

CHANGES IN SELF-CONCEPT: FEMALE ASSERTIVENESS IN WEBLOG WRITING

ANTONIO GARCÍA GÓMEZ
Universidad de Alcalá de Henares de Madrid

Recibido: 30/03/2009

Aceptado: 19/06/2009

1. Introduction

In literature, cognitivism is the prevailing paradigm in social psychology for explaining social psychological phenomena in terms of cognitive processes (i.e. thinking, perception and reasoning). In contrast to cognitivism, discursive psychology is regarded as an approach «to social psychology that has developed a type of discourse analysis in order to explore the ways in which people's selves, thoughts and emotions are formed and transformed through social interaction and to cast light on the role this processes in social and cultural reproduction and change»¹. Therefore, discursive psychology understands the uses of language as constructions of the world which are oriented towards social actions.

According to discursive psychology, language is not a tool for communication and knowledge; rather language constitutes our (gendered) subjectivity². Discursive psychology is particularly relevant in the study of female

1. PHILLIPS, Louise and JORGENSEN, Marianne, W. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London, Sage Publications, 2002, p.7

2. POTTER, Jonathan and WETHERELL, Margaret. *Discourse and Social Psychology*. London, Sage publications, 1987. SHOTTER, John. *The Cultural Politics of Everyday Life*. Buckingham, Open University Press, 1993. GARCÍA GÓMEZ, Antonio. «Gender on the Screen: A Public View of Private Writing». *Clepsydra: Revista de Estudios de Género y de Teoría Feminista*, 7, (2008), pp. 89-117. GARCÍA-GÓMEZ, Antonio. «Laddish Behaviour and Gender Performativity in British and Spanish Personal Weblogs». *English Studies*, 29, (2008), pp. 43-69.

identity construction in weblog writing in so far as it allows the analyst to shed light on how adolescent female bloggers are both products of discourse and producers of discourse. In this sense, this discursive psychology stance broadens the scope of traditional discourse analysis since individuals are not exclusively seen as subjects of discourse³. As Potter and Wetherell argue, language is not merely a channel through which information about underlying mental states and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated. On the contrary, language is a «machine» that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world⁴.

This idea is clearly connected with the fact that changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed. As Phillips and Jorgensen suggest, «struggles at the discursive level take part in changing, as well as reproducing, the social reality»⁵. In other words, discourses make different positions available. These subject positions are not exclusive but flexible resources in social interaction⁶. Therefore, the study of these discourses or positionings in female weblog writing can shed light on questions about communication, social action and the construction of the female self, the other and the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Owing to the fact that discursive psychology concentrates on how people use the available discourses in a flexible manner in both creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities in talk-in-interaction and to analyse the social consequences of this, the motivation for the research reported here is to determine what happens to a sample of British and Spanish adolescent female bloggers' identity and their evaluations, perceptions and motivations when they narrate their personal experiences in their weblogs. This study aims to explore the different positionings these British and Spanish female adolescents adopt when disclosing personal information and to analyse the discursive strategies these bloggers use in order to construct an

3. LACLAU, Ernesto and MOUFFE, Chantal. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, Verso, 1985.

4. POTTER, Jonathan and WETHERELL, Margaret, *Op. cit.*

5. PHILIPS, Louise and JORGENSEN, Marianne, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

6. BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York and London, Routledge, 1990. CAMERON, Deborah. «Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity». In J. Coates, ed. *Language and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 270–284, 1998. CAMERON, Deborah. «Language: Person, gender, number». *Critical Quarterly*, 46 (4) (2004), pp. 131–135. SUNDERLAND, Jane. *Gendered Discourses*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

assertive self-concept when narrating emotional events and more precisely when expressing anger towards others⁷.

2. Blog Corpus

2.1. Entries and participants

The blog corpus consists of 599 entries drawn from 34 British personal weblogs (155 entries about bloggers' loving relationships and 139 entries about bloggers' broken relationships) and thirty-one Spanish personal weblogs (158 entries about bloggers' loving relationships and 147 bloggers' entries about broken relationships) created by teenage females. The final sample contains 19,385 annotated utterances collected from February to May of 2007 from *blogger.com* and *studentsoftheworld.info*. Among other characteristics, both *blogger* and *studentsoftheworld* have an interactive feature in common: a friend list that encourages other users to read and comment on each other's journals.

A general assumption in language and gender studies, that even in one society, e.g. Britain or Spain, women cannot be discussed as if they formed a single homogeneous category. In order to provide a homogenous sample, the data selected come from a specific subsection of the female population: teenage heterosexual bloggers. More precisely, four main dimensions of identity which affect the way that the gendered selves are presented were considered: gender, age, race and social class. All teen females range from 13 to 16 years of age and are therefore secondary school students. In line with Herring and Huffaker and Calvert, author gender was determined by examining all the blogs qualitatively for indications of gender such as nicknames, explicit gender statements (e.g. «I am a woman, not a girl!», «Since I was a little girl», etc.), and gender-indexical language (e.g. «I know my boyfriend better than», «My boyfriend is so cute»)⁸. Finally, when bloggers want to create their own blogs they have to provide basic details about themselves which include race and social class. We cannot deny that factors like race, social class, and ethnicity do shape the experiences of individuals in society and as a result, can

7. The present study was financially supported by a grant (ID No: 37/06-01) from the Spanish Women's Institute. This study is part of a long-term research project: Effects of Anti-Sexist Language Policies and the Process of Feminisation of Language in the Media. University of Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain).

8. HERRING, Susan. C. «A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse». *Language@Internet*. 2007. <<http://www.languageatinternet.de/articles/761>>, accessed 22-12-2008. HUFFAKER, David A. and CALVERT, Sandra L., «Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs». *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 (2), (2005), article 1. <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue2/huffaker.html>>, accessed 22-12-2008.

have profound effects on how they depict themselves. Although there is no way to check on the reliability of bloggers' description of the user, all of them chose both the categories «white» and «middle class»⁹.

2.2. Coding process: speech acts variables considered

Initially, a preliminary overview of all these entries was necessary. This overview made it possible to segment blogs into topically defined passages¹⁰: a) exacerbations of love; b) (physical and personality) descriptions of their boyfriends and themselves when narrating their current relationship; c) (physical and personality) description of their boyfriends and themselves when narrating their former relationships. These topically defined passages were understood as Macro Speech Acts¹¹ that allow the analyst to have a complete picture of these bloggers' self-presentation strategies and to contextualise their discursive intentions. For current purposes, I will concentrate my efforts on the analysis of the last group of topically defined episodes. These British and Spanish bloggers' entries revolve around broken relationships, anger and pain.

Then, every utterance in each topically defined passage was coded for its pragmatic meaning. All the transcripts were coded by dividing each blogger's entry, as if they were a speaking turn, into thought units. Then, all these thought units were classified into a consistent and manageable taxonomy of 12 principles of classification of main communication acts in the corpus. These principles were adapted from Tsui's¹² classification of Speech Acts. The aim of adopting these principles is not to confirm Tsui's model but rather to facilitate the formalisation of observations of regularities exhibited in the blog corpus. Detailed analysis of all the entries made it possible to identify two main discourse functions of utterances: directives and informatives. Informatives, on the one hand, cover utterances which provide information and more specifically «those which report events or states of affairs, recount personal experience, and express beliefs, evaluative judgements, feelings and thoughts»¹³.

9. OBLINGER, Diana and OBLINGER, James. «Is It Age or IT: First Steps Toward Understanding the Net Generation?». In *Educating the Net Generation, EDUCAUSE E-Book*. (2005). <<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/EducatingtheNetGeneration/IsItAgeorITFirstStepsTowardUnd/6058>>, accessed 22-12-2008.

10. Inspection of the data reveals that the length of each passage varies from one blogger to another – the same way as the length of each entry. In general terms, it can be said that the mean length of these passages is a total number of 12 entries.

11. DIJK, Teun A. Van (ed). *Text and context : explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse*. London; New York, Longman, 1977.

12. TSUI, Amy. *English Conversation*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Directive, on the other, cover «acts which prospect a non-verbal action from the addressee without giving him/her the option of non-compliance»¹⁴.

Using Tsui's general classification, a more thorough analysis of the pragmatic meaning of each utterance was carried out. On the one hand, four major subclasses of directives were identified all directed to the addressee: imposition of a course of action (e.g. «Stop pestering me»); suggestion of a course of action (e.g. «I think you're wrong, why don't you call her later?»); threat (e.g. «Mind your words»); and warning (e.g. «If you show up tomorrow, I will kick your arse»). On the other, hand, eight major subclasses of informatives were identified: (in-) direct positive self-evaluation (e.g. «Since I'm with him, I'm not the person I used to be». «My world is a better place because of you»); (in-) direct negative self-evaluation (e.g. «Everybody knows who always spoils everything». «I'm fucking stupid»); (in-) direct positive evaluation of the addressee (e.g. «He's SO cute»); and (in-)direct negative evaluation of the addressee (e.g. «I hate you, I hate men, I hate you all, you deserve no respect». «All you men are good for is having sex with. Otherwise, you're useless»). Table 1 shows the principles of classification of speech acts found in the corpus and frequency of each pragmatic meaning of utterances.

Table 1. Principles of classification of speech acts in the corpus.

	British Corpus		Spanish Corpus	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Directive: imposition of a course of action	934	9.8	738	7.5
Directive: suggestion of a course of action for the addressee's benefit	532	5.6	489	5,0
Directive: threat directed to the addressee	1120	11.7	1205	12.2
Directive: warning directed to the addressee	648	6.8	873	8.9
Informative: direct positive self-evaluation	327	3.4	470	4.8
Informative: indirect positive self-evaluation	589	6.2	482	4.9
Informative: direct negative self-evaluation	1293	13.6	1190	12.1
Informative: indirect negative self-evaluation	324	3.4	562	5.7

14. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

	British Corpus		Spanish Corpus	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Informative: direct positive evaluation of the addressee	1836	19.7	1603	16.3
Informative: indirect positive evaluation of the addressee	736	7.7	702	7.1
Informative: direct negative evaluation of the addressee	972	10.2	1,121	11.4
Informative: indirect negative evaluation of the addressee	218	2.29	421	4.3
Total	9529		9856	

Adapted from Tsui, Amy. *English Conversation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

3. Constructing an assertive self-concept in weblog writing

Although the past forty years have witnessed the blossoming of the study of social cognition as a whole, it is in the last fifteen years that discursive psychologists have focused particularly intensively on the topic of self-expression and self-construction. For current purposes, I have adopted Brewer and Gardner's classification of self to analyse these female adolescents' narrations of broken relationships. They suggest that there are three types of self: *the individual self* that is characterised by those features which help us differentiate from other individuals; *the relational self* that is connected with the idea that individuals accumulate a collection of selves in their memory, each of which is linked with a specific significant other; and *the collective self* is defined by the in-group characteristics the individual belongs to¹⁵. The usefulness of their model lies in the fact that each and every form of self they propose is about making self-attributions that help people find out who they are.

Inspection of the British and Spanish data gives evidence that these real female adolescents, when narrating their former relationships in cyberspace, may take on two distinct virtual personae or forms of self that aim to protect the positivity of their self-concept when they are leaving the relationship. In all these entries in both data, these female adolescents self-present either as «the mourning widow» or as «an object of sexual desire». The self-attribution

15. BREWER, Marilyn. B. and GARDNER, Wendi. «Who is this «We»? Levels of collective identity and self representation». *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71 (1996), pp. 83-93.

process associated with the construction of these bloggers' self-concept when narrating their former love relationships consists in a two-fold discourse strategy: self-assessment and self-enhancement. On the one hand, British and Spanish female adolescents self-assess and contrast who they are and were before entering the relationship. This self-assessment allows bloggers not only to criticise, ridicule and reject anything that comes from their ex boyfriends but also to depict themselves as self-sufficient women.

In addition, the analysis of the two different personae these bloggers take on when they are leaving love relationships shows clear evidence that the construction of their self-concept does not only function at the level of the individual but must be regarded as a two-dimensional process: the interpersonal and the intergroup dimensions. The process can be explained as follows:

- a) **The interpersonal dimension.** The attributes discursively attached to each of these two personae (i.e. the individual self) determine the way the bloggers relate to their ex boyfriends (i.e. the relational self) once the relationship is over.
- b) **The intergroup dimension.** The way these individuals construct their self-concept when they narrate their broken relationships have implications at an intergroup level. Inspection of the data reveals that both the social impact of this way of maintaining interpersonal relationships (i.e. disclosing and sharing personal information with other bloggers on the web) and the regular features found in the construction of virtual personae in both the British and Spanish entries make it possible to argue that we may be in nascent stages in the (re-)construction of female gender identity.

In what follows, I will discuss how these British and Spanish female adolescents construct their self-concept by delving into the specific self-attribution process that characterises each persona these bloggers take on and its main linguistic realisations.

3.1. Construction of an assertive self-concept by positioning as «the mourning widow»

It is common to find in the data how these British and Spanish female adolescents self-present as «the mourning widow». These entries narrate how bloggers are trying to learn to live without their boyfriends in their life, going out socially on their own, doing all the tasks that were normally shared, finding a way to fill the void the loss has left. By writing all these experiences in their blogs, they seem to have found a grief support group (i.e. their friends and

other bloggers who can post comments) can be so helpful as they share with people who are experiencing similar struggles.

Linguistically speaking, «the mourning widow» is mainly constructed by means of informatives and directives which may be classified into two main groups:

- a) Informatives which are aimed at remembering old and better times when they were still together. In doing so, these bloggers evaluate their boyfriends negatively in a direct and indirect manner in so far as they describe what they give to their partners, how much effort they put into the relationship, how much effort to save and make the relationship work. These expressions include: recollections of their relationship (e.g. «I still remember when we were together, just being by your side make me the happiest woman in the world»), accusations (e.g. «You never loved me». «You never appreciated all the love I gave you») and negative appraisal of the ex partner (e.g. «I can't stand the sight of you. You're the most selfish creature I've seen on earth»).
- b) Directives which are aimed at imposing (e.g. «Don't say you love, it's not true») or suggesting a course of action for the blogger's benefit (e.g. «If you really loved me, you'd have called me and asked me to forgive you for all the pain and the suffering you put me through»).

This distinctive exploitation of informatives to (in-)directly evaluate their ex in a negative manner and to self-evaluate positively and the exploitation of directives to impose or suggest a course of action show how these British and Spanish bloggers try to cope with the breakup. Most entries revolve around how the breakup of a committed relationship turn these bloggers' whole world upside down and trigger all sorts of painful and unsettling feelings. They seem to understand grief is a normal, natural response by which they attempt to adjust to living with his loss. It is then the total response to the crises of losing something precious. On the one hand, they do not fight their feelings as they claim that it is normal to have lots of ups and downs, and feel many conflicting emotions, including anger, resentment, sadness, relief, fear, and confusion. On the other hand, they express their feelings as an attempt to liberate them in a way and assert that they question whether or not they will still have a future. It is hard for them to let these dreams go. Table 2 shows a detailed account of the linguistic realisations of the self-attribution process in the construction of «the mourning widow».

Table 2. Linguistic features of «the mourning widow»

	British	Corpus	Spanish	Corpus
Directives:				
Imposition and/ or suggestion of a course of action	Frequency	Ratio	Frequency	Ratio
Impositions of actions for the speaker's benefit	214	63.50	254	63.18
Suggestions of actions for the speaker's benefit	123	36.49	148	36.81
Total	337		402	
Informatives:				
(in-) direct negative evaluation of the addressee				
Use of swear words and insults	134	42.94	174	44.27
Negative appraisal of the opposite gender	178	57.05	219	55.72
Total	312		393	

We all have experienced loss at some time, be it the death of a loved one or end of a significant relationship. Grief is very personal and cannot be compared easily with other people's experience; however, as social beings, we all have certain expectations of social behaviours we consider to be within normal boundaries. Although these expectations of others to exhibit behaviours considered to be «normal» aide to perpetuate the social stereotypes of men and women, these bloggers seem to within «normal social boundaries»: they make explicit how much they cried, they need to share and communicate about the loss as a source of comfort with their friends via the blog where they disclose this personal information; and they need social support which must be understood as an ongoing need for social connections¹⁶. However, both British and Spanish female adolescents experience a similar reaction to the end of what they consider a significant relationship since they do not accept and respect the focus and investment in the past, this is a way to avoid holding onto connections of the loss. The following entries illustrate this form of self in the British and Spanish data:

Example 1: Blogger 19B. 15 years old

This can't be happening to me. Not me! [...] I can't say I miss you. I hate you, you're not the one I thought I was dating. When you said it was over I can still feel the pain in my heart. You fucked up my life [...] I miss those

16. KARLSSON, Lena. «Desperately Seeking Sameness: The Processes and Pleasures of Identification in Women's Diary Blog Reading». *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (2), (2007), pp. 137-53.

days we spent together, I still remember when you ask me out for Valentine's, I was so happy [...] the day you said you love and I gave you all [...] those special moments we share [...] got to be strong, though. I've got put myself together and be me again.

Example 2: Blogger 6B. 16 years old

Now that I know what love is, I am not sure I will love again, not the same way [...] It has taken me a while to accept he did this to me [...] I don't think I can share all my inner thoughts with somebody that may betray me? I don't know whether I can love, trust, be with someone who may just do to me what he did to me [...] no way I am not ready to be hurt again [...] I know it's going to be hard and painful but I can't trust men anymore, got to be me and take the reigns of my life, although sadness fills my heart and I don't know how but I've got to find my way

Example 3: Blogger 31S. 15 years old

Soy tan desgraciada. Siento como el dolor corre por mis venas. El amor se ha vuelto veneno y no soporto esta angustia. Son tantos los recuerdos que se agolpan en mi mente [...] echo de menos esos besos que me hacían sentir bien [...] ya no podré decirle a nadie como me siento abrir mi corazón y mi alma [...] me siento vacia [...] Todos me dicen que debo ser fuerte y luchar y ver que el mundo no se acaba, tengo que ser fuerte, sí eso es. Olvidarme del amor y ya está.

Example 4: Blogger 5S. 16 years old

El amor que me dio tanta felicidad hoy solo me da dolor, tengo que aceptarlo, ya no está conmigo pero es mejor así [...] me siento echa mierda porque ya no va a ser lo mismo, ya no voy a soñar mientras estaba despierta, ya no voy a ser feliz, ya no voy a ver la vida con los mismos ojos, me queda esta oscuridad de la que no soy capaz de librarme [...] dolor, dolor y más dolor, este tiene que ser mi fuerza para romper los lazos del pasado y encontrarme a mi misma. No puedo ser esa cosa en la que me convertí. Debo ser fuerte y luchar!!

Even though our relationships with each person in our lives is unique because of our different personalities, therefore our loss of that person will also be unique to ourselves, inspection of the data, as shown in examples (1-4), makes it possible to argue that there are two common elements in the construction of these bloggers' self-concept. First, these female adolescents self-assess their reality and describe feelings of shock, numbness, an unreal feeling, feeling as though this is happening to someone else (e.g. «This can't be happening to me. Not me». «It has taken me while to accept he did this to me». «Tengo que aceptarlo, ya no está conmigo pero es mejor así»). Second, they analyse their new reality and by experiencing the emotional pain they see the way to change their lives (i.e. feelings of intense sadness, anger, anxiety,

confusion, depression, and resentment) (e.g. «Got to be strong, though. I've got put myself together and be me again». «Although sadness fills my heart and I don't know how but I've got to find my way». «Todos me dicen que debo ser fuerte y luchar y ver que el mundo no se acaba, tengo que ser fuerte, sí eso es. Olvidarme del amor y ya está»).

It is common to find in all these entries how bloggers claim that they will learn to live with the loss. They all assert that they are going to put their anxiety, sadness aside and they are going to use anger as the mechanism to find ways of reinvesting in life.

3.2. *Construction of an assertive self-concept by positioning as «an object of sexual desire»*

When narrating their broken relationships, it is common for these British and Spanish female adolescents to depict themselves, either exclusively or in addition to the mourning widow, as an object of sexual desire. A thorough analysis of entries made it possible to argue that there exists a remarkable set of consistent habits of both labelling and describing their ex boyfriends in terms of their genitals. Interestingly, the use of dysphemism with explicit language to refer to the more taboo parts of the body or bodily processes makes this self-attribution process a tantalising technique, on the assumption that much explicitness sounds much more assertive¹⁷. Despite the explicit rejection of anything that has to do with these bloggers' ex boyfriends, they use sex as an appeal for men. This positioning seems to be connected with a strategy to get their ex back. They try to show their ex boyfriends that he has lost control of the situation and that they are «cool» with the break up and are ready to move on.

Linguistically speaking, the woman as an object of sexual desire is mainly constructed by means of informatives and directives which may be classified into two main groups:

- a) Informatives which are aimed at evaluating the blogger's boyfriend negatively in a direct or indirect manner: negative appraisal of the opposite gender (e.g. «You men are despicable creatures, you all are!») and use of swear words and insults (e.g. «You son of a bitch»).
- b) Directives by means of which these bloggers attempt to impose (e.g. «Don't tell your friends to ask me how I am») or suggest a course of action (e.g. «You should delete my phone number and forget you ever knew me». «Pity you don't like teleshopping, you should get

17. GARCÍA GÓMEZ, Antonio. «Laddish Behaviour...». *Op. cit.*

a new brain») for the blogger's benefit. All of them ridicule their ex boyfriends.

Table 3 shows a detailed account of the linguistic realisations of the construction of this positioning as an object of sexual desire.

Table 3. Linguistic features of the «woman as an object of sexual desire»

	British	Corpus	Spanish	Corpus
Directives: Imposition and/ or suggestion of a Course of action	Frequency	Ratio	Frequency	Ratio
Impositions of actions for the speaker's benefit	1,125	76.73	738	60.14
Suggestions of actions for the speaker's benefit	341	23.26	489	39.85
Total	1,466		1227	
Informatives: (in-) direct negative evaluation of the addressee				
Use of swear words and insults	382	56.76	326	45.85
Negative appraisal of the opposite gender	291	43.23	385	54.14
Total	673		711	

The construction of this persona or form of self shows a similar self-attribution process both in the British and Spanish data. Interestingly, one of the most significant aspects in these entries is the precise choice of terms from the relevant lexical fields, and the implications that these choices may have for the reader's perception of the bloggers and their ex boyfriends¹⁸. It is a common practice in most entries to address the ex boyfriend directly using the second-person pronoun, «you», and they just as often indicate that the blogger expects him to read it (e.g. «I know this hurts but someone has to tell you». «Don't call me when you've read this»). Furthermore, these bloggers use the imperative form of the verb and/or modal verb structure to impose a course on action on the addressee¹⁹. The following entries illustrate this form of self in the British and Spanish data:

18. COATES, Jennifer. *Women, Men and Language*. London, Longman, 2003.

19. RINGROSE, Jessica. «A New Universal Mean Girl: Examining the Discursive Construction and Social Regulation of a New Feminine Pathology». *Feminism Psychology*, 16(4), (2006), pp. 405–424.

Example 5: Blogger 11B. 16 years old

You are a goddamn arsehole! you're a complete ARSEHOLE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
 I'm so fucking stupid, can't believe I trusted when you said you love [...] you have the tiniest thing I have ever seen! You are such a tiny dick loser! I didn't even know when your small penis was inside my pussy [...] no woman would let you near her with that weenie little peepee! [...] Remember when I said to you «eat my pussy so fucking good baby» You will never push your tongue inside my lips and flick your tongue on my clit again. Besides you will never hear me moan again while grasping my hands on your hair and pressing your head down [...] Poor fucking bastard you will never have me, you hear me? You will never finger fuck me again. I will never let you taste my sweet pussy juices all over your face. Can't understand why you left me, you had everything and you fucked up my life. You're a complete ARSEHOLE!

Example 6: Blogger 2B. 16 years old

I hate you. I won't trust men never ever again. You're all a bunch of liars! I trusted you when you said you were helping your father out and you were fucking that bitch. But you know what you won't have me again, you know I can make you moan, you will never pump into me again [...] you are a tiny cock loser who would never have a chance with hot girls like me! I am way out of your league small dick loser [...] You will never slap my arse cheek while you're fucking me hard, you will never rub my breast while you're pushing yourself deep inside me. I know just thinking of me gets you all horny [...] When you said you didn't love me anymore I couldn't believe it but now I see you're fucking this ugly bitch, but I know what you really like. I won't ask you to fuck me, to fuck me as hard as you can again. You won't have that again!

Close inspection of examples (5) and (6) makes it possible to argue two differentiated stages in the construction of this assertive self-concept²⁰. On the one hand, these female adolescents self-assess who they were and how they behaved when they were in the relationship (e.g. «I'm so fucking stupid, can't believe I trusted when you said you love». «I trusted you when you said you were helping your father out and you were fucking that bitch»). The resulting self-attribution process comprises all the bloggers' anger and pain which lead them to evaluate their boyfriends negatively by mainly identifying them by their genitals (e.g. «You are a goddamn arsehole! you're a complete ARSEHOLE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!»). More precisely, the evaluations come down to the size and dysfunctions of their ex boyfriends' sexual body parts (e.g. «You have the tiniest thing I have ever seen! You are such a tiny dick loser! I didn't even know when your small penis was inside my pussy [...] no woman would let

20. JEFFRIES, Lesley. *Textual Construction of the Female Body*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

you near her with that weenie little peepee!». «You are a tiny cock loser who would never have a chance with hot girls like me! I am way out of your league small dick loser»).

On the other hand, these British female adolescents exude charm and charisma and boast about their sexual power and ability as an attempt to enhance their self-concept after the break-up (e.g. «You will never push your tongue inside my lips and flick your tongue on my clit. Besides You will never hear me moan again while grasping my hands on your hair and pressing your head down [...] Poor fucking bastard you will never have me, you hear me? You will never finger fuck me again. I will never let you taste my sweet pussy juices all over your face». «You will never slap my arse cheek while you're fucking me hard, you will never rub my breast while you're pushing yourself deep inside me. I know just thinking of me gets you all horny»).

Spanish female adolescents also self-present as «an object of sexual desire» and construct their self-concept in a similar manner. Similarly to previous examples (5 and 6), these Spanish female bloggers self-assess who they were and how they behaved when they were in the relationship and exude charm and charisma and boast about their sexual power and ability as an attempt to enhance their self-concept after the break-up²¹. The following examples illustrate the same strategy:

Example 7: Blogger 17S. 15 years old

He tirao seis semanas de mi vida contigo. He sio una jilipoyas y no me jode que me hayas tomao el pelo pero yo soy más fuerte que tú y se que vas a venir como un perro en celo a por mi pero entonces sere yo kien te diga k te jodan. Este domingo veo a tus colegas y les voy a decir toda la verdad. Tú nunca me follaste 9 veces, muchas veces te corrías antes de empezar [...] Cuando te vea me pienso pasar delante tuya para que veas lo que te pierdas, ya no vas a tocar estas tetas que tanto te ponian, mi culito va a ser para otras manos que sepan aprovecharlo.

Example 8: Blogger 14S. 15 years old

Estoy jodida! Me has usado y luego me has tirado. Con todo lo que yo he hecho por ti. Sólo quería follarme y cuando te has cansado te has pirao con otra. No te lo voy a perdonar nunca [...] Acabo de salir de la ducha y estoy toda mojadita, sé que te gustaría estar encima mio, pero ya no lo vas a volver a tener, nunca mas, te lo puedo asegurar que no vas subirte encima mia y correrre. Quiero un tio que sepa hacermelo bien y no me deje a mediar.

21. GONICK, M. «The «Mean Girl» Crisis: Problematizing Representations of Girls' Friendships». *Feminism and Psychology*, 14(3), (2004), pp. 395-400.

In brief, the ideological implications of naming of sex organs, secretions and sexual intercourse in these entries in a straightforward way are not easy to pin down, but it is clear that this metonymic habit relates only to the sexual body parts, which is usually considered to be a factor in (sexual) attractiveness. Both British and Spanish female adolescent bloggers disclose this type of personal information as an attempt to get their boyfriends back. It is interesting to point out that these bloggers complain because their ex boyfriends do not call them or come to see them after reading the sexual offerings made explicit in these entries.

4. Conclusion

The present paper has purported to shed light on the discursive strategies British and Spanish female adolescents exploit to construct their self-concept in their personal weblogs when they are narrating emotional experiences. More specifically, a thorough analysis of the data has revealed that these real female adolescents, when narrating their former relationships in cyberspace, may take on two distinct virtual personae or forms of self that aim to protect the positivity of their self-concept when they are leaving the relationship.

In all these entries in both data, these female adolescents self-present either as «the mourning widow» or as «a object of sexual desire». The self-attribution process associated with the construction of these bloggers' self-concept when narrating their former love relationships consists in a two-fold discourse strategy: self-assessment and self-enhancement. On the one hand, British and Spanish female adolescents self-assess and contrast who they are and were before entering the relationship. This self-assessment allows bloggers not only to criticise, ridicule and reject anything that comes from their ex boyfriends but also to depict themselves as self-sufficient women. All in all, both British and Spanish female bloggers seem to put their anxiety, sadness aside and they use anger as the mechanism to find ways of reinvesting in life

5. Reference

- BREWER, Marilyn. B. and GARDNER, Wendi. «Who is this «We»? Levels of collective identity and self representation». *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71 (1996), pp. 83-93.
- BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York and London, Routledge, 1990.
- CAMERON, Deborah. «Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity». In J. Coates, ed. *Language and Gender*. Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 270-284, 1998.

- CAMERON, Deborah. «Language: Person, gender, number». *Critical Quarterly*, 46 (4) (2004), pp. 131-135.
- COATES, Jennifer. *Women, Men and Language*. London, Longman, 2003.
- DIJK, Teun A. Van (ed). *Text and context : explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse*. London; New York, Longman, 1977.
- GARCÍA GÓMEZ, Antonio. «Gender on the Screen: A Public View of Private Writing». *Clepsydra: Revista de Estudios de Género y de Teoría Feminista*, 7, (2008), pp. 89-117.
- «Laddish Behaviour and Gender Performativity in British and Spanish Personal Weblogs». *English Studies*, 29, (2008), pp. 43-69.
- GONICK, M. «The «Mean Girl» Crisis: Problematizing Representations of Girls' Friendships». *Feminism and Psychology*, 14(3), (2004), pp. 395-400.
- HERRING, Susan. C. «A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse». *Language@Internet*. 2007. <<http://www.languageatinternet.de/articles/761>>, accessed 22-12-2008.
- HUFFAKER, David A. and CALVERT, Sandra L., «Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs». *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 (2), (2005), article 1. <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue2/huffaker.html>>, accessed 22-12-2008.
- JEFFRIES, Lesley. *Textual Construction of the Female Body*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- KARLSSON, Lena. «Desperately Seeking Sameness: The Processes and Pleasures of Identification in Women's Diary Blog Reading». *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (2), (2007), pp. 137-53.
- LACLAU, Ernesto and MOUFFE, Chantal. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, Verso, 1985.
- OBLINGER, Diana and OBLINGER, James. «Is It Age or IT: First Steps Toward Understanding the Net Generation?». In: *Educating the Net Generation, EDUCAUSE E-Book*. (2005). <<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/EducatingtheNetGeneration/IsItAgeorITFirstStepsTowardUnd/6058>>, accessed 22-12-2008.
- ORLOWSKI, Andrew. «Most bloggers «are teenage girls» – a survey». *The Register*. (2003) <<http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/30954.html>>, accessed 22-12-2008.
- PHILLIPS, Louise and JORGENSEN, Marianne, W. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London, Sage Publications, 2002.
- POTTER, Jonathan and WETHERELL, Margaret. *Discourse and Social Psychology*. London, Sage publications, 1987.
- RINGROSE, Jessica. «A New Universal Mean Girl: Examining the Discursive Construction and Social Regulation of a New Feminine Pathology». *Feminism Psychology*, 16(4), (2006), pp. 405-424.

SHOTTER, John. *The Cultural Politics of Everyday Life*. Buckingham, Open University Press, 1993.

SUNDERLAND, Jane. *Gendered Discourses*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

TANNEN, Deborah. *Gender and Discourse*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

TSUI, Amy. *English Conversation*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.