



**THE PERCEPTION WOMEN HAVE OF HOW THEY'RE REPRESENTED  
IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH THE *BRIDGERTON*  
NETFLIX SHOW**

**La percepción que las mujeres tienen sobre cómo son representadas en relaciones románticas  
en la serie televisiva Bridgerton**

**ISABEL VÁSQUEZ ARANGO**  
**Undergraduate Thesis**

**Advisor**  
**Horacio Manrique Tisnés**

**EAFIT UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES**  
**PSYCHOLOGY**  
**MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA**  
**2024**

## **Abstract**

*Objective.* To analyze some women's perception of how they are represented in romantic relationships in the Netflix show Bridgerton. *Method.* This qualitative study used a hermeneutic phenomenological method to examine Generation Z women's perceptions of gender representation in Bridgerton. Conducted in Medellín during the second half of 2024, the research involved semi-structured interviews with eight participants. The data was transcribed, organized, and analyzed for recurring themes, offering insights into how these women viewed media portrayals and gender roles. *Results.* The study found that Bridgerton's portrayal of women and relationships sparked both admiration and criticism among participants. Women appreciated diverse and empowered female characters but expressed concern over submissive roles and unrealistic beauty standards. The romantic relationships were viewed as exaggerated and often unhealthy, with a need for more balance in power dynamics. The show prompted personal reflections on gender roles and relationships, leading participants to clarify their desires and boundaries in real life. Additionally, the societal expectations of the era portrayed in the show caused frustration but also provided valuable insights into modern gender roles. *Conclusions.* This study explored how women perceive their representation in Bridgerton, evaluating both positive and negative aspects, and its impact on their real-life romantic behavior. While the show did not directly alter behavior, it prompted reflection on relationship dynamics. Limitations include a small sample size, and future research should examine broader media portrayals and long-term influences.

**Key words:** *TV show, representation, gender, woman, romantic relationship, Bridgerton.*

## **Resumen**

*Objetivo.* Analizar la percepción de algunas mujeres sobre cómo son representadas en las relaciones románticas en la serie de Netflix Bridgerton. *Método.* Este estudio cualitativo

utilizó un método fenomenológico hermenéutico para examinar las percepciones de las mujeres de la Generación Z sobre la representación de género en Bridgerton. Realizada en Medellín durante el segundo semestre de 2024, la investigación incluyó entrevistas semiestructuradas con ocho participantes. Los datos fueron transcritos, organizados y analizados en busca de temas recurrentes, ofreciendo información sobre cómo estas mujeres veían las representaciones de los medios de comunicación y los roles de género. *Resultados.* El estudio reveló que la representación de la mujer y las relaciones en Bridgerton suscitaba tanto admiración como críticas entre las participantes. Las mujeres apreciaron los personajes femeninos diversos y empoderados, pero expresaron su preocupación por los papeles sumisos y los cánones de belleza poco realistas. Las relaciones románticas se consideraron exageradas y a menudo malsanas, con la necesidad de un mayor equilibrio en la dinámica de poder. La serie suscitó reflexiones personales sobre los roles de género y las relaciones, lo que llevó a los participantes a aclarar sus deseos y límites en la vida real. Además, las expectativas sociales de la época retratada en el programa causaron frustración, pero también proporcionaron valiosas ideas sobre los roles de género modernos. *Conclusiones.* Este estudio exploró cómo perciben las mujeres su representación en Bridgerton, evaluando tanto los aspectos positivos como los negativos, y su impacto en su comportamiento romántico en la vida real. Las participantes apreciaron la diversidad y el empoderamiento de los personajes femeninos, pero criticaron los roles de género tradicionales y los cánones de belleza idealizados. Aunque la serie no alteró directamente el comportamiento, incitó a reflexionar sobre la dinámica de las relaciones. Las limitaciones incluyen el pequeño tamaño de la muestra, y futuras investigaciones deberían examinar representaciones más amplias de los medios de comunicación e influencias a largo plazo.

**Palabras clave:** *Serie de televisión, representación, genero, mujer, relación romantica, Bridgerton.*

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the portrayal of women in popular media has garnered significant attention and scrutiny. From the pages of classic literature to the screens of contemporary streaming services, narratives surrounding women in romantic relationships have undergone notable transformations. The Bridgerton Netflix series, adapted from Julia Quinn's novels, has sparked widespread discussion due to its captivating portrayal of Regency-era romance and its distinctive approach to depicting female characters. This paper delves into the perception that women have of how they are represented in romantic relationships through the lens of the Bridgerton series.

Arias (2006) states perception is the product of analyzing the external stimuli received by the subject's sensory receptors, which the subject encounters because of acting and interacting in the world. Having a show as a stimulus you then, through analysis, create an opinion and/ or belief based on this. Additionally, a social perception is generated; Bertoni (2010) states that social perceptions are cognitive contents that allow the subject to observe the presence of opinions, beliefs, values and norms. These perceptions then concretize the orientation of a subject's attitudes on a subject. This speaks of other things that can be perceived in the series, since they often represent human experiences, and from this representation the person is left with an attitude towards a certain subject.

In this paper we will focus on the female viewer as she brings a unique experience on how she interacts with the world and the world with her. Women in television series have a certain role; Menéndez (2014) states that, "The analysis of the protagonist in fiction reveals

an androcentric bias, by establishing de facto that the male and not just any but rather the stereotypical one is the significant subject" (p. 58). Women are marginalized to the background and, consequently, to secondary characters, to support the male character or introduce problems for him to solve, thus proving their worth.

Bridgerton, however, may aim to part with this vision. As a show it focuses on catering to women and therefore focuses on the female lead quite a bit. Bridgerton is also produced by Shonda Rhymes' production company. This specific producer is known for her very successful network shows like: Grey's Anatomy, How to Get Away with Murder and Scandal. All of these have a complex female main character that is at the top of her field and is continuously shown as flawed yet consistently triumphant in their own conflicts. As such a similar vision was applied to the Bridgerton leading ladies as they explore the regency era where much of their lives depend on "the marriage market" therefore deeply implicating relationships as the focus of the show.

Lastly there is women's perceptions, it has been established through previous research the impact representation in shows and media in general have on reality. Not only on this groups vision of themselves but how anyone else may perceive them. Therefore, this topic surges from the merging of a passion of story telling, a profound interest in women's opinions and a deep curiosity on representation in shows and how to better them and in extension better reality.

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this section is to present the current state of research on similar topics or connected topics to the perception some women have on the representation of women in relationships on Bridgerton. For this purpose, a summary will be made of the studies found related to the topic based on the following categories: general purpose of the research,

conceptual references, types of studies, participating subjects, data collection and techniques and main results.

In relation to the *general purpose* the research was focused on articles that show analysis regarding gender representations in audiovisual media and its impact on behavior in real life scenarios. Expósito et al. (2018) states their work strives to describe the socio-sexual models represented in the audiovisual media, through the analysis of sexual scenes contained in series and films of the last ten years. (p. 1).

On analyzing gender there are various studies that analyze the impact of television over it. De-Caso-Bausela et al. (2020) evaluates how gender in general is portrayed in Spanish television, while González-de-Garay et al. (2020) focuses on gender representations, detecting gender representations and sexual orientations in Spanish television series to compare with population data. Galán (2016) approaches Latin America with an exploratory study that aims to know the stereotypes and imaginaries that the university student body has about women and men, with the purpose of evidencing the gender gaps present in the context of this cultural industry. Ramos & Gonzalez-De-Garay (2021) analyzed the representation of gender in Video On Demand (VOD) Spanish productions. They were specifically interested in underrepresentation of character types and gender stereotyping regarding occupation, traits, attitudes, and conversations.

Specifically, about women, Lacalle and Castro (2017) focus on the representations of female characters in Spanish fiction television. Similarly, Rodal et al. (2017) analyzes the representation of female heroism and its relationship with post feminism in television series. Garcia et al. (2017) aims to examine the allocutions around sexuality and women's bodies from two paradigmatic episodes of the show *Orange is the new black*. Ramos (2019) set out to examine, from a sociology of culture and a gender perspective, the way three shows adhere

to feminist principles but still hold some contradictions on the reclaimed narrative from the female gaze

Regarding the effect of series on behavior, Gavilán et al. (2019) investigate how women perceive and are influenced by female protagonists in series. López et al. (2015) stated they set out to identify how the behaviors of characters in television series influence the viewer, when showing specific lifestyles (p. 23). Additionally, Ward (2002) examined the effects of both, regular viewing habits and experimental exposure, on students' conceptions about sexual relationships. Lastly Žerebecki et al. (2021) “reviews and connects theories and research from sociology, psychology, and media and communication studies to clarify the role of television in diversity attitudes formation and to identify directions for future research.” (p.1)

These studies collectively analyze and work with the following *conceptual references*: how gender and sexuality are portrayed and perceived in television and media, emphasizing themes such as stereotypes, representation, empowerment, and the impact of media content on societal attitudes. They explore these topics through the following *types of study*: Expósito et al. (2018), Ward, L. M. (2002), Ramos & Gonzalez-De-Garay (2021) and De-Caso-Bausela et al. (2020) use the quantitative study to carry out their research. On the other hand, López et al. (2015), Gavilán et al. (2019), Rodal et al. (2017), González-de-Garay et al. (2020), Garcia et al. (2017), Ramos (2019) and Galán (2016) used a qualitative type. Moreover, Lacalle (2017) did it mixed type of study and lastly, and Žerebecki et al (2021) did a literature review.

Regarding the *participating subjects*, the studies can be grouped into different types. These groupings show the methodologies and scopes of the studies, where some focus on specific TV series or seasons, others on character analysis across multiple series, and a few

involve participant surveys or focus groups to gather insights on gender portrayal in TV shows. Rodal et al. (2017), García et al. (2017), Ramos (2019) and Ramos & Gonzalez-De-Garay (2021) analyzed specific TV series or seasons. Expósito et al. (2018) went as far to analyze specific scenes in contrast to López et al. (2015) who analyzed multiple television series. Lacalle (2017), De-Caso-Bausela et al. (2020) and González-de-Garay et al. (2020) analyzed characters across multiple TV series. Escobar et al. (2016), Gavilán et al. (2019), Ward (2002) and Galán (2016) studied participants in surveys or focus groups. Standing out from the rest is the study by Żerebecki et al. (2021) which is a literary review that revised 58 works of literature in total.

In relation to *information gathering and collection techniques*, Exposito et al. (2018) used a registration table specifically developed for their study. Escobar et al. (2016) employed the technique of natural semantic networks with specific stimuli. Lacalle (2027) utilized the statistical program SPSS combined with socio-semiotics. López et al. (2015) used an interdisciplinary model to analyze structural elements, formal aspects, characters, and intertextuality. De-Caso-Bausela et al. (2020) used a questionnaire. Gavilán et al. (2019) used focus groups and content analysis. González-de-Garay et al. (2020) performed human-coded content analysis. García et al. (2005) used Critical Discourse Analysis. Ramos (2019) applied analytical tools from gender theory and feminist thought. Ramos and Gonzalez-De-Garay (2021) used an 18-page code book with 92 variables across 11 groups, along with a coding form. Ward (2002) used stimulus clips from popular sitcoms and dramas, rated by a multiethnic panel of graduate students. Żerebecki et al. (2021) explored echo chambers, media selection biases, and theories like cultivation theory, parasocial contact hypothesis, and social cognitive theory to examine television's impact on diversity attitudes.

The *main results* of several researchers on media representation highlight several significant findings. Exposito et al. (2018) point out the lack of reflection of social change on screens, while Escobar et al. (2016) highlight gender differences and traditional roles on television. Lacalle (2017) observes an overrepresentation of young and attractive women associated with sexuality. De-Caso-Bausela et al. (2020) find no statistical links between gender and certain narrative aspects. Taken together, these studies reveal a complex relationship between media and society, with significant implications for the representation and perception of various groups in the media.

Gavilán et al. (2019) suggest that women perceive changes in gender stereotypes in fiction series, but they desire further evolution aligned with societal changes. Rodal et al. (2017) analyzes *Outlander*'s simplistic feminist labels for its protagonist, Claire, noting her complex portrayal within historical and genre contexts and suggests that rigid feminist frameworks may hinder understanding in evolving social climates. González-de-Garay et al. (2020) find that contemporary Spanish prime-time TV series often underrepresent women, portray them in less qualified professional roles and more often in domestic roles, and tend to hyper-sexualize and socialize female characters in male contexts. Garcia et al. (2017) conclude that TV series directed by Jenji Kohan facilitate a reappropriation of sexualities and women's bodies through diverse female representation and the dismantling of patriarchal silences.

Ramos (2019) emphasizes the importance of feminist critique in uncovering and challenging subtle manifestations of sexism in cultural narratives, aiming to emancipate women by addressing ingrained ideas perpetuated by mainstream media. Galán (2016) highlights the gender gaps in Dominican television and advocates for the deconstruction of stereotypes to foster a more equitable society. Ward (2002) concludes that television offers

a wide range of fictional portrayals of human sexual relationships, which can be both exciting and thought-provoking.

Ramos and Gonzalez-De-Garay (2021) find a positive trend towards gender equality and LGBT representation in streaming platforms but note ongoing underrepresentation in certain areas for women. Meanwhile, Żerebecki et al. (2021) stress the need for diverse methodologies in studying media effects on diversity attitudes, advocating for longitudinal studies and cognitive models to inspire further research.

The content of these portrayals would be inconsequential if they in no way influenced viewers' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships in the real world. However, evidence presented here points to the contrary. Although the connections uncovered are complex, this study presents both correlational and experimental evidence that TV's narrow portrayals appear to strengthen sexual stereotypes and heighten assumptions of peer sexual experience.

Specifically regarding *Bridgerton* The article *Spring Aesthetics and Social Statements: An Ideological Critique of Bridgerton* by Stefanie Chae (2023), a Communications master's student at Georgetown, critically examines *Bridgerton* as a vehicle for dominant ideologies. Using Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture Industry, and Žižek's "big Other," Chae's textual analysis finds that the show reinforces social norms and the status quo while also reflecting a shift toward equality in U.S. society.

In *The Use of Narration and Gossip in Shondaland's Bridgerton*, McCarthy (2022), a psychology and criminology major, explores how Lady Whistledown's narration and gossip function as reflections of gender dynamics and feminine communication. Through narrative criticism, McCarthy argues that *Bridgerton* reframes gossip in a positive light,

countering the “mean girls” stereotype by presenting it as valuable and central to the plot. Meanwhile, Adriano (2024) from the University of Calgary in the department of Communication, Media, and Film, wrote *Colouring History: A Critical Analysis of Racial Representation in Bridgerton*. Which examines racial representation in the show. Using Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, Adriano analyzes how *Bridgerton*’s color-blind casting, interracial relationships, and dark-light symbolism contribute to post-racial and Orientalist narratives. She suggests that media can offer more authentic portrayals of identity, race, and power, enabling shows like *Bridgerton* to engage viewers in meaningful social discourse.

In *Feminism Perspective on Bridgerton Drama Series*, Azeharie et al. (2021) from the faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta, Indonesia critique *Bridgerton*’s portrayal of women using semiotic analysis. While the show’s multiracial casting is praised, the authors argue that it reinforces patriarchal values by depicting women as lacking autonomy and relying on male authority. They also suggest that portraying women as gossipers perpetuates misogynistic stereotypes. These articles are just a few of the inquiries made on *Bridgerton* as an investigation subject and the academic interest in *Bridgerton* as subject coming from many countries and academic areas, specifically communications.

As the *rupture point*, the following study will focus on the perceptions the women themselves have on their representation. It is meant to be an open discussion on how a Tv show represents them in romantic relationships seeing as how the show itself (*Bridgerton*) focuses on a different relationship each season. Unlike the other studies, the point is not to analyze how women are represented because, as seen before, there is already a clear picture of the representation. This study focuses on real women, not characters, and their perception

on how they are represented and how it influences their behavior in romantic relationships in real life scenarios. So, the investigation will focus on these women's opinions, analysis, and determinations.

### **Justification**

Theoretically, this study falls within the field of the psychology of gender, which as will be further explained in the theoretical frame, examines how gender impacts behavior, cognition, emotions, and mental health by considering both biological and societal influences. It explores aspects such as gender identity, the development of gender roles through socialization, cognitive differences, and mental health disparities. Additionally, the field critically analyzes gender stereotypes and biases, emphasizing the interaction between biological factors and cultural norms in shaping gender-related behaviors and experiences.

The study differentiates the most from other papers through its methodology. Most papers based on analyzing roles in shows do it from a quantitative mythology rather than a qualitative one. Even if using the qualitative approach, they still focus on what's depicted in the screen. This study wants to focus more on the female audience's opinions of what goes on in screen it seeks out more towards identifying how they perceive the representation than analyzing the representation itself because how they receive this representation of them on screen is the real reflection of the importance of accurate representation.

From a practical standpoint the results of this study can further the movement of accurate representation of women in shows and through this advance the expectation entire audiences have on how women should act daily in a relationship. So far it has been shown a very

Based on the above, the research question that this paper seeks to answer is the following: how do some women in Medellín (Colombia) perceive women's representation in romantic relationships in the Netflix show Bridgerton?

## **Objectives**

### ***General***

- To analyze some women's perception of how they are represented in romantic relationships in the Netflix show Bridgerton.

### ***Specifics***

- To identify what some women perceive of how they are represented in Bridgerton.
- To evaluate these representations on positive and negative terms from these women's perspectives.
- To determine the role of Bridgerton in shaping women's behavior in romantic relationships in real life scenarios from these women's perspective.

## **Theoretical Frame**

### ***Perception: an approximation to its definition***

Arias (2006) states perception is the product of analyzing the external stimuli received by the subject's receptors, the stimuli that the subject encounters because of acting and interacting in the world. Arias (2006) also reaches his own conclusions based on definitions previously given by Barthey (1986) of what perception is. Arias summarizes them by saying that: perception can be both a form of thought and immediate behavior, this would make it

synonymous with consciousness. Another way to define it is through the senses, where it's the process of copying external reality. Lastly, perception is equated to a judgement constructed from both sensory data and intuition. (p. 10)

Oviedo (2004) explains perception based on the *Gestalt theory* that was born in Germany with the authors Wertheimer, Koffka and Köhler, during the first decades of the 20th century. He clarifies that these authors illustrated perception as a fundamental process since other important processes such as learning, memory and thinking depended on it. This current also connected perception with sensory experiences, seeing it as the result of touch, vision, hearing, taste and smell. Perception is what we interpret from these.

In his work on social perceptions of the environment Bertoni (2010) states that social perceptions are cognitive systems that allow the subject to observe the presence of opinions, beliefs, values and norms. These perceptions then concretize the orientation of a subject's attitudes on a subject.

As such this paper, when referring to perception will be talking of how a subject interprets the world around them through their senses but also being affected by previous biases and beliefs they possess.

### ***T.V. show's influence on human behavior***

Seeing as how representation of women will be explored, it's important to know why this representation matters in the first place. TV shows have been around for a long time and their complexity increased studies have shown that they do in fact affect human behavior.

This new generation of series introduces new aspects and improves others, marking their evolution in recent years. Lopez (2015) clarifies this by explaining that this new generation focuses on presenting even more dramatic stories that are complemented by a

higher level of complexity. He states that more innovative themes are already being addressed and as a result the audience has also been reconfigured. This new audience is willing to invest time in the series to be able to analyze all these issues and better understand the messages that are conveyed throughout the series. It also introduces accessibility as a factor so that this follow-up can be done in a more engaged way, which establishes a stronger bond between the audience and the characters.

From this link, a relationship begins to be established between what the viewer sees and how his or her behavior is affected. In this regard, Lopez (2015) says that the character portrays certain behaviors, lifestyles and social valuations, therefore can influence the viewer's behavior if the relationship between the character and the viewer strong enough (p. 22)

Sandoval (2006) argues that television has evolved to be the medium that most influences its audiences and their behavioral patterns. He argues that specifically children and adolescents globally grew up parallel to the television market. Sandoval (2006) argues that there is even more literature supporting the concept that television does have effects on its audience. These effects have a greater risk if the subject that is part of this audience is a strong consumer of the program.

Regarding relationships specifically, one study investigated the effects of both regular viewing habits and experimental exposure on students' conceptions about sexual relationships. Ward (2002) explores this in his study: *Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships?* This study discovered correlational and experimental evidence that TV's portrayals of sexual relationships promote sexual stereotypes and increments assumptions about peer's sexual experiences (p.13).

***Women's role in TV shows and their romantic relationships.***

Currently, the female and male roles found in the series are criticized. Menéndez (2014) states that “The analysis of protagonism in fiction reveals an androcentric bias, by establishing de facto that the male and not just any but rather the stereotypical one is the significant subject” (p. 58). Elaborating further that most of the protagonists are male while the role of women is one of support for them or romantic interest. This leads to the women remaining objectified and represented in subordinate positions. Likewise, in the case that the protagonist is female, negative elements of them are highlighted (Aguilar, 2001). He reasons that these factors contribute to the fact that female protagonism is less than male protagonism.

Focusing more on the role of women in sexual scenes, Expósito (2018) first establishes sexual representation in general. He says that sexual acts in visual media generally involve two attractive protagonists who are the ones who take part in the act and their enjoyment is represented over what happens. He clarifies that very rarely do they encounter drawbacks, or negative consequences. Additionally, he argues that this idealization leads young people to emulate this behavior.

Expósito (2018) conducts an empirical study to analyze interactions between men and women, these interactions include sexual scenes, but also seduction, in sixty sequences. The results reflect the roles of women in these approaches. They studied the categories of first approach, verbal approach and initiation of physical contact. Additionally, they studied foreign caresses (referring to who caressed more the opposite gender), dominant movement, moaning and orgasm (measured when an orgasm was represented either by facial expressions, body or moans). The author concluded women were represented as passive first approaching the man but still very expressive non-verbal communication. The data suggests

women do seduce and are flirtatious but ultimately wait for the man to make the first move (p.19).

Another aspect that has been explored within the role of women in sex is that of virginity. LaCalle et al. (2017) express that less than a quarter of young women who star in stories related to sexual initiation explicitly lose their virginity. "Abstinence" - posited as a desire to remain a virgin until marriage - is the most common storyline in sexual initiation stories set in the past and culminating in the wedding night.

Rodal et al. (2017) analyze the representation of female heroism and its relationship with post feminism in television series. The main points of the analysis of *Outlander* focuses mostly on its heroine: Claire. Claire's character is compared to traditional and contemporary heroines, highlighting liberating and reactionary aspects within the context of historical adventure and romance genres. The narrative's ambiguity reflects real-life experiences and challenges binary interpretations. It's also established that the narrative challenges traditional notions of female identity and the media's quick labeling of her as "feminist" is questioned. The analysis suggests that approaching such portrayals from this perspective may oversimplify the complexity of gender identity. Lastly it acknowledges the usefulness of feminist and postfeminist frameworks in media studies but highlights how restrictive they can be.

### ***Sexuality and Romantic relationships***

Escobar et al. (2016) sought to identify the psychological meanings of the terms: sex, sexuality, male and female. The authors explain sexuality is connected to the fact of being human. Humans are shaped by sex, gender, sexual and gender identity, sexual orientation, eroticism, emotional attachment or love and reproduction. As such sexuality is expressed

through thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, activities, practices, roles and relationships, and is constructed by the individual through his or her interaction with society (p. 275).

Arias et al. (2011) affirms that sexuality also includes eroticism, which they define as sensual love that satisfies the senses and includes the person's capacity to feel pleasure, orgasm and desire. It also encompasses the fantasies of a subject, whether provoked by memories or by one's own imagination. In addition, it also includes physical affection such as caresses.

Flores-Hernández et al. (2021) states that romantic relationships are bonds formed voluntarily between two people that involve an emotional connection and, often, a physical attraction. These relationships may encompass feelings of love, affection, commitment, and a compatibility of interests or skills between the people involved (p. 48).

Connolly & McIsaac (2011) states the key components of romantic relationships are passion, intimacy, and commitment adding that passionate attraction and sexual desire are essential to differentiate romantic relationships from friendships. Romantic relationships involve mutually acknowledged close connections, with shared personal thoughts and feelings, leading to commitments over time. The presence of these components is consistent across age groups, although enduring commitments are less common in young adolescents (p.181).

In sum, in this context, “relationship” refers to the way sex, sexuality, and romantic relationships are interconnected. Sexuality shapes individual identity and influences thoughts, desires, and behaviors, which, in turn, play a key role in forming romantic relationships. Romantic relationships involve emotional bonds and physical attraction, which are integral parts of sexuality. Thus, the “relationship” means the mutual influence and

connection between these aspects, where sexuality forms the foundation for emotional and physical connections in romantic relationships.

### ***Bridgerton***

In December 2020 Netflix released the first season of *Bridgerton*, since then the series has only grown in popularity. Robinson (2021) A show focused on romantic relationships as it's main theme, created by a woman based on a book written by a woman. The show is produced by Shondaland the production company of Shonda Rhymes. This is a woman known for her strong leading ladies and focusing on a female perspective. Coles (2023) denominates what *Bridgestone* use as the “female gaze” (p. 21). The term referring to a show that caters to a female audience mostly. Coles (2023) later also specifies that the show is targeted towards an audience with heterosexual desire but does not exclude queer desire (p. 16).

The show mostly focuses on three love stories and the dynamic of these relationships (Coles, 2023). Though it includes a gratuitous imagery throughout and explores sex through various scenes these do not get in the way of the plot but rather adds to it (Coles, 2023). Lastly, the show depicts diverse cast therefore a bigger variety of audience members can relate more.

To contextualize what will be discussed in the interviews reading the following synopsis is recommended: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8740790/plotsummary/>. Additionally, here is a list of the characters divided by their families that were discussed in the interviews discussed with the women that took part in the study.

Bridgerton: First son Anthony, main character of season 2 and main love interest of Kate. Followed by Second son Benedict and Third son Colin: main character of season three

and love interest of Penelope. Afterwards comes fourth child - first daughter Daphne; main character of season 1 and love interest of Simon. Lastly, fifth child- second daughter Eloise, and sixth child- third daughter Francesca. Never mentioned in the interviews: seventh child- fourth son Gregory and eighth child – fourth daughter Hycinth.

Featherington: Miss Featherington, two older daughters not mentioned in the interviews, third daughter Penelope main character of season three, has secret persona of Miss Whistledown gossip columnist, and love interest of Colin.

Sharma: Mrs. Sharma, mother of Edwina and stepmother of Kate. Kate oldest daughter, main character for season 2 and love interest of Anthony. Edwina is the youngest and was also a love interest of Anthony.

Character that might have been mentioned: Simon, Duke of Hastings, love interest of Daphne and main character of season one.

### ***Psychology of gender***

The social role theory sustained that gender differences in behavior stem primarily from societal roles and expectations rather than inherent biological differences. According to this theory, men and women behave differently because society assigns them different roles, such as men being expected to work outside the home and women being expected to take care of domestic tasks. These roles shape psychological traits and behaviors over time (Eagly, 1987)

Similarly, the twenty first century theory Gender Similarities Hypothesis challenges the traditional emphasis on gender differences in psychological research. Arguing that men and women are more alike than different in most psychological traits and abilities. Based on a meta-analysis of studies across various domains (cognitive abilities, personality,

leadership, etc.), she found that gender differences tend to be small or non-existent in most areas, with exceptions in some physical and specific social behaviors. Her research suggests that overemphasizing small gender differences can reinforce stereotypes and limit opportunities for both men and women. She also points out that variability within each gender is often greater than the differences between genders, meaning that individual differences are more significant than gender differences (Hyde, 2005)

## **Method**

### ***Study type***

The present study is qualitative, using a hermeneutic phenomenological method. According to Fuster (2019), “This approach is oriented to the description and interpretation of the fundamental structures of the lived experience, to the recognition of the meaning of the pedagogical value of this experience” (p. 207). In relation to time, this study was of transversal cut since the data collection took place in exclusively the second semester of the year 2024. The scope of this research is descriptive because it focuses on describing the perspective of the participating women.

### ***Participants***

The participants were women between the ages of generation z in the city of Medellin. This group was selected due to several reasons. For the study, the show’s target audience was considered as the show may primarily appeal to Gen Z viewers, making them the most relevant demographic to provide insights into the portrayal of women. Their perspectives would be crucial in understanding how this age group interprets gender roles and representation in media. This leads to the cultural or social context aspect where Medellin

might have particular social or cultural characteristics that influence how women perceive gender roles and media portrayals. The age group (see Table 1) was chosen because focusing on a single demographic group, such as Gen Z women in one city, allows for more in-depth exploration of their unique perspectives, reducing variability that could arise from including a more diverse population. It helps to ensure that the findings are specific to that group's shared experiences. The city was also chosen due to the availability of participants or ease of conducting the research in a familiar or convenient location. This approach ensures the study gathers detailed, relevant insights from a key demographic while controlling for cultural and geographic factors.

*Table 1: Sociodemographic data*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Interview duration</b>
1	23	Psychology	Human Resources	August 12, 2024	24'01
2	22	Psychology	Consultant	September 12, 2024	18'56
3	22	Social Communication	Social communicator	September 18, 2024	12'31
4	23	Law	Student	September 23, 2024	25'49
5	21	Business management	Student	September 23, 2024	17'50
6	22	Psychology	Student	September 27, 2024	24'38
7	23	Design	Designer	October 2, 2024	20'33
8	23	International relations and global affairs	Administrative specialist	October 6, 2024	24'39

*Source:* own elaboration.

### ***Information recolection instrument***

Data collection will be based on semi-structured interviews due to their conversational nature, which is ideal because it does not constrain the participants, allowing open communication with the interviewer and removing the obstacle of not being able to investigate issues that may be more emotional (Ozonas, 2004).

### ***Procedimiento de análisis de la información***

To begin with, after completing all the interviews with the 8 participants, each interview was transcribed into individual Word documents. In total, these transcripts amounted to 31 pages. These transcripts were then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet, divided one sheet per interview (Manrique and De Castro-Correa, 2019). The participants' responses were organized into a matrix (see Table 2): The first column had a space for a number, the next read category followed by subcategory. Next was the analyzing columns: one column had the textual responses along with the corresponding questions called the meaning unit, another had the synthesized responses, lastly there was a column for the investigator's thought on the previous two boxes. After completing this step for all the meaning units the investigator identifies specific tendencies or themes and organizes them into categories and subcategories. This is done to all the interviews in order for them to share those categories and subcategories.

*Table 2: Analysis matrix*

Unit #	Category	Subcategory	Meaning unit	Transformation to psychological	Reactions, judgments, and interpretations of the investigator
--------	----------	-------------	--------------	---------------------------------	---

*Source:* own elaboration based on Gioia et al. (2013) y Manrique y De Castro (2019).

### ***Ethical considerations***

It was essential that the participants had the freedom to decide whether to take part in the present research and given the possibility of leaving the interview at any time the person considered it proper.

The participants were informed about the research, its general and specific goals, as well as its use. An informed consent form was drawn up and signed by each person, in which the data provided are protected and it is guaranteed that they will only be used for academic and research purposes; the above are protected according to the provisions of Law 1090 of 2006 and Resolution 8430 of 1993, article 11, complying with the basic ethical criteria of qualitative research. Finally, it is worth mentioning that this research makes up category A: Research without risk, of Resolution 8430 of 1993, Article 11, since no intervention or intentional modification is made to the psychological or social variables of the individuals who participate in this study (Resolution 8430 of 1993, Ministry of Health).

## **Results**

During the analysis of results, from 169 minutes of audio recording, transcribed in 31 pages, 120 units of meaning were named, which revealed 17 subcategories, and four categories following the proposal of Gioia et al. (2013). These categorical elements are the base for the data structure (Figure 1), which visualizes the relationship between categories and subcategories, which represent the interviewee's perceptions about Bridgerton Netflix series.

**Figure 1. Data structure.**



**Note.** Source: Own elaboration, based on Gioia et al. (2013) y Manrique y De Castro (2019).

The results presented are a composition of what each category means and what the subcategories that compose them means, based on the perspectives of the interviewees.

Then, information will be analyzed by the interviewer from these perceptions to generate clear results.

***First category: Portrayal of women***

This category is based on how the women describe how the show portrayed the female gender through their characters and plot lines. From the perspectives of the interviewees five components came up: *Idolization of female character*, *Communication styles*, *Female personality*, *Female empowerment* and *Bridgerton's female expectations*.

*Idolization of female character* of the show can cause more of a connection to the show but also a comparison might be made “You see a character that you really like, and you want to like look like that character” (1, 1.1, 17, E).<sup>1</sup> However, a reflection on how the impact of this comparison also took place in one interview: “comparing yourself to the character physically is not okay. It is toxic. It can become toxic, sorry” (1, 1.1, 19, E).

*Communication styles* refer to how the women communicated with each other and their partners. The interviewees mostly said three things, that the women were submissive, that the submission was not sustainable and that they were submissive in public but in private intimate moments with their partners they were more comfortable. “With the couples, I feel that they are still very submissive, yes, maybe some of them had a little more character, but in the end the man was always the one in charge” (6, 1.2, 91, S). However, this level of submission was not sustainable

Let's say that in the beginning yes, but then they all kind of exploded, like, I don't know if they realized, like, I'm not going to let myself get screwed for some guy,

---

<sup>1</sup> The coding used for the quotations of the testimonies is as follows: interview number, subcategory number and meaning unit number. Additionally, they will have an S for interviews done in Spanish and and E for those done in English.

but, I mean, everyone has to reach their limits, I mean, no matter how passive and respectful you are, you get to a point where you get tired and explode. (4, 1.2, 61, S)

*Female personality* served to see if the interviewees liked female characters themselves.

For example, when this was said of Daphne: “I feel like I connect with her a lot, but it's because she's kind of guiding the sisters, kind of taking charge like the household stuff” (5, 1.3, 71, S). Or even more general statements, where they refer to all women in the show, “And I feel that this contrasts well by showing that at that time it was like that, but that there are also these other women who suddenly represent something a little more of the modern woman, so to speak.” (7, 1.3, 108, S)

*Female empowerment* surged of any moment where women were represented with more power or as gaining power, either by opposing ideas they did not agree with or when they were given choices they were not usually given. It also included moments where the characters were represented as important in their own right instead as a tool for the plot line. This is mentioned when one interviewee said that *Bridgerton* showed all facets of a woman, how they can have many goals to pursue showing the women and what they want from their lives without limiting them. This is show when the interviewee said that,

[...] a woman can be strong, but she can also be romantic, she can want to dream for herself, but that dream can be to have children and a little machine, that's fine, that is, a woman can be many things. (3, 1.4, 44, S)

And more explicitly said: “[...] it seems to me that the second season showed a lot of empowerment of women, because originally she always establishes her limits and rules.” (2, 1.4, 32, S)

Lastly, *Bridgerton's female expectation* which is what the show's society expected of women had a few aspects named, such as the expectation of getting married, having children, maintaining chastity until marriage and maintaining decorum under any situation, just to name a few. One interviewee said, "the series explicitly shows how mothers are in a constant search and sometimes even a struggle for their daughters to have the best husband." (6, 1.5, 93, S)

[...] moms impose on their daughters like, well, when are you going to get married? And then, the husband. And then, that's it, they got married. But then: 'when are you going to have children?' It's like they appeased them, I mean, they kind of lowered a little bit the little square they were locked in, but it was still like: 'ready, well, but you have to get married'. And well, then you got married, then: 'where are the children?' And then: 'how are you going to provide for your husband?' (4, 1.5, 58, S)

This category explores one of the central topics in which interviewees are given the opportunity to reflect on how their gender is portrayed. The results explore the oppression of the women in the show because of the era it is inspired in. Yet also showed how the show did somethings right like including variety in the women not just their physical aspects but also their personalities and aspirations. Considering everything uncovered in the interview I would say the participants main objection to the *portrayal of women* pertained to the time, all other aspects were seemingly praised or at least admired.

***Second category: Relationship portrayal***

The second category refers to what tendencies pertaining to the couples on the show were present in the participants' observations. This may be about how a couple act when getting together, when married or even when talked about. These tendencies include *Unhealthy depictions*, *Relationship tropes*, *Parents' influence over choice of partner* and *Idealization of love*.

*Unhealthy depictions* refer to all dynamics that are not sustainable or constructive for the people in the relationship. Like having to put in excessive effort: "I have seen a lot of submission, [women] usually do what the man wants and asks of them, they are very forgiving beings, they put up with too much" (2, 2.1, 31, S). Another interviewee said:

A woman has to look and act in ways that please the man she hopes will choose her as a bride. So, in a way, you see who holds the power or at least who makes the decisions in these relationships. (8, 2.1, 113, E)

*Relationship tropes* are romantic plot tendencies in story telling media, these were identified in the show. One interviewee shows these tropes and that these tropes happen in real life, therefore the show can be realistic in certain circumstances.

The second one would be relationship tropes. They do happen. So, like from enemies to lovers or from like friends to lovers, which I think is the most common one. That can be like, you can see it right now. Maybe on a different kind of model, but it does happen. (1, 2.2, 3, E)

For this part, another interviewee mentions tropes when speaking on how realistic they are, stating:

Or they are enemies to lovers and hate each other and then love each other. Or they've always been friends, and I don't know what [else]. I mean, like yes, that can happen in real life, I'm not saying it can't. But the man is never going to be that handsome, the man is not going to tell you those things they say. [in the show] (4, 2.2, 65, S)

*Parents' influence over choice of partner* has already been mentioned and mostly refers to the arranged marriages and “pushy” mothers (or older brothers) that impose their wants onto their daughters. With respect to this issue, one interviewee stated that ((sugiero que escribas aquí con tus palabras qué es lo que vas a presentar o a destacar en el fragmento de la entrevista).

Let's say that in a way I find it very sad, because..., I don't know if the word is submission, but the fact that there is a person who chooses who is going to be your partner and who you are going to marry, whether you like it or not. As happened in the first season, that the main character didn't want to marry one of the men that the older brother wanted for her. (2, 2.3, 24, S)

Lastly in this category there is the *Idealization of love* referring to the show depicting something (or someone) that would seldom show up in real life. In the words of an interviewee: “But the guy is never going to be that cool, the guy is never going to say those things they say” (4, 2.2, 65, S). Another participant, said:

It shows women with the standard of a romantic relationship in different ways, like being friends, being a perfect couple, being the ones who fell in love, being the ones who hated each other, and now, as a perfect couple. Those standards are not so

realistic; and I think that one should take into account that this is the case. (7, 2.2, 109, S)

Thoughts on relationship portrayals on the show seemed to consist of the romantization of love and the exaggeration of the aspects of the relationships, the drama, the highs and lows. Yet there was also some reflection on how control and freedom of choice directly influence whether a relationship is ideal or healthy enough. There needs to be an equilibrium of these elements between the people in the relationship for the participants to deem it their approval.

***Third category: Change in Interviewee's life***

This category pertains to any changes that the individual may have identified in her life because of the show, even if they do not verbally name it as a change but still shared an aspect that can clearly be considered so by the interviewer. These changes were identified to be divided into: *Good changes*, *Neutral changes* and *Bad changes*.

*Good changes* that came from watching the show included reflections on women and their capabilities. On this topic, one participant said: “Series like *Bridgeton* have taught me that I can like dresses and pink and flowers, and I can still be independent, strong, and empowered. It's just that one thing doesn't oppose the other, the two can come together” (3, 3.1, 51, S). It also includes reflecting on wasn't as well liked: “Yes, I feel that it generated an impact, the truth is positive, positive, positive, positive, yes, overall, it makes it clearer to one what one does not want” (5, 3.1, 83, S).

*Neutral changes* mostly referred to changes that do not have a good or bad impact or there was a connection to the show but no changes. One interviewee said: “More than changing

me, I feel that I can identify myself, because although sometimes the series is very dramatic, as I was saying just now, I feel that many times it shows very real situations that couples can experience.” (3, 3.2, 50, S)

Another said about the changes she noticed outside of her:

I think there has been like since *Bridgerton*, like a way, a change in the way we, like we do our makeup or how we dress. Like obviously we don't put on like the big dresses and the costumes. But this is like vibe of like cleanliness and like prettiness and like girliness. (1, 3.2, 16, E)

*Negative changes* refer to things the interviewees noticed could cause negative affects from the interview.

So, it would be a negative change if someone doesn't have some kind of context on the subject. Well, not necessarily, I mean, I think that if I had seen this series as a child, obviously I would have idealized my boyfriend. (4, 3.3, 67, S)

In the three types of changes there were changes that affected the outside such as content in media, or trends, or even the show itself being a topic of conversation. If those were put aside then the changes left lean towards the inner reflections made by the participants on how the show portrayed women and with that an abundance of issues they disagreed with. Additionally, most of them came out with a clear picture of what they desire or don't desire not only in future relationships but as women.

#### ***Fourth Category: Context of interview***

The last category is composed of all information that was not punctually related to the study objectives yet provided the interviewee's stance on topics and information that might

influence the other answers and therefore is important to bear in mind. Five subcategories surged from this: *Perceptions of show*, *Perceptions of era*, *Perceptions of male characters*, *Perceptions of Bridgerton's society expectations* and *Show vs. book*.

*Perceptions of the show* reflects the opinion the women had of the show, which was mostly positive. “Yes, I mean, I'm one of those who do binge watching and I watched the whole season. It's really good, I like it a lot” (5, 4.1, 70, S). More specific aspects were complimented, like how pretty the sets and the costumes were. Or the story telling and how much the audience could get caught up on the show. A lot of them mentioned binge watching it which suggests not wanting to stop watching it. As an example, one interviewee mentioned,

I really like how everyone has their own little thing going on and their own reasons for believing certain things or acting the way they do. So, I think it's cool. It's a really cool show, and the outfits and makeup are amazing. I like it. (8, 4.1, 110, E)

Unlike the previous subcategory, *Perception of the era* was mostly negative, specifically towards discrimination and the woman's role at the time. One interviewee said: “Well, obviously we can already say that it is racist, super exclusive, especially as it was London” (7, 4.2, 100, E). Another participant talks about the role of women:

I feel that because of those same social roles that, let's say, were imposed on them, they behave in a certain way in front of their husbands, because in the end it's like: ‘well, the woman has to serve her husband’. (4, 4.2, 59, E)

Although not strictly on topic *perceptions on male characters* still helped develop a deeper grasp on where the interviewee was coming from. A participant raised a general opinion on all male main characters:

Like the main characters do share like this roguish personality, which I don't think I do like because: 'why are you showing me that they all were roguish before finding their true love?' Like I would have liked to see the other side of it, like them not actually being interested in women and then the woman being their interest. But each character has their like, their thing. Like they do have a personality. (1, 4.3, 7, E)

The subcategory of *Show vs. book* exists for the interviewees that had read the books the show was based on and compares it to the show. Not directly on topic yet still might impact their other answers, and their views on characters.

[...] the general treatment of Colin with Penelope. I think it's actually a bit better in the series because I also read the books. I'm a bit biased by the character and how they're portrayed on the different platforms. (1, 4.4, 11, E)

Subcategory *Perceptions of Bridgerton's society expectations* refers to what the interviewees thought of the show's society. Much like the *Era* category most interviewees did not like the role women played in the show's society. One interviewee made the comparison to Antioquia society:

I do feel that as a society, and more so in a society like ours, which is still very conservative, very macho, there is still this bubble of how a woman should be, how she should marry, how she should have children. (4, 4.5, 57, S)

In the fourth category it's clear the women interviewed had certain ideas on many topics that appeared in the interview organically and did not necessarily pertain to the objectives. The most important subject that affected their reflections most was their view of the era and their perceptions of Bridgerton's society expectations. These were the ones where they found the most upsetting feelings.

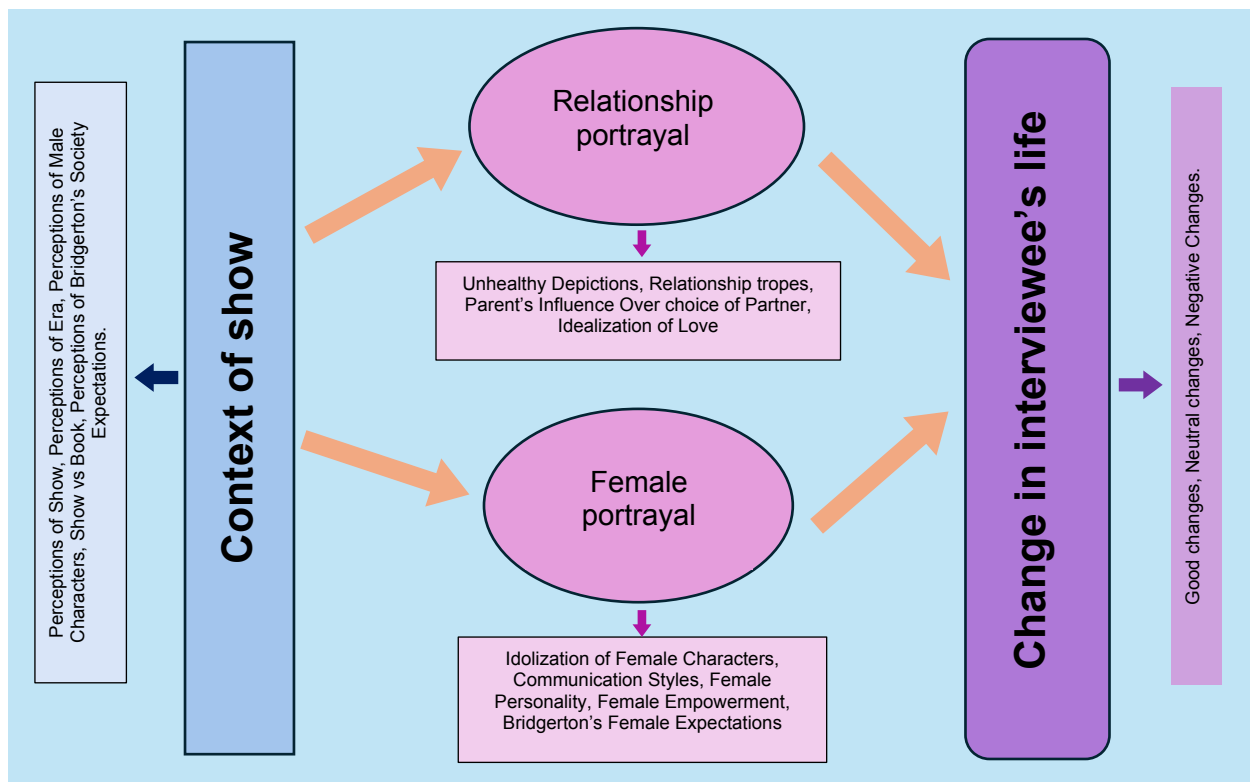
In the results the interviews reveal a nuanced reflection on the portrayal of women and relationships in the show, where participants acknowledged both the constraints imposed by the historical setting and the more progressive elements, such as diverse female characters and aspirations. While critical of the romanticized and exaggerated depictions of love, they emphasized the importance of balance in relationships, particularly around control and freedom of choice. The show sparked both external conversations and personal introspection, leading participants to form clearer ideas about their own desires and boundaries. Ultimately, the societal expectations of the era portrayed in the show were a major point of tension, evoking frustration about the limitations faced by women, yet offering valuable insights for their own lives.

### **Discussion**

From the results a dynamic qualitative schematic created (see Figure 2). This type of schematics is a flexible, evolving framework used in qualitative research to visually stand for and analyze complex, interconnected themes, or processes. It captures how these variables change over time and interact with one another. Unlike static models, it adapts as new data appears, highlighting relationships and reflecting the iterative nature of qualitative analysis. This tool is valuable for exploring dynamic phenomena like social behavior or

subjective experiences, helping researchers understand not just what happens, but how and why things happen (Gioia et al., 2013)

**Figure 2. Dynamic Qualitative Schematic**



**Note.** Source: Own elaboration, based on Gioia et al. (2013) and Manrique y De Castro (2019).

The schematic above illustrates the dynamics between the four key categories found in the investigation. It shows how the show's context shapes the interviewees' perceptions of both relationship and female portrayals, which, in turn, contribute to their understanding of

the personal changes they have experienced. The schematic has additional meaning portrayed by both shapes and color. The context is in a rectangle standing for rigidity and stability, it would be the foundation of what's next. This flows into two ovals that are the main topics for interview; they are the information the interview is looking for. Once these were established then the changes in the interviewees' lives can be more easily identified.

Each category will have its results compared to the theoretical framework, the literature review and the investigator own insights as to provide a discussion on the information that was already available and the information that was established during the investigation.

### ***Portrayal of Women:***

The interviewees reflected on how women were portrayed in the show, acknowledging both the oppressive elements tied to the historical setting and the positive aspects, such as the diversity of personalities and aspirations. While critical of the time-specific gender roles, the participants generally appreciated other aspects of the portrayal.

Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) explains the interviewees' recognition of traditional gender roles reflected in the show's historical setting. Participants appreciated the diversity in women's personalities, showing a desire for more modern portrayals that break from rigid societal roles. Gender Similarities Hypothesis (Hyde, 2005) is reflected in the participants' praise for varied representations, suggesting they value portrayals that show women as multidimensional, challenging exaggerated gender differences.

The research highlights how gender representations in media often emphasize traditional roles for women, as shown by studies such as Gavilán et al. (2019) and Lacalle and Castro (2017). In line with the study results, this paper identifies both the limitations

and advancements in how women are portrayed, particularly in terms of sexualization and the reinforcement of stereotypes. This reflects the interviewees' acknowledgment of both oppressive aspects tied to the historical era of *Bridgerton* and the praise for the show's attempt to diversify female characters' personalities and aspirations.

This investigation is particularly valuable from a psychological point of view because direct engagement with the interviewees allowed them to deeply reflect on the portrayals they observed on screen, specifically through the lens of their own gender. They were able to pinpoint what aspects they found troubling and what they admired. This is especially rewarding, as the study aimed to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the representation of women, acknowledging that even fictional depictions can significantly impact and influence reality. On a personal level, it is also more respectful and humane to treat women with the dignity they deserve in media portrayals.

### ***Relationship Portrayal:***

The participants noted the romanticized and exaggerated depiction of love and relationships in the show. They also emphasized the importance of balance between control and freedom of choice, deeming relationships healthier when equilibrium between these elements is achieved.

Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) relates to participants' critiques of the romanticization of love, reflecting traditional relationship roles where control and freedom are unbalanced. Participants wanted more equality in relationships. Gender Similarities Hypothesis (Hyde, 2005) supports this, as participants sought balance and mutual respect,

suggesting both genders have similar relationship needs and challenging the notion that men and women behave very differently in romantic contexts.

Studies like Ward (2002) and López et al. (2015) emphasize how television portrays romantic relationships in exaggerated and idealized forms, which shapes viewers' perceptions of relationships. This is comparable to the interviewees' thoughts on *Bridgerton*, where the romanticization of love and exaggerated dynamics were noted. Ward's study specifically connects television portrayals to viewers' assumptions about sexual relationships, aligning with the participants' reflection on the need for a balance of control and freedom of choice in relationships.

The core objective of the investigation was to go beyond merely examining how women were portrayed individually and explore how they were depicted in relation to men, focusing on the dynamics of these interactions. The relationship dynamic was chosen for this reason. The interviewees expressed that they enjoyed seeing a variety of portrayals, such as women taking charge or women deeply in love, as long as there was diversity in the narratives. They emphasized a desire for varied representations—not only of the women themselves but also in the types of men and the ways women handled situations—reflecting the complexity and variety of real life.

### ***Change in Interviewee's life***

The show prompted both external discussions on media content and trends, as well as deeper personal reflections on gender and relationships. The participants identified issues they disagreed with and came away with clearer desires and boundaries for their future relationships, particularly as women.

Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) helps explain how the show prompted participants to reflect on their roles as women, leading to a clearer understanding of what they want in future relationships, moving away from traditional roles. Gender Similarities Hypothesis (Hyde, 2005) is seen in participants' diverse desires for relationships, reinforcing that individual preferences are more important than gender-based differences.

Several studies, including Gavilán et al. (2019) and Ramos (2019), discuss how media representations impact women's self-perceptions and behaviors. These studies suggest that while women are aware of evolving portrayals in media, they still desire further changes aligned with societal progress. This matches the interviewees' personal reflections, as watching *Bridgerton* prompted them to reassess their desires and attitudes in relationships, helping them clarify what they do and do not want in future romantic contexts.

During the interviews, some participants firmly stated that the show had not changed them. However, when prompted to elaborate, they revealed a range of reflections they had made about society as a result of watching it. It is fascinating to observe how certain influences, which people might not consciously recognize, are still acknowledged by the mind. Whether they realize it or not, this exposure subtly alters their perspectives, even if only in small ways. This underscores the idea that the media can shape our thoughts and attitudes, often without us being fully aware of it.

***Context of show:***

The women found that the era depicted in the show and the associated societal expectations resonated deeply, eliciting strong emotional responses. These historical

aspects were central to their reflections, revealing feelings of frustration regarding the limitations faced by women in that period.

From the two theories set up Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) explains the participants' negative feelings toward the societal expectations of the show's era, as these traditional roles clash with modern views on gender. Gender Similarities Hypothesis (Hyde, 2005) aligns with participants' rejection of rigid historical gender norms, reflecting their preference for more progressive, egalitarian portrayals in media.

The historical context of *Bridgerton* and the societal expectations tied to its era sparked strong emotional reactions from the participants, which aligns with findings from Rodal et al. (2017) on how historical media representations complicate modern feminist interpretations. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2017) note that the dismantling of patriarchal norms in TV shows can evoke powerful reflections on identity and representation. These connections underscore how the show's setting influenced participants' feelings, especially regarding the limits placed on women in that time, leading to frustration about the lack of progress in gender portrayals.

The perception of the historical era had a profound impact on the participants. It would be intriguing to conduct a similar study with a show set in modern times to examine how the context influences viewers' perceptions. Interestingly, the more negative aspects of the past portrayed in the show sparked an unexpected response in the interviewees: gratitude. They expressed appreciation for not having to conform to those restrictive norms and for the greater personal freedom they enjoy in their own lives today.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to achieve three primary objectives: identifying how women perceive their representation in *Bridgerton*, evaluating those representations in positive and negative terms, and determining the role of *Bridgerton* in shaping women's behavior in real-life romantic relationships. The findings were structured around four key categories—Portrayal of Women, Relationship Portrayal, Changes in Interviewees' Lives, and Context of the Show.

The study successfully identified how women viewed their representation in the show. Interviewees recognized both traditional and modern portrayals of women, highlighting various dimensions such as female empowerment, idolization, and communication styles. While they appreciated the diversity of female characters and how they balanced strength with vulnerability, they were critical of the historical context that imposed rigid gender roles. The show sparked reflections on societal expectations of women, from maintaining chastity, to marriage and motherhood.

The participants provided both positive and negative assessments of how women were represented. Positively, many admired the show's inclusion of diverse female characters with different aspirations, showing that women could pursue various goals. Empowerment moments, where women challenged norms or gained autonomy, were particularly valued. However, negative feedback focused on the unrealistic idolization of female beauty, the submissive roles women played in relationships, and the persistence of stereotypical gender roles. The women noted that while *Bridgerton* showcased empowerment, it was still constrained by the limitations of the era it portrayed.

The study explored how *Bridgerton* might influence women's behavior in their real-life romantic relationships. Many participants reflected on the exaggerated, romanticized

portrayals of love and relationships in the show. While these depictions did not directly change their behavior, they led to deeper introspection about what they desired or didn't desire in their relationships. For example, women expressed a desire for more balanced dynamics of control and freedom in relationships, rejecting the idea of submission. The show also sparked external changes, like media discussions and trends, but its influence was more about providing a clear picture of what participants found appealing or problematic in their romantic lives.

The study has several limitations, including a potentially small and homogeneous sample size, leading to limited generalizability, as well as the subjective nature of interview responses. Future research could benefit from a larger, more diverse group and the inclusion of quantitative methods to balance subjective insights. Additionally, the focus on *Bridgerton* limits the findings to this specific period drama, and expanding the scope to include modern shows could provide broader results. The study also did not deeply explore the long-term impact of media on real-life behaviors, which could be an area for future investigation. Future research could focus on comparing media portrayals across genres and eras, examining the intersectionality of representation, conducting longitudinal studies on media influence, and exploring cross-cultural perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of how media shapes perceptions of gender and relationships.

### ***References***

- Adriano, H. (2024). Coloring History: A Critical Analysis of Racial Representation in *Bridgerton*. *The Motley Undergraduate Journal*, 2(1). 15-25

- Aguilar, P. (2001). Mujeres de cine: Retratos mágicos pero distorsionados. In B. Muñoz (Coord.), Medios de comunicación, mujeres y cambio cultural. *Dirección General de la Mujer de la Comunidad de Madrid*. <http://repositorio.ciem.ucr.ac.cr/jspui/handle/123456789/101>
- Arias, C. (2006). Enfoques teóricos sobre la percepción que tienen las personas. *Horizontes Pedagógicos*, 8(1), 9-22.
- Arias, L., Vásquez, M., Dueñas, E., García, L., & Tejada, E. (2011). Comportamiento sexual y erotismo en estudiantes universitarios, Cali, Colombia. *Colombia Médica*, 42(3), 309-318.
- Azcharie, S., Sari, W. P., & Irena, L. (2022, April). Feminism Perspective on Bridgerton Drama Series. In 3rd Tarumanagara International Conference on the Applications of Social Sciences and Humanities (TICASH 2021) (pp. 72-80). Atlantis Press.
- Bretoni, M., & López, M. (2010). Percepciones sociales ambientales: Valores y actitudes hacia la conservación de la Reserva de Biosfera “Parque Atlántico Mar Chiquita”-Argentina. *Estudios y Perspectivas en Turismo*, 19(5), 835-849.
- Chae, S. (2023). Spring Aesthetics and Social Statements: An Ideological Critique of Bridgerton. *GNOVIS Journal* 23 (1), 101-125
- Coles, H. C. (2023). Desire in Bridgerton: Defining the Female Gaze. *Honors College Theses*. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/honors-theses/844>
- Connolly, J., & McIsaac, C. (2011). Romantic relationships in adolescence. In M. K. Underwood & L. H. Rosen (Eds.), *Social development: Relationships in infancy, childhood, and adolescence* (pp. 180–203). The Guilford Press.

- De-Caso-Bausela, E., González-de-Garay, B., & Marcos-Ramos, M. (2020). Representación de género en las series generalistas de televisión españolas emitidas en prime time (2017-2018). *El Profesional de la Información*, 29(2). <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.mar.08>
- Eagly, A.H. (1987). Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-role interpretation. *Psychology Press*. (1st ed.) 7-34 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203781906>
- Expósito, D., & Rodríguez, A. (2018). Representación de modelos sociosexuales en los medios audiovisuales. *Universidad de la laguna*. 1-31
- Escobar, S. G., López-Fuentes, N. I. G. A., & Medina, J. L. V. (2016). Significado psicológico de sexo, sexualidad, hombre y mujer en estudiantes universitarios. *Enseñanza e Investigación en Psicología*, 21(3), 274-281
- Flores-Hernández, B. G., Guzmán-Pimentel, M., Martínez-Ruiz, L., Jiménez-Castro, M. P., Rojas-Solís, J. L., & Lloyd, P. N. P. (2021). Caracterización de las (nuevas) relaciones románticas de adolescentes. *Avances en Psicología*, 29(1), 47-58.
- Fuster Guillen, D. E. (2019). Investigación cualitativa: Método fenomenológico hermenéutico. *Propósitos y Representaciones*, 7(1), 201-229.
- Galán, O. M. (2016). Construcción de estereotipos masculinos y femeninos en la televisión dominicana: Diferencias en la percepción de roles. *Razón y Palabra*, 20(93), 300-319.
- García, A. (2014). El fenómeno de la serialidad en la tercera edad de oro de la televisión. *Universidad de Navarra*.
- García, D. C. (2005). Teoría queer: Reflexiones sobre sexo, sexualidad e identidad. In *Teoría queer. Políticas bolleras, maricas, trans, mestizas* 21-62.

- García, P. M., & Aguado-Peláez, D. (2017). La reapropiación de los cuerpos de las mujeres en la ficción televisiva: Análisis de *Orange is the New Black*. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 8(2), 401-413.
- Gavilan, D., Martínez-Navarro, G., & Ayestarán, R. (2019). Las mujeres en las series de ficción: El punto de vista de las mujeres. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 10(2), 367 -384.
- Gioia, D., Corley, K., & Hamilton, A. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- González-de-Garay, B., Marcos-Ramos, M., & Portillo-Delgado, C. (2020). Gender representation in Spanish prime-time TV series. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(3), 414-433.
- Hyde, J. S. (2005). The gender similarities hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60(6), 581-592.
- Lacalle, C., & Castro, D. (2017). Representations of female sexuality in Spanish television fiction. *Convergencia Revista de Ciencias Sociales*. 45-64. <https://doi.org/10.29101/crcs.v0i75.4656>
- López, M., & Gavilán, M. (2015). El análisis de series de televisión: Construcción de un modelo interdisciplinario. *ConHumanitas*, 6(1), 21-39.
- Manrique-Tisnés, H.; De-Castro-Correa, A. (2019). Toma de decisiones: intuición y deliberación en la experiencia de los decisores. *Innovar*, 29(73), 149-164. <https://doi.org/10.15446/innovar.v29n73.78028>
- McCarthy, E. (2022). The Use of Narration and Gossip in Shondaland's *Bridgerton*. *The Cupola*, 204-217
- Menéndez, M., & Zurian, F. (2014). Mujeres y hombres en la ficción televisiva norteamericana hoy. *Anagramas - Rumbos y Sentidos de la Comunicación*, 13(25), 55-71.

- Oviedo, G. L., (2004). La definición del concepto de percepción en psicología con base en la teoría Gestalt. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, (18), 89-96.
- Ozonas, L., & Perez, A. (2004). La entrevista semiestructurada: Notas sobre una práctica metodológica desde una perspectiva de género. *La Aljaba*, 9(5), 198-203.
- Robinson, J. (2021). How *Bridgerton* officially became Netflix's biggest hit ever. *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2021/01/bridgerton-netflix-biggest-hit-highest-ratings-female-audiences-romance>
- Ramos, E. M. (2019). Más allá de Bechdel: *The Good Wife*, *The Good Fight* y *Orange is the New Black*: La imagen de la mujer en las series de televisión feministas. *Universitas Humanística*, (87), 23-49.
- Ramos, M. M., & Gonzalez-De-Garay, B. (2021). New feminist studies in audiovisual industries: Gender representation in subscription video-on-demand Spanish TV series. *International Journal of Communication*, (15). 581-604.
- Rodal, A. B., & Segarra, I. M. (2017). ¿Más allá de la heroína postfeminista? *Outlander* (2014) y la cultura popular. *Océanide*, 9. <http://oceanide.netne.net/articulos/art9-10.pdf>
- Rodriguez, J. (2014). Influencia de la serie cómica televisiva “El chavo del ocho” en el comportamiento social de las niñas de primer año de educación básica del jardín de infantes “El despertar” de la ciudad Ambato. *Universidad Técnica de Ambato*.
- Rojas, M. (2015). Tipos de investigación científica: Una simplificación de la complicada incoherente nomenclatura y clasificación. *Revista Electrónica de Veterinaria*, 16 (1) 1-14.

- Sandoval, M. (2006). Los efectos de la televisión sobre el comportamiento de las audiencias jóvenes desde la perspectiva de la convergencia y de las prácticas culturales. *Fundación Universitaria Konrad Lorenz*, 5(2), 205-222.
- Ward, L. M. (2002). Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships? Correlational and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 31, 1-15.
- Weeks, J. (1998). La invención de la sexualidad. *Sexualidad. Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica*.
- Żerebecki, B. G., Oprea, S. J., Hofhuis, J., & Janssen, S. (2021). Can TV shows promote acceptance of sexual and ethnic minorities? A literature review of television effects on diversity attitudes. *Sociology Compass*, 15(8). 1-16

**Pregrado en Psicología****Universidad EAFIT****DECLARACIÓN DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO**

El propósito de esta ficha de consentimiento es proveer a los participantes de esta investigación una explicación de la naturaleza de esta, al igual que su rol como participantes.

**Título del trabajo de investigación:** La percepción de la representación social del sexo en televisión atribuido por mujeres de Medellín (Colombia).

Investigadores Principales: Isabel Vásquez Arango.

Esta entrevista hace parte del proceso de recolección de datos para el trabajo de investigación que desarrollo en el pregrado de Psicología de la Universidad EAFIT.

Algunas consideraciones:

- La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria.
- La información obtenida con la entrevista será de uso exclusivo para este trabajo de investigación.
- La intervención del entrevistado será anónima en la consolidación de la información.
- La información que se recoja será confidencial y no se usara para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de esta investigación.
- Al participar en este estudio, el entrevistado responderá con libertad y en sus términos las preguntas realizadas por el entrevistador. También podrá entregar información adicional que considere pertinente para el objeto de la investigación.
- Concedo que la entrevista sea grabada, lo cual se requiere para la labor de transcripción y análisis de la información.
- Este consentimiento es válido para todas las entrevistas relacionadas con el tema, pues en ocasiones se puede requerir más de una entrevista.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

CC: \_\_\_\_\_

*¡Agradecemos su sincera participación!*