



Disembodiment and cyberspace: Gendered discourses in female teenagers' personal information disclosure

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Abstract

At present, cyberspace tends to occupy a growing part of the social realities of most teenagers. The present study suggests that personal weblogs collectively can be said to comprise a social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of femininity. In promoting a cult of femininity, these personal weblogs are not merely reflecting the female role in society; they are also supplying one source of definitions of, and socialization into, that role. The main business of this study is to engage with a fairly large amount of data and try to answer some basic questions about how personal weblogs open up a new context for female teenage identity construction. More precisely, this article analyses the different gendered discourses British and Spanish female teenagers live out when they narrate their current and former romantic relationships. The study suggests that these female teenagers' self-concepts, floating free of corporeal experience, derive from a struggle between their social relational identity and their individual-based social identity.

Keywords

discursive psychology, feminism, online gender identity, self and other presentation strategies, social constructivism

Introduction

At present, cyberspace tends to occupy a growing part of the social realities of most teenagers. Weblogs,¹ among other tools of Computer-Mediated Communication, mean a shift in

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the use of the technology as we move away from ‘the use of technology to support an individual, towards the use of technology to support the relationships between individuals’ (Brown, 2000: 4). The impetus behind this research came from two directions. One was the wish to study how web technology and the emerging developments in digital media are playing a key role not only in the way teenagers have access to information, but also in the way they communicate and maintain social relationships between people (Blood, 2004). The other was the desire to develop methods and assess ideas of discursive psychology and pragmatics applied to a large body of data. The main business of this study then is to engage with a fairly large amount of data and try to answer some basic questions about how personal weblogs open up a new context for female teenage identity construction.

My reasons for doing this are based on the research literature as well as on practical necessities. There is extensive and ever-growing research literature on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in general (Herring, 2007) and gender differences in CMC in particular (Danet, 1998; Herring and Paolillo, 2006). These studies provide useful points of departure for future research on new media communication. Ultimately, however, there is a difficulty with that literature in that it does not directly come to grips with what happens when these female teenage bloggers are disclosing personal information and exploring their own identity in the early 21st century (García-Gómez, 2008a).

In what follows, these preliminary considerations will be given careful thought. The first section presents an overview of the concepts and relevant theoretical issues that aim to contextualize the research questions and hypothesis. The next section deals with the data collection and coding process. The third section addresses the different self-attribution processes involved in the discursive construction of British and Spanish female teenagers’ self-concepts when disclosing personal information about their current and former romantic relationships. The final section ends by considering the main implications of the analysis.

Blog corpus

Entries and participants

A general assumption in language and gender studies is that even in one society, such as Britain or Spain, women cannot be discussed as if they formed a single homogeneous category. In order to provide a homogeneous 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 et al.’s study (2004), 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’). 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

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'.

The blog corpus consists of 599 entries drawn from 34 British personal weblogs (155 entries about bloggers' existing romantic relationships and 139 entries about bloggers' broken relationships), and 31 Spanish personal weblogs (158 entries about bloggers' existing romantic relationships and 147 bloggers' entries about broken relationships), created by female teenagers. The final sample contains 19,385 annotated utterances collected between February and May 2007 from www.blogger.com and www.studentsoftheworld.info/sites/pages_s.php. 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.

The coding process: Speech act variables considered

Initially, a preliminary overview of all these entries was necessary. This overview made it possible to segment blogs into topically defined passages:² (a) exacerbations of love; (b) (physical and personality) descriptions of their boyfriends and themselves when narrating their current relationship; (c) (physical and personality) descriptions of their boyfriends and themselves when narrating their former relationships. These topically defined passages were understood as Macro Speech Acts (Van Dijk, 1977) that allow the analyst to have a complete picture of these bloggers' self-presentation strategies and to contextualize their discursive intentions.

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's (1994) classification of Speech Acts. The aim of adopting these principles is not to confirm Tsui's model but rather to facilitate the formalization 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. The former 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' (Tsui, 1994: 135), while the latter cover 'acts which prospect a non-verbal action from the addressee without giving him/her the option of non-compliance' (Tsui, 1994: 116).

Using Tsui's general classification, a more thorough analysis of the pragmatic meaning of each utterance was carried out in order to maximize the characteristics of the self-attribution process associated with the construction of each persona. On the one hand, four major subclasses of directives were identified, all directed to the addressee: imposition of a course of action (e.g. 'don't phone me again'); suggestion of a course of action (e.g. 'If I were you, I'd sort out my priorities'); threat (e.g. 'Mind your words'); and warning (e.g. 'Stop calling me or else'). On the other, hand, eight major subclasses of informatives were identified: indirect/direct positive self-evaluation (e.g. 'Since I'm with him, I'm not the person I used to be', 'I'm a better person since I'm with him');

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

	British frequency	Corpus percentage	Spanish frequency	Corpus percentage
Directive: imposition of a course of action	934	9.8016	738	7.4878
Directive: suggestion of a course of action for the addressee's benefit	532	5.5829	489	4.9614
Directive: threat directed to the addressee	1120	11.7535	1205	12.2260
Directive: warning directed to the addressee	648	6.8002	873	8.8575
Informative: direct positive self-evaluation	327	3.4316	470	4.7686
Informative: indirect positive self-evaluation	589	6.1811	482	4.8904
Informative: direct negative self-evaluation	1293	13.5691	1190	12.0738
Informative: indirect negative self-evaluation	324	3.4001	562	5.7021
Informative: direct positive evaluation of the addressee	1836	19.2674	1603	16.2642
Informative: indirect positive evaluation of the addressee	736	7.7237	702	7.1225
Informative: direct negative evaluation of the addressee	972	10.2004	1121	11.3737
Informative: indirect negative evaluation of the addressee	218	2.2877	421	4.2715
Total	9529		9856	

Source: Adapted from Tsui (1994)

indirect/direct negative self-evaluation (e.g. 'Everybody knows who always spoils everything', 'I'm so damn stupid'); indirect/direct positive evaluation of the addressee (e.g. 'He's the most handsome guy on Earth'; and indirect/direct negative evaluation of the addressee (e.g. 'Men are useless, don't know why I don't become lesbian', 'You are not worthy'). Table 1 shows the principles of classification of speech acts found in the corpus and frequency of each pragmatic meaning of utterances.

Given that both the male and the female self emerge and are shaped in social interaction, I here suggest that these British and Spanish female teenagers have a choice of how to express themselves in discourse and how to perform the gender role in which they would like to be perceived. In this context, I argue that the systematic analysis between the different forms of self or personae these bloggers construct in the narrations and the linguistic realizations used can throw further light not only on the way the social female self is constructed, but also on the way these British and Spanish female teenagers perform femininity at the beginning of the 21st century. Owing to this, each form of self will be accompanied by a table showing the main linguistic features used to construct this particular persona.

Disembodiment, self-attribution and self-conception in personal weblogs

Face-to-face interpersonal interaction in our daily life is interpreted by embodied characteristics which are culture and gender sensitive (i.e. interactants' physical features, behaviour and body language). Such embodied characteristics are therefore socially constructed gender categories which enable men and women to see others as in-group or out-group members. In Boudourides and Drakou's (2000) words:

when we meet a new person we reach conclusions about his or her gender judging by their performance in relation to culturally constructed gender categories. From early childhood one learns how to perform masculinity or femininity. In this sense, gender is considered to be not only a feature of the flesh but a figment of the mind.

This combination of mind and body becomes particularly relevant in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) due to the fact that entering into dialogue with other people in cyberspace is characterized by a process of disembodiment or dislocation of the self (Boudourides and Drakou, 2000). In other words, cyber-communication in interpersonal relationships constitutes an example of the disembodied practice of social talk in the early 21st century, in so far as the body, the most natural location of the self, becomes irrelevant. If we leave the body aside, it is then the mind and how we encode our reality that matters. There are two questions that arise here: how does this process of disembodiment influence the way gender is reproduced and performed in the blogosphere, and which linguistic strategies may bloggers use in order to construct themselves in cyber-interpersonal communication?

Floating free of corporeal experience in personal weblog writing, the study aims to analyse the self-attribution process present in the discursive construction of British and Spanish female teenagers' self-concept. More precisely, the study aims to delve into the different gendered discourses these female teenagers live out when narrating their current and former romantic relationships, in an attempt to throw further light on how gender is reproduced and performed in the blogosphere. Thus, it is predicted that the discursive construction of these British and Spanish female teenagers' self-concepts in their personal weblogs contains a repertoire of relatively discrete forms of self, each of which correlates with a particular self-attribution process.

Self-attribution processes in the pursuit of self-knowledge

Although some studies claim that internet interactions allow individuals to better express aspects of their true selves and that the relative anonymity of online interactions and the lack of a shared social network online may allow individuals to reveal potentially negative aspects of the self online (Bargh et al., 2002), the truth is that the understanding of the search of self-knowledge involved in the construction of self-concept is not an easy task. In my view, the difficulty lies in the amount of factors that interplay in self-conception and identity formation. In the literature, it is commonly accepted, on the one hand, that identity presumes the presence of multiple aspects of the self and, on the other, that social context plays a key role in triggering different aspects of the self that are presumed to constitute both our personal and social identity (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002).

Although there is a number of studies that attempt to define the different types of self and identity, the analysis below of these female teenagers' self-expression and self-construction is based on Brewer and Gardner's (1996) classification of self:³ *the individual self* that is defined by those personal characteristics that make the self different from all others; *the relational self* that is defined by the dyadic relationship that assimilates the self to significant others; and *the collective self* defined by the group characteristics that differentiate 'us' from 'them'. 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. As Hogg and Vaughan (2002: 122) add, this knowledge of identity 'regulates and structures human interaction; and in turn, interactive and societal structures provide identities for us'.

In what follows, I attempt to orchestrate the analysis of these female bloggers' self-attribution processes in the pursuit of self-knowledge to its linguistic realization. In the present article, the analysis of the different personae these bloggers take on when they are entering, and leaving, romantic 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 an integrated, multi-dimensional process:⁴ on the intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the intergroup dimensions. The process can be explained as follows:

- (a) **The intrapersonal dimension.** These female bloggers construct a (virtual) persona that suits the characteristics of the narration of their current or former romantic relationships. The discursive construction of these personae is based on a self-attribution process that allows the bloggers to explore who they are and how they behave when entering or leaving the relationship. I suggest that the characteristic self-attribution process may be understood as a journey of self-discovery. This self-knowledge in turn facilitates the relation to significant others (i.e. their boyfriends at the interpersonal level and potential readers of their weblogs at the intergroup level).
- (b) **The interpersonal dimension.** The attributes discursively attached to each persona (i.e. the individual self) determine the way the bloggers relate to their ex-boyfriends (i.e. the relational self). Interestingly, the self-attribution process consists in contrasting the differences between their past and their present. Here, I suggest that the analysis of this particular self-attribution process may throw further light on the nature of intimate dyadic relationships in the early 21st century via the internet.
- (c) **The intergroup dimension.** As mentioned above, the way these individuals construct their self-concept and the way they relate to their partners also 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 teenagers construct their self-concept by delving into the specific self-attribution process that characterizes each persona these bloggers take on and its main linguistic realizations.

Constructing female teenagers' self-concept: From a person-based to a relational social identity

Inspection of the British and Spanish data provides evidence that these female teenagers, when transferred in cyberspace, may take on two virtual personae or forms of self that aim to enhance the positivity of their self-concept when they are entering a romantic relationship. In all the entries analysed about British and Spanish bloggers' romantic relationships, these female teenagers self-present either as 'the fairytale princess' or as 'the exemplary woman'. These two self-presentations share two main features. Both the fairytale princess and the exemplary woman aim to:

- (a) reduce ambiguity and facilitate communication and an understanding of the relationship in so far as the attribution process attempts to assign a cause to their own and their boyfriends' behaviour. As will be shown later on, these personae's behaviour aims to credit their boyfriends for positive behaviour and to explain negative behaviour away by ascribing its causes to an external and/or uncontrollable factor (Fincham and Bradbury, 1991); and
- (b) enhance the positivity of their self-concept when they enter a romantic relationship by performing a biased search of self-knowledge to support a favourable self-concept and contribute to a positive sense of in-group membership ('women in love').

Furthermore, the self-attribution process that these bloggers use to construct their self-concept consists of a two-fold discourse strategy: self-assessment on the one hand and self-enhancement on the other. Initially, both British and Spanish female teenagers' narrations aim to seek out new information about themselves in the relationship in order to find out what sort of person they really are. This usually involves a contrast between the type of person they used to be before they met their boyfriend and the person they are in the relationship. In contrasting past and present, bloggers show themselves in a favourable light by explaining all the changes (both physical and personal) they have gone through. Interestingly, self-assessment and self-enhancement of their self-concept show a struggle between adopting a person-based identity and a relational social identity. Finally, it is worth pointing out that even though it is common for these British and Spanish female teenagers to depict themselves as both the fairytale princess and the exemplary woman, the fact that each persona or form of self is based on a distinctive self-attribution process makes it possible to argue that they are two independent personae. Let us discuss the construction of each persona in detail.

The fairytale princess in love with her hero. In the narrations of their romantic relationships, both British and Spanish female teenagers tend to depict themselves as a fairytale princess that is in love with her hero. In general terms, the construction of this persona is based on the repetition and maintenance of the same gender stereotypes that prevailed in the books these teenagers used to read in their childhood (e.g. Cinderella, Snow White, etc.). The message in these entries is quite clear: their hero-like boyfriends live exciting and independent lives, whereas they are primarily auxiliaries to them. In this sense, the construction of the fairytale princess correlates with self-attributing a set of stereotypical

characteristics that reflect the struggle between the subordination of their personal identity (i.e. the individual self) and the dominance of the social identity (i.e. the collective self) caused by the need to relate to their boyfriend (i.e. the relational self). These bloggers live up to the traditional social expectations by adopting traits, roles and behaviour deemed appropriate for women versus men. As a result, the fairytale princess can be said to represent both a relational and collective self where the self-attribution process involved aims to specify the relationship between the individual self (i.e. who they are in the relationship and how they must behave) as an in-group member (i.e. women in love) and specific others as out-group members (i.e. their boyfriends) that will guarantee the happiness and stability in the relationship.

Linguistically speaking, the fairytale princess is mainly built up by means of informatives that may be classified into three main groups in terms of the function they fulfil (see Table 2):

- (a) informatives which self-evaluate the blogger negatively in a direct or indirect way comprise expressions of: (a) self-humiliation and self-ridicule (e.g. 'I'm so damn stupid. I didn't know what he meant when he told me he wanted to get his red wings'⁵); (b) self-accusation (e.g. 'I'm to blame for what he did'); and (c) complacency (e.g. 'I didn't sleep a wink last night but I wrote the essay he asked me to');
- (b) informatives which evaluate the boyfriend positively in a direct or indirect way comprise exacerbations of love (e.g. 'Love is everything') and exaggerations of the boyfriends' physical and personality traits (e.g. 'He's the most handsome guy I've ever seen');
- (c) informatives which evaluate the blogger positively in a direct or indirect way comprise expressions of self-transformation (e.g. 'Since I've been with him, I'm not the person I used to be') and self-praise (e.g. 'I'm beautiful both on the inside and the outside'). It is worth saying that those instances where the blogger self-evaluates positively are not only less frequent in number but are also mainly devoted to telling the world how beneficial entering the relationship has been to them.

These recurrent speech acts in the construction of the fairytale princess show that one implication of taking on this persona is that these female teenagers do not see themselves as others see them, but instead they see themselves as they think their boyfriends see them. I suggest that this form of self emerges and is shaped both by interpersonal interaction (i.e. with their boyfriends) and by social interaction (i.e. with the potential readers of their blogs). The connection between the presence of these particular speech acts and the adoption of this persona shows a personality repression, since these British and Spanish bloggers define themselves in the way they think their boyfriends would like them to be. In doing so, they portray themselves in a narrow and biased way, in so far as they tend to define their identity in terms of its difference when compared to their boyfriend's; therefore, they describe the female as the 'other'. The following table shows the linguistic realizations of the self-attribution process in the construction of the fairytale princess.

Table 2. Linguistic features of the fairytale princess

	British frequency	Corpus ratio	Spanish frequency	Corpus ratio
Informatives:				
(in-)direct negative self-evaluation				
Expressions of self-humiliation and self-ridicule	266	36.33	318	39.01
Expressions of self-accusation	148	20.21	123	15.09
Expressions of complacency	318	43.44	374	45.88
Total	732		815	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct positive evaluation of addressee				
Exaggerations of physical and/or personality traits	906	67.16	1314	88.84
Exacerbations of love	443	32.83	165	11.15
Total	1349		1479	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct positive self-evaluation				
Expressions of self-transformation	123	50.82	125	50.19
Expressions of self-praise	118	49.17	124	49.80
Total	242		249	

In general terms, the quantitative and qualitative analyses support the idea that the search for their identity, as part of adolescence, is commonly associated with a poor self-concept and lack of self-esteem (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). With regard to the contrastive analysis of both British and Spanish data, entries show a similar process of self-attribution. Detailed analysis of the entries reveal that expressions of self-humiliation and self-ridicule correlate with the blogger's past (i.e. how she was before she entered the romantic relationship), expressions of complacency and exaggerations of her boyfriend's physical and/or personality traits co-exist to describe the present situation (i.e. how life has changed since they have been together), and expressions of self-praise combine with exacerbations of love to describe the transformations the blogger has gone through thanks to her boyfriend and his love. In addition, bloggers tend to use the third-person pronoun to narrate their stories. Let us consider the following British and Spanish entries.

Example 1: Blogger 17B. 15 years old

I've loved him since the first moment I saw him. When he asked me for a date, I couldn't believe such a guy could have ever set his eyes on me. Don't know what he can see in me. He's got everything I always wanted. He's SO . . . handsome, I can NEVER say no to him. His smile, his eyes, he's so charming. I love him much more than words can say [. . .] We've been going out for three weeks and my world is a better place because of him. My whole life has changed since he came in. I am so deeply in love. I get up every morning thinking of him, I get up because of him, he's my reason, my world, my everything.

He's taught me what love is. Now I want to show him I am the woman he wants me to be. I'll dress and do as he wants. I promise I will never see myself as the ugly duckling I used to be. I feel so alive for the first time.

Example 2: Blogger 5S. 16 years old

Estoy MAZO contenta. Hoy me ha dicho que me quiere. Más mono, se ha puesto rojo y todo. ¡qué guapo es! Me gusta todo de él, su cuerpo, su sonrisa y la manera que tiene de acariciar mi cara mientras me besa. [...] Yo en cambio no valgo nada, tan bajita casi no llego a darle un beso y con este pandero, pero me hace sentir tan bien. Gracias a él veo el mundo con otros ojos. Cuando me miro en sus ojos, veo mi reflejo y entonces soy quien el quiere que yo sea, me hace sentir que mi vida tiene sentido [...] Es perfecto no sé como he podido vivir sin él, desde que estamos juntos mi vida es como un cuento, siento que puedo conseguirlo todo, ahora siento que puedo tocar el cielo con mis manos, me miro en su ojos y veo a otra persona. SOY TAN FELIZ.

I'm SO happy. Today he has told me he loves me. So cute! He even blushed. He's so handsome! I like all of him, his body, his smile and the way he caresses my face when he kisses me [...] I am worthless, though. I'm so small I can't reach to kiss him and with this bottom of mine . . . but he makes me feel my life makes sense. Thanks to him I see the world through different eyes. When I look him in the eyes I see my reflection and I am whoever he wants me to be. I become someone different. He makes me feel everything is possible [...] He's perfect, I don't know how I managed to live without him. Since we have been together, my life has been like a fairy tale, I feel I can do anything, now I feel I can touch the sky with my hands. I look in his eyes and I am a different person. I'M SO HAPPY.

In these entries, boyfriends are depicted as heroes that can make the impossible attainable (e.g. 'I feel so alive for the first time'; 'I feel I can do anything [...] now I feel I can touch the sky with my hands'), give you something to live for (e.g. 'He's my reason [...] He's taught me what love is. Now I want to show him I am the woman he wants me to be', 'He makes me feel my life makes sense'), *be* catalysts for change (e.g. 'I promise I will never see myself as the ugly duckling I used to be', 'I become someone different'), create new possibilities (e.g. 'Thanks to him I see the world through different eyes'), and have skill and charm (e.g. 'He's SO ... handsome, I can NEVER say no to him. His smile, his eyes, he's so charming', 'He's so handsome').

As in fairytales, these British and Spanish bloggers also talk about great difficulties in their relationships (i.e. how many hardships they overcame to *sustain* their relationships) and the dangers to be faced (i.e. interfering mothers and/or friends that act as villains who want to cause the blogger and her boyfriend to split up. Acting as such, these villains use words and power to control and destroy the relationship intentionally for personal benefit). Sometimes these narrations even present the opening situation where the main characters, the place and time settings are briefly outlined – a *situation* appears, a *problem* to be solved, and the complication around which the whole narration will be created. At this point, the adventure develops, until we arrive at a conclusion, a happy ending where all the difficulties are overcome and the problems are solved. The following entries illustrate this point in the British and Spanish data.

Example 3: Blogger 19B. 16 years old

Once upon a time in a far away land there was a young guy. He was so cute that every girl was in love with him. One day at high school, he went up to that ugly girl and asked her the time. She couldn't help stuttering. He was so handsome. There was no doubt she had fallen in love at first sight [...] One day his friends told him a story about this girl. His friends told him she was a bitch a lot of the time and liked to play games just to see how much she could get out of him or see how much she could get him to do. At first, he took all of it and stopped seeing her, but one day he pulled himself together, stood up for himself and decided to start dating her again. Day by day, he fought against those who thought she was no good and with the strength of his love she is the woman of his life. They've lived happily ever after!

Example 4: Blogger 14S. 15 years old

Érase una vez que se era una pobre chica de barrio. Ella nunca había soñado con ser popular, ni salir con los chicos más macizos del insti, pero un día dando un rulo con sus colegas vieron a un grupo de tíos que estaban mazo buenos. Ella no quería entrarles pero entonces uno de ellos vino dijo que si tenía un canuto. No podía creerlo. Sin darse cuenta se lo hicieron en el parque [...] Cuando su madre se enteró le prohibió que se vieran e incluso quiso llevárselo a casa de su abuela para que se olvidara de ella. Decía que no era lo suficientemente buena para él y que le distraería de sus estudios. Él no quiso escuchar a esas voces y les demostró que era amor de verdad. Sacó las mejores notas y desde entonces son inseparables.

Once upon a time there was a poor girl who lived in a small town. She had never ever dreamt of being popular or going out with the most handsome guys in high school. One day she was going out with her friends when they saw a bunch of cool guys. She didn't dare to go up to them but then one guy came and asked her if she had any dope. She couldn't believe it. Almost without realising they had a lay in the park [...] When his mother found out, she forbade him to see her again, she even tried to take him to his grandma's so that he would forget her. Her mother told him this girl was not good enough for him and that she would make him fail at school. He didn't want to hear those voices and he proved that it was true love. He got the best marks in his class and they have been inseparable since then.

As in examples (1) and (2), bloggers use the third-person pronoun to narrate their stories. Here, I suggest that this use of pronoun must not be understood as a strategy by means of which the writer creates a distance from the text (and the story itself), but rather this way of fictionalizing their reality is the means whereby these bloggers self-idealize their relationship. As shown in examples (3) and (4), the norm for many of these entries is to locate the story in an unknown high school. In addition, the recall of past events introduces a contrast with present events. Negative happenings are always connected with the past the character has left behind and a new present/future is opened up. In doing so, these British and Spanish female teenagers attempt to evoke profound feelings of awe and respect for life as an unpredictable process, which can be changed to compensate for the emptiness that most teenagers experience.

In brief, the fairytale princess depicts an obedient, loving girlfriend which in turn shows that the prevalence of gender stereotypes has decreased slightly at the beginning of the 21st century. These female teenagers construct this stereotyped form of the self by presenting themselves as the partner, especially through the dominant images of the mother (i.e. they protect their boyfriends as if they were their children), the lover (i.e. loving their boyfriends is the only thing that matters) and the nurse (i.e. taking care of their boyfriends is part of the relationship). All in all, the fairytale princess as a form of British and Spanish female teenager's self reveals how these bloggers subordinate their personal needs to their boyfriends (i.e. satisfaction of the interpersonal dimension) and exemplifies the in-group for other bloggers to imitate (i.e. satisfaction of the intergroup dimension).

The exemplary woman. It is common for these British and Spanish female teenagers to depict themselves, either exclusively or in addition to the fairytale princess, as the exemplary woman. The ancient Christian practice of setting up saints and other good women as 'exemplary women' can also be found in these British and Spanish female teenagers' narrations of romantic relationships. It is worth mentioning that the attribution process involved in this form of self present in weblog writing differs from those women in the past who emphasized the importance of women behaving virtuously in relation to their bodies (Jeffries, 2007). Women's active participation in the public sphere has also shaped new roles and demands for new generations of women (García Gómez, 2008b). Whilst 21st century society no longer emphasizes chastity as the highest form of female virtue, it puts much pressure on looking after the body (this includes dieting, exercise and having a healthy sex life to ensure their boyfriend will like them).

In contrast to the previous form of self, the exemplary woman in both data shows a process of social identity salience. In narrating *romantic* relationships, the principle that governs social identity salience hinges on bloggers' motivation to reduce uncertainty about themselves and feel positive about themselves (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). The discursive strategy is based on the use of a limited set of perceptual clues associated with imitating a celebrity their boyfriend likes or an ex-girlfriend their boyfriend used to go out with. This process of imitation causes the bloggers to depict themselves as a prototype (i.e. the kind of woman their boyfriends like) which describes and prescribes the attributes of this form of self (e.g. what they must look like, how they must speak, what attitudes they must express and how they must behave if they want to attract their boyfriends). Furthermore, the exemplary woman can be argued to represent the collective self since the self-attribution process consists in imitating women celebrities who seem to have perfect lives and who in turn determine how these bloggers view themselves and act in life.

Linguistically speaking, the exemplary woman is mainly constructed by means of informatives which may be classified into three main groups (see Table 3 opposite):

- (a) informatives which self-evaluate the blogger negatively in a direct or indirect way comprise expressions of: (a) self-criticism (e.g. 'My legs are not good enough to wear this dress'); (b) self-condemnation (e.g. 'I always spoil everything. It's my fault that he's not happy in bed'); and (c) dependence upon their boyfriends (e.g. 'I'm lost without him');
- (b) informatives which evaluate the boyfriend or other women positively in a direct or indirect way comprise mainly expressions of admiration which also involve

Table 3. Linguistic features of the exemplary woman

	British frequency	Corpus ratio	Spanish frequency	Corpus ratio
Informatives:				
(in-)direct negative self-evaluation				
Expressions of self-criticism	390	44.07	493	52.61
Expression of self-condemnation	139	15.69	153	16.32
Expressions of dependence upon their boyfriends	356	40.23	291	31.06
Total	885		937	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct positive evaluation of addressee				
Expressions of admiration to boyfriends	365	29.84	298	36.07
Expressions of admiration to other women	858	70.15	528	63.62
Total	1223		826	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct positive self-evaluation				
Expressions of self-transformation	156	56.93	168	61.99
Expressions of self-praise	118	43.06	103	38.00
Total	274		271	

imitating behaviour (e.g. 'He's got very good taste in clothes [...] I want him to come with me and tell me what I should buy for the wedding', 'Rhianna is a goddess. She's perfect, there's nothing I don't like about her [...] I want to be like her in every way', 'I love those sunglasses that Vic, Paris, Lindsay and My Britney wears');

- (c) informatives which evaluate the blogger positively in a direct or indirect way comprise mainly expressions of self-transformation (e.g. 'I'm more like her now. I got Rhianna's Pixie hair cut'). The transformation resulting from imitating others eventually leads to self-praise (e.g. 'I look great with Paris' sunglasses').

The exploitation of these particular speech acts makes it possible to argue that these bloggers emerge as preoccupied with their romantic relationships, explicitly dependent upon men, and in aspiring to these celebrities' lifestyles they construct a form of self that shows a struggle between rejecting a person-based identity (i.e. the person they really are) and adopting a relational social identity (i.e. the celebrity they would like to be and/or their boyfriends would like them to be). Table 3 shows the linguistic realizations of the self-attribution process in the construction of the exemplary woman.

Inspection of entries in the data reveals that these British and Spanish female teenagers seem to seek new favourable knowledge about themselves as well as ways to revise pre-existing but unfavourable views of themselves. This urge to self-affirm is particularly strong when an aspect of one's self-esteem has been damaged. The following entries illustrate this form of self in the British and Spanish data.

Example 5: Blogger 2B. 16 years old

I often wonder who I am. I look at myself in the mirror and I don't see that ugly girl I used to be. I still remember how I was: FAT, UGLY and WITH PIMPLES!! Nobody ever invited me over to their house, never been to a party or anything I was a nerd!! [...] It took me a couple of months to believe Andrew really wanted to be with me. I owe him so many things, things I didn't know before. He was the one who told me about Paris, never heard that name before, strange, I know! [...] couldn't imagine he could teach me so many things. At first, I didn't like her, who was this woman??? but then I started watching some of the things she had done and she's COOL! She's so ... She's PERFECT!!!! I like her style, her body ... What can I say, I am her best fan!!!! I always think how she would do things and I then do them. [...] I'm like a celeb now! Thanks to her I am the woman I wanted to be. I now radiate confidence and prince and am ALWAYS the life and soul of the party, no matter what it takes. Yesterday we went to Mary's and I spent the whole evening talking on my cell phone. I laughed out loud and pretended there was someone on the other line. I wanted to show them I've got loads of friends!! [...] Now I am just as popular as she is, I am a celeb after all!

Example 6: Blogger 17S. 15 years old

La primera vez que me dijo que por qué no me vestía como ella creía que estaba de coña, tenía que estar ciego, yo vestirme como Soraya y dónde tenía yo su cuerpo, y su cara, me sentó como el culo [...] Un día después de hacerlo me dijo que me parecía a ella y que por eso le ponía [...] poco a poco empecé a fijarme en su forma de vestir, parece una buena tía [...] Al principio era me jodía tener que vestirme como Soraya me sentía ridícula con esas faldas cortas y enseñando las tetas, pero Juan no dejaba de hablar de ella, de lo bien que cantaba, de lo mucho que le excitaba [...] Estoy deseando de verle esta tarde cuando vea que me he teñido y cortado el pelo como ella me va a querer aún más. María dice que me parezco mazo! Seguro que le gusta y en el fondo yo me siento bien.

The first time he asked me why I didn't dress like her I thought he was joking, was he blind? me, dress like Soraya,⁶ and had I her body or her face? He really drove me up the wall [...] step by step I started paying attention to the way she dressed, she seems to be a good girl [...] In the beginning, it pissed me off to dress like Soraya. I felt stupid wearing those short skirts and showing my boobs, but Juan didn't stop talking about her, about how well she sang, how much she excited him. I am looking forward to seeing him this afternoon, when he sees that I had my hair dyed and cut as she did he will love me even more. María says I look very much like her! I'm sure he'll love it and I must admit I feel so good as well.

This form of self is surely symptomatic of celebrity culture today. The attribution process of the exemplary woman starts with a self-assessment of these bloggers' physical and personality traits. The resulting negative assessment leads the bloggers to self-enhance their self-concept by imitating a celebrity their boyfriends admire.⁷ This transformation into a celebrity imitation, in turn, can improve the quality of the relationship. As can be seen in examples (5) and (6), the analysis of the discursive construction of the exemplary woman shows that both expressions of self-criticism and self-condemnation

form part of the bloggers' self-assessment (e.g. 'I still remember how I was: FAT, UGLY and WITH PIMPLES!! Nobody ever invited me over to their house, never been to a party or anything I was a nerd', 'and had I her body or her face? He really drove me up the wall'). Owing to the dependence on their boyfriends and the need to overcome their insecurities about their bodies and personalities, the self-attribution process results in a negative depiction of the individual self that must go through a process of imitation to show itself in a favourable light (e.g. 'I always think how she would do things and I then do them [. . .] I spent the whole evening talking on my cell phone. I laughed out loud and pretended there was someone on the other line. I wanted to show them I've got loads of friends', 'I had my hair dyed and cut as she did'). By imitating one of these celebrities, in addition, they attempt to protect themselves and ignore a poor self-concept (e.g. 'Now I am just as popular as she is, I am a celeb after all', 'María says I look very much like her! I'm sure he'll love it and I must admit I feel so good as well').

In short, this celebrity culture makes these British and Spanish female teenagers perform a biased search of self-knowledge to enhance their self-concept. As will be discussed in the following section, celebrity culture has always been part of any culture's self-definition; however, it is almost impossible to get away from the media's fascination with the self-destructive tendencies of modern celebrities. At present, the media exploit 'Bad Girl' celebrities alarmingly, as idols worthy of worship, and the films they star in, the music they produce, the clothes they wear, the unhealthy lifestyle they have, all have a distinct aura which is desirable for these female teenagers.

Constructing female teenagers' self-concept: From a relational social identity to a person-based identity

Inspection of the British and Spanish data provides evidence that these female teenagers, 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 teenagers self-present either as 'a sexual object' or as 'the disciplinary woman'. Although these two personae show a distinctive self-attribution process, they share two main features:

- (a) They are concerned with making dispositional attributions for their bloggers' and their ex boyfriends' behaviour. In other words, these bloggers as individuals make attributions for the behaviour of themselves as group members (i.e. abandoned women) and their ex-boyfriends as out-group members (Hewstone, 1989). Interestingly, these dispositional attributions seem to be explicitly correlated with changes in female teenagers' social representation of verbal aggression.
- (b) They protect the positivity of bloggers' self-concept when they are leaving the romantic relationship by performing a biased search of self-knowledge which not only supports a favourable and assertive self-concept but also contributes to a positive sense of in-group membership (i.e. 'independent women'). Interestingly, one may expect that former fairytale princesses look back and mourn the loss of their beloved prince. However, information disclosed in these entries shows that these bloggers insult, ridicule and attack their ex. On the one hand, this can be

understood as a mechanism to ease the pain and avoid dragging on the pain of the break-up. On the other, this attitude underlines the idea that these weblogs are written for a particular audience (i.e. these bloggers bring information to public light as a strategy to humiliate their ex-boyfriends in front of others who may know them and/or post direct, offensive comments for their ex to read them).

The self-attribution process associated with the construction of these bloggers' self-concept when narrating their former romantic relationships also consists of a two-fold discourse strategy: self-assessment and self-enhancement. However, the aim of the strategy differs significantly as argued in the previous section. On the one hand, British and Spanish female teenagers self-assess and contrast who they are and were before entering the relationship. This self-assessment allows bloggers not only to criticize, ridicule and reject anything that comes from their ex-boyfriends, but also to depict themselves as self-sufficient women. Contrary to the narrations of the current romantic relationships, the construction of bloggers' self-concept shows a struggle between leaving behind the old relational social identity they performed when they were entering the relationship and adopting a person-based identity now that they are leaving the relationship. Let us discuss the construction of each persona in detail.

The woman as a sex object. In the narrations of their broken relationships, both British and Spanish teenagers tend to depict themselves as a sex object. What emerged from the analysis of these entries was 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 tantalizing technique, on the assumption that much explicitness sounds much more assertive. Initially, the construction of the woman as a sex object may be thought to correlate with a struggle to recover their independence as they express their dislike for anything that has to do with their ex-boyfriend. However, a deeper analysis of the entries suggests that, in spite of the explicit and apparent rejection of their boyfriend, bloggers use their sex appeal as an attempt to get their ex-boyfriends back.

Linguistically speaking, the woman as a sex object is mainly constructed by means of informatives and directives which may be classified into two main groups (see Table 4):

- (a) directives which are aimed at imposing (e.g. 'Don't phone me again') or suggesting a course of action (e.g. 'If I were you, I'd have a penis job if you want me to fuck you again') for the blogger's benefit;
- (b) informatives which evaluate the blogger's boyfriend negatively in a direct or indirect way comprising: use of swear words and insults (e.g. 'You dickhead') and negative appraisal of the opposite gender (e.g. 'Men are useless, don't know why I don't become lesbian').

This distinctive exploitation of directives to impose or suggest a course of action and informatives to (in-)directly evaluate their ex in a negative manner show how these bloggers try to use their beauty resources and their sexual attractiveness in order to self-enhance who they are and become more appealing to their ex-boyfriends. Table 4 shows a detailed

Table 4. Linguistic features of the woman as a sex object

	British frequency	Corpus ratio	Spanish frequency	Corpus ratio
Directives:				
imposition and/or suggestion of a course of action				
Impositions of actions for the speaker's benefit	1125	76.73	738	60.14
Suggestions of actions for the speaker's benefit	341	23.26	489	39.85
Total	1466		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	

account of the linguistic realizations of the self-attribution process in the construction of the woman as a sex object.

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-boyfriends. 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 of action on the addressee. The following entries illustrate this form of self in the British and Spanish data.

Example 7: Blogger 6B. 16 years old

You dickhead! Don't know how the hell I ever love you or kiss you or touch your chubby tiny knob. That's what you are ... you're a brainless bald penis [...] where did you get those teeny-tiny balls? in a sale at half-price? Is it legal to have such a thing and call yourself a man? If I were you, I'd have a penis job if you want me to fuck you again. You know I'm too much woman for you. I'm curvy – big tits and ass but I'm slim. You couldn't bare to look at my boobs without getting horny. They are just perfect. You'd like to bury your cock in between these jugs but you won't do it again, not again! Remember when I pushed them together and asked you to put your rod right there and squirted you go all over my neck!. You won't have that again!!! You should have thought better before you kissed this bitchy friend of yours.

Example 8: Blogger 16S. 15 years old

Por fin me he dado cuenta de quién eres. Me dejaste ver a mis amigas, me hiciste pensar de que era una mierda. Cómo pude estar tan ciega como para ver que eres un ser egoísta que sólo vive para presumir de su nabo. Tanto vacilar a tus colegas de que la tienes grande pero lo que no les decías es que no se te levantaba ni de coña. Estás amargado. No puedes vivir en una fantasía que te has creado. No eres actor porno y nunca lo serás. Ah! A que no sabes una cosa. Estoy sin sujetador y lo único que llevo puesto son mis braguitas rojas de seda. Seguro que te estás poniendo cachondo pero nunca jamás volverás a comerme el clitoris mientras me metes el dedo con un mano y me das en la cacha con la otra. Tú lo has querido así que te lo pierdes.

I finally realised who you are. You didn't allow me to see my friends, you made me feel like shit. How could I be so blind as not to see you're a selfish creature who only lives to boast about his knob. You're always boasting about how big it is in front of your lads but you never dared to tell them there was no way it got hard. You're fucked. You can't live in a fantasy that you've created. You're not a porn star and you won't be. Umm, you know what? I am braless and all that remains on are my red silk panties. I know you're getting hot but you'll never suck on my clit while fingering my ass with one hand and palming an ass cheek with the other. You lost just what you wanted.

Inspection of the data, as shown in examples (7) and (8), makes it possible to argue two differentiated stages in the construction of this form of self. On the one hand, these female teenagers self-assess who they were and how they behaved when they were in the relationship (e.g. 'Don't know how the hell I ever love you or kiss you', 'You didn't allow me to see my friends, you made me feel like shit. How could I be so blind'). 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 dickhead'). More precisely, the evaluations come down to the size and dysfunctions of their exboyfriends' sexual body parts (e.g. 'you're a brainless bald penis [...] where did you get those teeny-tiny balls', 'there was no way it got hard. You're fucked. You can't live in a fantasy that you've created. You're not a porn star and you won't be'). On the other hand, these British and Spanish female teenagers 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 couldn't bare to look at my boobs without getting horny. They are just perfect', 'I am braless and all that remains on are my red silk panties. I know you're getting hot but you'll never suck on my clit while fingering my ass with one hand and palming an ass cheek with the other').

In brief, the ideological implications of the 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. By disclosing such personal information, they attempt to get their boyfriends back, as it is common to find in later entries these bloggers' complaints about the lack of effectiveness of their strategy (e.g. 'He's so DAMN stupid that he prefers staying with her instead of having me', 'I got hot and he didn't even call me').

The disciplinary woman. In the 21st century, female teenagers not only live in a generally more violent society, but their role models are also more assertive in every realm,⁸ from television to the yellow press (Muncer et al., 2001). In the relevant literature, research in a number of cultures has argued that there is a reliable gender difference in the way in which men and women experience acts of aggression (Campbell, 1993). Traditionally, psychological research on aggression expression has suggested that women tend to regard it as an expressive act that comes out of a temporary loss of self-control, whereas men tend to regard it instrumentally (Campbell, 2002). Interestingly, inspection of the data reveals that these bloggers' dispositional attributions seem to be explicitly correlated with culture-specific changes in female teenagers' social representation of verbal aggression. I therefore anticipate that these female teenagers' narrations will be correlated both with a laddish verbal behaviour⁹ and with an instrumental view of aggression.

It is common for these British and Spanish female teenagers to depict themselves, either exclusively or in addition to the woman as a sex object, as the disciplinary woman. Analysis of entries shows that the persona adopted in the dissolution phase of the relationship is characterized by an increase in attributions in order to regain an understanding of the relationship and what led to the break-up. Although the attribution process is shared in both the British and Spanish data, the linguistic realization reveals a culture-specific social representation of verbal aggression. Both British and Spanish bloggers self-assess over-positively and denigrate their ex-boyfriends by disclosing personal information which in turn distorts reality. In spite of this common laddish verbal aggressive behaviour, the discursive construction varies widely from one culture to another, in so far as British bloggers tend to use and validate masculine expressions and Spanish bloggers tend to use feminization of masculine expressions. All in all, the different references to name the sexual parts of their bodies and sex acts allow British and Spanish bloggers to exert power over their ex-boyfriends and try to discipline them because of the mistakes they made in the relationship.

Linguistically speaking, the disciplinary woman is mainly constructed by means of directives and informatives which may be classified into three main groups (see Table 5):

- (a) directives which are aimed at threatening or warning bloggers' ex-boyfriends comprise mainly (in-)direct threats (e.g. 'Stop pestering or I will kick your arse', 'Could anyone do me a favour and get out of my life?') and (in-)warnings (e.g. 'Mind your words', 'If only someone would learn to mind his own business');
- (b) informatives which self-evaluate the blogger positively in a direct or indirect way comprise of: mainly using and validating masculine expressions (e.g. 'I will shoot my load into your mouth'; or mainly feminizing masculine expressions (e.g. 'You're touching my tits', which comes from the male counterpart 'You're touching my balls', meaning 'You piss me off');
- (c) informatives which evaluate the blogger's ex-boyfriend negatively in a direct or indirect way comprise: use of swear words and insults (e.g. 'You son of a bitch') and negative appraisal of the opposite gender (e.g. 'Men know nothing about women!! NOTHING AT ALL').

Table 5. Linguistic features of the disciplinary woman

	British frequency	Corpus ratio	Spanish frequency	Corpus ratio
Directives:				
threats and/or warnings				
Direct threats	439	24.83	734	35.32
Indirect threats	315	17.81	129	6.20
Direct warnings	834	47.17	1027	49.42
Indirect warnings	180	10.18	188	9.04
Total	1768		2078	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct positive self-evaluation				
Use and validation of masculine expressions that assert power	367	91.06	185	42.82
Feminization of masculine expressions that assert power	33	8.18	247	57.17
Total	403		432	
Informatives:				
(in-)direct negative evaluation of the addressee				
Use of swear words and insults	393	76.01	538	64.74
Negative appraisal of the opposite gender	124	23.98	293	35.25
Total	517		831	

This distinctive exploitation of directives to threaten or warn their ex, informatives to evaluate negatively their ex-boyfriends and to self-evaluate positively in an (in-)direct fashion, makes it possible to argue that the construction of this persona aims to demonstrate 'heart' and 'balls' and stand in very direct contrast to the female personae they constructed while being in love. It can easily be seen that the other female personae as the representation of femininity stand as the antithesis to this form of laddish verbal behaviour. Table 5 shows a detailed account of the linguistic realizations of the self-attribution process in the construction of the disciplinary woman.

Inspection of these entries supports the general claim that British and Spanish female teenagers' social representation of verbal aggression has changed dramatically in the last two decades due to the media. Research suggests that their behaviour is argued to result from their adoption of 'laddish' attitudes that in turn are derived from new, aggressive images of women in the media (Muncer et al., 2001; García Gómez, 2008b). This adoption of male attitudes, traits and prerogatives has been regarded as women's attempt to improve their status quo. Let us consider the following entries in the British data.

Example 9: Blogger 3B. 15 years old

Can't believe you betrayed me! You broke my heart into pieces! You son of a bitch. Stop pestering me! You men are all the same. No brains! I called you but get no answer. You never get the facts right! You're a fucking liar! I'm telling you I will make my way through your house. I will make you lean up against the wall and work my hands between the cheeks of your ass, letting my finger press up against your ass hole. I will slowly work a finger up your ass. I don't care if it doesn't work its way in without much trouble. I will make you moan out loud as I push my finger all the way in. Leave me alone or I will finger fuck your ass. Someone must teach you some manners.

Example 10: Blogger 11B. 16 years old

Take a fucking hike you fag. How did you dare to fuck my best friend? Oh God I'm so fucking angry that I feel like peeing on your face. Leave me alone or I'll rub my clit and I will fuck you doggie style till I cum. I know you love the taste of cum so I will shoot my load into your mouth [...] you're a fag. There is nothing like fucking your ass. You men are SO STUPID that you can't understand when a woman says NO. Are you deaf? Said NO NO NO NO. Fucking idiot.

As can be seen in examples (9) and (10), the analysis of the discursive construction of the disciplinary woman shows that the threats and warnings as well as the negative evaluation of the ex-boyfriend are not just intended to harm their ex, but also men in general (e.g. 'You men are all the same. No brains', 'You men are SO STUPID that you can't understand when a woman says NO'). More specifically, the self-attribution process starts with a negative assessment of everything the ex-boyfriend said or did ('Can't believe you betrayed me! You broke my heart into pieces!', 'How did you dare to fuck my best friend?'), which provokes these bloggers' anger (e.g. 'Oh God I am so fucking angry that I feel like peeing on your face') and justifies subsequent verbal actions.

Out of anger, they address direct insults to their ex-boyfriends (e.g. 'You son of a bitch', 'You're a fucking liar!', 'You're a fag'), along with threats and warnings that aim to make explicit these bloggers' intention to discipline their ex-boyfriend for what they did (e.g. 'Stop pestering me', 'Someone must teach you some manners'). The most significant aspect is the structure these threats and warnings present as they acknowledge the above-mentioned laddish verbal aggressive behaviour. Examples show how these bloggers make explicit, on the one hand, what they want their ex-boyfriend to do or stop doing (e.g. 'Leave me alone ... ') and, on the other, the negative consequences if they do not obey. Interestingly, all the negative consequences are threats of forcing them to have sexual relationships where these bloggers self-attribute a traditional male role in sex (e.g. 'I'll rub my clit and I will fuck you doggie style till I cum', 'I know you love the taste of cum so I will shoot my load into your mouth') or have displeasing sexual relationships (e.g. 'I will make you lean up against the wall and work my hands between the cheeks of your ass, letting my finger press up against your ass hole', 'I will finger fuck your ass').

In the Spanish entries, the construction of this persona is also based on a clear laddish verbal aggressive behaviour; however, the discursive strategy involved in the self-attribution process reveals a culture-specific conceptualization of assertiveness. Let us consider the following examples:

Example 11: Blogger 21S. 15 years old

Se acabo! Eres tan tonto del culo que no puedes entender que no te quiero ver ya????

Es un hijo de puta, eso es lo que es. Sólo de pensar que te has tirao a la Mari te partía la cara. Déjame en paz, no quiero verte NUNCA JAMÁS. Lo que más me jode es que te pasees por mi casa eso sí que me hincha los pezones. Un día voy a salir y te voy a poner de rodillas y te voy a agarrar la cabeza y te voy a meter mi coño durito en la boca delante de esa furcia. Te lo vas comer todo, te lo voy a meter hasta el fondo. Te voy a enseñar lo que es follar.

It's over! Are you so fucking stupid that you can't understand I don't want to see you again???? You're a son of a bitch, that's what you are. Just the mere thought of you fucking Mari, I'd slap your face. Leave me alone, I don't want to see you EVER AGAIN. What really pisses me off is that you pass by my house. This really makes my nipples swell.¹⁰ One day I will make you fall on your knees and grab the back of your head and pull your mouth to my cunt in front of that bitch. You will take it all, sucking it in deep inside.

Example 12: Blogger 31S. 15 years old

Eres idiota. No te voy a perdonar lo que hiciste. Para qué me llamas, me pajeó el coño tener que oír tu voz. Siempre con la misma película. Me das asco. No sigas tocándome los labios o me vas comer el clítoris. Me lo vas a dejar sequito de de mamar [...] Me sudan las tetas que me llares no quiero volver contigo [...] Me suda un labio del coño que no puedas dormir, oír tu voz solo me dan ganas de follar tu careto, darte bien con el coño hasta que me corra en tu careto [...] Piérdete marica. Déjame en paz o me voy a pajear el clítoris y cuando lo tenga durito me voy a bajar la cremallera y voy a sacar a la fiera y te voy a taladrar y te voy a follar a lo perrito hasta que me corra.

You're stupid I'm not going to forgive what you did to me. Why did you call me? Having to hear your voice jerked off my cunt. The same old story. You make me puke. Stop touching my lips¹¹ or you will have to suck my clit into your mouth. You will suck it dry [. . .] You make my tits sweat¹² if you call me, I don't want to get back with you [. . .] That you can't sleep makes one of the lips of my cunt sweat,¹³ hearing your voice only makes me feel like fucking your face, fuck it hard, jam my cunt into your face until I burst into you. Take a fucking hike you fag. Leave me alone or I'll jerk my clit, and when it's rock hard I will pull down my zipper and let the beast loose, I will drill you and I will fuck you doggie style till I cum.

Examples (11) and (12) show the culture-specific self-attribution process these two bloggers construct to present themselves as the disciplinary woman. As in the British examples, these female teenagers address the exboyfriend directly using the second-person pronoun, you, leading us to think these entries are specially written for them.¹⁴ The break-up leads to these bloggers feeling resentful because of what their ex-boyfriends said

or did (e.g. 'Just the mere thought of you fucking Mari', 'I'm not going to forgive what you did to me'). Out of the relationship, these bloggers express their negative attitude towards their ex-boyfriends by insulting them (e.g. 'You're a son of a bitch that's what you are', 'You're stupid') and expressing violent emotions (e.g. 'You make me puke').

In this state of anger and hatred, these bloggers give direct threats and warnings (e.g. 'Leave me alone, I don't want to see you EVER AGAIN'). As seen in examples (9) and (10), these Spanish female teenagers also make explicit the negative consequences if their ex-boyfriends do not comply. Although the discursive strategy also provides evidence of a laddish verbal aggressive behaviour, it reveals a culture-specific phenomenon that is taking place and rapidly gaining popularity among female teenagers: the feminization of masculine expression to express power and assertiveness in interaction. In this way, these bloggers include in their threats expressions that are clear counterparts of traditional male sexual expressions (e.g. 'This really makes my nipples swell', 'Stop touching my lips', 'You make my tits sweat', 'That you can't sleep makes one of the lips of my cunt sweat'). It is also relevant to highlight the abundance of verbs referring to sex acts usually associated with male genitals (e.g. 'Pull your mouth to my cunt', 'Sucking it in deep', 'jerked off my cunt', 'suck my clit into your mouth. You will suck it dry', 'jam my cunt into your face until I burst into you', 'it's hard rock', 'let the beast loose, I will drill you').

Conclusion

This section aims to draw together some of the main insights arising from this contrastive study of female teenagers' personal weblog writing at the turn of the 21st century. The quantitative and qualitative research has delved into the different gendered discourses British and Spanish female teenagers live out when they narrate their current and former romantic relationships. In doing so, the study has thoroughly analysed the discursive construction of these British and Spanish female teenagers' self-concepts in order to argue that their personal weblogs contain a repertoire of relatively discrete forms of self, each of which correlates with a particular self-attribution process. More specifically, the analysis has made it possible to argue that the British and Spanish female teenagers' construction of their self-concepts does not only function at the level of the individual but must be regarded as an integrated multi-dimensional process, where the individual self struggles to meet both interpersonal (i.e. the relational self) and social demands (i.e. the collective self).

The subsequent contrastive analysis of the different personae or forms of self has thrown further light on the nature of intimate dyadic relationships. This in turn has provided evidence of the social impact of this way of maintaining this type of relationships. Especially relevant for the field is the analysis of the self-attribution process associated with the construction of these British and Spanish female teenagers' self-concepts when narrating their former romantic relationships. These bloggers' dispositional attributions have been shown to be explicitly correlated with a nascent culture-specific change in Spanish female teenagers' social representation of verbal aggression. All in all, although it may be too early to provide a definitive view of this culturally based redefinition of female gender roles, this study opens up an interesting field of research on interpersonal communication in the early 21st century.

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Notes

1. Weblogs can be defined as modified web pages where almost any literate person can self-publish content and communicate on a regular basis by introducing dated entries in reverse chronological sequence (Herring et al., 2004).
2. 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.
3. See also Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory. He suggests that we have three types of self-schema or three domains of the self: the *actual self* (how we currently are or the real attributes an individual possesses), the *ideal self* (how we would like to be or the attributes an individual would ideally possess) and the *ought self* (how we think we should be or the attributes an individual ought to possess).
4. I use the term 'integrated' here to argue that each dimension is connected with and has implications for the understanding of the other dimensions.
5. To get red wings refers to oral sex during menstruation.
6. A famous Spanish singer who took part in the song contest 'Operación Triunfo', the Spanish version of Pop Idol.
7. These bloggers also use the third-person pronoun to narrate their stories.
8. For instance, Gonick (2004) and Ringrose (2006) have explored the historical dimension of notions of self among teenage girls. In carrying out a discursive exploration of the construction of the female self, both studies refer to this phenomenon as 'the mean girl crisis'.
9. Muncer et al. (2001: 1021) point out that 'The British media has suggested that this increase since the early 1990s is a result of the rise of masculine attitudes amongst young women, that in turn have been promulgated by new and aggressive cultural images of women in films and on television. In Britain, such attitudes are referred to as "laddish" and the holders of such views as "laddettes" or "yobettes". These young women are believed to have adopted the attitudes of working-class antisocial males and the rise of female violence is attributed to their emulation of the hard-drinking, swearing, confrontational style of male counterparts'.
10. 'It pisses me off' – this expression comes from the male counterpart 'you're swelling my balls'.
11. 'Stop bothering me' – this expression comes from the male counterpart 'you're touching my balls'.
12. 'I don't really care' – this expression comes from the male counterpart 'this makes my balls sweat'.
13. 'I don't care if ...' – this expression comes from the male counterpart 'this makes my dick sweat'.
14. It is common to find in later entries comments referring to their ex-boyfriends taking offence because they wrote to them or called them to ask them to remove the entries where they were insulted.

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