent (age, profession and temporal location) and

37 dependent variables, five of which link data relative to the identification of the programme (character name, programme title, channel, fiction genre and format). Age was divided into eight groups to reduce spread: 4-9 years old; 10-14; 15-17; 18-23; 24-29; 30-45; 46-65 and over 65. The work variable was divided, in turn, into two sub-variables: occupation (female student, female worker, housewife, unemployed woman, retired woman, prostitute, other, not applicable, not known) and activity, which included work carried out by groups of «working» women and «other activities» (graduate, unqualified, waitress/shop assistant, trade, other, public worker, administrative worker, not known). Finally, the temporal location of the programme was divided into the present, past and future. Certain options allowed us to choose from a specific number of possibilities, while others were more discriminatory (yes/no).

The variables used to code the characters were divided into five headings: importance of character, scenes, main themes (family, friendship, work, health and sexuality), roles (thematic, semiotic and narrative) and temporal setting. The results presented in the next section summarise the relationship between the female characters and the workplace within the framework of the different interactions that make up the construction of the working woman in Spanish television fiction.

3. Analysis and results

63.2% (N=387) of working age female characters have a defined occupation, which in 58.4% (N=358) of cases is relevant to their configuration. 93.2% (N=361) are represented in the workplace. 9.1% (N=65) of the women analysed are students; 5.7% (N=41) are housewives; 2.9% (N=21) are unemployed; 2.9% (N=21) are retired and 1.4% (N=10) are prostitutes. Similarly, in the analysis sample, 8% (N=57) are included under the heading «other activities», 8% (N=57) are of unknown occupation and 7% (N=50) neither work nor study. The female workers are mainly single³ (40.8%; N=158). 63.9% (N=126) of these por-

tray a central character and are more affected by work problems (62%; N=240).

No significant differences were observed in the percentage of housewives portrayed in fictions set in the past (53.7%; N=22) or in the present (46.3%; N=19). Nevertheless, the temporal setting was important in terms of age, as nearly all the housewives under the age of 45 appear in stories set in the past.

The majority of unemployed female characters appeared in comedies (57.1%; N=12), which are traditionally characterised by the inclusion of a wide range of social problems that nevertheless barely affect narrative development. Foremost among the unemployed female fiction characters are married women (52.3%; N=11), followed by unqualified women (23.8%; N=5) and those whose education level is unknown (23.8%; N=5), while only three have university degrees (14.3%). Few retired women play a leading role (23.8%; N=5), but the large number of problems involving confrontations and competitiveness (57.1%; N=12) in their relationships results in a negative representation of older women.

All the female characters who play the part of prostitutes appear in fictions set in the past, the majority being between 18 and 23 years old and single (60%; N=6, in both cases). This group also has the greatest number of problems related to their work activity (80%; N=8).

The female characters in the group headed «other activities» portray a range of personalities, including female prisoners, nuns and criminals but mostly members of royalty or the aristocracy. The women who do not carry out any form of labour activity appear far more frequently in period dramas (84%; N=42) and most are married (56%; N=28).

3.1. The workplace

Working women who appear in Spanish television fiction carry out a limited range of work activities, foremost of which are those requiring a university degree (22.2%; N=86), followed by unqualified wor-

Table 1. Work situation of female characters in Spanish television fiction broken down by age

Age	Unemployed	Work	Study	Housewife	Retired	Prostit.	Others	Not known	N/A	Total
4-9	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	5.3%	0.0%	2.7%
10-4	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	1.6%
15-17	0.0%	1.3%	29.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	6.0%	4.1%
18-23	19.0%	11.1%	32.3%	2.4%	0.0%	60.0%	14.0%	19.3%	20.0%	14.7%
24-29	19.0%	20.4%	3.1%	7.3%	0.0%	20.0%	15.8%	10.5%	20.0%	16.2%
30-45	38.1%	44.7%	0.0%	31.7%	4.8%	20.0%	47.4%	29.8%	32.0%	36.2%
46-65	19.0%	19.4%	0.0%	53.7%	14.3%	0.0%	19.3%	21.1%	18.0%	19.2%
+65	4.8%	3.1%	0.0%	4.9%	81.0%	0.0%	1.8%	5.3%	4.0%	5.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

kers (16.5%; N=64). In third place are waitresses and shop assistants (14.7%; N=57), female workers such as dressmakers, hairdressers, bakers and cooks, etc. (14.4%; N=56), women who carry out other activities (11.8%; N=46), public workers (8.5%; N=33) and administrative staff (6.7%; N=26). The remaining 4.9% (N=19) play such minor roles that no mention was made of their occupation.

The majority of female characters holding degrees or diplomas are between 30 and 45 years old (51%; N=48) and 43.6% (N=41) are single. Moreover, they make up the group with the greatest number of central characters (48.9%; N=46) and include the highest percentage of characters whose fictional profession is a determining factor for their characterisation (81.9%; N=77). By contrast, unqualified women (mainly servants and cleaners) are between 46 and 65 years old (19.2%; N=20), are married (36.5%; N=38) and play secondary roles.

Fictional female characters under 30 years of age work as waitresses or shop assistants (21.3%; N=26), jobs that are carried out by only 11.2% (N=28) of over-30s. However, while the former tend to be employees, the latter have some connection with the ownership of the business, generally running a family enterprise together with a male character. In contrast to the other low-qualified female workers, the fictional profession plays an important part in these women's characterisations (85.9%; N=55), which are mainly constructed in the workplace.

Waitresses and shop assistants are usually the most popular female characters in their settings (39.1%; N=25), although they make up the second group, after female public workers (generally police-women), with the greatest number of work-related problems (65.6%; N=42). Female public workers are mainly between the ages of 30 and 45 (72.7%; N=24) and generally members of the police force or

Civil Guard. As such, this group is faced with the greatest number of work-related problems (66.7%; N=22) and are frequently shown in the work place (97%; N=32). Moreover, the fictional professional role plays a decisive part in the character construction of this group of women, which is the second largest group (39.4%; N=13).

Similarly, it is possible that female police officers stand out due to limited contextualisation of their private lives, to the point that their friendships and their position within their circle of friends fail to appear in the characterisation of 42.4% (N=14) of these fictional characters, as do their social status or the romantic relationships they have outside the workplace (39.3%; N=13). The low number of problems associated with relationships (45.5%; N=15) can be explained mainly a result of their portrayal as women dedicated to their work.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the majority of female administrative workers are between 24 and 29 years old (34.6%; 9 characters) and 30 and 45 (38.5%; 10 characters) and are mainly secretaries and receptionists. They tend to be young, generally attractive, obliging, efficient and have few relationship problems (30.8% and 8 characters), which perpetuates the stereotype of the secretary loyal to her boss and reaffirms the subordination of the female figure to the male (76.9%; N=20). However, despite appearing to have few relationship problems in the workplace, they have a large number of other problems (65.4%; N=17), mainly resulting from their boss's authoritarianism, which usually spills over into sexual abuse.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis carried out here shows that the percentage of women workers in Spanish television fiction is nearly 10 points higher than data presented in the latest report from the Ministry of Work and Social

Table 2. Female roles characterised by profession

Professional role	Higher qualif.	Admin.	Trade	Unqualified	Waitress/shop assistant	Other	Not known	N/A	Public worker	Total
No	18.1%	26.9%	22.6%	45.2%	14.1%	33.3%	79.4%	95.6%	0.0%	47.4%
Yes	81.9%	73.1%	77.4%	54.8%	85.9%	66.7%	20.6%	4.4%	100.0%	52.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3. Female characters represented in the workplace

Work place	Higher qualif.	Admin.	Trade	Unqualified	Waitress/shop assistant	Other	Not known	N/A	Public worker	Total
No	10.6%	3.8%	12.9%	26.0%	3.1%	29.8%	76.6%	96.3%	3.0%	40.3%
Yes	89.4%	96.2%	87.1%	74.0%	96.9%	70.2%	23.4%	3.7%	97.0%	59.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Security (NSI, 2015) and contrasts with the underrepresentation of unemployed and retired women. The low number of female characters older than 65 years old—who make up 81% (N=17) of the total number of retired women—is another persistent feature in the representation of older women (Gordillo, Guarinos, & Ramírez, 2009), who are generally characterised one-dimensionally, with their roles often ill-defined and minor (Bazzini, 1997; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Vernon, Williams, Phillips, & Wilson, 1990).

Similarly, our study reveals an overrepresentation of qualified women, a pattern observed in television fiction in the USA since the 1970s (Downing, 1974). In fact, women with university degrees constitute the group with the widest range of characters included in the analysis sample. 85.1% (N=80) of these practice their profession, establishing a direct relationship between higher education and professional practice that is deeply rooted in the social imaginary. Most of the women with degrees or diplomas studied in social sciences and humanities and have professions traditionally associated with women, such as lawyers, teachers, journalists, psychologists etc., which is another tendency inherited from US television (Signorielli, 1983; 1993; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). In contrast to Vande-Berg and Streckfuss (1992), no female character was observed working in the technical-scientific or technology fields, a fact probably determined by the greater narrative and dramatic possibilities of the professions described here rather than by any educational or statistical factors (Signorielli, 2009; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001).

A large number of female characters with professions requiring qualifications have jobs involving caring for others, such as primary or secondary school teachers, nurses, carers and physiotherapists (Tous, Meso, & Simelio, 2013). However, despite the link between these jobs and the female world, the women who do these jobs are not usually questioned by their bosses or other male characters (Galán, 2007).

The medical profession is one of the most «subversive» professional groups and is characterised by decision-making and exercising authority (Philips, 2000: 53). In this regard, the gradual increase in the number of female doctors, determined in part by the

longevity of the series «Hospital Central» (Tele5, 2000-12), has meant that the traditional model that confers the role of «saviour» (the doctor) to men, and that of «companion» (the nurse) to women, has been superseded (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984; Women's Institute, 2007). The overrepresentation of certain professions also explains the prominence of female police officers among public workers, the group with the best-defined professionals but with often the least developed personal lives. Although gender is not always decisive in the characterisation of professions (Lacalle, 2013), these women are usually observed adopting male characteristics in an attempt to allow themselves to be guided by their most rational side, eliminating «any trace of sensitivity» or hiding it «under a mask of coldness» (Galán, 2007: 231).

Leadership/empowerment of businesswomen and women directors also entails the attribution of traditionally masculine traits. In fact, television fiction rarely opts for the novel representation of a dominant, independent woman but rather opts for copying characteristics associated with masculinity, namely aggressiveness, individualism, competitiveness and decision-making (Van-de-Berg & Streckfuss, 1992), as well as authority and organisational skills (Greenberg, 1980; Signorielli, 1989). Nevertheless, the representation of these power-defined women brings with it a stigma that calls into question their work success. For the most part, they are negative female characters: ambitious, unscrupulous, resentful, vengeful, despotic, strong and implacable. Their professional success is frequently belittled by associating their position of power with other male characters (husband, father, etc.) (Van-de-Berg & Streckfuss, 1992)⁴. On other occasions, the reasons behind the success of these women is not questioned, but is, rather, presented as compensation for an unsatisfying personal, family or love life, and successful female characters are portrayed as women who have been unable to «satisfy their «instincts» as a mother or wife» (Ruido, 2007: 12).

From an androcentric point of view, the negative characterisation of the powerful woman represents a form of punishment for pursuing profession goals at the expense of her partner and/or family (Tous, Meso, & Simelio, 2013). The desire to abandon traditional

Table 4. Female characters with work-related problems

Work problems	Higher qualif.	Admin.	Trade	Unqualified	Waitress/shop assistant	Other	Not known	N/A	Public worker	Total
No	41.5%	34.6%	50.0%	46.2%	34.4%	46.4%	77.6%	97.8%	33.3%	58.4%
Yes	58.5%	65.4%	50.0%	53.8%	65.6%	53.6%	22.4%	2.2%	66.7%	41.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

stereotypes such as the housewife, mother and wife has been frowned upon (Women's Institute, 2007), while secretaries, on the other hand, continue reaffirming «the [male] corporate hierarchy and power, often including among their normal services favours of a sexual or affectionate nature (Ruido, 2007: 12).

Unlike sexual abuse or relationship problems experienced by those female characters who, for reasons of narrative economy, spend most of their time in the workplace (Galán, 2007), other issues, such as juggling work with family life, are practically non-existent (Ortega & Simelio, 2012). This is reflected in the greater percentage of working single women (45.7%; N=177) compared to married women (27.3%; N=106), a feature also observed in the US (Glascock, 2003; Signorielli, 1982; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). The percentage of single, qualified women (52.1%; N=49) is also much higher than the number of married qualified women (28.7%; N=27) (Atkin, 1991), although the difference has gradually decreased since the 1980s (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999).

The analysis presented here confirms the different hypotheses and sub-hypotheses underlying this investigation and highlights not only the debate between the achievements made since the first representations of women workers in television fiction but also the persistence of certain stereotypes «strongly rooted in normative patriarchal designs» (Menéndez & Zurian, 2014: 70). It thus justifies the need to combine a quantitative diachronic perspective with a qualitative analysis of the roles and stereotypes of the female worker in order to adequately contextualise the effects of the representations of the woman on viewers. In this regard, our choice of a method that brings together a quantitative (SPSS) and a qualitative (socio-semiotic) analysis represents a novel contribution to studies on gender and television in Spain.

Notes

¹ The term post-feminism, first coined by Rebecca Walker in 1992 to define «third-wave feminism», is a culturally complex concept. Brunson illustrates it in television fiction through characters appearing in series such as «Sex and the City» and «Desperate Housewives» (Brunson, 2013: 378). Lotz believes that third-wave feminism represents the overcoming of certain limitations of «second-wave activism» (Lotz, 2006: 8).

² Only those secondary characters that appeared in less than three episodes in the same season were excluded.

³ Every country's television system reflects the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has developed (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck & Signorielli, 1978: 178). In line with the situation in Spain, women are considered «married» if they cohabit with their partner and, as such, we prefer the term so-

cial status to marital status.

⁴ Waitresses and shop assistants who own the business are also similarly discredited, since they are portrayed as running it with a male member of the family.

Acknowledgements

This article forms part of the project «The Social Construction of Women in Television Fiction and the Web 2.0: Stereotypes, Reception and Feedback» (FEM2012-33411), financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. In addition to the authors, the following also participated in the study: Deborah Castro, Mariluz Sánchez, Belén Granda, Tatiana Hidalgo, Elsa Soro and Karina Tiznado (researchers), and Marc Bellmunt, Paola Cabrera, Estitxu Garay, Germán Muñoz, Amaia Neracan, y Lucía Trabajo (collaborators).

References

- Akass, K., & McCabe, J. (2006). Feminist Television Criticism: Notes and Queries. *Critical Studies in Television*, 1(1), 108-120 (<http://goo.gl/XApyLC>) (2015-11-25).
- Akass, K., & McCabe, J. (2007). *Quality TV. Contemporary American Television and Beyond*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Ang, I. (1985). *Watching Dallas. Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Methuen.
- Atkin, D. (1991). The Evolution of Television Series Addressing Single Women, 1966-1990. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 35(4), 517-523. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/088381591-09364144>
- Atkin, D., Moorman, J., & Lin, C.A. (1991). Ready for Prime Time: Network Series Devoted to Working Women in the 1980's. *Sex Roles*, 25(11-12), 677-685. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF002-89571>
- Attwood, F. (2006). Sexed Up: Theorizing the Sexualization of Culture. *Sexualities*, 9(1), 77-94. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1-363460706053336>
- Bazzini, D.G., McIntosh, W.D., Smith, S.M., Cook, S., & Harris, C. (1997). The Aging Woman in Popular Film: Underrepresented, Unattractive, Unfriendly, and Unintelligent. *Sex Roles*, 36(7-8): 531-543. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02766689>
- Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2000). *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Beck, K. (1978). Television and the Older Woman. *Television Quarterly*, 15, 47-49.
- Brunson, C. (2013). Television Crime Series, Women Police, and Fuddy-duddy Feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 13(3), 375-394. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.652143>
- Butsch, R. (1992). Class and Gender in Four Decades of Television Situation Comedy: Plus ça change... *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 9(4), 387-399. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15-295039209366841>
- CAC (Consell Audiovisual de Catalunya) (2013). *La representació de les dones a la televisió. Informe sobre la diversitat i la igualtat a la televisió*. Informe 29, Barcelona (<https://goo.gl/P9bB4T>) (2015-11-25).
- Davis, D.M. (1990). Portrayals of Women in Prime-Time Network Television: Some Demographic Characteristics. *Sex Roles*, 23(5-6), 325-332. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00290052>
- DeFleur, M.L. (1964). Occupational roles as portrayed on television. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28(1), 57-74. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/267221>
- Downing, M. (1974). Heroine of the Daytime Serial. *Journal of*

- Communication, 24(2), 130-137. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j-1460-2466.1974.tb00378.x>
- Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K., & Brain, M. (1999). The Portrayal of Women in U.S. Prime Time Television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43(1), 20-34. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838159909364472>
- Emons, P., Wester, F., & Scheepers, P. (2010). 'He Works Outside the Home: She Drinks Coffee and does the Dishes'. Gender Roles in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(1), 40-53. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550386>
- Galán, E. (2007). Construcción de género y ficción televisiva en España. *Comunicar*, 28, 229-236 (<http://goo.gl/3wRWbD>) (2015-11-25).
- Gallager, M. (2014). Media and the Representation of Gender. In C. Carter, L. Steiner & L. McLaughlin (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender* (pp. 332-341). London: Routledge.
- García, N., Fedele, M., & Gómez, X. (2012). The Occupational Roles of Television Fiction Characters in Spain: Distinguishing Traits in Gender Representation. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, XXV(1), 349-366 (<http://goo.gl/yYwD1Q>) (2015-11-25).
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Jackson-Beeck, M., & Signorielli, N. (1978). Cultural Indicators: Violence Profile n. 9. *Journal of Communication*, 28(3), 176-207. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.14602466-1978.tb01646.x>
- Gerbner, G., & Signorielli, N. (1982). The World According to Television. *American Demographics*, 4(9), 15-17.
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist Media Culture. Elements of a Sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies Reader*, 10(2), 147-166. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898>
- Glascok, J. (2001). Gender Roles on Prime-Time Network Television: Demographics and Behaviors. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(4), 656-669. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4504_7
- Glascok, J. (2003). Gender, Race and Aggression in Newer TV Networks Primetime Programming. *Communication Quarterly*, 51(1), 90-100. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01463370309370142>
- Gordillo, I., Guarinos, V., & Ramírez, M. (2009). Mujeres adolescentes y envejecientes en las series de televisión. Conflictos de identificación. In *Identidades femeninas en un mundo plural* (327-334). Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, IDUS. (<https://goo.gl/FhHbni>) (2015-07-01).
- Greenberg, B.S. (1980). *Life on Television: Content Analysis of U.S. TV Drama*. Norwood (NJ): Ablex.
- Greenberg, B.S., & Collette, L. (1997). The Changing Faces on TV: A Demographic Analysis of Network Television's New Seasons, 1966-1992. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41(1), 1-13. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838159709364386>
- Hobson, D. (1982). *'Crossroads': The Drama of a Soap Opera*. London: Methuen.
- INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) (2015). *Publicaciones de síntesis. Resumen últimos datos*. (<http://goo.gl/SlvJk3>) (28-07-2015).
- Instituto de la Mujer (Ed.) (2007). *Tratamiento y representación de las mujeres en las teleresías emitidas por las cadenas de televisión de ámbito nacional*. Madrid: Instituto de la Mujer (<http://goo.gl/e5DCJf>) (2015-11-25).
- Kalisch, P.A., & Kalisch, B. (1984). Sex-role Stereotyping of Nurses and Physicians on Prime-time Television: A Dichotomy of Occupational Portrayals. *Sex Roles*, 10(7-8), 533-553. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00287262>
- Lacalle, C. (2013). *Jóvenes y ficción televisiva. Construcción de identidad y transmedialidad*. Barcelona: UOC Press.
- Lauzen, M.M., Dozier, D.M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing Gender Stereotypes through Social Roles in Prime-time Television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200-214. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838150801991971>
- Lotz, A.D. (2006). *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Manes, A.L., & Melnyk, P. (1974). Televised Models of Female Achievement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 4(4), 365-374. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1974.tb02608.x>
- McNair, B. (1996). *Mediated Sex: Pornography and Postmodern Culture*. London: Arnold.
- McNeil, J.C. (1975). Feminism, Femininity, and the Television Series: A Content Analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 19(3), 259-271. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838157509363786>
- McRobbie, A. (2009). *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage.
- Menéndez, M.I., & Zurian, F. (2014). Mujeres y hombres en la ficción televisiva norteamericana hoy. *Anagramas*, 25, 55-71 (<http://goo.gl/ZE8bN4>) (2015-11-25).
- Mittel, J. (2006). Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. *The Velvet Light Trap*, 58 (<http://goo.gl/DmlMmc>) (2015-07-27).
- Morley, D. (1980). *The Nationwide Audience*. London: BFI.
- Ortega, M., & Simelio, N. (2012). La representación de las mujeres trabajadoras en las series de máxima audiencia emitidas en España. *Comunicación*, 10(1), 1006-1016 (<http://goo.gl/Ha5VzQ>) (2015-11-25).
- Philips, D. (2000). Medicated Soap: The Woman Doctor in Television Medical Drama. In B. Carson & M. Llewellyn-Jones (Eds.), *Frames and Fictions on Television: The Politics of Identity within Drama* (pp. 50-61). Portland, OR: Intellect.
- Ruido, M. (2007). *Just do it! Bodies and Images of Women in the New Division of Labour*. (<http://goo.gl/rFJHgK>) (2015-07-31).
- Seggar, J.F., & Wheeler, P. (1973). World of Work on TV: Ethnic and Sex Representation in TV Drama. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 17(2), 201-214. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0883815-7309363684>
- Signorielli, N. (1982). Marital Status in Television Drama: A Case of Reduced Options. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 26(2), 585-597. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838158209364027>
- Signorielli, N. (1983). The Demography of the Television World. In O.H. Gandy, P. Espinosa, & J.A. Odorver (Eds.), *Proceedings from the Tenth Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference* (pp. 53-76). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Signorielli, N. (1989). Television and Conceptions about Sex Roles: Maintaining Conventionality and the Status Quo. *Sex Roles*, 21(5-6), 341-360. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00289596>
- Signorielli, N. (1993). Television and Adolescents' Perceptions about Work. *Youth & Society*, 24(3), 314-341. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0044118X93024003004>
- Signorielli, N. (2009). Race and Sex in Prime Time: A Look at Occupations and Occupational Prestige. *Mass Communication and Society*, 12(3), 332-352. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/152054-30802478693>
- Signorielli, N., & Bacue, A. (1999). Recognition and Respect: A Content Analysis of Prime-Time Television Characters across Three Decades. *Sex Roles*, 40(7-8), 527-544. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1018883912900>
- Signorielli, N., & Kahlenberg, S. (2001). Television's World of Work in the Nineties. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(1), 4-22. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4501_2
- Stillion-Southard, B.A. (2008). Beyond the Backlash: Sex and the

- City and Three Feminist Struggles. *Communication Quarterly*, 56(2) 149-67. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01463370802026943>
- Tedesco, N. (1974). Patterns in Prime Time. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 119-124. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1974.tb00376.x>
- Thompson, R. J. (1996). *Television's Second Golden Age*. New York: Continuum.
- Tous, A., Meso, K., & Simelio, N. (2013). The Representation of Women's Roles in Television Series in Spain. Analysis of the Basque and Catalan Cases. *Communication & Society*, 26(3), 67-97 (<http://goo.gl/w4kTuN>) (2015-11-25).
- Tyler, M. (2010). The Politics of Pornography and Pornographication in Australia. Australian Political Science Association Conference 2010 (<https://goo.gl/BD0lNn>) (2015-07-06).
- Turow, J. (1974). Advising and Ordering. Daytime, Prime-time. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 138-141. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1974.tb00379.x>
- Van-de-Berg, L.R., & Streckfuss, D. (1992). Prime-time Television's Portrayal of Women and the World of Work: A Demographic Profile. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 36(2), 195-208. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838159209364167>
- Vernon, J.A., Williams, J.A., Phillips, T., & Wilson, J. (1990). Media Stereotyping: A Comparison of the Way Elderly Women and Men are Portrayed on Prime-Time Television. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 2(4), 55-68. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J074v02n04_05
- Whelehan, I. (2000). *Overloaded. Popular Culture Future of Feminism*. London: The Women's Press.