

History of teen series in Spain: evolution and characteristics

Historia de las teen series en España: evolución y características

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2021.7979>

CHARO LACALLE¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0024-6591>

BEATRIZ GÓMEZ²

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0557-528X>

TATIANA HIDALGO³

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4599-5876>

This article explores the evolution of Spanish teen series, broadcast by generalist televisions on VOD platforms from its beginning at 1997 to 2020. The sample includes 24 productions starring teenagers. The analysis carried out reveals the configuration of a subgenre of its own and its concern to address issues of interest to young audiences. A progressive dissociation between romantic love and sex is evidenced, as well as less dependence on the family and an increase in generational conflicts.

KEYWORDS: Spanish, TV fiction, television, teen series, young characters.

Este artículo explora la evolución de las teen series españolas, emitidas por las televisiones generalistas y las plataformas VOD desde su debut en 1997 hasta 2020, mediante el análisis diacrónico de las 24 producciones protagonizadas por adolescentes. El estudio revela la configuración de un subgénero propio del drama televisivo y la preocupación por abordar los temas que interesan a la audiencia juvenil. Se evidencia una progresiva disociación entre el amor romántico y el sexo, así como una menor dependencia del núcleo familiar y un incremento de la conflictividad generacional.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ficción española, televisión, teen series, personajes jóvenes.

How to cite:

Lacalle, C., Gómez, B. & Hidalgo, T. (2021). History of teen series in Spain: evolution and characteristics. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, e7979. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2021.7979>

¹ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

rosario.lacalle@uab.es

² Universitat de Lleida, Spain.

beatriz.gomez@udl.cat

³ Universidad de Alicante, Spain.

tatiana.hidalgo@ua.es

Submitted: 10/01/20. Accepted: 01/12/21. Published: 10/20/21.

INTRODUCTION

Young people's television fiction provides a highly relevant source of information on this segment of the population. The young are easily swayed by this type of content, which has an essential formative role in learning social norms and adult behavior (Chapoton et al., 2019). The sexual sphere is the axis around which the transition from adolescence to early adulthood usually revolves in these fictions, contributing to standardizing both desirable and deviant behaviors (Berridge, 2011; Fedele et al., 2019).

Although youth audiences are one of the most attractive targets for media and advertisers, this social group consumes less linear TV, making it a more elusive segment and, therefore, the most difficult to satisfy. This is particularly true of television fiction, which, along with the high costs compared with those of other genres, and the difficulty of converting hit shows into formulas, has significantly limited both production and experimentation. After a five-year hiatus of homegrown teen series on Spanish schedules, locally-produced youth fiction subgenre has become the focus of attention following the success of international adaptations of the Norwegian series *Skam* (Movistar+, 2018-) and *Elite* (2018-), a Netflix Spain production watched by more than 20 million viewers in its first four weeks on the air (Gajanan, 2020).

This paper reviews teen-fronted series on Spanish generalist channels and content platforms, from their launch in 1997 to 2020. This is the first such study on homegrown fiction to map the evolution and defining features of a subgenre that has had a patchy track record and whose niche audience is ideally suited to the new content distribution platforms.

Our study, starting from the premise that Spanish teen series borrow from their North American counterparts, seeks to answer the following questions: What are the defining traits of Spanish teen series? What are the preferential scenarios of the representations? What role do generational conflicts play? How relevant are they in portraying social issues and shaping youth identity? How does the relationship between sexuality and romantic love evolve?

BACKGROUND: RESEARCH ON TEEN SERIES

In “The Teen Series”, Moseley (2001) provided the first approach to this subgenre, the definition of which is still under debate. Film studies usually regard productions starring teenagers and young adults aimed at that demographic as an autonomous subgenre, defined by a set of distinctive narrative and stylistic features (Driscoll, 2011; Shary, 2002). The dearth of research on adolescent television fiction, however, is notable. Despite the differentiating characteristics they present, the literature on this subject shows that these productions are rarely addressed as a generic category.

Most of the works analyze popular series or characters, which generally lack a common theoretical framework and use minimal samples of analysis (Davis & Dickinson, 2004; Ross & Stein, 2008). However, the predominance of case analyses is not an obstacle to identifying elements common to the productions in this subgenre, many of which have been defined by Moseley (2001).

First, teen series are specifically, but not exclusively, aimed at adolescents, and their protagonists, usually a group of friends, also tend to belong to the same age group (Berridge, 2010; Meyer, 2009). In line with this target, these series usually occur in an educational environment (middle school or high school) or the home (Berridge, 2010; Moseley, 2001). The most common themes address adolescent dilemmas and concerns: friendship and the first important conflicts with friends, the first emotional relationships (love and sexual), the transition to young adulthood and the search for identity, along with family tensions and alcohol and drug consumption (Davis & Dickinson, 2004a). In the same vein, Heintz-Knowles (2000) argue that characters in teen-fronted series are inspired not by school-related issues, but by their relationships with peers, sports and hobbies, family life, romance and music (Wee, 2010).

Regarding the dramatic structure, Moseley (2001) suggests that, although the plots are sometimes resolved in a single 45-60-minute episode, other devices such as the emphasis on repetition and the delay of conflict resolution brings teenage serial fiction closer to the long-running serial format. Magee (2014) considers *Beverly Hills*

90210 (Fox, 1990-2000) as one of the pioneering series in extending a narrative arc across a season. Ross and Stein (2008a) affirm that seriality is a fundamental aspect of teen TV, adding that even youth sitcoms of a markedly episodic nature use narrative arcs extending from one episode to the next. Similar to Moseley (2001), Ross and Stein (2008a) acknowledge the centrality of interpersonal relationships and the tendency to intensify emotions, as well as other strategies and stereotypes characteristic of the soap opera, a generic and formal orientation or predisposition with which Jenner (2011) and Berridge (2013) agree. Finally, Davis and Dickinson (2004a) point to the melodramatic treatment of emotions and widespread use of pop music.

Another element that frequently arises in the debate surrounding the definition of the subgenre is hybridization, which is evident in the more successful North American series. For example, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB, 1997-2001; UPN, 2001-2003) features elements of terror; *Veronica Mars* (UPN, 2004-2006; The CW, 2006-2007; Hulu, 2019) includes aspects of film noir, and *Roswell* (The WB, 1999-2001; UPN, 2001-2002) and *Smallville* (The WB, 2001-2006; The CW, 2006-2011), of science fiction. A large part of this subgenre deals with issues of difference and otherness, and even celebrates them, imbuing its protagonists with supernatural abilities that hinder the deep adolescent yearning to belong to the group (Banks, 2004). Hence, Jenner (2011) proposes distinguishing between teen soaps and supernatural teen series, two categories that, according to the author, can be grouped under the term “teen drama”. Both subgroups use different narrative tools but have in common a differentiating characteristic of juvenile fiction: teenagers’ scant dependence on their parents (Guarinos, 2009), who are often absent (Banks, 2004). The teen series’ protagonists usually express an emotional maturity that does not reflect their age, and they tend to work out their problems without the help of adults. According to Aubrun and Grady (2000), they are portrayed as super-individuals, “as models of what American adults wish they themselves could be” (p. 8).

Osgerby (2004) notes that teenage characters have played a key role in family soap operas and sitcoms since the 1950s. However, Moseley (2001) points out that the growing interest in youth audiences did not emerge until the 1980s with sitcoms specifically aimed at this target

group. Notwithstanding, Magee (2014) suggests that the first teens sitcoms were not long enough to delve into the typical troubles of adolescence. When they did touch on these conflicts, they did so from an adult perspective (that of the parents). Dramas occasionally devoted some time to conflicts inherent to this vital stage in life, but not exclusively. In this vein, Ross and Stein (2008a) highlight that most of the series of the seventies featuring adolescent characters also included other demographic groups, without necessarily favoring the perspective of the adolescents. Hence, these authors agree that the nineties and the success of the teen soap *Beverly Hills, 90210* marked the start of the configuration of the new subgenre of adolescent serialized fiction and, specifically, of contemporary teen drama: “Although teenagers appeared in American television programs as early as 1949, television shows specifically targeting teenagers did not become a major category until recently” (La Ferle et al., 2001, p. 11).

Themes and adolescent representations

As indicated, some authors consider the introduction of specific social issues, such as sexuality or the use of alcohol and other drugs, as a defining characteristic of the subgenre (Davis & Dickinson, 2004a; Moseley, 2001). That teen series creators felt the need to combine education with entertainment sometimes translates into contradictory representations that reaffirm and challenge the stereotypes in vogue (Davis & Dickinson, 2004a). Ross and Stein (2008a) observe that teen TV explores youth-specific issues to negotiate class, race, gender and, particularly, sexuality. Whereas series of the nineties such as *Dawson's Creek* (The WB, 1998-2003) focused on the romantic and affective aspects of relationships (Bindig, 2008), the theme of sexuality became central to teenage fiction. Furthermore, the sexual content of such fictions has also changed, in tune with the social reality upon which it feeds back. Thus, the characters have their first sexual encounter at an earlier age and not necessarily in a committed relationship (Van Damme & Van Bauwel, 2013). Much of the extensive literature on sexuality on this subgenre highlights the significant differences in the treatment of femininity and masculinity (Aubrey, 2004; Masanet & Fedele, 2019; Masanet et al., 2016; Van Damme, 2010). Adolescent sexual identity is another of the most explored issues (Dhaenens, 2013; García Manso, 2013; Meyer, 2009; Peters, 2016).

The treatment of sexuality is precisely one of the elements that generate the widest disparity between American productions and those of other countries. According to Van Damme and Van Bauwel (2013) Canadian, British and Flemish productions present a greater degree of realism and reflect ideas about sexuality that are more liberal, while American productions favor the strengthening of the American dream, the cult of the body, success and dating culture. Spanish productions, by contrast, provide a more realistic teenage profile and address sex and drug-related issues, while beauty and success are not particular to any one character (Guarinos, 2009; Lacalle, 2013b).

As in Spain, the literature on representations in Latin American teen series is limited, as input on the topic focuses mainly on reception studies. Kjeldgaard and Nielsen (2010) explore both methodological approaches in *Rebelde* (Televisa, 2004-2006) and conclude that this series serves as a model and a place for cultural negotiation of gender roles and identity construction processes. Orozco Gómez (2006) and Lewkowicz (2014) highlight the challenge to the classic telenovela's traditional narrative in this teen series. Nonetheless, while Orozco Gómez considers *Rebelde* an example of the commercialization process that the telenovela is undergoing, Lewkowicz insists that eliminating the markers of cultural specificity is what precisely facilitates the introduction of alternative discourses to the romantic narrative. Both authors agree on the decisive role of iconography, representing a transnational youth culture in which music and apparel play a relevant role. According to Villareal (2008), in this teen series, clothes themselves embody the icons of "rebellion": a tie with a loose and uneven knot, a shirt with its collar raised at the ends, a miniskirt, piercings and unkempt colored hair.

METHOD

This research took a diachronic perspective to analyze the evolution of homegrown teen series aired on Spanish statewide channels from their launch in 1997 to 2020. The sample comprised 24 fictions: 14 series, six serials (the long-running Spanish fiction format with an open ending), three mini-series and one TV movie, starring teenagers aged 15 to 18 years. Children and young adults around this age range were excluded.

The productions were viewed to identify the variables (program title, channel, genre, format, length, seasons, day of broadcast, time slot, time of broadcast and audiences, co-production, production company, period, environment, character prominence, adaptation and start and end dates). The analysis was carried out through the construction of an ad hoc qualitative analysis script by integrating the most relevant characteristics of the North American teen series that have inspired their Spanish counterparts and the incorporation of the original features from the latter, identified after viewing the sample.

The variables constituting the historical overview were: a) *description* (age, gender and social class); b) *relational sphere* (family, friendship, sentimental and sexual, school); c) *thematic* (generational and sentimental conflicts, transition to adulthood, search for identity, difference and otherness, treatment of femininity and masculinity, consumption of alcohol and other drugs); and d) *gender* (degree of realism, intensification and melodramatic treatment of emotions, hybridization, stereotypes).

RESULTS: EVOLUTION OF SPANISH FICTION

The Spanish *costumbrista* fiction, aimed at family audiences, began in youth production almost at the same time it became a regular television format. Hence, the portrayal of young people was first characterized by using the narrative context of generalist prime time series, to which themes and plots of interest to this social group were gradually added (Chicharro, 2012). As with other genres, such as comedy, the inclusion of these characters allowed family content to be interwoven with the intensification of plots explicitly aimed at viewers between early youth and adolescence (Herrero & Diego, 2009).

Verano azul (TVE1, 1981) was the first series that, despite being designed for a general prime time audience, clearly aimed at teenagers. Its plot combined summer love affairs with intergenerational problems, defiance and parental incomprehension while introducing social interest themes such as menstruation, divorce, classism and discrimination.

Five years later, the Spanish public service channel premiered *Segunda Enseñanza* (1986), a high school drama revolving around the

TABLE 1
SPANISH TEEN SERIES (1997-2020)

Airing	Title	Channel	Cap./Ep.	Season	Min.	Genre	Format	Thousands	Share %
1997-02	<i>Al Salir de Clase</i>	Tele 5	1	5	25	Drama	Serial	2 429 000	21.5
1998-02	<i>Compañeros</i>	Antena 3	121	9	70	Drama	Series	4 091 000	26.2
1999-00	<i>Nada es para Siempre</i>	Antena 3	375	2	22	Drama	Serial	1 660 000	20.8
2001	<i>Dos + Una</i>	Antena 3	13	1	25	Comedy	Series	764 000	15.2
2002-05	<i>Un Paso Adelante</i>	Antena 3	84	6	80	Drama	Series	3 661 000	22
2002	<i>Demium</i>	Antena 3	1	1	90	Thriller	Tv movie	2 070 000	14
2003	<i>London Street</i>	Antena 3	13	1	50	Comedy	Series	1 788 000	12.4
2006	<i>SMS</i>	LaSexta	185	2	22	Thriller	Serial	217 000	1.9
2006	<i>Mesa para Cinco</i>	LaSexta	6	1	70	Drama	Series	161 000	1.7
2007-20	<i>El Internado</i>	Antena 3	71	7	80	Thriller	Series	3 194 000	18.5
2008-11	<i>Física o Química</i>	Antena 3	77	7	80	Drama	Series	2 786 000	16
2008-09	<i>HKM</i>	Cuatro	85	1	30	Drama	Serial	574 000	5.7
2008	<i>El Castigo</i>	Antena 3	2	1	70	Thriller	Miniseries	5 105 000	27.2
2008-09	<i>18 RDC</i>	Antena 3	22	1	40	Drama	Serial	1 370 000	7.5
2009	<i>Un Golpe de Suerte</i>	Tele 5	60	1	22	Drama	Serial	969 000	9
2009	<i>90-60-90</i>	Antena 3	8	1	60	Drama	Series	2 088 000	13.5
2010	<i>No Soy Como Tíu</i>	Antena 3	2	1	75	Fantasy	Miniseries	1 155 000	9.6
2010	<i>El Pacto</i>	Tele 5	2	1	75	Drama	Miniseries	3 371 000	20.3

Airing	Title	Channel	Cap./Ep.	Season	Min.	Genre	Format	Thousands	Share %
2010	<i>La Pecera de Eva</i>	Tele 5	11	4	30	Drama	Series	2 303 000	11.2
2011-12	<i>Los Protegidos</i>	Antena 3	28	3	75	Fantasy	Series	2 584 000	13.6
2011-13	<i>El Barco</i>	Antena 3	43	3	80	Aventure	Series	2 868 000	15.6
2012-13	<i>Luna: el Misterio de Calenda</i>	Antena 3	20	2	80	Fantasy	Series	2 545 000	14.1
2018-	<i>Skam</i>	Movistar+	24	3	25	Drama	Series	--	--
2018-	<i>Élite</i>	Netflix	24	3	60	Drama	Series	--	--
2020	<i>HIT</i>	La 1	10	1	70	Drama	Series	1 489 800	9.10

Source: The authors.

concerns and frictions of a group of adolescents affected by the conflicts of their age and the generational divides with the adults around them (Lacalle, 2018). However, despite the emergence of private channels in the late eighties and the influence of American fiction, which spurred the production of some teen-fronted series in the early nineties, it took until the mid-nineties for Spanish channels to make a firm commitment to teen series.

The nineties: the decade of opportunities

The young characters of the prime time dramedy, who became the benchmark of the first Spanish teen series, were influenced by the *costumbrismo* of the local fiction. Their roles, heavily influenced by their family environment, revealed their reliance on adults, whose presence was still very relevant. The plots of this first period centered mainly on typical adolescent conflicts: love, heartbreak and everyday problems, played out in school and domestic settings.

The first Spanish youth series, *Al Salir de Clase* (1997-2002), exceeded the most optimistic expectations and ended its five seasons with an average of 2 millions 429 000 viewers (25.5% share), becoming the standard for the new subgenre. The realism with which the young actors play the young characters of their same age was undoubtedly one of the greatest successes of this teen series, which capitalized on its popularity by promoting a tour of young pop groups and artists around Spain.

Antena 3 countered Tele 5's daytime serial with *Compañeros* (1998-2002), a series with which Globomedia enthralled the heterogeneous prime time audience (Bardají & Gómez Amigo, 2004). *Compañeros* ushered in a more realistic homegrown version of Spanish youth fiction. Among other novelties, the series addressed the intergenerational narrative (Cascajosa & Herrero, 2009) through a balanced alternation of young people's problems of the day and their family, personal and love issues: violence, sexual harassment, school bullying, juvenile death, etc. *Compañeros* became the icon of its generation and drew an average audience of 4 millions 91 000 viewers (26.2% share).

Spurred on by the success of *Compañeros*, Antena 3 produced the series *Nada es para Siempre* (1999-2000), an adaptation of the

successful Venezuelan soap opera *A Todo Corazón* (Venevisión, 1997-1998). Designed to counter program against *Al Salir de Clase*, its shallow plots and overblown romantic strife alienated *Nada es para Siempre* from an adolescent and youth audience that preferred the more realistic and contemporary stories of *Compañeros* and even *Al Salir de Clase*, which were far removed from the traditional dichotomies of family fiction dominating the television schedules of the decade. The death of one of the series' stars at the end of the first season brought it to an end when its viewership fell to 1 million 660 000 viewers (20% share).

The most relevant youth fictions of the nineties were relatively successful in their bid to position this subgenre with respect to the rest of the homegrown fictions. Beyond the audience figures, the recurrence of stereotyped characters, the role of adults as habitual mediators of youth conflicts, and the popularity of costumbrista representations, restricted both innovation and the influence of the first youth fictions produced in the following decades.

The first decade of the 21st century: innovation

The dawn of the new century saw teen series leave the confines of drama to experiment with other genres (comedy and thriller) and formats (mini-series and TV movies). Although the school remained the primary setting, hybridization introduced new scenarios and social problems that were silenced in the previous decade. The construction of the adolescent characters of that period retrieved the stereotypes of the nineties, even though Guarinos (2009) attributed part of the evolution to Spanish culture itself, divided between the urge to build “a profile of the adolescent not to dream, tougher, more real and more possible” (p. 210), yet without renouncing traditional portrayals. Hence, narratives of a more transgressive nature were introduced to add value to the story, leading to the emergence of other youth fictions focused on professional development.

Un Paso Adelante (Antena 3, 2002-2005), Globomedia's second foray into teen series production after *Compañeros*, which was set in a performing arts school, not only became a hit with Spanish audiences (3 millions 661 000 viewers and 22% share) but was also sold to more

than 50 countries. Its musical choreographies supported plots where adults held less sway, although their presence was still relevant. Its popularity was underscored by the success of the pop group, made up of the actors in the series, UPA Dance, whose first album sold more than half a million copies.

The serials of the noughties, by contrast, did not enjoy the same success. *SMS, Sin Miedo a Soñar* (La Sexta, 2006), the first and longest-running of the four included in this study, was a Globomedia fiction aimed at building the identity of the new La Sexta channel, in which it was a shareholder, achieved relatively low audience figures (217 000 viewers and a 1.9% share). The novelty of *SMS* lay in its inclusion of thriller elements hitherto unknown in juvenile fiction, which sought to innovate a subgenre that continued to hark back to *Al Salir de Clase and Compañeros*. Its central plot placed social inequality squarely at the forefront, a recurring theme in youth fiction. The other three serials in our sample, *HKM, Hablan, Kantan, Mienten* (Cuatro, 2008-2009), watched by 574 000 viewers, with a 5.7% share; *18, RDC* (Antena 3, 2008-2009), viewed by 1 million 370 000 viewers, with a 7.5% share; and *Un Golpe de Suerte* (Tele 5, 2009), with 968 600 viewers and a 9% share, all had as little success as *SMS*. Despite efforts to package these series with music (*HKM* and *18 RCD*) or focus on identity crisis (*Un Golpe de Suerte*), their outdated references to love and disaffection, intergenerational and personal conflicts no longer featured among the teenage preferences.

El Internado (Antena 3, 2007-2010) placed its young protagonists in a thriller that flirted with the paranormal and science fiction. Set in a boarding school in the heart of the countryside, the plot's many twist and turns, more akin to the teenage horror films so popular among adolescents, were enhanced by its transmedia storytelling (Lacalle, 2013a). The success of the series (3 millions 194 000 viewers and an 18.5 share) led Antena 3 to further boost its investment in teen series with *Física o Química*. This drama series juxtaposed the plot complexity of *El Internado* with a varied line-up of characters that, without renouncing the stereotypes of the "bad boy and the sensible girl" (Masanet & Fedele, 2019), introduced other unique characteristics of an ever more diverse and complex social group.

El Internado and *Física o Química* encouraged the construction of increasingly self-reliant and less stereotyped characters, confronting situations and problems previously unexplored in juvenile fiction. Although the theme of love made up the main thread of the narrative, it became progressively weaker as the portrayal of sexuality increased. The role of adults in both series' storylines also gradually declined, although the school setting once again took prevalence.

*The second decade of the 21st century:
from experimentation to the return to the VOD canon*

The third period analyzed is characterized by experimentation at different levels, above all by the increased relevance of young people characters, despite the fact that a few adults recovered some of the roles they played in the nineties' teen series. In the first half of this decade, besides increasingly more social themes and issues, the series introduced elements of fantasy and intrigue, typical of the supernatural teen series, such as the above-mentioned *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Roswell* and *Smallville*. This hybridization also affected the settings, which were again diversified (performing arts academies, English-language academies, etc.), although the two VOD series in this sample called for a return to the classroom to strengthen the youth fiction canon they were based upon.

The mini-series *El Pacto* (Tele 5, 2010), the first production of that decade, drew on a real event about a group of schoolgirls who decide to get pregnant after one of them is expelled from school for that same reason (3 millions 371 000 viewers and a 20.3% share). *La Pecera de Eva* (Tele 5, 2010) was a daily series of an intimist nature interspersed with humor, whose storylines were guided by a psychologist. The modest audience ratings for the 11 episodes aired on Tele 5 (2 millions 303 000 viewers and an 11.2% share) led to its relocation to another of the Mediaset group's channels, La Siete, and ended Tele 5's contribution to youth fiction.

Unlike the low-budget model of *La Pecera de Eva*, Antena 3 stepped up funding for youth fiction in order to tap into its historical appeal among this target group, through a three-fold commitment to fantasy genres that would also eventually lead to the channel's last foray into

this subgenre: *Los Protegidos* (2011-2012), *El Barco* (2011-2013) and *Luna: el Misterio de Calenda* (2012-2013).

Los Protegidos (2 millions 583 928 viewers and a 13.6% share) reinstated teenagers in the family circle through a story of superheroes pursued by a criminal organization. With its combination of drama, adventure and suspense, the series was highly praised for its special effects. With *El Barco*, an adventure thriller containing elements of science fiction, Antena 3 aimed to revive the atmosphere of the mystery of *El Internado*. This sixth youth fiction production by Globomedia replaced the traditional school with a training ship, a setting more conducive to pushing realism to limits unexplored in Spain by this subgenre. Thanks to the audience figures for *El Barco* (2 millions 868 000 viewers and a 15.6% share) and the enthusiasm generated by the different transmedia strategies with which Antena 3 tried to build loyalty among the young audience (Lacalle, 2013a), the channel entrusted Globomedia once again to explore a mythical figure of universal terror: the werewolf. *Luna: el Misterio de Calenda* brought the teen series back to the family fold to tell a story of impossible love between the lead character's daughter and a teenage werewolf (2 millions 545 000 viewers and a 14.1% share).

The launch of VOD over the five years between the last teen series on generalist channels and the first series on OTT platforms sped up the gradual move away from young audiences' conventional consumption. The OTT platforms more than filled this gap thanks to the success of *Skam* (Movistar+, 2018-) and *Elite* (Netflix, 2018-).

Skam is a free version of its Norwegian namesake, which focuses on the relationships between several realistic characters to address issues pertinent to the young: feminism, cyberbullying, toxic relationships, sexual identity, mental disorders, Islamophobia or sextortion, etc.

Elite, on the other hand, emerged as a global project headed by Carlos Montero, who cut his teeth as a scriptwriter on *Al Salir de Clase* and *Física o Química*. The series, today a global phenomenon for Netflix, merges the traditional elements of the teen series with the narrative motifs of the thriller, including murder, robbery, mystery and investigation. Religious and/or cultural diversity, mostly absent from earlier productions, burst into this VOD teen (Ramos

et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the one thing that sets *Elite* apart from the productions of the generalist networks is its unparalleled emphasis on sex outside the context of romantic love. In addition, the secondary role of the family and adults in general clearly seeks to grant the young characters' autonomy with an uninhibited viewpoint on other issues such as drugs, promiscuity or voyeurism. The standardization of the aesthetic elements of youth representations (the uniform, the code of conduct of affluent children, etc.), identifiable in many very different societies, is another crucial element of *Elite*'s success.

Finally, *HIT* (La 1, 2020), the last production in the sample under analysis, reinforces the stereotype of characters who challenge the outside world and generational conflicts. The series (1 million 489 800 viewers and a 9.1% share) contrasts adolescents' desire for self-reliance with an overprotectiveness that warrants even acts of vandalism. Ravaged characters, insecurity and fear of social rejection remove the protagonists from the usual condescending nature of this subgenre and underpin a moral debate on education. The apparel and adornments perpetuate the belonging to a peer group, something that had not been portrayed so evidently in any previous teen series.

At the time of writing, the VOD platforms have announced four new teen series in 2021, corroborating the growing interest in the subgenre: the adventure series *Los Espabilados* (Movistar+), a remake of *Los Protegidos* (Atresplayer), the thriller *Feria* (Netflix) and the fantasy thriller *El Internado: las Cumbres* (Amazon Prime Video), inspired by *El Internado*.

CONCLUSIONS

Al Salir de Clase started a subgenre in Spain inspired by American teen series, whose evolution has run parallel to series aimed at the family audience. However, although the first adolescent characters in local productions already showed a maturity closer to young adults than teenagers, their parents, whom they turn to when overwhelmed by worries or conflicts, continued to play a relevant role, both in their lives and in the plots. It was not mid-2000, with *El Internado* and *Física o Química*, that the family took a back seat, although the parents' role

was replaced, in large part, by the relevance of adults in the educational sphere.

The hybridization of genres is a defining characteristic of the Spanish teen series based on the North American referents from which they were developed. Music and dance provided youth fiction with the most significant success in the first half of 2000 (*Un Paso Adelante*). Science fiction (*El Internado*, *Los Protegidos*, *El Barco*) and horror (*Luna: el Misterio de Calenda*) marked the transition to the streaming era when the teen series reclaimed many of the defining characteristics of the subgenre.

However, what sets Spanish youth fiction apart from American equivalent is its length and format structure. The weekly primetime series ranged from 70 to 80 minutes in length, in line with the rest of the fictions aimed at family audiences. The daily serials, usually lasting between 25 and 35 minutes, were aired when schoolchildren returned home for lunch (between 13:00 and 15:00) or in the afternoon (between 17:00 and 21:00). Except for the pioneering *Al Salir de Clase*, the audience's scant interest for youth serials, which died out in 2009, led to a fusion of both formats in the Antena 3's last productions around 2010 (*Los Protegidos*, *El Barco* and *Luna: el Misterio de Calenda*), marking the end of the teen series on linear television.

The Spanish version of this subgenre has, broadly speaking, incorporated the themes and issues considered relevant in each period, sifted through the realism characteristic of local production, to mirror the target audience's social environment.

The two most recent global projects, *Skam* and *Elite*, culminate the serialized structure with eight-episode narrative cycles, which conclude the main plot and leave open other issues for development in future seasons. They also make a return to the school and the serialized nature of the storylines starring adolescents, as in *HIT*, except that in this one, adults undertake to (re)educate the young.

Despite the fact that the love conflict and the moral debate over maturity remain a constant feature of teen series in the VOD era, the stories are continually being re-worked and make sexuality the focus of sentimental relationships in which the desire to be together and to experiment replace commitment and romanticism. Unlike the centrality

of romantic relationships in the teen series of the mid-nineties, or even the relevance that *Física o Química* accords to adolescent sexual initiation in the noughties, the constant recourse to sexuality in the final productions frees it from the constraints traditionally associated with romantic love.

Finally, it should be noted that independence from the family has paved the way for the construction of increasingly individualistic characters that view their surroundings with a condescension learned from their American counterparts. Hence, difference and otherness, canonical characteristics of the subgenre, become the constitutive elements of the new global stories.

Bibliographic references

- Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and Punishment: An Examination of Sexual Consequences and the Sexual Double Standard in Teen Programming. *Sex Roles*, 50(7/8), 505-514. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:SERS.0000023070.87195.07>
- Aubrun, A. & Grady, J. (2000). *Aliens in the Living Room: How TV Shapes Our Understanding of 'Teens'*. The Frameworks Institute.
- Banks, M. J. (2004). A Boy for All Planets: *Roswell*, *Smallville* and the Teen Male Melodrama. In G. Davis & K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Teen TV. Genre, Consumption and Identity* (pp. 17-28). BFI.
- Bardají, H. & Gómez Amigo, S. (2004). *La gestión de la creatividad en televisión. El caso de Globo Media*. Eunsa.
- Berridge, S. (2010). *Serialized sexual violence in teen television drama series* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Glasgow. <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2326/>
- Berridge, S. (2011). Personal problems and women's issues. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(4), 467-481. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.555967>
- Berridge, S. (2013). Teen heroine TV: narrative complexity and sexual violence in female-fronted teen drama series. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 11(4), 477-496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2013.809565>
- Bindig, L. (2008). *Dawson's Creek. A Critical Understanding*. Lexington Books.

- Cascajosa, C. C. & Herrero, B. (2009). De “Compañeros” a “No te fallaré”: Manuel Ríos San Martín y la experiencia en la producción cinematográfica de Globomedia. In J. Marzal & F. J. Gómez (Eds.), *El productor y la producción en la industria cinematográfica* (pp. 495-506). Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Chapoton, B., Werlen, A.-L. & Regnier Denois, V. (2019). Alcohol in TV series popular with teens: a content analysis of TV series in France 22 years after a restrictive law. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 30(2), 363-368. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckz163>
- Chicharro-Merayo, M. M. (2012). Representaciones juveniles en la ficción televisiva. Los jóvenes, los adultos y la escuela en Física o Química. *Doxa Comunicación*, 14, 199-220. <https://www.doxacomunicacion.es/es/hemeroteca/articulos?id=150>
- Davis, G. & Dickinson, K. (2004a). Introduction. In G. Davis & K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Teen TV. Genre, Consumption and Identity* (pp. 1-16). BFI.
- Davis, G. & Dickinson, K. (2004b). *Teen TV. Genre, Consumption and Identity*. BFI.
- Dhaenens, F. (2013). Teenage queerness: Negotiating heteronormativity in the representation of gay teenagers in *Glee*. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(3), 304-317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.718435>
- Driscoll, C. (2011). *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction*. Berg.
- Fedele, M., Masanet, M. J. & Ventura, R. (2019). Negotiating love and gender stereotypes: Prevalence of “amor ludens” and television preferences rooted in hegemonic masculinity. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 8(1), 1-43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/mcs.2018.2749>
- Gajanan, M. (2020, July 16). These Are the Most Popular Netflix Shows and Movies- According to Netflix. *TIME*. <https://time.com/5697802/most-popular-shows-movies-netflix/>
- García Manso, A. (2013). Series de ficción y homosexualidad en España: Un intento por visibilizar la diversidad sexual. *Revista Iberoamericana de Salud y Ciudadanía*, 2(1), 29-55. <https://security.ufpb.br/iohc/contents/documentos/books/sexuality-ies-and-citizenship-s>

- Guarinos, V. (2009). Fenómenos televisivos «teenagers»: prototipias adolescentes en series vistas en España. *Comunicar*, 17(33), 203-211. <https://doi.org/10.3916/c33-2009-03-012>
- Heintz-Knowles, K. E. (2000). *Images of Youth: A Content Analysis of Adolescents in Prime-Time Entertainment Programming*. The Frameworks Institute.
- Herrero, M. & Diego, P. (2009). Do Family Television Series Travel Well? A Spanish Case: Médico de Familia. *Journal of Spanish Language Media*, 2, 142-152. <https://hdl.handle.net/10171/21279>
- Jenner, M. (2011). "I Can't Even Imagine What It's Gonna Be Like Here without Him". Friendship and Queer Theory in American Teen Soap. *In-Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies*, 6(1), 30-48. <https://inspirejournal.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/jenner61.pdf>
- Kjeldgaard, D. & Nielsen, K. S. (2010). Glocal gender identities in market places of transition: MARIANISMO and the consumption of the telenovela Rebelde. *Marketing Theory*, 10(1), 29-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593109355249>
- Lacalle, C. (2013a). *Jóvenes y ficción televisiva: Construcción de identidad y transmedialidad*. Editorial UOC.
- Lacalle, C. (2013b). La ficción resiste la crisis. In I. Vasallo & G. Orozco (Eds.), *Anuario Obitel 2013. Memoria social y ficción televisiva en países iberoamericanos* (pp. 279- 310). Sulina.
- Lacalle, C. (2018). Memoria histórica y democracia: la ficción en el período socialista". In J. Montero (Dir.), *Una televisión con dos cadenas. La programación en España (1956-1990)* (pp. 611-636). Cátedra.
- La Ferle, C., Li, H. & Edwards, S. M. (2001). An overview of teenagers and television advertising in the United States. *Gazette*, 63(1), 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0016549201063001002>
- Lewkowicz, E. (2014). Rebel love: transnational teen TV vs. Mexican telenovela tradition. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 28(2), 265-280. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2013.854869>
- Magee, S. (2014). High School is Hell: The TV Legacy of Beverly Hills, 90210, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 47(4), 877-894. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12165>

- Masanet, M. J. & Fedele, M. (2019). El “chico malote” y la “chica responsable”: modelos aspiracionales y representaciones juveniles en las *teen series* españolas. *Palabra Clave*, 22(2), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2019.22.2.5>
- Masanet, M. J., Medina Bravo, P. & Aran-Ramspott, S. (2016). The Survival of the Forbidden Love in Television Fiction: “Romeo and Juliet” in Contemporary Spanish Series for Youth. In A. Hetsroni (Ed.), *Television and Romance: Studies, Observations and Interpretations* (pp. 19-38). Nova Science Publishers.
- Meyer, M. D. E. (2009). “I’m Just Trying to Find my Way Like Most Kids”: Bisexuality, Adolescence and the Drama of *One Tree Hill*. *Sexuality & Culture*, 13(4), 237-251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-009-9056-z>
- Moseley, R. (2001). The Teen Series. In G. Creeber (Ed.), *The Television Genre Book* (pp. 41-43). BFI.
- Orozco Gómez, G. (2006). La telenovela en México: ¿de una expresión cultural a un simple producto para la mercadotecnia? *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 6, 11-35. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v0i6.3975>
- Oserby, B. (2004). “So Who’s Got Time for Adults!”: Femininity, Consumption and the Development of Teen TV. From *Gidget* to *Buffy*. In G. Davis & K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Teen TV. Genre, Consumption and Identity* (pp. 71-86). BFI.
- Peters, W. (2016). Bullies and Blackmail: Finding Homophobia in the Closet on Teen TV. *Sexuality & Culture*, 20(3), 486-503. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-016-9336-3>
- Ramos, M. M., González de Garay, B. & Arcila Calderón, C. (2020). Grupos minoritarios en la ficción televisiva española: análisis de contenido y percepciones ciudadanas para la creación de un índice de diversidad. *Cuadernos.Info*, 46, 307-342. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.46.1739>
- Ross, S. M. & Stein, L. E. (2008a). Introduction: Watching Teen TV. In S. M. Ross & L. E. Stein (Eds.), *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom* (pp. 3-26). McFarland.
- Ross, S. M. & Stein, L. E. (2008b). *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom*. McFarland.

- Shary, T. (2002). *Generation Multiplex. The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*. University of Texas Press.
- Van Damme, E. V. (2010). Gender and sexual scripts in popular US teen series: A study on the gendered discourses in *One Tree Hill* and *Gossip Girl*. *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 77-92. https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.2.1.77_1
- Van Damme, E. & Van Bauwel, S. (2013). Sex as Spectacle. An Overview of Gender and Sexual Scripts in Teen Series Popular with Flemish Teenagers. *Journal of Children and Media*, 7(2), 170-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2012.673499>
- Villareal, H. (2008). Imágenes de la rebeldía massmediática. *Revista F@ro*, 7. http://web.upla.cl/revistafaro/02_monografico/07_villareal.htm
- Wee, V. (2010). *Teen media. Hollywood and the Youth Market in the Digital Age*. McFarland.