

Ester VILLACAMPA-MORALES

Ramon Llull University, España. esterm1@blanquerna.url.edu. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7334-0298>

Dra. Maddalena FEDELE

University of Barcelona, España. fedele@ub.edu. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9930-4930>

Dra. Sue ARAN-RAMSPOTT

University of Barcelona, España. fedele@ub.edu. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9930-4930>

YouTubers between postfeminism and popular feminism: Dulceida's and Yellow Mellow's construction and performance of gender identity

YouTubers entre posfeminismo y feminismo popular: la construcción y la representación de la identidad de género de Dulceida y YellowMellow

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Abstract

Participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) has opened up the possibility of prosumption for the youngest users, who use social media as a tool for building their (gender) identities. At the same time, as part of a juvenile digital culture they share with their audiences, influencers, and more specifically YouTubers, they act as role models in this process. While YouTube and other social media continue to reproduce the post-feminist sensibility, recent studies indicate that it also embraces manifestations of popular feminism. This research focuses on two popular female Spanish YouTubers, Dulceida and Yellow Mellow, and its aim is to analyse how they build and represent their gender identity. Particular emphasis is put on the negotiation and/or integration of feminist precepts into those identities, in order to determine whether they contribute to the creation of new gender imaginaries. A qualitative methodology, which includes four models of analysis, is used to cover the representations from the audio-visual, socio-semiotic and textual aspects. The results show a certain ambivalence regarding gender, since popular feminism and queer theory coexist with postfeminism, and values such as diversity with the acritical acceptance of individualism.

Keywords

YouTube; Influencers; Feminism; Gender; Identity; Postfeminism

Resumen

La cultura participativa (Jenkins, 2006) ha abierto la posibilidad de la prosumición para los usuarios más jóvenes, que utilizan las redes sociales como herramienta para construir sus identidades (de género). Al mismo tiempo, como parte de una cultura digital juvenil que comparten con sus audiencias, influencers y más específicamente YouTubers, actúan como modelos a seguir en este proceso. Si bien YouTube y otras redes sociales continúan reproduciendo la sensibilidad posfeminista, estudios recientes indican que también abarcan manifestaciones del feminismo popular. Esta investigación se centra en dos populares YouTubers españolas, Dulceida y YellowMellow, y tiene como objetivo analizar cómo construyen y representan su identidad de género. Se pone especial énfasis en la negociación y/o integración de preceptos feministas en esas identidades, con el fin de determinar si contribuyen o no a la creación de nuevos imaginarios de género. Se utiliza una metodología cualitativa, que incluye cuatro modelos de análisis, para cubrir las representaciones desde los aspectos audiovisuales, socio-semióticos y textuales. Los resultados muestran una cierta ambivalencia en cuanto al género, ya que el feminismo popular y la teoría queer conviven con el posfeminismo, y valores como la diversidad con la aceptación acrílica del individualismo.

Palabras clave

YouTube; Influencers; Feminismo; Género; Identidad; Postfeminismo

1. Introduction

This study is situated in a larger body of knowledge that investigates the relationship between youth and media and it is justified by the fact that teenagers, who are going through a stage of life where they are vulnerable and defining their future selves, co-construct their (gendered) identities through media (Arnett, 1995). Especially in the context of late modernity, community ties are weakening (Bauman, 2000; Beck and Ritter, 1992) and individuals are becoming responsible for the life-long project of the self (Giddens, 1991), guided by psychology (Illouz, 2007) and the numerous choices offered by media.

This relationship between youth and media has been intensified with the arrival of participatory culture and Web 2.0, where users are finally able to produce and share their own content. Statistics indicate that about 80% of the young population in Western countries have a social media profile (Eurostat, 2020); in the case of Spain, 85% of active social media users aged 16 to 30 use them (among other functions) to follow influencers (IAB Spain, 2018). On the other hand, several studies have focused on the uses and gratifications that young people seek and find in social media, showing that they do not differ that much from those of traditional media. Teens use social networks, and particularly YouTube, as sources of information, informal learning, entertainment, and peer relationships (Aran, Fedele and Tarragó, 2018; García Jiménez, García and López de Ayala, 2016; Haridakis and Hanson, 2009; Pires, Masanet and Scolari, 2019). Social media are also considered to be a privileged space for identity construction and performance (Cover, 2012; Thumim, 2012), especially for teenagers (boyd, 2014; Buckingham, 2008; Linares-Bahillo, Aristegui-Fragua and Beloki-Marañón, 2018), as well as one of civic engagement (Boulianne and Theoharis, 2018). Therefore, they may be a space of resistance and negotiation, where users move from hegemony to counterhegemony (Márquez and Ardèvol, 2018) and from subversion to regression (Dobson, 2015). Finally, influencers, as emergent adults themselves, may act as role models for young people (Pérez-Torres, Pastor-Ruiz and Ben-Boubaker, 2018; Westenberg, 2016).

As a part of a teen digital culture (Aran, et al., 2018), YouTube is mostly populated by progressive and irreverent youngsters (Scolari and Fraticelli, 2016) and has been praised by the visibility it gives to LGBTQ communities (Abidin and Cover, 2019; Lovelock, 2017; Pérez-Torres et al., 2018). However, studies reveal that there is still a gender bias in the unequal representation of male and female influencers, as well as in the kind of content produced and its reception (Aran, et al., 2018; García Jiménez et al., 2016; Molyneaux et al., 2008).

According to previous observations, a prevalence of postfeminist female representations has been detected on YouTube (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Caballero, Tortajada and Willem, 2017; Campos de Cerqueira, 2017), and on other social media such as MySpace (Dobson, 2012) or Instagram (Liu and Suh, 2017). However, recent studies indicate that this panorama is being resignified by an increasing circulation and visibility of various feminisms in struggle for hegemony (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2017) in the field of popular culture and especially in the digital media.

This research aims to contribute to the description of popular feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2018) and the different forms of coexistence that are established between it and postfeminism (Gill, 2017) in the YouTube environment. The study intends to analyse how two popular Spanish YouTubers, Dulceida and Yellow Mellow, build and represent their gender identity on YouTube, with the objective to determine whether they contribute to the creation of new gender imaginaries or whether, on the contrary, they reproduce models of hegemonic and/or postfeminist femininity. Special emphasis is put on how they integrate and/or negotiate feminist precepts into those identities. In order to respond to the main objective of the research, three research questions are set out below:

RQ1: Which audio-visual and multimodal resources do these YouTubers use in order to perform their gender identity?

RQ2: Which kind of (gendered) values and personality traits do they identify themselves with?

RQ3: Which kind of discourse do they create surrounding gender issues?

1.2. Postfeminism, queer theory and popular feminism

This research is based on gender studies and particularly on the theoretical inputs of the last 30 years, coinciding with the arrival of the third wave of feminism until today with the hatching of popular feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2018). The feminism of the second wave had been characterized by an allegedly universalism and the development and conflict between the liberal, radical and socialist feminisms; from the 80s the critics towards this wave have intensified for not having been able to integrate all women in its diversity. A process of fragmentation of the movement in favour of dispersed identities, constituted and defined based on differences began. Even if this paradigm shift empowers certain traditionally marginalized individuals and collectives, it has also been severely criticized for its disruptive capability of the collective struggles in support of individualism (Amorós, 1998). In accordance with the identity

fragmentation typical of the postmodern subject, the third-wave feminism adopts an intersectional perspective, "coming to terms with the multiple and constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to multiple interpenetrating axes of identity" (Budgeon, 2011), while embracing an inclusive perspective by making the forms of resistance to such oppression more flexible.

With precedents in lesbian feminism and the struggle for LGBT rights, queer theory emerges in this context as a corpus of root knowledge thoroughly poststructuralist, which supports the idea that not only gender and identity, but also sex, are performative categories that are constructed on the basis of discourse and the repetition of its representation (Butler, 1990). The queer theory, therefore, fights the naturalization of gender binarism by focusing on peripheral identities, bodies, and sexualities, which usually transgress said binarism. It is consistent with this performative nature that the third wave promotes a renewed interest in representations, while a great variety of identity and appellative combinations proliferate. According to some researchers, the level of individualization is such that there would be practically as many genders as there would be people (Miyares, 2017).

The preservation and social and cultural significance of the queer theory and of the third wave of feminism are manifested in social media (Bragg et al., 2018), particularly in Tumblr (Keller, 2019; Thelandersson, 2013). Although YouTube has highlighted the presence and visibility of the LGTBQ community, some authors warn about the permanence of homonormativity in the platform (Abidin and Cover, 2019; Blanco-Ruiz and Sáinz de Baranda, 2018; Lovelock, 2017). Indeed, the LGTBQ community on YouTube generates its own narratives, such as the coming out video, framed in the neoliberal values of personal branding, self-sufficiency and authenticity (Lovelock, 2017). Lovelock (2019) notes that these videos are also characterized by sentimental display, with a predominance of awkwardness, and of self-acceptance as a solution to the problems caused by heteronormativity.

In a similar way, manifestations of postfeminist representations by young female YouTubers have been detected (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Caballero et al., 2017). In parallel to the queer theory and also circumscribed to the third wave, postfeminism appears as a sensitivity (Gill, 2007) that goes beyond backlash against the previous feminist movement (Faludi, 1991). Postfeminism, as a form of young gendered and media friendly neoliberalism (Gill, 2017), borrows some of the advances of feminism, especially those regarding female agency, while denying or repudiating some others (McRobbie, 2008). This agency is mainly directed towards the body, which becomes a girl's source of power and therefore must be disciplined through consumption. However, postfeminism also demands confidence and self-esteem, making its standards almost impossible to meet. The inclusion of women in the labour market is taken for granted, but nothing is discussed about structural inequalities in it, which are to be faced with great effort and good humour. The normative kind of woman, then, is no longer the housewife, but a working, active, successful and self-sufficient woman who does not complain. Since women are now free to choose, they may embrace their traditional role arguing it is their individual right (Dobson, 2012). Postfeminism, then, vindicates unashamed self-sexualisation, romanticism and "girlie stuff" from a place of pleasure and control rather than of submission, while feminism is seen as a censor of these inner desires (Gill, 2007). Even if post-feminism is initially based on binary categories (Gill, 2007), its main characteristic is its adaptability to new contexts (Gill, 2017). Consequently, just as it has shown to be compatible with racialised icons (Butler, 2013), it could also be compatible with gender flexibility (Lotz, 2001).

Over the last decade, however, this cultural panorama has been challenged by a new feminist visibility, which is born in the digital sphere, where celebrities play a dominant role. Beyond eminently activist uses that suggest the arrival of a fourth feminist wave, in most cases the new circulation of feminism in the economy of visibility becomes an aim in itself (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Although in this case we will adopt the term of popular feminism, the truth is that the phenomenon is better understood in dialogue with neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg, 2013). Various authoresses (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Favaro and Gill, 2018) agree to sustain that feminism as a political movement would be undergoing a process of rebranding that goes beyond its commodification to incur in its flexibilization and reduction to the liberal precept of equality. Unlike postfeminism, therefore, popular feminism recognizes a systemic deficiency (Banet-Weiser, 2018), but often proposes as a remedy a greater female representation (especially in the spheres of power) that would be achieved through (self-)confidence (Rottenberg, 2013). It is thus a process of (self-) empowerment that would replace notions such as emancipation or liberation (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

This focus on confidence, on the other hand, allows the proliferation of the body positive movements, which represent an extension of the normativity that does not necessarily imply its dissolution (Fernández, 2017). This movement often implies the transfer of the (self-) discipline from body to mind (Gill and Elias, 2014), since there is an obligation to feel good about oneself. Popular feminism, therefore, is generally situated in a regime of continuity with postfeminism, especially regarding collusion with neoliberalism (Gill, 2016). One of the few differences is that the feminist identification has positive connotations, so

much that it becomes a practically mandatory identification for young women (Favaro and Gill, 2018). These women do not always have knowledge of the feminist theory or have participated in spaces of political activism, so the version they adopt of feminism is the one that suits them best, a practice that Favaro and Gill (2018) refer to as feMENism.

2. Methodology

Since this study is part of a larger research about influencers and their young followers, and because of their condition as young people themselves (sharing a digital youth culture with their followers), the criteria of reputation and age were the turning point to select the cases of study. Following precedents such as Lovelock's (2019), an age range of 18-29 years old is established and the two female YouTubers with the highest number of followers are chosen from those included in this scale (Social Blade, 2018).

Yellow Mellow (YM)^[1], Melody Moreno, manages two different active channels dedicated to humour and entertainment, combining their task as a YouTuber with their career as a musician, having launched two different albums. Dulceida (D), Aida Domènech, is a fashion influencer who owns her own brand as a result of her work on social networks, and collaborates with other international fashion and cosmetics brands such as Dolce &Gabbana and Rimmel.

They both are consolidated people on YouTube, with a track record and consistency on the platform. They have been present on the platform since 2010 and have more than 660 videos between them. Moreover, in the starting period of this research (January 2018), both published videos in which they directly address issues related to gender and sexuality from apparently very diverse perspectives, suggesting the coexistence of different femininity models.

The sample consisted of their channel profiles (analysed during July 2018) and three videos of each launched from January to March 2018 (Table 1)^[2].

Table 1. Research Sample

Author	Title	Release	Length	Visualizations	Comments
Dulceida	<i>El Tag del YouTuber hipócrita (D1)</i>	28/02/2018	7:08	745,250	1835
Yellow Mellow	<i>El Tag del YouTuber Honesto (YM1)</i>	18/03/2018	14:20	291,918	1519
Dulceida	<i>¿Qué opinan mis amigos de mí? (D2)</i>	17/01/2018	10:52	703,750	911
Yellow Mellow	<i>Para mi futura esposa (YM2)</i>	04/03/2018	13:22	340,838	4087
Dulceida	<i>Respeto (D3)</i>	21/02/2018	5:49	2,864,003	7889
Yellow Mellow	<i>No me siento mujer (YM3)</i>	18/01/2018	7:37	765,883	8209

Source: own elaboration (Data retrieved in January 2019).

We encountered repeated topics in the same period of time and decided to organize the sample according to these thematic similarities:

In the first video they both respond to the *Hypocrite YouTuber Tag (D1)*, reshaped by Yellow Mellow as the *Honest YouTuber Tag (YM1)*: this kind of video consists of them answering private questions, sometimes suggested by the audience, regarding other YouTubers and their relationship with them. It is supposed to reveal some secrets and bring the followers closer to the influencer.

In the second video they both ask their friends to reveal some private details about them, with the final aim of the audience getting to know them better.

In the third video, both YouTubers address gender issues. Both videos have been very popular, at least doubling (Table 1) their usual number of views and comments and demonstrating that their topics related to gender and sexuality resonate with the audience (Pérez-Torres et. al, 2018).

We developed a qualitative model of analysis, which combines different proven methods (Table 2), each of which is aimed at answering our three research questions.

Table 2: Research methodology

Research question	Method	Items
Which audio-visual and multimodal resources do they use in order to perform their gender identity?	MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF CHANNEL PROFILE (Jones, 2009)	Username
		Icons
		Pictures (avatar and banner)
		Text
		Layout
Which kinds of (gendered) values and personality traits do they identify themselves with?	FILM ANALYSIS (Casetti and di Chio, 1990)	Narrative codes
		Audio-visual codes (visual, sound, graphic, syntactic)
		Physical traits
Which kinds of discourses do they create surrounding gender issues?	SOCIO-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS (Fedele, 2014)	Sociological traits
		Psychological traits
		<i>A posteriori</i> categorization

Source: own elaboration.

In order to understand which resources these YouTubers use to perform their gender identity, we conducted a multimodal analysis of their profiles, based on the one conducted by Jones (2009) and specially adapted to online interfaces, as well as audio-visual analysis (based on film analysis proposed by Casetti and di Chio, 1990) of their videos. The multimodal analysis included the analysis of their usernames, icons, pictures (both avatar and banner), texts (specially the description in the "information" section) and general layout of their channels. The layout substituted the original item of interactivity, since YouTube permits their users to edit the cover of their videos and the general look of the channel. Audio-visual analysis, for its part, considered both narrative and audio-visual codes, including visual, sound, graphic and syntactic codes. The aim of these techniques was to establish which resources were used in order to construct a gendered identity.

Secondly, we conducted a socio-semiotic analysis of the two influencers as "characters" (Fedele, 2014), establishing their characteristics in a triple level: physical, such as weight, type of clothes, make up use or lack of it, tendency to show their bodies; sociological, including social class, education, sexual orientation, leisure activities; and psychological, in order to understand which (gendered) personality traits and values they identify themselves with, and whether or not they self-attribute gender stereotypes on the basis of the model developed by Williams and Best (1977).

Finally, thematic analysis of the texts (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to unravel the type of discourse they create around gender issues, not just when they explicitly speak about it.

The discourses were transcribed and categorized *a posteriori* with a deductive reasoning, and data were treated separately and together with cinematic or audio-visual codes with the help of the software program ATLAS.TI (7.5.2).

3. Results

3.1. Channel profile and audio-visual analysis

First, combining both profile and video analysis, we analysed which resources the YouTubers use in order to perform their gender identity (RQ1). In analysing Dulceida's profile and videos we found that she constructs her personal brand by ascribing to the indicators of traditional femininity (Dobson, 2015), such as the colours purple and pink, heart icons and occasional sparkling or flashing texts. Also, her username evokes her sweetness (as "dulce" in Spanish means sweet), a trait she wishes to highlight. Her channel is better crafted and internally coherent than Yellow Mellow's, always following the same formal and visual rules. For example, in the layout of her channel (picture 1) we can appreciate that every video is presented with its title in the very same pink strip and its topic is classified by an icon in the top right of the image.

Picture 1: Dulceida's channel

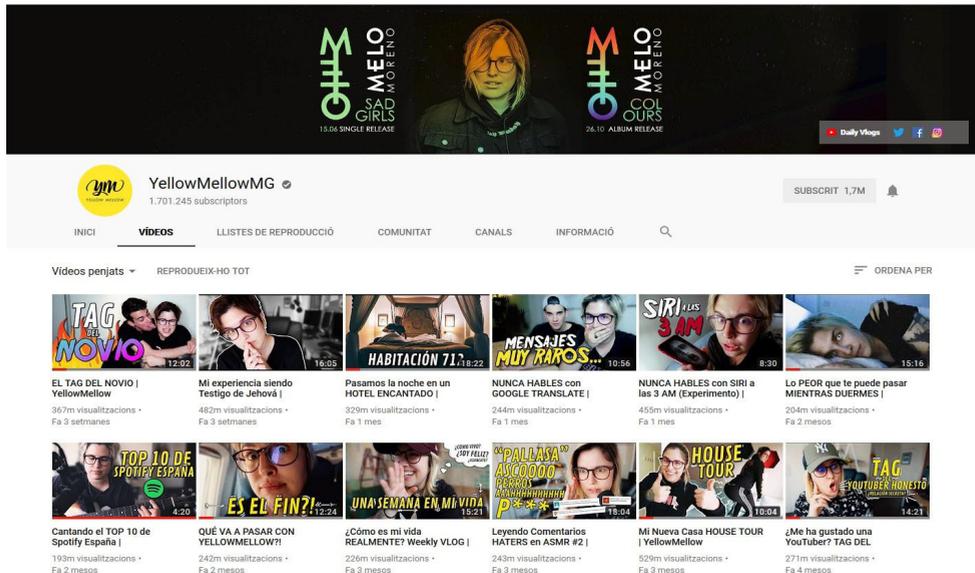


Source: Screenshot of Dulceida's channel (9 July 2018).

In fact, she maintains a high degree of control over her image, being very present on her own channel (both in the avatar and the banner), but also in her content. For example, in *What do my friends think about me?* video, she uses the same setting, her own house, in almost every take. The audience can hear her voice behind the camera, so they understand she is the one directing and recording. This is not the case in Yellow Mellow's video *To my future wife*, where they simply edit what their friends have previously sent. Finally, Dulceida deploys a wider range of audio-visual resources: in most of her videos she uses dozens of zooms and travellings (sometimes with no apparent purpose) and dozens of other sound effects and visual graphics or images to illustrate her discourse. This may be explained by the fact that an editing team aids her, while Yellow Mellow's videos are self-edited.

Yellow Mellow's channel profile analysis also revealed their username to be related to the quality of softness. However, as they have explained, it is also associated with their real name (Melo, diminutive of Melody), to the popular series *The Simpsons* and to a colour (yellow) with less obvious gender connotations. Their channel (picture 2) is much more thematically heterogeneous and formally simpler than Dulceida's: for example, Yellow Mellow reuses their logotype as both an avatar and as a subscription link button, where Dulceida uses two different images (a picture of her and a heart icon with her name on it). In Yellow Mellow's video covers yellow graphics are prominent, but they also use other colours or no graphics at all. They do not even describe themselves in the "information" section. Their banner is aimed at promoting their album, since they are a singer too, and stands out for containing the colours of the LGBTQ community flag. Yellow Mellow constructs their personal brand through narrative strategies such as digression and they emphasize their discourses with sound, graphics (their use of typography reminds us of comics) or syntactic codes in order to create humour. They also make a particular use of language, including neologisms, recurrent imitation of accents and Anglicism, which identify them as part of a global community and generation (Jorge, Maropo and Nunes, 2018) but also distinguish them from other Spanish YouTubers.

Picture 2: Yellow Mellow's channel



Source: Screenshot of Yellow Mellow's channel (9 July 2018).

As expected, the two YouTubers share most of their resources since they respond to the conventions of the vlog genre (Burgess and Green, 2009; Sabich and Steinberg, 2017; Scolari and Fraticelli, 2016; Simonsen, 2012): one person speaking directly to the camera, inserting other videos to create humour through association, zooms related to facial expressions, histrionic performance, the use of graphics to give credit to other YouTubers, etc. Self-parody and making the device visible are recurrent strategies for both YouTubers, with the aim of creating a sense of transparency and apparent spontaneity. As for their interaction with the camera, Dulceida starts *The Hypocrite YouTuber Tag* showing it in REC mode, and then interrupts her discourse several times by speaking to the camera operator, who participates in the narration even though we are not able to see him. Also Yellow Mellow starts *The Honest YouTuber Tag* manipulating the camera and trying to get it focused. Later on, they clean it because they supposedly have spit on it although we as spectators are unable to observe it.

3.2. Socio-semiotic analysis of their character

Through the socio-semiotic analysis of their characters we intend to identify the (gendered) values and personality traits the YouTubers identify themselves with (RQ2). We observed that Dulceida and Yellow Mellow differ significantly in their physical appearance. While Dulceida always wears make-up, likes trendy clothes and usually shows her body even when it means sexualizing herself (Caballero et al., 2017), Yellow Mellow does not fit the physical stereotype of traditional femininity, using baggy clothes, no makeup, and refusing to show their body. As for the socio-demographic variables, they both belong to the LGBTQ community: Dulceida is bisexual and married to a woman and Yellow Mellow only dates women and was single at the time of the study. It is relevant that the two Spanish (socially read as female) YouTubers under 30 with the largest number of followers identify themselves as part of this community, since it suggests that their sexual orientation does not negatively affect their popularity.

We found the existence of some personality traits and the praise of some values which are not gendered related but linked to the Millennial generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000) and/or to the YouTuber community (Scolari and Fraticelli, 2016): they argue that sharing or even copying content is good (D1: "We all take content from others"), give credit to their colleagues' work by mentioning them and linking their videos, and advocate for respect in social media (YM1: "I want to spread positivity and say good things about people"). To them, honesty and humility are very important values. For example, Dulceida appreciates her friends' sincerity and claims she is also very honest and direct. She adds that she has never felt "real envy". Yellow Mellow praises other YouTubers' humility and claims that they do not find it hard to say sorry. As part of their role as YouTubers, they are both also very grateful to their communities (friends and fans) and affectionate towards them.

As for their psychological traits, they both have been defined by their friends as having a bad temper and being stubborn, and at the same time positive, energetic, adventurous and confident. However,

only Dulceida is described with other traits related to additional femininity (Williams and Best, 1977): her friends say she is coquettish (D2: "she would take 10 bikinis and her eyeliner to a desert island"), childish (D2: "she's a baby", "she's so cute"), feminine (D2: "she's a princess"), dependent (D2: "she would take her dad to a desert island in order to survive"), and even frivolous. Other words that come to their minds are sweet, glamorous, sexy and bossy. When they are asked to identify her with a brand, they just as easily mention alcohol as cosmetics or Disney, which could seem apparently contradictory. Interestingly, Yellow Mellow also loves Disney, but they and their friends proudly adhere to the "geek" aspect of the brand. In this sense, Yellow Mellow belongs to a subcultural community while Dulceida stays in the mainstream.

3.3. YouTubers speak about gender

The videos where they speak about gender give us the opportunity to more deeply explore their conception, construction and performance of it (RQ3). First of all, it is significant that they both use their YouTube channels to speak about these topics. Their approaches, though, are very different. In her video *Respect*, Dulceida criticizes the beauty canon through a "body positive" video, a performance in a (pink) chroma screen scenario in which she and her female friends undress and speak about their body insecurities while flattering each other (picture 3). She appeals to emotions through the use of music and visual and audio-visual resources such as travellings. This is a short video with a very direct message about the importance of self-esteem, reinforced by the graphic codes at the beginning and end of it. There is a kind of tension in it between creating visibility for an issue and exacerbating it (Gill and Elias 2014), since Dulceida takes for granted that every girl feels insecure about her body (D3: "we all have insecurities and we must love them") and judges others (D3: "stop judging other women's bodies"), exerting a kind of victim blaming. There is no mention of sexism as a social problem even if in her video the curvy girl wears different underwear due to the impossibility of finding her own size. Her advice, then, is to love oneself and respect other women. Moreover, representation of diversity is quite weak, since some of their problems are "my bunions" or "my tattoos". Besides, without any apparent reason, the only woman of colour is excluded from the thumbnail of the video.

Picture 3: Dulceida's video *Respeto*



Source: Screenshot of Dulceida's video *Respeto* (9 July 2018).

On the other hand, Yellow Mellow's video, in the form of the typical vlog, is very simple in terms of audio-visual resources, in order to reinforce their speech while keeping their personality. They speak about their gender identity claiming they feel neither like a woman nor a man. They mention more than 30 times the word "feel/ing", suggesting gender is something people feel. When speaking about the whole range of genders, they show enthusiasm and respect (YM3: "what a wonderful world we live in"), exalting difference more than equality. Other feelings expressed are confusion and oddness, which may substitute solitude and despair in context of major gender inclusivity (Lovelock, 2019). We detected a double tendency towards individualism and solidarity, making people know they are not alone, which again responds to the inherent ambivalence of the coming out video (Lovelock, 2019). However, their social criticism is very timid (YM3: "I don't know if I feel like this because of what's socially expected from a girl").

Following the conventions of the vlog genre, which is inspired by confessional culture (Simonsen, 2012), Yellow Mellow states to speak from their personal point of view and exaggerates emotions. Gender, then, is not considered something to be discussed in rational terms or mediated by experts. In fact, as an ordinary celebrity, they consciously distance themselves from experts (YM3: "I'm not an expert", "I don't want to behave like a philosopher"). They also feel relieved when confessing (YM3: "Wow, I said it!"), suggesting problems can be solved by accepting the true self and confessing personal information to others (YM3: "sharing, accepting, living and enjoying").

4. Discussion and conclusions

The combination of the techniques shown on Table 2 allows us to answer to our research questions, as well as to conclude that Dulceida and Yellow Mellow share not only audio-visual resources but also, more surprisingly, most of their values and personality traits, even if they look physically different.

First, concerning RQ1 (Which audio-visual and multimodal resources do these YouTubers use in order to perform their gender identity?), we found that some of the audio-visual and multimodal resources available on YouTube are related to the gender performances of both YouTubers, but not all of them. For example, colours, username, images and icons are used by Dulceida to link her brand to the indicators of traditional femininity, while in the case of Yellow Mellow some of these elements show they ascribe themselves to the LGBTQ community. Dulceida's concern for her image and the aesthetic coherence of her channel, contrasting with the simplicity and heterogeneity of Yellow Mellow's, may also be interpreted in terms of gender stereotyping (Williams and Best, 1977). On the other hand, most of audio-visual codes (editing, camera movements, sound and graphic effects), as well as the use of Anglicisms or neologisms, are instead related to the audio-visual genre of their videos and their identification with a global community and young generation.

Second, as for RQ2 (Which kind of (gendered) values and personality traits do they identify themselves with?), we found that while most of the physical and psychological traits relate Dulceida to, while distancing Yellow Mellow from, traditional femininity, they do share common values, that can be associated to the Millennial generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000) and/or to the YouTuber community (Scolari and Fraticelli, 2016).

Third, in relation to RQ3 (Which kind of discourse do they create surrounding gender issues?), we found that both YouTubers speak openly about gender issues, and share ideas like self-esteem and self-acceptance. But, while Dulceida focuses her message on the beauty canon, Yellow Mellow talks about gender as something that people feel, while coming out as a non-binary person.

More in detail, Dulceida presents a personal brand, which is crossed by gender normativity in every single detail, from the colours and icons prevailing in her channel to her personality traits, including her physical appearance. She displays a "hetero-sexy" image (Dobson, 2012) and objectifies herself from a subject and agentic position. Her sexual orientation, in this case, is not a guarantee of a non-stereotypical gender representation, but rather of her objectification through the lesbian pose (Caballero et al., 2017), which appeals to the male gaze.

She also presents a multifaceted personality that combines attributes of traditional femininity and masculinity, for example sweetness with dominance (Williams and Best, 1977). Similarly, she equally enjoys fashion or Disney princesses, both of which are close either to traditional femininity or postfeminism (England, Descartes and Collier Meek, 2011; Wilde, 2014) and the consumption of alcohol, commonly related to the construction of hegemonic masculinity (Peralta, 2007). According to Dobson (2015), this kind of combination is typical of postfeminist subjects, who use it to individualize themselves and remain unique. Moreover, Dulceida's identification with childishness plays a role in a wider strategy aimed to infantilize herself in order to remain attractive and non-threatening, which is also a major characteristic of postfeminism (McRobbie, 2008). As we have noticed, in her video *Respeito*, empowerment is achieved through postfeminist ideals such as choice, freedom and agency, which is a shared characteristic with any femvertising campaign (Becker-Herby, 2016; Rogers, 2017). Even though this video, inserted within the body positive movement, contributes to flexibilizing the beauty canon, it still presents idealized images of femininity, which generates a discrepancy with the YouTuber's speech (Gill and Elias, 2014).

The displacement of the beauty ideal from body to mind is not only manifested in the importance of self-esteem, but also in Dulceida's disapproval of envy and the several times both YouTubers emphasize the importance of happiness and positivity. Moreover, Yellow Mellow replies to the negative comments about their physical appearance with optimism and good mood, the strategy that popular feminism has prioritized as a reaction to the phenomenon of popular misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2018). This popular feminism, as well as postfeminism, adopts a kind approach, to which these YouTubers identify themselves, in opposition to the feminist killjoy (Ahmed, 2010) that characterizes the second wave of feminism. Positive emotions and values not only encourage virality (García Jiménez, et al., 2016), but

are also related to neoliberalism (Ehrenreich, 2010) because they are untruthfully sold (also by the self-help industry) as the appropriate means to overcome social inequalities (Illouz, 2007). Indeed, both Dulceida and Yellow Mellow treat gender from the personal acceptance point of view, individualistic and emotional, preventing them from further reflection and collective action. Even though they have spoken several times in favour of feminism, they both embrace a kind of neoliberal and flexible version of it that does not contradict their status as influencers in a context where activism and branding may coexist (Raun, 2018). As we have found in this study, a “feminist” message can overlap with the promotion of brands.

In the context of late capitalism, both Dulceida and Yellow Mellow understand identity as something fluid that must be worked on and speak about it in psychological terms (D1: “I regret nothing because we all evolve and change”; YM2: “no relationship is easy but it’s beautiful to work on it”). They both claim not to be worried about other people’s opinions, but then need to communicate everything they go through (Dobson, 2012) which suggests the implicit acceptance of the therapeutic narrative (Illouz, 2007) and its collusion with celebrity and confession culture. Yellow Mellow, more than Dulceida, adopts the ideas of individualization (Bauman, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), life politics (Giddens, 1991) and the enterprising self (Rose, 1990) when they defend that “learning from yourself and discovering yourself is a whole-life process” or says “now I realize I did some things wrong, but people grow up, evolve and learn” (YM3).

However, Yellow Mellow’s questioning of gender binarism and normativity implies the acceptance of queer theory and suggests the necessity to study its penetration among the so-called gender fluid generation (Marsh, 2016). In contrast to Dulceida, Yellow Mellow is also aligned with popular feminism and they are subversive in many ways. Their identity as a non-binary person is performed in the context of YouTube through a discourse around it which borrows the main characteristics of the distinctive genre of the coming out video (Lovelock, 2019), suggesting its use goes beyond the lesbian, gay and bisexual identities as originally conceived by this author. Its main characteristics are, again, the understanding of gender from the individualistic and diversity point of view, as well as from the emotional and personal-acceptance perspective, but still aimed at helping others in a similar situation. This identity is perfectly consistent with a neutral brand image constructed through the multimodal resources of their channel, as well as their physical appearance (for instance dressing in a way that hides their sexual attributes) and a personality that avoids any classification in terms of gender.

Even though this study is not without limitations, especially due to the small sample of the analysis, it demonstrates the circulation and hybridization of different forms of feminism in the digital media landscape (Banet-Weiser, 2018) through the study of the influencers as protagonists of the digital popular culture, a space of struggle and negotiation of meanings with special impact among young people. For example, Dulceida makes a clearly postfeminist representation while adopting a personal identification with feminism, which is more appropriate to popular feminism. Yellow Mellow, on the other hand, integrates queer theory and, again, popular feminism. The diversity of models which are available to the youth represented by these two popular YouTubers, is good news, as well as the idea that LGTBQ women and non-binary persons could have conquered the mainstream on YouTube. However, the complexity and combination of apparently opposing concepts can generate certain confusion. Since popular feminism is in constant process of development and definition, it will be necessary to continue the line initiated in this project to see how this competition of feminisms evolves and is solved.

5. Specific contributions of each author

Contributions	Author
Research design	Ester Villacampa-Morales
Documentary search	Ester Villacampa-Morales y Sue Aran-Ramspott
Data collection	Ester Villacampa-Morales
Critical data analysis and interpretation	Ester Villacampa-Morales y Maddalena Fedele
Review and approval of versions	Maddalena Fedele y Sue Aran-Ramspott

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Notes

1. After the period of analysis Yellow Mellow changed their username to simply Melo. Moreover, since through the analysis it was possible to identify Yellow Mellow as a person of non-binary gender and respecting the recommendations of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, we refer to this YouTuber with the corresponding pronoun "they".

2. Visualization data, May 2021: D1, 771,761; YM1, 297,397; D2, 766,636; YM2, 353,658; D3, 3,844,464; YM3, 796,073. Comments data, May 2021: D1, 1781; YM1, 1470; D2, 894, YM2, 4026; D3, 8055; YM 8085.