

The construction of the teenager profile on Netflix TV Shows *13 Reasons Why* and *Atypical*

La construcción de los perfiles adolescentes en las series de Netflix Por trece razones y Atípico

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Abstract

Teen characters have a relevant presence in current TV shows, and, especially, play-ing the leading roles. Their construction involves a number of recognizable stereotypes, but they also include some characteristics of the problems and situations which are familiar to the teenager audience. In that way, they facilitate the process of identification with the viewers. With the aim of reflecting on the stereotyped image of teenagers in serial fiction, highlighting the current American 'Teen TV' and addressing the 'Netflix serial universe', two main characters of two famous series from the VOD platform will be analyzed in this paper: Hannah Baker from 13 Reasons Why, a victim of bullying in her highschool, and Sam Gardner, from Atypical, a teenager with autism spectrum disorder. For that reason, a qualitative analysis template, based on Francesco Casetti and Federico Di Chio's theories, will be applied as a person and as a role, with the aim of learning the iconographic, psychological, sociological and

Keywords

Netflix; teenagers; television show; Teen TV; 13 Reasons Why; Atypical.

Resumen

Los personajes adolescentes tienen una notable presencia en las series de televisión actuales y, especialmente, ocupando roles principales. En su construcción intervienen una serie de estereotipos reconocibles, aunque presentan también ciertos rasgos de los problemas y situaciones del público adolescente al que se dirigen. De esta manera, facilitan el proceso de identificación con los espectadores. Con el objetivo de reflexionar sobre la estereotipada imagen de los adolescentes en la ficción seriada, poner en valor la *Teen TV* estadounidense actual y abordar el universo serial de Netflix, en este trabajo se analizará a dos protagonistas de famosas series de la plataforma de VOD: Hanna Baker, de *Por Trece razones*, víctima de *bullying* en su instituto, y Sam Gardner, de *Atípico*, un adolescente con trastorno del espectro autista. Para ello, se les aplicará una plantilla de análisis de personajes de carácter cualitativo como persona y como rol basada en las teorías de los autores Francesco Casetti y Federico Di Chio, con la finalidad de conocer las dimensiones iconográficas, psicológicas, sociológicas y sexuales, así como las motivaciones y acciones de los personajes.

Palabras clave

Netflix; adolescentes; series de televisión; Teen TV; Por Trece razones; Atípico.

1. Introduction

The consolidation of what is called Teen TV in the 21st century is due to a specific combination of social, technological and economic factors (Ross & Stein, 2008; Wee, 2008; García & Fedele, 2011a, 2011b). Understood as a generic cultural category, the concept includes a wide variety of worldwide TV shows considered for adolescents due to its content, its target, its programming context or its viewer demographics (Ross & Stein, 2008: 4), and that has also become one of "the star content of the mediatic market" (García & Fedele, 2011a: 134). In these teen narratives, produced in multiple international markets, adolescents share a common space for development, beginning with their school career, going through college in some cases and even becoming, on occasions, part of the workforce, for which the so-called "Generation Y"1 experiences simultaneously a process of maturation together with their favorite characters, being molded, physically and socially, by these entertainment products (Jinadasa, 2015).

This generational connection between life and fictional experience is the motive for writing the following article, given that teen television is traditionally an ideal scenario for the introduction and recognition of stereotypes but, at the same time, it presents itself as a perfect space to reflect on the progress and social changes, that may in the end affect and mold such stereotypes. With the object of discovering how adolescents are portrayed, a case analysis is performed of the first season of the series *Atypical and 13 Reasons Why*, distributed by Netflix, which has become a crucial mediatic agent of 21st century television.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The profile of adolescents in the fiction series: stereotyped representations.

The use of stereotypes in the characterization process of roles is common and although they appear more frequently in *sitcoms*, their presence in fiction series also, "they are an essential resource for generalizing and reiterating attributes about social groups contributing to the creation, in the viewer, of prejudices and predetermined opinions" (Galán, 2006: 65). For Martínez (1998), stereotypes are rather common and useful in audiovisual media as they act to simplify the psychological attributes of characters, without having to define complex features and highlighting their most relevant characteristics. If the creation of stereotypes is a form of categorization that allows human beings to distinguish, differentiate and take from reality the most important data in order to classify them in their process of perception, in fiction, that categorization is even more necessary since the audience needs the stereotype to easily understand the character and make his conduct and behavior predictable during a period of time that lasts no longer than an hour and a half (Martínez, 1998; Galán, 2006).

There are numerous investigations published that focus on stereotyping from different perspectives: representation of gender (Galán, 2007; Figueras-Maz, Tortajada & Arana, 2014), homosexuality (Masanet, Medina-Bravo & Ferrés, 2012), or the love discourse (Medina & Rodrigo, 2009), and although it is a field of study applying to all fiction genres, the phenomenon of the teen series is the one that creates the highest number of jobs. Interest for adolescence and fiction has earned notable interest in terms of investigation throughout various decades. Buckingham (1987), Fedele and García Muñoz (2010) and Bermejo (2012), among others, are some of the authors that have studied the relationships between fiction and adolescents represented such as the contribution of these series to the forming of the adolescent identity.

In any case, and regardless of the genre in which it is analyzed, such representations show a socializing function, given that in these characters, the audience finds models of

identification and comparison that may have an influence in the creation of their values, beliefs or attitudes (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Medrano & Martínez, 2012). Just as stated by Masanet, Medina-Bravo and Ferrés (2012), fiction is based on topics created based on reality but that are fictional. For Sánchez (1997), the socializing capability of television is successful depending on how it responds to the expectations or needs of viewers and also the lack of experience of the viewer on a specific topic. The representation and actions of stereotyped characters, involved in any theme unfamiliar to the audience, provide an approach based on which the viewer experiences and reflects. For this, it is important to control how characters are built. The way they act and the consequences of their actions provide an example for the audience and a way of seeing reality.

Via fiction, topics are exhibited to which public opinion may remain indifferent, ambivalent or contrary. The risk run is concentrating on stereotyped contexts that go creating a combination of unitary, simplifying contents (Medina & Rodrigo, 2009: 85).

2.1.1. The profile of the adolescent represented in North American fiction series

Just as this article has shown, studies on the representation of adolescents in fiction has become one of the basic lines of investigation, together with the reception and the effects, given it is considered both a vulnerable and critical audience, in terms of certain ideas and imaginaries represented. Signorielli (1987), after analyses performed between 1969-1985, shows that the adolescent population appeared related with violence and crime. While young women were shown as victims, young men were represented as the perpetrators of violent acts. However, Lacalle (2013) states that these aspects seem to have evolved. Evidence of such are the results of the investigation carried out by Heintz-Knowles (2001) on the representation of the adolescent-juvenile population in American fiction series primetime

programming. In this project, the researcher emphasizes a larger presence of feminine characters in comparison to male characters and all of them located in educational spaces. The themes represented had to do with sentimental problems, friendship, as well as family and inter-generational issues. Overall, representation of the young people showed clearly positive aspects, such as a sense of loyalty and compassion, although there also were negative aspects such as the use of stereotypes for selfish young people or a lack of plots that went beyond sentimental issues (Heintz-Knowles, 2001: 21). The study by Moseley (2001), goes along the same lines: successful teen series based on topics that affect young people in their real life, like friendship, love, sex and transitioning into the adult world. Plus, the author highlights the significant number of series that use characters with supernatural powers to explore the impact of the otherness in personal and community relationships among young people. Despite this information, Davies and Dickinson (2004) comment that fiction represented by young people is anchored in an emotional representation of their adolescent characters based on their struggle to establish sexual and social relationships. In regards to this, and from a psychological point of view, Havighurst (1972) states that adolescents have as objectives to obtain a social purpose and a masculine or feminine role and become part of new, more mature relationships with peers of the same age and of both sexes. Plus, Davies and Dickinson (2004) also say that the series directed at this audience show characters that are too sophisticated for their age and that "juvenile fiction follows the conventions of melodrama and the soap opera traditionally associated to a feminine audience" (Davies & Dickinson, 2004: 136). In regards to this, Jenner (2011) recommends not generalizing and notes that to accept such conclusion it is necessary to make a distinction between the teen soap and the *supernatural teen series*.

In addition, Guarinos (2009) says that most North American series are based on the characters' road to success, like the paradigmatic example of Hannah Montana. The general

prototype offered is young boy or girl worried about their outer-beauty, white or black, but integrated in a group of peers. The importance of outer-beauty is associated with love, acceptance by the group and success, but also with the value of generosity, given that those represented as villains are often ridiculous for their excessive and character-esque behavior in terms of their appearance. They are unfamiliar with sex, homosexuality, and alcohol and drugs are taboo. They are characters that are competitive, accompanied with a high degree of guilt and regret. They are winners. Negative characters want success without the effort, except when it is derived through deceit, but they never achieve it, because justice and personal merit based on hard work triumph. There are characters involved in a love triangle where 2 girls fight for a boy, representing a patriarchal behavior.

Galán (2007) and Belmonte and Guillamón (2008), denounce that despite an apparent modernity, TV cultural products continue being carriers of discourses and reproduce models of inequality for the construction of identity of young viewers.

2.2. American Teen TV of the 21st century: the series as a reflection of social issues

During the 90s, a significant opening of the American TV market occurred, brought on by the development of cable and by the progressive appearance of new non-commercial networks, that discovered the adolescent viewer as an attractive audience niche for advertisers (Cascajosa, 2005; Wee, 2008). In this discursive context, entertainment drama shows for adolescents began to appear, especially on networks like The WB, Fox and UPN, focused on first offering rather non-conflicting representations, like that presented in the successful *Beverly Hills, 90210*, Fox: 1990-2000, in which the narrative plot lies in the affective relationships of a group of attractive, popular and rich adolescents. Just as had been done habitually in cinema for decades, television in the 90s shows a social stratification as an

insignificant problem, bullying as a permitted practice and adolescents as frivolous and angry people (García, 2011).

Nevertheless, the technological revolution of the 21st century influences the adolescent viewer's perspective of reality, given that in addition to "the viewer's generational wisdom that enables him or her to connect with new screens" (Guarinos, 2009: 205), it also allows them to connect with new social truths and ideas that gain ground in television. Following the vertical integration trend of large media networks, in 2006, channels The WB and UPN stopped competing, and merged to become The CW, joining forces to attract a young audience without that distinction of original genre, and especially focused on creating entertainment productions inscribed in the sub-genre "supernatural teen television genre" (Diviny, 2016), those such as *The Secret Circle*, (CW: 2011-2012), *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW, 2009-2017) and *The 100* (CW, 2014-). Although these series present unlikely scenarios, important social changes begin to appear in some of them, like the normalization of sexual orientation, that are recognized and applauded by audiences, making way for a wide debate in social networks and generating *fandom communities* around certain LGTB characters, like what happened with Clarke and Lexa in *Los 100* (Guerrero, Establés & Ventura, 2017). Another relevant case is proposed by the werewolf series *Teen Wolf* (MTV: 2011-2017), which contrary to other teen supernatural fiction series that use unlikely scenarios to justify the presence of sexual coercion and manifest violence, like for example the saga *Twilight*, the series positively developed topics such as sexual freedom or the need for explicit sexual consent (Kendal & Kendal, 2015), as well as performing an interesting reinterpretation of the concept of virility.

Along this line, some teen series of the 21st century aim to give a more realistic and less-stereotyped view of adolescents and their maturation processes, aware of the reflective abilities that these types of fictions allow¹. One paradigmatic example that serves as a referen-

ce is *My So Called Life* (ABC: 1994-1995), as it addresses adolescence from a transgressive perspective, given that in addition to the main characters being fairly unpopular in their social environment, it portrays relevant issues of the 90s, such as the defining of sexual orientation, drug use, gun use by minors, teenage sexuality, the important role that family plays in identity or the need for social acceptance. It favors the representation of adolescents less two-dimensional and also the popularity of new, more marginal stereotypes in TV history, like the *geek*, *nerd*, *freak* and the 'invisible adolescent', that are presented as protagonists of the fictions (García, 2011). In the words of researcher García (2011: 180), the celebration of individuality and difference is one of the fundamental reasons for success of *Dawson Dawson's Creek* (WB: 1998-2003), given that its main character, Dawson, is a geek, obsessed with cinema, purposely awkward and condescending of his more popular peers, while the co-star, Joey Potter, could be considered an atypical nerd. To explore more controversial topics, other proposals add an some additional thematic component, like in the case of *Veronica Mars* (UPN: 2004-2006; The CW: 2006-2007), that fuses the life of an adolescent, marginalized by her peers and victim of sexual abuse, with her work as a private investigator during her free time; the duality of her character favors the introspection on additional, more mature issues, in which Veronica becomes involved as a detective, such as gender violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, bullying, classism and the limits of privacy. Among these productions, we make special mention of the musical series *Glee* (Fox: 2009-2015), starring a heterogeneous group of adolescents, in which in addition to promoting the visibility of racial plurality and presenting a regular character with functional diversity, is a key example in the normalization of the LGBT collective (Sarkissian, 2014).

Conscious of the power of attraction adolescents have on the teen audience and the multi-dimensionality with which they can be represented, the video on demand chain Netflix takes advantage of this niche market launching productions starring adolescents in

which weight it also given to reflection on current issues like anorexia, the impact of social networks on real life, bullying or functional diversity. This will be analyzed in depth later on.

2.3. Netflix and its production

In barely twenty years, Netflix has become a key player audiovisual entertainment industry. The key to its success is comprised of three things: a business model based on demand, a public relations policy and an internationalization strategy. The company offers a wide variety of television series, and movies, that viewers can access via streaming while paying a monthly subscription fee (Ojer & Capapé, 2012), which tends to be fairly cheap and flexible, especially for the young people. Thus, "its audiovisual business model is based on an attractive content and on a user-friendly payment method" (Izquierdo, 2015: 820). This has brought about new manners in the traditional consumption of audiovisual products, characterized by viewer independence and the emergence of the internet. Therefore, Netflix is pioneer in the distribution of *online* audiovisual content.

Although it was founded in 1997 in Scotts Valley (California) as an online DVD sales and rental store, it did not hesitate to consider new possibilities, like streaming, which in 2007 came to be its main business. Entrance into this market was considered a strategy to compete with the powerful Blockbuster company, but, years later, and beyond all predictions, it surpassed "that which had been until then the largest conglomerate in North American history in audiovisual content rights" (Del Pino & Aguado, 2012: 1490-1491).

In 1998 Netflix stopped its movies sale service, and, the next year, began another based on a monthly subscription for unlimited DVD rental; an initiative that revolutionized the video club market upon signing agreements with some of the main movie studios and distributors (Ojer & Capapé, 2012). In 2000, one of its main novelties appeared, the user rating and

recommendation system, that continues to be a consumption reference for others (Heredia, 2017) and one of its identifiable features. "The diversification of the content library, the convenience of the subscription service, the increase of distribution centers as well as personalized service were important factors in this stage that brought about an increase in the number of subscriptions from year to year" (Ojer & Capapé, 2012: 195).

Streaming and the video on demand have paved the way for its second period. This caused an expansion of the business that started in 2007 with the idea of offering subscribers access to see an hour of video for each dollar they paid in their subscription, multiplying the number of subscribers and consumption of their products. Therefore, at the end of 2011, Netflix decided to produce original content, especially TV series. Their first production and premiered was *House of Cards* (2013-) –the first high-budget, high quality production made for a web platform -, while *Beast of no Nation* (Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2015), was their first film and it premiered in theaters and online simultaneously (Heredia, 2017). The company offers a powerful third television model –in addition to the already existing generalist and themed ones-, in which there is full convergence between TV and internet.

This model based on subscriptions or pay for content has experienced a boom in TV consumption mode: the selection of what one wants to see compared to what the TV broadcasts in each programming slot. It has not taken long for this model, that gives the viewer independence in regards to the generalist model, to be imitated by industry giants like Apple, Amazon, Google, Hulu –the website where you can find the series of FOX, NBC y ABC-, or HBO Go, which is HBO's paid, à-la-carte platform. Thus, "these new airs of change seen in the United States are mainly due to innovative and effective offers like those made by *Netflix*" (Del Pino & Aguado, 2012: 1490). In terms of its products, the corporation needs to have flexibility in service contracting "that enables it to modify its content library based on

consumption by subscribers" (Izquierdo, 2015: 823). This also influences its series aimed at the young and adolescent viewers, a target audience that demands immediacy and is attracted by the multiplicity of screens.

Some of the most representative shows that have treated problems present in adolescents are *Degrassi: Next Class* (2017-), that takes place in a school and is centered around a group of friends affected by generational conflicts, dysfunctional families, mental illness, harassment, drug use and homosexuality; or *Dear White People* (2017-), starring various black people that question racism and social injustice at a high school dominated by whites. There are also movies like *To be Bone*, (Marti Noxon, 2017), drama in which the star of the show, Ellen, suffers from anorexia and goes through several rehabilitation therapies, or *The Duff* (Ari Sandel, 2015), comedy in which the star, Bianca, is a victim of her image and struggles to change it in order to obtain recognition and popularity in her social environment.

Netflix's success has shaped the current context of transformations in the consumption and production of audiovisual narratives. To this respect, the fall of the great TV audiences, the tendency of fragmentation among viewers, the dissemination of social networks or the new attitude of viewers to generate their own pace in the stories, has had vital relevance. Likewise, the processes of business mergers that permit globalization of audiovisual products have also played an important role.

3. Methodological Framework

The main objective of this exploratory study is to examine the representation of the adolescent protagonists of the current fiction TV industry. For such, we use as a sample the first seasons of two recent series from Netflix starring young people and, at the same time, are aimed at this target audience: *13 Reasons Why*

(2017-) and *Atypical* (2017-). Both are still being aired and have a global impact on this target audience due to the rapid expansion that the North American company has experienced in the last years and to its hegemony as a TV model, especially for the youngest viewers, and to the identification and empathy that these stories produce in the adolescent audience. In addition, they present the following specific objectives: 1. Reflect on the construction of the audiovisual character and the stereotyped image of adolescents in current *TV series*; 2. Analyze American *Teen TV* in the 21st century to know how these series reflect social problems via their characters; 3. Examine the starring characters of the television series *13 Reasons Why* and *Atypical*, Hannah Baker and Sam Gardner, respectively, as representative cases of this study.

For this, a qualitative-descriptive methodology is used. Firstly, a bibliographic review has been carried out which focuses on the fictional characters of TV series, and, specifically, on the stereotypes on which they are built. In this scenario, the contributions of Spanish and foreign authors is useful—in particular from the Anglo-Saxon world—, specialized in the topic, such as Lacalle (2013), Guarinos (2009), Galán (2007 and 2006) or Martínez (1998), in the first case, or Davies and Dickinson (2004), Heintz-Knowles (2001) and Moseley (2001), in the second. Plus, there has also been an approach to the current TV series focused on an adolescent audience—especially in the United States—, an environment in which the research of experts like Diviny (2016), Sarkissian (2014), García (2011a) or Cascajosa (2005) has proved interesting.

Due to the fact that the series that the present study focuses on belong to Netflix, in third place research has been done into the history, evolution, and configuration of this North American corporation. For this, the authors consulted have been Izquierdo (2015), Ojer and Capapé (2012), Del Pino and Aguado (2012) and Heredia (2017), have investigated diverse aspects of the various strategies or offers of the company. Fourthly, there is a detailed explanation

of the two series addressed, *13 Reasons Why* and *Atypical*, starting adolescent protagonists with problems. This has enabled the analysis of the two protagonists, Hannah Baker and Sam Gardner, using the methodological tool explained below.

This form of character analysis created in 2009 by the Investigation Team for the Analysis of Audiovisual Media, Images and Stories (known as AdMIRA for its acronym in Spanish) of the Universidad de Sevilla, is based on the theories of Casetti and Di Chio (2007). It is a qualitative tool that includes, at the same time, the contributions of famous researchers like Chatman (1990), Greimas or Propp, key in audiovisual narrative research. The form, that addresses iconographical, psychological, sociological and sexual aspects, as well as others relative to the actions, allows you to see the appearance, language, character, relationships, thoughts, feelings, development process, sociocultural level, and the motivations and the actions of the fictional characters. It also addresses aspects relative to the stereotypes on which these are built. These factors, used as indicators in the analysis, verify that “every character is defined by its person (identity, physical features, character, etc.) and by its actions, by its behavior and by the relationships that it establishes with other characters, which create a series of features that set it apart” (Sánchez, 2000: 126). All these factors are used to build a character as a being coming from real life, with the concerns, problems and aspirations of the adolescent audience at which it is aimed, to facilitate the identification process.

4. Results

Before reaching the analysis of the results we must warn that each character is built around a different theme, bullying and autism. Both represent issues that affect the young population during adolescence.

To begin, it is necessary to indicate that both *13 Reasons Why* and *Atypical* are American

series aimed at a young audience and broadcast via the Netflix platform, belonging to the drama and dramedy genre, respectively. Their episodes portray stories that persuade the audience they are aimed at due the proximity and presence these topics have with them: bullying and autism.

The following section describes the character profiles of the protagonists according to the factors proposed.

4.1. Iconography and sexuality

We have to note that although there are two different characters they share common characteristics: Hannah and Sam are the same age (17 and 18 years old, respectively), and are found in the same context: the school and their closest social environment are the scenarios in which the plot takes place. Nevertheless, and as previously mentioned, each one represents a different way of being and acting. In terms of the physical transformation they experience: note that Hannah, in the last part of the season, changes her image. The haircut creates a breaking point with her previous life. In Sam's case, he slightly changes his hairstyle and decides to buy his own clothes; two non-radical actions for any young person, that, however, given their parameters involve a great complexity. Both are heterosexual.

4.2. Psychological and sociological dimension of characters

In terms of the psychology: on one hand, Hannah is presented as a character whose behavior contradicts her internal reflections. She is shown as extroverted, involved and kind with her classmates but constantly thinks that she doesn't fit in with her group of peers. With Sam Gardner we see the opposite. It is a character that, given his condition, doesn't relate with his classmates. He is introverted and relies heavily on his family. His feelings are a consequence of the reality that he lives, given that he experiences internal conflicts that no don't coincide with his desires and reality. In

terms of objectives and goals, both characters are in search of support from a person close to them. In Hannah's case, she longs for a true friendship; Sam, on the other hand, wants to find a girlfriend. The desire to share with and be understood by others transforms into the feature both characters have in common.

From a sociological perspective: it is necessary to highlight the external conflicts experienced by each character. Hannah is a victim of bullying. In the series *Atypical*, this issue is also present although it is not emphasized. Nevertheless, it is important to indicate that in the case of *Atypical*, Sam is constantly protected by his sister, who also defends other victims of bullying.

4.3. Roles, stereotypes and relationships with other characters

In terms of the role they play: both Hannah and Sam are students that look for their place among a group of peers. Within their motivations we find similarities: the desire to have a more satisfying life. Hannah, with the intention of trying to create a social as well as a personal life that she is happy with, gives second chances to those who hurt her. Sam, likewise, despite believing the world a hostile place, his desires to have a good life make him carry on.

Stereotypes: Both characters are adolescent students. In Hannah's case, it's about a student who is unsatisfied with the situation that surrounds her but, nevertheless, she is not represented as a rebellious character, but rather just the opposite: she is a prudent girl that does not voice her concerns or problems. Sam, on the other hand, is represented as a character with functional diversity being compatible with the stereotypes of nerd and freak.

Hannah relates easily with others, has a hard time maintaining good relationships with boys as well as girls at her school; in contrast, Sam finds it difficult to relate with others, but maintains good relationships with those he is able to relate with, both male and female.

We know that the person who has the most difficulty starting relationships is Hannah. On the contrary, Sam holds relationships with both males and females.

5. Conclusions

The results of the investigation enable us to see a tendency in terms of the themes represented in the fiction series. Thus, Moseley's (2001) theory is corroborated, saying that the successful teen series are based on themes that affect young people in real life. We also understand Netflix's intention to make the issues of bullying and autism visible as situations that provoke social concern nowadays. In this sense, just as Sánchez (1997) and Masanet, Medina-Bravo and Ferrés (2012) state, certain fictional representations project new realities which influence viewers. Likewise, establishing a comparison between the characters analyzed and the background of the teen narratives, it can be said that the novel effect of these programs is related with an updated form of celebrating individuality and difference in adolescence as one of the characteristic themes of some teen shows from the 1990s.

From an iconic perspective, one of the most noteworthy aspects is that both characters undergo a change of appearance, given that they believe that a change in their physical aspect may motivate a change in the way they are perceived by others and that it may transform their lives. Nevertheless, these changes in appearance are not towards a more sexualized self, which happens in other teen shows³ but rather an attempt at personal improvement, in such a way that the renovation has more to do with a process of maturation than a need for external recognition. It should also be noted that both Sam and Hannah are white, upper middle-class, heterosexual protagonists and therefore, satisfy the traditional parameters hidden by the idea of real diversity (Galán, 2007; Bel-monte & Guillamón, 2008).

Referring to the psychological aspects of the characters, the most significant is the existing confrontation between their own internal reflection and what is reflected externally. In that sense, the development of adolescent characters with a complex interior would should be seen in a positive light, considering that it gives them depth and it avoids prototypical, one-dimensional representations. This is directly related to the reflections of roles and stereotypes.

Both Hannah and Sam represent audiovisual models present in the collective imaginary, she as a high school student and he as a fusion between the archetypical *freak* and the nerd. Their treatment of characters allows for exploration of issues like social integration, sexual awakening, common themes in fiction represented by young people (Davies & Dickinson, 2004), or the responsibility of adults in the life of young people. Nevertheless, in the case of Sam, appearing as a person with a slight degree of autism, can over-simplify the real diversity existing within the wide spectrum of functional diversity, exemplifying a very light case that is practically functional.

On the other hand, it is important how in both series the need for outside support is apparent in order for one's own survival, as the individuality and isolation convert into the worst enemies of Hannah and Sam, whose greatest desire is to establish a connection with their peers, in which the role of family and friends becomes essential and determines their different endings. In addition, emphasis is placed on the unavoidable responsibility that educational institutions have on students, as the lack of empathy destroys Hannah's confidence while, on the contrary, an innovative integration initiative allows Sam to attend a dance and enjoy the experience.

Without a doubt, we conclude that both series, shown on Netflix, offer interesting approaches to the adolescent figure given that they surpass the two-dimensional presentation and enable the exploration of relevant social issues within the current situation, although

they continue to subscribe to a very specific cultural context, the American educational experience, that may be perceived as our own considering our globalized cultural context.

Notes

1. Although the range of years varies according to the study, "Generation Y", following "Generation X", identifies those individuals born between the 80s and the first years of the new millennium, digitally-savvy and accustomed to continuous changes derived from the technological revolution (Bolton et al., 2013).

2- Although this study is focused on the television industry, it is necessary to mention the influence John Hughes's cinema has had (*The Breakfast Club*, 1985), (*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, 1986), for the celebration of identity as difference.

3. This narrative resource is introduced habitually as an updated version of the fable Cinderella. It is found in *Grease* (1978) or *She's All That*, 1999.

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