

Diversity behind bars: Stereotypes and gender identity in the fictional television series *Orange is the New Black*

Diversidad entre rejas: Estereotipos e identidad de género en la ficción televisiva Orange is the New Black

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Abstract

The multiplicity of platforms and channels prevailing in the Third Golden Age of television has generated an expansion of fictional products, giving new formats, stories and characters their own place. Orange is the New Black, with a mostly female cast, brings the audience closer to daily life of women in prison. This research work delves into the representation of main characters' gender identity, determining which factors affect the way these women are reflected. An in-depth analysis of fourteen female characters detects several stereotypes and values associated with the traditional heteronormative model. Nevertheless, prevailing social canons, represented by the main character, open the door to multiple femininity models and give visibility to minority collectives.

Keywords

Gender identity; stereotypes; television; fiction; gender studies

Resumen

La multiplicidad de plataformas y canales en la Tercera Edad De Oro de la televisión ha generado una expansión de la oferta ficcional, dando cabida a nuevos formatos, historias y personajes. Con un elenco mayoritariamente femenino, *Orange is the New Black* acerca a la audiencia la vida de un grupo de mujeres en prisión. Este trabajo de investigación ahonda en la representación de la identidad de género de sus protagonistas, determinando qué factores influyen en dicho retrato. El análisis en profundidad de catorce personajes femeninos detecta estereotipos y valores asociados al modelo heteronormativo. Sin embargo, la representación de los cánones sociales imperantes, personificados a través de la protagonista, abre la puerta a múltiples modelos de feminidad y a la visibilización de colectivos minoritarios.

Palabras clave

Identidad de género; estereotipos; televisión; ficción; estudios de género

1. Introduction

The American Piper Kerman began writing her memoir to tell the audience about the single most defining experience in her life. In 2010 *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, an autobiographical book about her time at the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury (Connecticut), was released. The director producer Jenji Kohan would subsequently bid to turn the book into a television series: *Orange is the New Black* (in reference to the orange jumpsuits worn by inmates on arrival at the prison).

The first season of the drama/comedy was released on Netflix in July 2013, and 65 episodes have been aired to date¹. Since its inclusion in the global television catalogue the series has garnered considerable success, not without criticism, for its depiction of issues of social interest such as racism, the abuse of power, and the privatization of the penitentiary system. Its popularity is such that in the first two days of the release of the fourth season on the digital platform, 6.7 million viewers in the US tuned in to watch (17/06/2016 – 19/06/2016). The data provided by the communications conglomerate Nielsen single it out as one of the most followed series on *Netflix*.

In the opening episodes the audience accompanied Piper Chapman, Kerman's alter ego, on her first incursion into prison. However, the protagonist slowly gives way to the rest of the characters, turning them into an ensemble cast in which the lives of the inmates and prison staff weave and intertwine. This paper investigates deeper into the representation of the female characters, looking at transversal factors such as age, race, social status, religion, maternity and sexual diversity. One of the main tasks was to determine what factors influence the portrayals of these women, detecting the possible presence of gender stereotypes that lie hidden beneath the façade of a bold and transgressive aesthetic.

2. The Representation of women in fictional television

Women and communications media have formed a widely researched pair in recent decades, with a profuse number of studies that broach audiovisual production from a gender perspective. Academic interest in the representation of multiple realities within the aspect of femininity in fictional television, coinciding with the success of series in general, has led to well-informed research centering on roles, stereotypes and social representation on the small screen (De Miguel, Ituarte, Olabari & Siles, 2004; Galan, 2007; Belmonte & Guillamon, 2008; Menendez & Zurian, 2014). It has also covered other matters of interest such as family models (Lacalle & Hidalgo-Mari, 2016). In the same manner we find more examples of research linked to other acclaimed works of fiction such as *The Walking Dead*, *Mad Men*, and *Game of Thrones* (Lopez & Garcia, 2013; Chicharro & Acolea, 2014).

Some North American series such as *Ally McBeal* (1997 – 2002), *Sex and the City* (1998 – 2004), and *Desperate Housewives* (2004 – 2012), considered pioneers in the audiovisual industry, brought about a change to the representation of female characters, and empowered them in the face of traditional male chauvinism. This was the result of research projects such as *Women in Series* (Fernandez, Menendez, Torras & Trapero, 2006), a set of articles about the first two series mentioned above, in conjunction with other articles that analyze the same series from a feminist and post-feminist perspective (Dubrofsky, 2002; Moseley & Read, 2002; Gerhard, 2005; Kaufer, 2009; Hill, 2010; Lorie, 2011; Chicharro, 2013).

Orange is the New Black was born in the midst of the Third Golden Age of television, a period that began in the late nineties and has continued until today. For Alberto Nahum, "to explain this boom means we must take into account a set of factors – industrial, technological, narrative and audience – that have become enmeshed and in that entanglement each has synchronically influenced the others" (2014: 1). Stand outs among them are the arrival of cable and satellite television to the US, the proliferation of digital

platforms and the subsequent multiplicity in the offer of different subject matter. In their search for an increasingly more segmented audience audiovisual productions have undergone “a leap in quality with heightened ambition regarding content, and stories that are more sophisticated” (Nahum, 2014: 1-2), integrating narratives that initially didn’t seem to have a place in programming.

This particular series “moves away from representation typically associated with patriarchal tradition” (Aguado & Martinez, 2015: 263), and bids to reveal and showcase mental disease, transgender women, abortion, sexual assault and age. Despite its fairly recent appearance in programming it has inspired a bevy of research stemming from gender studies (Artt & Schwan, 2016; Fernandez & Menendez, 2016; Schwan, 2016; McKeown & Parry, 2017). In the same manner racial discrimination in prison is also a frequent research topic (Caputi, 2015; Enck & Morrissey, 2015; Aguado & Martinez, 2016; Belcher, 2016) that develops with the construction of the timeline in the series (Silverman & Ryalls, 2016), the protagonists’ occupations (Pramagiore, 2016) and Netflix’s promotional strategy (DeCarvalho & Cox, 2016).

3. Methodology

The methodology revolves around an in-depth character study of the female protagonists in the first four seasons of the series, each season with a total of thirteen episodes. The wide variety of female characters that make up the cast has required that the sample used in the study be reduced to only the main roles. Who was considered a main character was based on whether a character had one or more episodes dealing exclusively with their story, narrating parts of their lives prior to being incarcerated. Main characters were also determined to be characters that have been present on the show since the beginning of the series.

The inmates are organized into three groups inside the prison: *The Suburbs* (white inmates),

Spanish Harlem (Latin American inmates) and *The Ghetto* (black inmates) and a fourth group of older women called the *Golden Girls*. Taking these circumstances in mind efforts have been made to balance the origins of the protagonists – approximately twenty – integrating a similar number of characters from each group. Given the group of older inmates is smaller, their representation in the sample is accordingly smaller. The fourteen characters in the sample are distributed in the following manner:

The Suburbs: Piper Chapman, Lorna Morello, Carrie Black and Tiffany Doggett

The Spanish Harlem: Dayanara Diaz, Aleida Diaz, Gloria Mendoza and Maria Ruiz

The Ghetto: Sophia Buset, Tasha Jefferson, Suzanne Warren and Poussey Washington

The Golden Girls: Galina Reznikov and Rosa Cisneros

The analysis was carried out in accordance with a file based on the methodology Elena Galan Fajardo presented in her study *The social image of women in fictional television series* (2007). The initial phase in the method details three fundamental axes for the development of the characters in question: physical description, psychological make-up and social environment (Galan, 2007: 46). After the aforementioned first appreciation the study then relies on the contributions of Phillip M. Parker to broaden the parameters (Galan, 2007: 48). External presentation refers to gender, age appearance or sexuality. Internal presentation refers to intellectual and emotional parameters that inform their behavior. Lastly, context refers to their environment, relationship with their environment or personal history.

Taking the above factors into account, the author drafted an extensive table to analyze each character (Galan, 2007: 85-90) with content adapted from the goals of the study, eliminating certain categories and adding others. Aspects included in said table were: name, age, prison group, origin, social status, crimes, sexual preference, marital status, children or no children, stereotypes associated with the character, reli-

gion, physical appearance and a more extensive description (including the main roles/adjectives/characteristics).

In conjunction with the file the researchers have also identified the possible gender stereotypes as described in the list of "fictional feminine stereotypes" created by Virginia Guarinos (2008: 116-118).

Good girl: accepts the system, Suffers, is naïve and a conformist. Young, generally from a mid to lower social class and cultural level. Aspires to find happiness through marriage.

The angel: a wolf in sheep's clothing. Similar profile to the above but is far more dangerous as they do not reveal their intentions. Ambitious and capable of anything if it's in their interest.

Mater amabilis: Middle-class housewife, loving and caring of her family.

Mater dolorosa: A suffering mother that observes how her children are mistreated in life and who turn around and abuse her. Stereotype commonly associated with mature women.

Denaturalized mother: Gives birth to an undesired son/daughter that does not turn out the way she desired, leading to conflict between the two.

Witch/villain: presented as monstrous beings or women of bewitching beauty. Perverse, always willing to do evil to gain control or dominion over something or other people.

Psychopath: women of unbalanced and dangerous behavior. On occasions the insanity is related to romance, upon which she will do whatever it takes to be with the one she loves.

Femme fatale: Considered evil by nature, and defined as a "downfall" given they are ambitious and dangerous to the men they are involved with. They have certain self-destructive tendencies and are considered highly seductive. Sickness or death are what generally negate their beauty or youth, due punishment for their detrimental lifestyles

Regardless of the previous the scale of masculinity and femininity included in *Analysis of the stereotypes in gender roles, transcultural validation of the inventory of gender roles* (1998) by Ana Garcia-Mina are used as a guiding reference. The tables below show the markedly opposing characteristics/values associated with both genders. For the feminine, research determines attitudes such as a concern for appearance, submission and the desire to form a family. All of the attributes are generally associated with the private environment of the home. For the masculine, research determined success, strength and safety/security.

Table 1 and 2: Scale of characteristics attributed to masculinity and femininity.

Scale of Masculinity			
Masculine	Leadership quality	Competitive	Fuerte personalidad
Daring	Good business sense	Confident	Ambicioso/a
Strong character	Entrepreneurial	Strong	Enérgico/a
Independent	Intrepid	Successful	Dominio de sí mismo/a

Scale of Femininity			
Feminine	Flirty	Docile	Submissive
Affectionate	Sweet	Sensual	Romantic
Sentimental	Welcoming	Emotional	Loyal
Gullible	Innocent	Self-sacrificing	Generous
Understanding	Love of children	Unabashedly cries	Concerned about physical appearance
Dependent	Attractive	Concerned about group harmony	Childish

Source: Own elaboration (Garcia-Mina, 1998)

4. Results

4.1. Litchfield or heterogeneity in prison: notes regarding context

The study yielded results on general character corresponding to the main categories in the analysis (age, origin, crimes, social status, sexuality, children or no children and religion). These initial findings made it possible to build a complementary picture from the deeper analysis of the main characters belonging to each prison group. Focus was placed on their evolution within the series as well as the stereotypes and roles associated with them.

Youth is one of the main characteristics of the inmates given that three quarters of them (72%) are under 40. In general terms the middle-aged women (30 to 40 years old) have a stronger presence in their families coming in at a little over a third of them (36%). Likewise, one out of every three female characters is over 40 years old. The younger inmates (under 30) on the other hand only make up 28% of the sample and are mostly members of *The Ghetto*.

Regarding their origins the narrative takes place in the prison of Litchfield (the US) which no doubt

explains why six out of every ten inmates (56%) are American. Latin America is second place in origins (25%) while two out of every ten inmates (19%) are European. Some characters such as Lorna Morello (Italian – American) or Poussey Washington (French – American) have dual nationality. The heterogeneity among the inmates also extends to social status, although the number of women in mid to lower social classes is slightly higher (38% in both cases). On the other end of the spectrum inmates with a more comfortable standard of living are less frequent (24%).

The type of crimes leading to the inmates' incarceration is an interesting element to the study, given that almost none of the inmates (82%) have committed violent crime. Violent crime for the purposes of this study means murder/homicide (12%) and organized crime (6%). However, the highest occurring offenses are financial (35%): theft, fraud or laundering. At the same time one of every three inmates is in prison for drug possession and/or trafficking. Kidnapping and harassment/breaking and entering (6%) are other crimes committed that led to incarceration.

Regarding romantic relationships six out of every ten inmates do not have a partner (50% are sin-

gle and 14% separated/divorced or widowed), as opposed to the 36% that maintain some form of romantic relationship (14% married and 22% in a relationship). Analysis of sexual preference reveals an incorporation and normalization of different sexualities. Heterosexuality is the majority among the inmates (62%); however, four out of every ten women have homosexual relations. In summary, one out of every four inmates is homosexual, while one out of every ten is bisexual.

Motherhood, a condition generally considered essential to women, is of less importance in this particular fiction. A little over a third of the women (36%) have one or more children, while the remaining 64% are childless. The image projected by each family is radically different. The whites and blacks are for the most part without children, the opposite being true for *Spanish Harlem*.

Lastly, religion is a differentiating aspect in the representation of the protagonists, and race exerts considerable influence on this particular factor. By not explicitly declaring the religious beliefs of all the inmates only the most representative cases have been considered in this study. In general, the religious influence of *Spanish Harlem* stands out from the rest; their religion is mainly catholic with strong spiritualist beliefs. In addition to the previous, the character Gloria Mendoza also mentions she is a practitioner of Santería.

The Suburbs also demonstrate a belief in Catholicism, mainly through the characters of Lorna Morello and Tiffany Doggett. In the first case religious artifacts and jewelry are evidence of the fact (a chain and crucifix), as well as being a staunch defender of the traditional family structure, and the role of the housewife. However, Tiffany Doggett (*Pennsatucky*) is most in touch with religion, it being a defining element to the character.

When first introduced Tiffany is presented as a fanatical figure, converted on the surface to the pro-life movement, a circumstance she uses to her benefit. Although her initial conversion to the Christian faith is a way to shorten her sen-

tence, she eventually demonstrates strong religious beliefs that lead her to a redemption of sorts (she abstains from consuming drugs, changes her look and takes on an attitude of compassion). Both in *The Suburbs* and *The Ghetto* some women openly reject religious beliefs (are atheists); such is the case with Piper Chapman who is from a protestant family, and Poussey Washington.

4.2. *Three Families, three realities: An analysis of the female characters*

4.2.1. *The Suburbs*

This particular group consists of white women, the majority of which are American (75%) and European (25%). Profiles indicate they are in their majority middle-aged women (30 to 40 years old), from a middle-class background (50% in both cases). The most common crimes associated with these women are financial (49%), although there is mention of harassment, murder and drug trafficking. Sexual diversity is a factor that characterizes the members of this particular group, half of which maintain relations with both men and women. The remaining members are distributed among heterosexual and gay women (25% in both cases). They are for the most part single (75%) and none of them have had children.

This is the context Piper Chapman is inserted in, being the leading character and the anchor of the series in the first season. This young and innocent woman, hailing from a family with comfortable means sees all her plans dashed when she is first notified of her prison sentence. According to Jenji Kohan, Piper is her "Trojan Horse"¹, which she uses to start the story and present the rest of the cast. During the first season her position as heroine is emphasized as she struggles against her archenemy Tiffany Doggett. A fight between the two marks a turning point in the building of the character's image as well as her enemy's, moving them both away from their respective stereotypes. Piper's protagonism is dialed down over the seasons, leaving space for the other women with whom she shares her day-to-day activities. This stage coincides with the evolution of

her character toward a double personality, letting the viewer see more complex and less amenable aspects of her character.

The sweet and benign façade gives way to a woman capable of doing anything to achieve her goals. Here we now face the angle of which Virginia Guarinos (2008) talks about; an angle that takes on the role of authoritarian leader in the third season. However, the image of a triumphant woman dissolves whereupon she is rejected from her own group, who eventually accept her back later.

Lorna Morella is a showcase for a multitude of characteristics associated with femininity: naivety, submission, self-sacrificing for the needs of others, flirtatious, romantic and of a great love for children. She is the good girl (Guarinos, 2008) that needs a man by her side in order to be happy, and she incarnates the idealized vision of romantic love. In fact, she is obsessed with organizing an imaginary wedding which serves as a vehicle to harass a male love interest.

Lorna is representative of the ‘woman crazed by love’ stereotype (2008) and in her delirium she comes to a point where she can no longer distinguish between wish and reality. She later decides to find “the man of her life” by mail, to ultimately become a jail bride. Once more the model ideal of romantic love is repeated, and the young woman continuously expresses her joy at becoming a married woman and having a family (*mater amabilis*).

Another protagonist is Carrie Black (Big Boo), a tough, physically hard looking woman of a rough and tumble attitude and behavior patterns associated with aggressiveness, competitiveness and independence (Garcia-Mina, 1998). She represents the stereotype of a masculine woman with a “butch” tattoo on her arm. Under her aggressive exterior lies an intelligent woman with an ironic wit who in her youth was misunderstood and rejected. She publicly supports the gay community and fights for sexual freedom, and feels compelled to normalize female masturbation and banish the prejudice surrounding it.

Last on the list is Tiffany Doggett (*Pennsatucky*), the character on the show that undergoes the greatest transformation. The young woman was raised in a rural and disjointed family environment where romantic relations and sexuality are overridden by chauvinism. The aforementioned circumstances make her a woman prone to submitting to the will and desires of her partners, with whom she had five unwanted pregnancies which she aborted voluntarily. As mentioned before, during the first season she represents the dangerous villain/antagonist to Piper Chapman. After, recovered from her drug addiction and given a new physical appearance she undergoes a profound change, making her a more affable person willing to help others.

4.2.2. *The Spanish Harlem*

The women of Latin American origin come together in a family who mainly communicate in Spanish. The group largely consists of women between 30 and 40 years old (50%), the majority of them of low social standing (75%) and some on occasions border on poverty. One of the more important members is the youngest, Dayanara Diaz, whose mother (Aleida Diaz) is also in prison. Daya is presented as a good girl (Guarinos, 2008), a responsible adolescent subject to a role reversal, taking on the mantle of mother to her brothers and sisters. Despite her efforts to not resemble her mother, she nevertheless ends up incarcerated for running narcotics – a crime of which 75% of the group members stand accused – the result of a toxic relationship. Once in prison there is intense conflict between mother and daughter due to extreme differences in opinion on love, motherhood and family.

Dayanara is several steps away from the traditional image of a Latin woman, unlike her mother who is buxom, sensual woman considerably concerned with her appearance. Dayanara’s behavior also demonstrates several of the adjectives on the scale of femininity (Garcia-Mina, 1998) such as sweet, self-sacrificing, responsible and romantic. Her personality leads her to fall in love with a prison guard with whom she maintains a love story that culminates in an unwanted

pregnancy and abandonment. The disappointments and hard prison life cause a radical twist in her character making her cold and arrogant as she strives for acceptance in her group. By threatening to shoot a guard she reaches an inflection point for the character, where her good intentions and inherent kindness is corrupted.

Daya is taken into custody together with her mother, both accused of the same crime. Aleida Diaz was a mother at a very young age, with a total of five children from five different fathers. Due to her immaturity (Peter Pan syndrome) she is incapable of taking control of her life and is solely concerned with enjoying her free time and caring for her physical appearance. Her profile matches that of a large segment of the group: heterosexual woman, in a relationship (50%) and a young mother (75%), in many cases from large families. As such she is starkly against the idealistic conceptions of her daughter concerning romantic relationships, stating they only exist for material gain. Aleida is classifiable as an extremely possessive woman who understands jealousy to be a form of love.

As with the other groups, *Spanish Harlem* has a leader. In this case the leader is Gloria Mendoza who takes on the role of protective mother (*mater dolorosa*). This is perhaps the motive behind her hard exterior and personality – competitiveness, aggressiveness and cold demeanor – more in tune with the scale of masculinity. This particularly strong character hides a woman who was physically and psychologically abused by her partner. During prison visits Gloria shows she is a strict, yet empathetic mother. Her character is an amalgam of two defining traits of this particular prison group: religious beliefs and the preference of Spanish over English.

Maria Ruiz is one of the few women inmates from a higher-class background at Litchfield. She was raised in a family with high purchasing power consequence of the family drug trade. Her father instilled in her a love for her Dominican roots, a character-defining trait. At the start of the series she gives birth to a little girl whom she leaves with her partner for the duration of

her prison sentence. Both frequently visit Maria who wishes to be a good wife and mother (*mater amabilis*). Initially little is known about her character, but as the series progresses she gains more importance until she becomes the cruel authoritarian antagonist/villain of the fourth season as she comes up against Piper Chapman. Maria considers emotion a sign of weakness (masculine view) except when dealing with family, to whom she shows her softer side.

4.2.3. *The Ghetto*

The Ghetto is a group of black inmates, mainly Afro-Americans (80%) and Europeans (20%). Characterized by their youth, the group largely consists of women under 40, and the majority have neither romantic relations nor children (75% in both cases). They mostly come from middle class families (50%). The list of crimes leading to their incarceration is the most heterogeneous of all: they are mainly drug-related (40%), but there is homicide as well, kidnapping and financial crimes. They are also noteworthy for the number of members attracted to members of the same sex, almost one out of every seven.

One of the protagonists is Sophia Burst, kind, generous and positive, she offers her help to the other inmates at the salon she manages within the prison. In fact she herself is well-groomed and feminine. Before undergoing gender reassignment, Sophia answered to the name of Marcus, and worked as a fireman. Her ex-wife gives her unconditional support, although the situation is far harder for her son to accept. Despite her good attitude she suffers the effects of trans-phobia from prison mates and guards, taking physical and verbal abuse, generating a profound sense of resignation and loneliness.

The same sense of turmoil is shared by Suzanne Warren (Crazy Eyes) who is a representation of the stigmas people with mental disorders face on a daily basis. Initially introduced as Piper Chapman's stalker, she is a conflictive inmate with a long history of violent episodes. Underlying her violence are panic attacks that make it impos-

sible for her to control herself to the point of self-harm and rejection from those around her. She has a rich imagination and talent for writing, but her difficulty in empathizing with others and controlling her emotional response complicate her relationships with other inmates. Aware of her reality Suzanne continuously strives to please and be accepted.

One of Suzanne's main supporters is the young Tasha Jefferson (Taystee). Jovial and intelligent she is known for her professional ambition and desire to overcome her circumstances. In prison she works in the library which gives her ample cultural knowledge and awareness. In the second season Taystee takes over leadership of The Ghetto despite being an atypical matriarch: she neither has the tough exterior nor the same behavior patterns as the other leaders, as well being much younger.

This rare circumstance may be the result of an unexpected arrival into power, encouraged by her fellow inmates as a reward for her empathy toward them. The lack of a structured social environment during infancy and adolescence has a powerful influence on her character. As a result, when she is granted probation she confesses she is not ready to live outside the penitentiary. Without a wage and living entirely dependent on the system, she deliberately commits a parole violation to be sent back to prison.

Behind bars she re-encounters her best friend Pousse Washington, a sweet young woman prone to falling in love. From a wealthy family Pousse is highly cultured. In the third season Pousse meets SoSo, an Asian inmate accepted into The Ghetto despite not being black. They begin a romantic relationship until tragedy strikes leaving an indelible mark on both the character and the rest of the female inmates, leading to a faceoff between the inmates and the guards. A pacifist by nature Pousse joins the protest and is accidentally choked to death by a guard. Her demise is highly symbolic, depicting both the young woman and her killer as victims of their own fate.

4.2.4. *Las chicas de oro*

The older inmates, apart from belonging to their own aforementioned families, also share an affinity of their own: The Golden Girls. In other words, their age unites these women from different backgrounds (Europe, The US and Latin America). They are middle to lower class in their majority (50% in both cases). They are largely perpetrators of organized and financial crime. They generally respond better to more traditional family models, perhaps due to their age: they have formed a family and are currently married or widowed.

Galina Reznikov (Red) leads the group although she is also the leading authority of *The Suburbs*. She is portrayed as one of the power players and most respected inmates and is head of the kitchen. Intelligent and ambitious she is the very incarnation of the traditional matriarch (in this case from Eastern Europe) carrying the weight of her charges on her shoulders. Red – in reference to her hair color – suffers for those under her authority and wishes to protect them from harm (*mater dolorosa*). In fact, she frequently uses the word 'family' to address her group. Her physical appearance and behavior are aggressive, a Russian accent being her most salient feature.

Rosa Cisneros (*Miss Rosa*) also had a murky past, a one-time bank robber in the final stages of terminal cancer. Ambitious, intelligent and seductive, she was depicted as the *femme fatale* (Guarinos, 2008) married to a man with whom she committed the robberies, becoming a widow when her husband was murdered. Later she would marry another member of the gang who also ends up dying. The only survivor decides to distance himself from her thinking she is cursed. Arrested in mid-robbery Miss Rosa was serving a long sentence when the cancer was detected. Aware that she was at the end of her life she planned her escape in the prison van to enjoy the last minutes of her life before causing a traffic accident and dying in the crash.

Considering all the above, the extensive table included to close the present study combines

two aspects relative to the feminine characters analyzed in this study. On the one hand the relationship between general character traits obtained from the quantitative analysis, impacting on the differences that exist between

prison groups. On the other, the landscape of issues, stereotypes and/or values associated with each protagonist, expressed in a more qualitative sense.

Table 3. Matching aspects between general group characteristics and protagonist analysis.

Prison Group	General Aspects	Analysis of Protagonist (issues/stereotypes)
The Suburbs		Piper Chapman Initially a heroine (the angel). Evolves to develop a dual personality + assumes authoritarian leadership role.
	Middle-aged women	Lorna Morello
	American and European	Idealizes romantic love + traditional family model (mater amabilis)
	Low social status	Suffers from intense/delirious love
	Financial crime	Carrie Black
	Sexual diversity	Masculine woman (physical image + behavioral patterns)
The Spanish Harlem	Religion: Catholicism / atheism	Tiffany Doggett Antagonist/villain. Redemption (religious component). Chauvinism + abuse + sexual assault Motherhood (abortion)
		Dayanara Díaz
	Middle-aged women	Challenges the stereotypes in her group (the good girl). Switches roles with her mother (motherhood). Corrupted/looks for social acceptance.
	American and Latin American origins	Aleida Díaz
	Low social status	Immature (denaturalized mother). Incapable of taking on responsibility + concerned about her physical appearance. Toxic relationships (jealous/possessive)
	Drug trafficking/possession	Gloria Mendoza
The Spanish Harlem	Heterosexuality	Authority figure (masculine). Protective instinct (mater dolorosa). Abuse + chauvinism.
	Toxic romantic relations+ young motherhood	Religious beliefs + language (identity). María Ruiz
	Marked religious beliefs	Proud of her heritage. Dual personality: Close family relations vs. aggressiveness in prison (respect/power).
		Sophia Burset
		Gender reassignment. Transphobia

The Ghetto	Youth (joviality + nonchalance)	(rejection/isolation). Suzanne Warren
	American and European origins Low social status	Stigmatization of mental disease. Social rejection/desire for acceptance from those around her.
The Golden Girls	Drug trafficking/possession	Tasha Jefferson
	Sexual diversity	Leadership different to matriarchal stereotypes. Ambition, culture and desire to better herself. Dependent on the system (no reinsertion). Poussey Washington
	Age: unifying force	Cultural baggage + sensibility + pacifism. Unconscious victim of her fate (tragedy). Galina Reznikov
	American, European and Latin American origins Mid to low social status	Authority figure (matriarch). Sufferer + self-sacrifice (mater dolorosa). Union through race (family). Rosa Cisneros
	Financial crime / organized crime	Seduction + ambition (Femme Fatale). Terminal disease.
	Influence and power (empowerment)	Freedom/death (escape)

Source: Own elaboration

5. Conclusions

Race or skin color, in addition to being a cohesive factor among the prison families, is also one of the axes which condition the representation of female characters on *Orange is the New Black*, following the lines of research in previous studies (Enck & Morrissey, 2015; Aguado & Martinez, 2016). From this perspective *The Suburbs* are the more numerous and heterogeneous group, integrating inmates of different backgrounds and origins, social class and age. The group also represents diversity in sexual preference and is perched at the summit of the power structure in the prison given that the most powerful inmate – Galina Reznikov – belongs to this group.

In this regard there is a high masculinity to the authority figures (matriarchs). In practically every case these women are physically tough and equally aggressive. The association between power and masculinity, linking men to leadership roles and responsibility, is a trend that perpetuates traditional gender roles (Garcia-Mina, 1998). Personifying these values

is the main path to ascension into power, and to gaining the respect of your peers.

Another example of the visibility of racial stereotypes in the series are the women of *Spanish Harlem*. The group is generally associated with a lower social status, broken family models, early motherhood and chauvinism in romantic relationships. Their religious beliefs, language and pride in their origins are some of the main defining elements on which the identity of these characters is built.

The black women in the series (*The Ghetto*) draw a relatively youthful picture, associated with joviality and lack of concern over different social classes. However, several of the constituents do suffer levels of discrimination or rejection for varying reasons such as gender, or mental health. In addition to the previous the television production in question also lends a voice to the older female characters by also giving them their own group, *The Golden Girls*, where age trumps racial distinction. Although they do demonstrably represent certain stereotypes such as a protective instinct toward family

or acute awareness of the suffering of one of their members. However, the series empowers these women by representing them as influential and powerful figures within the confines of the penitentiary. In general terms one can conclude that, in a manner of speaking, the image projected by these prison groups is built on racial stereotypes, as well as other stereotypes traditionally attributed to female characters in audiovisual fiction (Guarino, 2008). The previous notwithstanding, *Orange is the New Black* goes beyond stereotype, and manages to avoid the pitfall of basic profiling by continually evolving these characters.

Said transformation, beginning with the protagonist herself, is captured in the development of narrative, and in the *flashbacks* that delve deeper into the lives of the characters. Piper Chapman, representing social canon and ruling aesthetics, is offered as the link to the audience, and through her the viewer is introduced to other realities often less visible within the landscape of current fictional television (Aguado & Martínez, 2015): sexual diversity, gender reassignment, physical and/or mental disease, age, abortion and sexual assault.

Ultimately, the efforts made by digital platforms like Netflix to produce television productions like *Orange is the New Black* makes it possible

to transmit to the audience the multiple models and realities of femininity, following in the wake of other paradigmatic examples such as *Desperate Housewives*, *Sex & The City*, and the more recent *Girls*. In this manner, although seemingly far from ultimately doing away with gender stereotypes, new fictional discourse is beginning to break through, a discourse that questions the androcentric heteronormative foundations of more traditional media discourse (Menendez & Zurian, 2014). This evolution and “constant redefining” is in response to the changing nature of the image of femininity in contemporary society, happening on a par with the growing interest among the general female population of having “cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral guides and models” on the other side of the small screen (Chicharro, 2013).

Notes

1. nformation in reference to *Orange is the New Black*, available on the IMDb database. <https://imdb.to/1kKY7S6>
2. Audience data provided by Nielsen to The Wall Street Journal. <https://on.wjs.com/293NQjh>
3. nterview with Jenji Kohan for The Hollywood Reporter: <https://bit.ly/1mmWx7h>

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