"Apparently, women don't know how to operate doors": A corpus-based analysis of women stereotypes in the TV series *3ʳᵈ Rock from the Sun*

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores how women stereotypes are discursively evaluated in the TV sitcom *3ʳᵈ Rock from the Sun* by paying attention to the societal, cultural and ideological values they convey. Following recent trends for the study of television series (Bednarek, 2010), the analysis is both qualitative and quantitative, adopting a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis approach (Baker, 2006; Partington, 2004). The contextualised analysis of words that refer to women confirms that the sitcom writers of *3ʳᵈ Rock from the Sun* purposefully resort to stereotyping as a verbal strategy to create humour while conveying negative attitudes towards women.

KEYWORDS: sitcoms, female gender stereotypes, gender discourse, Appraisal Theory, Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis, evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on television discourse, and particularly television series, is justified by the large audiences that engage daily with their fictional worlds, their characters and their language (Bednarek, 2015; Quaglio, 2009). Bednarek (2015) notes that research on television series through corpus approaches has proliferated in recent years, with a tendency to centre on individual series, since their language can have a profound effect on the way populations speak, inform themselves, and even think, effectively creating *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983) of belonging. Rey (2001) studies the *Star Trek* series (Paramount, 1966–

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1993); Mittmann (2006) pays attention to *The Golden Girls* (NBC, 1985–1992), *Dawson's Creek* (Warner Brothers, 1998–2003) and *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004); while Baker (2005) studies how gender identities are construed in *Will & Grace* (NBC, 1998–2006). Gregori-Signes (2007) describes Sally, one of the main characters in the series 3rd *Rock from the Sun*, Quaglio (2009) compares the language of *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004) with casual conversation, and Bednarek (2011) investigates various aspects of dialogue in *Gilmore Girls* (Warner Brothers, 2000–2007).

The TV sitcom 3rd *Rock from the Sun* (henceforth 3RFS), the object of analysis in this paper, features a team of aliens who land on Earth with the purpose of observing the behaviour of earthlings for the sake of science. 3RFS was first broadcast between 1996 and 2001, but it is still being broadcast today (e.g., Channel 4 in the UK in 2016) and recent reruns include ABC (2002–2006), TVland (2008–2010), ReelszChannel (2010), Paramount comedy and Channel 4 (2014–2016), and it has been broadcast recently, among other countries, in Ireland (2011 and 2015) and in Spain (2014). In addition, 3RFS has been recently chosen as one of the first sitcoms to be aired by LAFF (Katz Broadcasting, an American media company specialised in digital multicasting, April 2016). Apart from the traditional TV broadcast, 3RFS is also available on websites such as *Netflix,* thus making it available at any time.

Dhoest and Simons (2016) claim that in the era of digitalization and convergence, it is difficult to measure the impact that a TV series may have. The authors suggest that this is due to the fact that the predominance of *broadcast TV*, which left the viewer with a limited number of channels, fixed programming and fixed broadcasting schedules and minimum control, is over. In this context, 3RFS is as available as any other current series and, thus, it can still influence people's behaviour and understanding of what is socially acceptable (cf. Montemurro, 2003).

In the context of sitcoms, stereotypes (cf. Attardo, 2001; Raskin, 1985) are often manipulated, exaggerated and distorted with the purpose of making us laugh (cf. Chandler, 1998). A recent study by Haines, Deaux and Lofaro (2016) indicates that gender stereotyping is still strongly embedded in today's society and can influence our judgements, choices and actions. In 3RFS one of the aliens' main concerns is to find out the differences between men and women, since they are allegedly nonsexual. The aliens' research method involves contrasting the information they get from the media and books with the reality they come across when interacting with humans. This provides 3RFS with a fictitious and yet ideal context in which womanhood can be reinterpreted. Humour arises from the clash between the audience's expectations and those provided by the sitcom (Putrevu, 2004).

This contribution examines the social and ideological meanings, and the values inherent in the statements that bring about women stereotypes as a resource for humour. The present research is mainly text-oriented (cf. Thompson, 2008) and focuses on the verbal construction of stereotypes, thus taking into account some relevant discourse variables, in particular, the

positions that characters adopt towards their propositional content. The results obtained provide new insights into gender ideologies and how they are humorously negotiated or subverted in the sitcom.

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides a review of some recent contributions to the study of the representation of 'womanhood' in TV series. Section 3 describes the objective of the research and discusses the theoretical and methodological principles that have guided the analysis. Section 4 describes the study corpus and puts forward some hypotheses. Section 5 presents the most relevant findings in relation to gender ideology. The conclusion summarises and brings together the main implications derived from the study.

2. FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN TV SERIES

There is a large volume of published studies describing the representation of women on TV. In this respect, Montemurro (2003) claims that television and media discourse in general have an influence on our interpretation of the world and, in particular, on our perception of gender models. Montemurro's (2003) sociological study on sexual harassment summarises previous research on how women are portrayed in TV sitcoms, and points out that television influences people's attitudes towards appropriate roles and behaviour for men and women. For Butler (1990), gendered norms stem from heterosexual conventions across cultures and societies, and have become institutionalised in one way or another. Along the same lines, Young (2015: 360) claims that social norms are so "embedded in our ways of thinking and acting that we often follow them unconsciously and without deliberation" until someone questions them, be it on TV or in real life. In the field of gender studies, Cameron (2006: 15) has claimed that representations may be even more powerful in forming desires and identifications just because they are idealised, highlighting that "people learn what is considered normal and desirable femininity or masculinity from representations as well as from first-hand observation and experience".

From a discourse approach, Bednarek (2015: 432) points out the need to address cultural representations of women in TV series that would complement linguistic studies of female voices based on real-life women. She studies the representations of 'wicked' female characters that engage in behaviour that would be socially and morally condemned, and describes their use of bad language. Paltridge, Thomas and Liu (2011) focus on how characters create an identity and reaffirm themselves and their views through their interaction with other characters in the series *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998–2004). Bubel and Spitz (2006) highlight verbal humour as a key factor in *Ally McBeal* (Fox Network, 1997–2002). while Bubel (2006) explores how alignment patterns, terms of address and questions

contribute to the construal of character relations in *Sex and the City*. Rey (2001) analyses how *Star Trek* progressively narrows down traditional differences between men and women, and concludes that the traditional characterisation of male and female language portrayed by television "may be changing to allow a wider range of options for viewers" (Rey, 2001: 156); Liebling (2009) argues that Grace in *Saving Grace* "refutes expectations about women while also taking on stereotypical roles of femininity" (quoted in Bednarek, 2015: 433). Interestingly enough, a recent study by Haines et al. (2016) claims that instead of diminishing, stereotypes about women's behaviour have significantly increased over time. TV series, among other genres, may certainly contribute to the perpetuation of certain gender stereotypes by elaborating and exaggerating the differences between men and women.

Regarding gender stereotypes, Brannon (2010) claims that they are used to represent attitudes, attributes, interests and beliefs about masculinity and femininity, about the psychological traits, the characteristics and the type of activities appropriate for either sex. The current gender stereotypes in Anglo-Saxon society go back to the Victorian era when the attributes of True Womanhood (1820–1860) (i.e., piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity) were thought to bring happiness to women. However, moral and societal behaviour stereotypes change over time and what was once considered the norm may become obsolete, ridiculous (e.g., 'men opening doors for women') or merely sexist. A critical approach to the analysis of ideology in gendered discourses should attempt to identify the conservative, resistant, subversive or damaging functions (Baker, 2014; Sunderland, 2004) present in discourses. In this regard, 3RFS is a suitable source in which to find current gender stereotypes being humorously portrayed, negotiated, contested, resisted or endorsed, particularly through the speech of 'alien' characters who cannot quite understand how they should behave to fit in with humans. This allows them to call human social and moral norms into question.

3. THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

The aim of this paper is to analyse the verbal evaluation of women and the ideological values behind such an evaluation in the American TV sitcom 3RFS. Despite acknowledging the fact that, on some occasions, gender stereotypes may rely on the interplay of verbal and non-verbal elements (e.g., gestures, appearance of characters, sounds, setting), it is purported here that language plays the central role in the passing of stereotypes. The present study, mainly due to space limitations, is text-oriented. The analytical framework applied here is eclectic and relies mostly on the insights of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2008), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the methodological principles of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS). Discourse analysis is a vast and complex field (cf.

Schiffrin, 1987) and, as pointed out by Baker and McEnery (2015: 3), "there is more than one way of doing discourse analysis". The discourse analysis approach adopted here incorporates a critical linguistic perspective (Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravnik, Krzyzanowski, McEnery & Wodak, 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2015; Bednarek & Caple, 2014) when interpreting the results obtained through the application of the Appraisal Theory framework and corpus methodologies (cf. Baker et al., 2008). The synergy between these three approaches was found to be a useful way to uncover the ideologies lying behind the manipulation of gender stereotypes.

Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 10) define CADS as "that set of studies into the form and/or function of language which incorporate the use of computerised corpora in their analysis". It is now well established from a variety of studies such as Baker et al. (2008), Gabrielatos and Marchi (2012), Partington (2004) and Stubbs (1996), among others, that applying CADS can help to uncover broad discursive patterns through frequency, statistical significance and word alignment techniques. One of the greatest advantages of CADS is that it allows for an effective exploration of large corpora through the inclusion of quantitative methods (Gries, 2010; Hunston, 2002), which uncover patterns that would be hard to identify through unaided human perception and, thus, can only be reliably obtained through the use of appropriate corpus techniques. The corpus methodologies applied in the present research used Laurence Antony's programme *Antconc* for the examination of the corpus, drawing mainly on the work by Baker et al. (2008), Gabrielatos and Marchi (2012), Partington (2004), Partington et al. (2013) and Stubbs (1996), among others, for methodological issues. In the present research, the use of a corpus methodology provided the means to address relevant analytical issues, such as how frequently stereotypes were used, how stereotypes were distributed throughout the corpus, or which lexical items were used in the evaluation of women.

The discourse analysis of 3RFS involved the scrutiny of word lists, concordance lines and keywords, and how these may be interpreted critically within the larger context of which they are part. Thomson (2008: 170) claims that Appraisal Theory constitutes "[t]he most fully developed model of evaluation", and that it encompasses all evaluative uses of language that speakers/writers adopt to indicate positive or negative evaluation and negotiate attitudes or positioning with actual or potential partners (White, 2001). Thompson (2008: 181) proposes to start the analysis from what was actually said rather than what might have been meant and argues in favour of "an approach to analysis as close to the wording of the text as possible", so as to avoid impressionistic interpretations.

Appraisal Theory developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics and intends to describe how interpersonal meanings are linguistically realised in discourse. It comprises three subsystems, ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION, which in turn have a few subcategories. GRADUATION reveals the force of the statement as well as the focus (Martin & White, 2005: 138). In sitcoms, the force of statements can also be graduated by

non-verbal features such as the reaction of other characters and laugh tracks (cf. Savorelli, 2010). Canned laughter is an indicator of what the producers of the sitcom may think the audience will find funny. ENGAGEMENT is concerned with the positioning of speakers towards their utterances. Resources in ENGAGEMENT are dialogic in mode and are related to the Bahktinian notion of voice (cf. Martin & White, 2005). Sinclair's (1987, cf. Bednarek, 2006a, 2006b; Hunston, 2000) distinction between *averral* and *attribution* summarises the two basic options a speaker has, i.e., assuming responsibility for the propositional content (*averral*) or deferring such responsibility to another source (*attribution*). *Averral* refers to statements originating from the speaker (self-attribution), whereas *attribution* refers to the use of a textual marker that indicates other-attribution. In the case of *averral*, the source may be identified (*sourced*) or not identified (*unsourced*).

ATTITUDE is the major subsystem in Appraisal Theory and accounts for three further subsystems: AFFECT, JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION.

1. AFFECT is concerned with the speaker's expression of positive or negative emotions.
2. JUDGEMENT encompasses the speaker's positive or negative evaluation of people's behaviour by reference to a set of institutionalised norms.
3. APPRECIATION involves the aesthetic evaluation of products and processes.

JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION are the main subtypes identified in the evaluation of gender stereotypes in 3RFS. The category of JUDGEMENT comprises (1) *judgements of social esteem*, which have to do with 'normality' (how unusual someone is), 'capacity' (how capable someone is) and 'tenacity' (how resolute someone is); and (2) *judgements of social sanction*, which are related to 'veracity' (how truthful someone is), and 'propriety' (how ethical someone is) (Martin & White, 2005: 52). APPRECIATION also comprises three subtypes: (1) *[reaction: impact]* ('did it grab me?'); (2) *[reaction: quality]* ('did I like it?'); and (3) *composition* ('did it hang together?'). APPRECIATION is mainly linked to aesthetic values of objects, although it may be used to evaluate human beings when "viewed more as entities than as participants who behave – thus, a *beautiful woman, a key figure*" (White, 2001).

Regarding the type of evaluation, it is widely recognised by researchers who follow the Appraisal framework that there are many bordering cases in coding Attitude values (Martin & White, 2005: 58), since the three subsystems of ATTITUDE are all motivated by affectual responses and are therefore interconnected. Consequently, the same item can exhibit multiple appraisal features and thus admit a primary and a secondary evaluation. Thompson (2008) defines this as the 'Chinese box' effect, i.e., the possibility of seeing Appraisal choices as layered, with a choice in one system functioning as a token of a choice in a different system. In the analysis of 3RFS, when faced with two or more rival interpretations, a decision was made to include only one evaluation (cf. the Appendix includes 20 examples).

Evaluative attitudes can be positive or negative and *inscribed* or *evoked*. The statement 'Mary is <u>terrific</u>' is an example of *inscribed appraisal* because it includes explicit evaluative lexis ('terrific'). Other times, the evaluative meaning cannot be assigned to specific words, but to larger units. This is identified as *evoked* (implicit) *appraisal* (cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997: 126; Thompson, 2008). A case in point is provided by Kaltenbacher (2006), who, in his research on tourism websites, claims that the sentence "On a hot summer day, a beach on the lake is the place to be!" conveys the appraisal and, therefore, the desirability of spending the day on the beach on a hot summer day, without any specific word carrying that meaning. For Thompson (2008: 173), *evoked appraisal* is a potent resource for maintaining values within a culture: the addressees reconstitute the values for themselves which depend heavily on shared assumptions about cultural and societal values.

In sum, this paper relies on corpus methodology to identify instances of women stereotypes in the TV series 3RFS. The resulting list of stereotyping statements is subsequently classified as positive or negative and analysed according to the evaluative parameters established by Appraisal Theory. The final interpretation of those statements containing stereotypes adopts a critical perspective in order to clarify the ideological content of the gender stereotypes brought up in the sitcom. Consequently, the specific research questions addressed are:

1. How frequently are gender stereotypes used in 3RFS?
2. Are the same stereotypes used throughout all the seasons of 3RFS?
3. Are there different gender stereotypes used in 3RFS?

Given that 3RFS is a sitcom that states from the very first episode that one of its priorities is to find out the differences between men and women, the hypotheses entertained in this study are the following:

1. that gender stereotypes will appear frequently in 3RFS.
2. that these stereotypes will be used throughout the whole series.

Regarding the third research question, one would expect a variety of stereotypes to be used throughout the sitcom, since, as humour often relies on surprise, the repetition of the same stereotype could have a negative effect audience-wise. Thus, a third hypothesis is

3. that women stereotypes in 3RFS will be varied in nature.

4. METHOD

This section provides firstly a description of the corpus and then follows an overview of 'women' through the analysis and discussion of word frequency lists, keyword analysis and distributional patterns. The analysis of stereotypes and the evaluation or attitudinal choices of characters relies on two corpus techniques: concordancing, which allows for the examination

of words with the co-text, and File View, which gives access to a wider context in which to interpret the meaning being put forward. The analysis concludes with a critical discussion of the ideological content of women stereotypes in 3RFS.

4.1. Data description

The data for this study corresponds to the full six seasons of 3RFS, an American sitcom aired from 1996 to 2001 on NBC (see Table 1 below). The show involves four aliens who are on an expedition to Earth (in spatial terms, the Earth is the "third rock from the sun"). While on Earth, the aliens pose as a human family with the aim of finding out what moves human beings to act as they do. The aliens are a family of four: Sally, a military officer who assumes the form of a woman in her late 20s; Dick, the high commander, in his late 40s; Tommy, an experienced intelligence specialist who becomes the teenager; and Harry, in his 30s, who is on the mission because "they had an extra seat".

The total amount of word forms for the six seasons of 3RFS is 378,875 tokens, and the number of types (different word forms) is 15,674. As illustrated in Table 1, the number of words and episodes per season is roughly similar. The corpus qualifies as comprehensive since it hosts all the seasons and episodes of the series:

SESSIONS	WORDS/TOKENS	EPISODES	BROADCASTING DATE
1	53,083	20 [101–120]	1996
2	66,350	26 [201–226]	1996–1997
3	76,068	26 [301–326]	1997–1998
4	68,087	24 [401–424]	1998–1999
5	59,633	22 [501–522]	1999–2000
6	55,654	20 [601–620]	2000–2001
Total	378,875	138	

Table 1. Corpus data and distribution in 3RFS.

These figures have been obtained with *AntConc 3.5.0.*, the corpus software used for this research. The distribution of words per episode and the time of broadcasting are displayed in Table 1. Each episode is given a number as a code for further reference (e.g., ep. 206 corresponds to episode six, season two). The transcripts of episodes have been downloaded from *Springfield! Springfield!*

4.2. Keywords list, frequency list and distribution

Keyword analysis is widely practised by corpus linguists in the study of genres and discourse (cf. Baker 2004; Scott 1997, 2010). It involves a comparison between two word lists, one of them obtained from the study corpus, and the other from a larger reference corpus. By means

of an automated statistical calculation, it surfaces those words that are prominent in the study corpus. The interest of keywords is that the listed items reveal what the text in the research corpus is about. For the purpose of comparison, two reference corpora were used, namely the spoken subcomponent of the BNC (BNC*sp*), and the *American English corpus 2006* (AmE06), built by Baker (2007). The AmE06 is a one-million-word corpus that represents written American English produced in 2006, and the BNC*sp* contains ten million words (10% of the 100-million-word BNC) of "unscripted informal conversations" and "spoken language collected in different contexts" (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml).

The log-likelihood statistical method with its default setting in *Antconc* was used to obtain the list of keywords but only the top 1,000 keywords in both lists were taken into consideration. Table 2 below shows the keywords related to womanhood arranged by frequency and rank (relative position in terms of keyness):

KEYWORD	FREQUENCY	RANK (BNC*sp*)	RANK (AmE06)
woman	270	55	365
baby	217	71	138
girlfriend	86	94	141
girl	133	149	395
sex	102	188	687
virginity	15	346	464
lady	92	468	290
ladies	64	562	469
gal	12	568	437
chick	10	699	2,307
mother	114	837	---
babes	7	949	885

Table 2. Women, femininity and womanhood keywords.

Leaving aside ranking differences, Table 2 indicates that eleven out of twelve keywords are shared as part of the top 1,000 items. These are nouns which designate 'women', 'womanhood' or women's social roles. The rank position of these keywords was higher when the BNC*sp* was used as a reference corpus. Most of the other top keywords included the names of characters in the sitcom (*Dick, Harry, Sally, Solomon, Nina, Albright, Don, Tommy*, etc.), adverbials, exclamations (*oh, god, huh, wow, damn, um*, etc.), greetings (*hey, hi*), pronouns, possessives, and other function words (*I, me, you, her, here, your, no, why, ok*). These are prominent even when compared to spoken registers in BNC*sp*. Within the top 100 keywords, one finds *man* and *woman*, which bears witness to the potential centrality of gender discourses in 3RFS. However, given that any lexical item that designates 'woman' can potentially become a gender stereotype carrier, the entire word list was manually scrutinised to identify candidates. This manual scrutiny resulted in the inclusion of some words which would not be identified as stereotype carriers per se: e.g., *sex* was included only

when it referred to the opposite sex. The results of this analysis and the frequency of 'woman'-related items are displayed in Table 3 below:

TOKENS	WORD	TOKENS	WORD
270	woman	16	female
147	women	15	virginity
133	girl	14	maid
114	mother	12	babe
102	sex	12	gal
92	lady	11	babies
86	girlfriend	10	virgin
76	wife	7	babes
73	sister	7	girlfriends
47	girls	4	bimbo
34	daughter	3	girly
17	queen		

Table 3. The lexis of 'womanhood' in 3RFS.

A significant number of words were used in 3RFS to refer to women. As shown in Table 3, the frequency list displays a variety of social roles that can, at least potentially, be used to introduce gender stereotypes. A qualitative analysis of each concordance, using File View to access its co-text, soon revealed that the selected words had multiple meanings and therefore were only at times used in relation to stereotypes. For example, the word *ladies* in "Ladies and Gentlemen" was often used as a formulaic term of address, or "I like ladies" to denote a particular type of woman with social standing, or polite and well-mannered. Finally, a total of 80 occurrences were selected as being evaluative about certain women's stereotypes. Table 4 below shows their frequency in the corpus:

WORD	STEREOTYPE FREQUENCY
women	21
woman	20
girl	8
wife	4
female	3
chicks, girlfriends, lady, maid, (opposite) sex	2
babes, bimbo, chick, daughter, gal, girlfriend, girly, girls, ladies, mother, queen, sister, secretaries, virgin	1 (each)

Table 4. Lexical carriers of stereotypes in 3RFS.

As observed in Table 4 above, *women* and *woman* were the two most frequent words used to introduce stereotypes about women, followed by *girl*, *wife* and *female* and 19 other words that appeared once or twice as stereotypes carriers. The first and second hypotheses

can now be addressed. The number of stereotypes was not as high as predicted, and neither was their distribution throughout the series: season 1 (23×), season 2 (12×), season 3 (21×), seasons 4 and 5 (10× each), and season 6 (4×). The results seem to indicate that there is a decreasing interest of scriptwriters in the implementation of women stereotypes from season 4 onwards. If the rate of women stereotypes had been the one observed in the first three sessions, the expected number of stereotypes would have been larger. The results obtained answer the first hypothesis negatively: the number of stereotypes is not as high as might have been expected.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Analysis of the evaluation of women in *3rd Rock from the Sun*

After obtaining the frequency and distribution patterns, the qualitative analysis of women stereotypes in 3RFS took into account a number of parameters. The discussion of examples 1, 2 and 3 below exemplifies the procedure followed in the classification (cf. Appendix) and interpretation of each of the instances in the corpus:

> Example 1 (ep. 216)
> Sally: It's what women are supposed to do-- get married, have babies, hire total
>   strangers to raise them and then wonder where they went wrong.

> Example 2 (ep. 323)
> Dick: Oh Mary, you throw like a girl.

> Example 3 (ep. 110)
> Dick: You know a man is never complete when he is alone.
> Tommy: And a woman's never complete unless she is making you beg.

In the examples above, the underlined segment identifies the instantiation of the stereotype and its evaluation. The appraiser in 1 is Sally, in 2, Dick and in 3, Tommy. Sally and Dick are the lead characters on the sitcom 3RFS, Tommy is Dick's son. The three of them are alien and human at the same time. The appraisers were also identified in terms of gender in order to know who was responsible for the appraisal of women, since it may be socially and ideologically relevant to know, for example, whether women sustain, accept or reject the stereotype.

Stereotypes should be conceived as notional conventions whose meaning can be conveyed by different wordings and distribution within the text. Example 1 includes the

stereotype and its modification, both uttered by the same character. Example 2 includes only the stereotype itself. In example 3 one of the characters, Dick, brings about the stereotype and the other, Tommy, modifies it. The alterations, or verbal additions to the stereotype, can precede or follow it, and can be produced by the same character or by other participants in the interaction.

In example 1, the first part of Sally's statement "It's what women are supposed to do-- get married, have babies" is an enactment of the well-known conservative stereotype 'women should marry and be mothers'. The stereotype could have been left as such (unmodified); nonetheless, Sally decides to add a second part that humorously modifies the stereotype: "hire total strangers to raise them and then wonder where they went wrong". Since Sally is an alien occupying the body of a woman, this negative evaluation of women (uttered by a woman) as being incapable of being good mothers could be interpreted as an example of self-deprecatory humour. The example, therefore, is coded as follows: it is an example of a negative stereotype about women, prompted by the word "women". It has been modified and is an instantiation of *evoked negative judgement* (since we cannot attribute it to explicit attitude lexis); in particular, an example of negative of propriety *[-JUDGEMENT: propriety: unethical]*: women are unethical and insensitive because they trust strangers to take care of their own children. Dick's statement in the second example only contains the stereotype itself (women are weaker than men). It is an example of an *evoked negative judgement [-JUDGEMENT: capacity: weak]*.

Example 3 has two parts. The first part is uttered by Dick ("You know a man is never complete when he is alone") and could be interpreted as an instantiation of the traditional stereotype associated with heterosexual males, which assumes that men cannot be happy without the support of a woman. Nevertheless, the second part, uttered by Tommy, modifies the stereotype and turns it into an example of negative stereotyping against women: "And a woman's never complete unless she is making you beg". Once more, the humorous modification of the stereotype and the fact that they pit both stereotypes against each other, opens the door to new interpretations of either or both. This example is therefore coded as follows: a negative stereotype about women, uttered by a man. It is an example of *evoked appraisal* ("make you beg"), in particular a judgement of negative propriety *[-JUDGEMENT: propriety: cruel]*. Note also the difference between both examples in terms of attribution. In example 1, Sally's use of "supposed to" attributes the stereotype to common belief, freeing herself from any responsibility about its propositional content by attributing it to an anonymous shared convention or hearsay. Dick and Tommy, on the other hand, aver their statements by not attributing them to another person.

In 3RFS, the four alien characters, Dick, Sally, Harry and Tommy, together with Mary / Dr. Albright (Dick's girlfriend) and Nina (his secretary), are responsible for most of the appraisals. Table 5 below describes their distribution among the appraisers themselves:

MALE CHARACTER	NUMBER OF APPRAISALS	FEMALE CHARACTER	NUMBER OF APPRAISALS
Dick	23	Sally	23
Harry	5	Mary	5
Tommy	3	Nina	4
George	1	Mrs Dubcek	3
Harry & Dick	1	Vicky	2
Don	1	Mamie	1
Dr Ravelli	1	Janet	1
Larry	1	Janice	1
Randell	1	Judith	1
Sally's boyfriend	1	Saleswoman	1
TOTAL MEN	38	TOTAL WOMEN	42

Table 5. Distribution of stereotypes between men and women.

Accordingly, the aliens make a total of 55 statements (69%) about women stereotypes. Their distribution between the two genders is also pretty balanced (47% uttered by men and 52,5% by women). Dick and Sally are by far the most important sources of stereotypes, which comes justified by the fact that Sally is the only alien-woman and Dick is the main character of the sitcom. It is funny though that, in the sitcom, Dick is also often ridiculed because of his unmanliness (Sally: "Well, Dick, you throw like a girl, you cry like a girl, and you're paid like a girl, so you're not so far off").

Out of 80 examples of stereotypes, 72 (90%) were classified as items of JUDGEMENT and 8 (10%) of APPRECIATION, thus indicating that the sitcom provides moral and emotional evaluations of women. A total of 53 were negative, 17 positive and 10 neutral as described in Table 6 below:

ATTITUDE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	INSTANTIATION
- JUDGEMENT	47	So? She's just like any other woman; women show their bodies all the time.
- APPRECIATION	6	Men look distinguished with grey hair. Women just look old
+ JUDGEMENT	16	It's just everyone always sees me as this tough warrior but I'm a woman, and I'm soft inside.
+ APPRECIATION	1	When women get breasts, they look sexy.
+/- JUDGEMENT	9	Dick, we're having girl talk here.
+/- APPRECIATION	1	Babes love guys on machines.

Table 6. Overview of the ATTITUDE subsystem.

In terms of JUDGEMENT: *social esteem*, the sitcom recurs to negative stereotypical roles of women in terms of *normality*, *capacity* and *tenacity*. In terms of *normality*, women are mostly stereotyped in relation to marriage, motherhood, domesticity and the types of jobs they can do. Marriage is one of the ideal states for women (Sally: "I think it's every little

girl's dream"; Randell: "I always thought it was to get married"). They should be happy being the perfect housewives (Sally: "I love this room. Oh, what's not to love? Did you know that this is where I do all of my cooking and cleaning? I mean, there is no greater honour for a woman") and serving men (Dick: "Are you talking about being a woman or a waitress?"; Sally: "Waitress, woman-- same thing"). As for motherhood, women naturally want to have and raise children, and they know how to take care of them (Dick: "Mrs. Dubcek, why do you assume that Sally will be taking care of the baby?" Dubcek: "Well, she's a woman").

Regarding their *capacity* for other jobs, apart from housewives and mothers, women can perform well as maids and secretaries (who are stereotyped as having affairs with their bosses) (Dick: "Business men having affairs with their secretaries, please! I can't let this happen") or take other jobs that do not entail responsibility (Sally: "Security officer? That's a girly job!"; Dick: "That's an order!"; Sally: "Fine. All right!"). They are also judged as incapable of understanding technology (Dick: "Apparently, women don't know how to operate doors"). Moreover, women are difficult and immature (Dick: "Women are maddening. They pretend to be so adult, but just like that, they'll sink all the way down to your level") and obscure ("they keep secrets"). They are also portrayed as chronic complainers who want to dominate men (Dick: "Scout masters, families, girlfriends!" All: "eww!" Dick: "Yeah, it's all the same. Just a bunch of whiny voices trying to tell you what's right and wrong").

As for those characteristics related to *tenacity*, the sitcom mentions some positive and some negative ones. The negative characteristics repeatedly describe women as being capricious and weaker than men (Dick: "Oh Mary, you throw like a girl"), while the positive ones point out their capacity to take care of those who are socially disadvantaged (Tommy: "You know, chicks like minorities"), and their loyalty towards the man they love (Sally: "I mean, hey, it's every girl's dream to be tied down to her guy for the rest of her life, huh?").

In terms of *[social sanction*: *veracity* and *propriety]*, women are considered dishonest (Harry: "Women. They say they want honesty in a relationship, but they don't want to know when you've been eavesdropping on them"), immoral (Dick: "So? She's just like any other woman; women show their bodies all the time"), cruel (Dick: "A wedding? […] And the female devours the male immediately after the ceremony?"; Mary: "No. That's a process that takes years and years") and unethical in the workplace (Sally: "This is so typical! When a woman with a body like this gets a promotion, everybody questions it"). They are vain (Dick: "I don't know what you want!"; Sally: "What every woman wants: sparkle!") and greedy, and they like to spend money (Harry: "I like fly-fishing, and my dream is to find a wife who won't spend so darn much money").

APPRECIATION is the other type of evaluation present in the sitcom, mostly related to the subtype *[reaction: quality]*. The beauty and physical appearance of women is a recurrent topic (Mary: "Men look distinguished with grey hair. Women just look old"). Women become objects and are judged according to their beauty (Sally: "I mean, good looking

women are accepted at more places than American Express"). Likewise, the opposite is also true: ugliness makes women unattractive (Tommy: "You know, all those brainy girls are going to be ugly"; Dick: "Are you saying that intelligent girls are, by definition, unattractive?"; Tommy: "Yeah, most of them are") and, by definition, intelligent women are ugly. Beauty, however, has a price, since it requires that women follow certain social conventions (Sally: "They impose arbitrary standards on women") and behave in a way that pleases men (Harry: "Guys don't like it when a woman smiles. They like them pouty").

Arguably, a few statements could be classified either as neutral or even positive judgements, as Sally's statement about women's taste ("I mean, whoever said that diamonds are a girl's best friend never saw those black pearls at Tiffany's"), or Judith's rejection of Dick's stereotype implicit in his question "Why do women have to close themselves off?", to which Judith answers: "<u>They don't</u>". Another example is when Sally warns Dick "we're having a girl's talk here". Greater ambiguity is found in Mrs Dubcek's statement ("You know what they say: under every great man is a great woman"; Dick: "Don't you mean 'behind every man?'"; Dubcek: "Oh, you're dirty"), which could be thought as positive in terms of *normality* or *usuality* (men owe their success to women). However, ideologically, the stereotype is discriminatory since it is the woman who should be raised in the esteem to equal man. The stereotype emphasises the role of the woman as the caregiver and not the breadwinner and helps to clean the sexual undertone in Dick's statement.

As can be deduced from the above examples, producing humour is the main objective of the sitcom, and the differences between social gender roles are one of its many resources. The function of humour is to challenge or subvert the stereotype, as in example 4 below, although it is admitted that different audiences may interpret the same text differently (Gregori-Signes, 2007):

> Example 4 (ep. 402)
> Mrs Dubcek: This little lady told me she lost her virginity 14 times, huh?
> Dick: Wait. Is that possible?
> Mrs Dubcek: <u>No, but a girl's got to be mindful of her reputation</u>.

In example 4, Mrs Dubcek's statement reinforces the traditional stereotype that recommends women to maintain a good reputation if they want to be treated with respect, thus perpetuating the existing inequalities between men and women. In this case, however, Mrs Dubcek has previously subverted its content with a humorous remark "This little lady told me she lost her virginity 14 times, huh?". By doing so, the sitcom offers a reassessment of the stereotype at the same time that it subverts its validity by providing an impossible way out of such imposition on women: lying about the obvious. In essence, the stereotype 'look after your reputation' could be judged as positive in terms of *social sanction* and *propriety* (respectful and moral). However, in this context, it is negative since only women (not men)

should be mindful about their reputation. The same topic is dealt with in relation to Mary Albright, Dick's girlfriend. Mary is portrayed as a strong independent female, financially secure and with a stable job, but the sitcom undermines this positive image by portraying Mary implicitly as a 'slut' who got promoted because she had affairs with a few colleagues (Mary: "You just don't get it, do you? When a man has an office romance, it doesn't affect his career. But when a woman has one, no one takes her seriously").

At this point we can conclude that the sitcom resorts to a variety of commonly known negative gender stereotypes in order to describe women, thus proving the third hypothesis true. These stereotypes are often accompanied by humorous verbal remarks, as well as other paralinguistic features (i.e., body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone and pitch of voice) whose function is to modify the impact that the negative stereotyping of women may have on the audience, and prompt them to challenge their validity. A critical interpretation of the ideology behind those stereotypes is further discussed in the next section.

5.2. Gender ideology in *3rd Rock from the Sun*

Gender ideology refers to attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women in society. Most of the stereotypes humorously brought about in 3RFS sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination by evaluating women negatively. These stereotypes can be said to correspond, broadly, with the four components in Deaux and Lewis's classification (1984, in Brannon, 2010) of gender differences: personality traits, role behaviours, physical appearance and occupations. The question that still remains to be answered in relation to this analysis is if the sitcom's goal is to support a negative view of women or if, on the contrary, it intends the audience to call into question such views.

3RFS is a sitcom, a comedic well-established genre whose intention is to be funny and read as such (Mills, 2009). Mills (2009: 94) claims that the audience "needs to understand the cues which signal the text's comic intention while simultaneously finding such humour inappropriate", since "to not accept the cue is to render the moment serious, or, worse, incomprehensible". In 3RFS the aliens represent the perspective of outsiders looking in the social life of human beings, and it seems only natural that they get confused. The aliens' reference to stereotypes comes from consulting books and media resources such as TV, magazines and the cinema, among others. They interpret this information literally, and think that it corresponds with the actual social rules of behaviour. The negative interpretation of the aliens, however, is systematically offset by the use of humour, which gives a new dimension to the way the audience interprets the statements about women. In this sense, Eggins and Slade (1997: 156) argue that humour allows the enactment of simultaneous meanings by offering the interactants the chance to claim that either a "serious" meaning was not intended, or that the "non-serious" was not either. Humour enables speakers to say things without strict accountability, either to themselves or to others (Eggins & Slade, 1997: 155), to negotiate

attitudes and alignments, and, in terms of identities, to indicate degrees of "otherness" and "in-ness".

Cues nevertheless work within social conventions and, alternatively, can be explored as indicative of cultural norms (Mills, 2009: 97). As claimed by Hodge and Kress (1988: 5), "when a logonomic system allows a statement offensive to women to be read as 'a joke', this signifies a particular structure of gender relations". Nonetheless, as argued by Mills (2009: 80), in broadcasting it is difficult to discern who the teller of a joke is, although, in legal terms, the broadcaster is responsible for any unacceptable social views. In 3RFS, most of the stereotypes are voiced by the alien characters (cf. Table 5 above) by means of evoked appraisal which, according to Thompson (2008: 173), and in terms of ideology,

> [r]epresents a powerful resource for maintaining values within a culture which gain strength from being so taken for granted that they do not need to be spelt out; and it can, of course, also be deployed manipulatively, since it may be harder for readers and hearers to resist values which are assumed but not overtly expressed.

It is apparent that 3RFS exploits the ambiguity provided by humour as a safe way to avoid the responsibility for giving support to mostly negative traditional stereotypes about women.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has accounted for the explicit verbal humorous manipulation of women stereotypes in the sitcom *3rd Rock from the Sun*. The theoretical framework for the quantitative and qualitative analysis included Appraisal Theory (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2008), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the methodological principles of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS). The analysis entailed several steps that proved to be adequate in identifying and accounting systematically for all the statements containing stereotypes. Each case was coded in terms of the appraiser, the type of evaluation, the attitude and the subcategory they reproduced—mostly JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION. Additionally, each example was interpreted in terms of the gender ideology behind it.

A total of 80 instances were classified as containing women stereotypes. The elaboration of a wordlist and subsequent keyword analysis was useful first, to establish, in quantitative terms, the relevance of the topic 'women'; and secondly, to localise the words that introduced evaluations about women. Each example was analysed in context with the help of concordances and File View in order to discern between evaluative and non-

evaluative statements (e.g., "Women are trouble" is evaluative while "That woman is my sister" is not). The analysis revealed that the series does in fact resort to a variety of negative stereotypes of women to construe humour, thus confirming hypotheses 1 and 3. However, the results of the qualitative analysis confirm that the distribution of stereotypes is not even, since there is a prevalence of the use of stereotypes in the first three seasons of the sitcom, thus proving hypothesis 2 wrong.

The study is in line with recent research trends that emphasise the need to investigate cultural representations of gender (Brannon, 2010; Haines et al., 2016) in the media and in particular in TV series (Bednarek, 2015; Cameron, 2010), whose role and social relevance comes justified by their scope. TV series reach large international audiences and, at least potentially, may influence the way people, men and women, conceive womanhood. As reported by Brannon (2010) and Haines et al. (2016), negative stereotypes are still present and have been proved to influence people's behaviour. Studies like the one carried out here illustrate that the way women are stereotyped can be socially relevant, since they can contribute towards an understanding of how humour, through influential TV series, can be used to portray, classify or discriminate women. Acknowledging the existence of women stereotypes and how these are manipulated may help either to perpetuate or to eradicate discriminating conventional gender stereotypes.

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APPENDIX

This Appendix collects 20 examples that illustrate the procedure to classify relevant instances of women stereotypes.

WORD	APPRAISER	CONTEXTUALISED INSTATIATION	ATTITUDE	SUBCATEGORIES
BABES	Harry	Babes love guys on machines.	[+APPRECIATION]	reaction: quality
BIMBO	Sally	So, Tommy, can't find fulfillment in a meaningless relationship with a superficial, simpleminded bimbo? I know. I'm just as baffled as you are.	[-JUDGEMENT]	capacity
DAUGHTER	Nina	My parents aren't getting any younger, and I feel a little safer knowing that they can reach me. Just being a good daughter. If anything, I am a good daughter. Aren't you gonna call back? Yeah, I guess so.	[+JUDGEMENT]	propriety
FEMALE	Dick	When are we gonna learn you can't deal with women? The female feigns weakness only to use it as a weapon.	[-JUDGEMENT]	veracity
GAL	Saleswoman	I've been shopping here a long time, and I demand service. You know, hon, it's really unattractive when a heavy gal yells.	[-APPRECIATION]	reaction: quality
GIRL	Mrs Dubcek	This little lady told me she lost her virginity 14 times, huh? Wait. Is that possible? No, but a girl's got to be mindful of her reputation.	[-APPRECIATION]	propriety
GIRL	Sally	Dick, we're having girl talk here.	[+/-JUDGEMENT]	normality
WIFE	Dick	If she was my wife, she'd be so busy cooking and doing chores, she'd have no time for Borneo.	[-JUDGEMENT]	propriety
WOMAN	Janice	It's just everyone always sees me as this tough warrior but I'm a woman, and I'm soft inside.	[+JUDGEMENT]	propriety

WOMAN	Tommy	You know, a man is never complete when he's alone. And a <u>woman's not complete unless she is making you beg.</u>	[-JUDGEMENT]	propriety
WOMAN	Harry	<u>Guys don't like it when a woman smiles.</u> <u>They like them pouty.</u>	[+APPRECIATION]	reaction: quality
WOMAN	Dick	She's <u>getting married.</u> - Oh, that's so romantic! - <u>She just met him!</u> - I wish <u>I'd have met him first.</u> <u>Dick, do you have a problem with this? No, why should I? Sally's fulfilling her purpose as a woman.</u>	[-JUDGEMENT]	propriety
WOMEN	Harry	<u>Women. They say they want honesty in a relationship, but they don't want to know when you've been eavesdropping on them.</u>	[-JUDGEMENT]	veracity
WOMEN	Dick	Apparently, women don't know how to operate doors.	[-JUDGEMENT]	capacity
WOMEN	Dick	<u>Women are maddening. They pretend to be so adult, but just like that, they'll sink all the way down to your level</u>.	[-JUDGEMENT]	capacity
WOMEN	Mary	Men look distinguished with gray hair. Women just look old.	[-APPRECIATION]	reaction: quality
WOMEN	Sally	Listen to me. <u>Women are trouble</u>.	[-JUDGEMENT]	propriety / veracity
WOMEN	Sally	Yeah sure, Nina. That's the way women use it! Look, you know, being your roommate is not as much fun as it used to be!	[-JUDGEMENT]	normality
WOMEN	Nina	No, it's tough making friends with women. You're telling me.	[-JUDGEMENT]	normality
WOMEN	Dick	So? She's just like any other woman; women show their bodies all the time.	[-JUDGEMENT]	propriety