

Transnational Dissemination of Discourses on Non-normative Sexualities through Netflix: the *Sex Education* Case (2019-2020)

*La difusión transnacional de discursos sobre
sexualidades no normativas vía Netflix:
el caso Sex Education (2019-2020)*

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This paper analyzes the series *Sex Education*'s role in the transnational dissemination of discourses on non-normative sexualities, equality and LGBTIQ+ diversity. From a LGBTIQ+ Studies perspective, a mixed design with non-experimental ex-post-facto methodology has been applied through transmedia measurement instruments and the ILGA World and Global Attitudes reports. Netflix –through *Sex Education*– is confirmed to transnationally spread values of diversity and LGBTIQ+ equality in countries without full social and legal protection for such diversity, promoting the construction of alternative subjectivities.

KEYWORDS: *Sex Education*, Netflix, LGBTIQ+, teen fiction, transnationality.

Este trabajo estudia cómo la serie Sex Education difunde transnacionalmente discursos sobre sexualidades no normativas, igualdad y diversidad LGBTIQ+. Desde los Estudios LGBTIQ+ se aplica un diseño mixto con metodología no experimental de tipo ex-post-facto usando instrumentos de medición e interacción transmedia y los informes ILGA World y Global Attitudes. Se confirma que Netflix, vía Sex Education, difunde transnacionalmente valores de diversidad e igualdad sexo-genérica en países sin pleno amparo social y jurídico a dicha diversidad, propiciando la construcción de otras subjetividades.
PALABRAS CLAVE: *Sex Education, Netflix, LGBTIQ+, series para adolescentes, transnacionalidad.*

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INTRODUCTION

Netflix, together with HBO and Amazon Prime, is one of the most popular streaming sources and thus quite an example of how to permit us to rethink “our conceptual models of global television and to rethink what this term means in a context of digital distribution” (Lobato, 2019, p. 12). In the dawn of the third decade of the 21st century, the audiovisual content that Netflix offers, as Opie (2019) has indicated, leads the field of LGBTIQ+ representation on television. Even more so if we keep in mind the original Netflix programming for adolescents in the final years of the 2010 decade. Titles such as *Élite* (2017-), *Alex Strangelove* (2018), *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018) or *Sex Education* (2019-) are examples of Netflix’s inclusion of the diverse LGBTIQ+ adolescent realities in their films and fiction series. Still more notable is the construction of these characters from an intersectional perspective which includes LGBTIQ+ with diverse functional, social, racial lives reflecting marked tridimensionality. The report *Where We Are on TV* (GLAAD, 2020) notes that Netflix is the video on demand platform that offers, since 2016, the largest number of LGBTIQ+ characters in its catalogue. This makes Netflix a referent in the investigation into the construction of LGBTIQ+ characters in audiovisual fiction, as well as the articulation and dissemination of discourses concerning non-normative genders and sexualities in an increasingly globalized media context.

The complexity of the discourses regarding affect, desire and sexuality which Netflix offers in these series contributes to the dissemination –through their platform or on non-official channels via Internet– of equality and diversity, that upon occasions does not coincide with the dominant sociocultural and political-legislative order present in the countries that consume these texts. This is a discrepancy which at times manifests itself in State-sponsored homophobia or in repressive laws aimed at those who show a dissonant desire or sexuality.

From this perspective, the series *Sex Education* is particularly relevant for investigating the transnational dissemination of discourses linked to the production of non-normative sexualities and identities through audiovisual teen fiction. Works such as those published by Demory and Pullen (2013), Parsemein (2019), Pullen (2014) or Zurian

(2013) reflect the increasing interest in the study of the representation of LGBTIQ+ characters in teen fiction. This trend reflects the notable increment the representation of these characters has experimented. As Peters (2016) states, between June, 2010 and June, 2011, teen series included more non-heterosexual characters than in the two previous decades, taken together.

In *Sex Education*, 29 of the 31 adolescent characters shown in the first two seasons show one or more of these three variables (Vázquez-Rodríguez et al., 2020): the characters' gender does not respond to conventional femininity or masculinity, their sexual orientation transcends cisheterosexuality or their desire and fantasies do not actually fall within what might be expected in a cisheterosexual norm. Using a more rigid normative identity, Ferrera (2020) shows that the number of heterosexual teenage characters in European Netflix fiction is 81.06%. Again, these data indicate that *Sex Education* is an appropriate object of study.

From its very name, *Sex Education* points to a pedagogical interest held by its British creator, Laurie Nunn. The series features the adventures of Otis (Asa Butterfield), a white British teenager who, simulating his mother's profession, a sexologist, acts as a sex therapist for his schoolmates. Among those who consult him, there appear never-ending issues concerning identities, desires, and sexual practices. Contrary to other teen series like *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012), *Riverdale* (2017-) or *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-2017), in which sex appears to occupy just one more important role in the life of the protagonists, *Sex Education* addresses these issues from a much more pedagogical and didactic manner, and thus reflects the problems and insecurities which appear at the initiation of sexual identity in adolescence.

Beginning with its launch in 2019, the first season of the series was tuned in by 40 million accounts (Porter, 2019). These data include spectators with access to *Sex Education* through the Netflix platform and which would increase if the counting included those who watched through alternative means, such as downloaded webs or streaming sites. If we take into account the type of audience cited by Porter (2019) and if we analyze the geographic origin of the number of the viewers of *Sex Education* in social media, it seems necessary to research the

transnational impact of the series considering its potential for the cultural homogenization of the discourses the series transmit. Among the most notable aspects supporting this idea is the fact that *Sex Education* has been dubbed or subtitled into 30 different languages. As Matrix (2014) explains, Netflix has contributed to intercultural communication through local productions and translations into diverse languages.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that Netflix, HBO or Amazon Prime consider inclusivity as one more of their production values by distributing contents that tend to disseminate values associated with gender equality, tolerance, antiracism or the representation of sex-affective diversity. The tendency towards inclusion is considered a commercial issue on television, as diversity sells (Farr, 2016). As Oliviera Silva and Lima Satler state (2019), this tendency is even more visible in the original programming of Netflix, which keeps in mind marketing factors such as the multiplication of LGBTIQ+ teen audiences but also that cultural consumption in the digital world continues to be linked to experiences based, for example, on identities, languages and values (García-Leiva, 2017, p. 138). Nevertheless, the annual reports of the ILGA World (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association) regarding homophobia on the part of the State points out a number of contexts in which there are almost insurmountable political and legal barriers. The censorship in some countries conditions and limits the access to part of the cultural offer, even including when the content is as globalized as that distributed by video on demand platforms.

In its annual reports, Netflix states that it is mindful of “the need to adapt our content and user interfaces for specific cultural and language differences” (2019, p. 5) As well, they state that censorship measures means that we have to eliminate or modify popular contents, which disappoints the consumer, leads to brand tarnishment and may provoke dissatisfaction with the service (Netflix, 2019, pp. 5-6). The fact that the most problematic audiovisual contents in the Netflix catalogue –among them, *Sex Education*– are not distributed in all the territories where Netflix operates means that there is not “one sole Netflix”, but rather a series of national services linked through a common platform.

As far as the importance of fictional series regarding the sex-affective identities, Scarcelli (2014) posits that popular culture, the contact between couples and the Internet are the main sources of information concerning sexuality and sexual behavior among teenagers. The importance of globalized television products such as *Sex Education* becomes evident when one considers the diverse socio-political and educational contexts in which these products are broadcasted by a transnational platform, since the media and popular culture significantly mold the knowledge, the understanding and the fantasies which surround sex, above all for teen audiences for whom sexuality is still an incipient phenomenon.

According to Floegel and Costello (2018, p. 31), in the case of LGBTIQ+ youth, audiovisual stories and online dynamics provided by social media are, in great measure, necessary in order to alleviate the absence of education regarding sex health, affective relations and the formation of non-normative identities, even in countries where LGBTIQ+ rights and feminism are part of public policy. As well, conventional educational resources often silence or present stereotypical non-normative sexualities within an information gap which entertainment products like *Sex Education* would be filling. This gap, present in educational spheres as well as in family contexts, is highlighted and criticized in this very series.

The study *Televised Sexual Content and Parental Mediation: Influences on Adolescent Sexuality* (Fisher et al., 2009) points out that the sexual content of certain fictional series for young consumers directly influence their thoughts, their behavior and their sexual expectations, thus, leading to what Gagnon and Simon (1973) termed *sexual scripts*. These sexual scripts provide guidelines for appropriate or non-appropriate sexual behavior, given the various sexual encounters and practices –contrary to the conception of sexuality, a purely biological concept–. This is so, given that one learns through cultural practices and the interaction with other people, keeping in mind three dimensions: cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic experiences. Thus, as pointed out by Van Damme and Biltreyst (2013, p. 287), the sexual scripts as usually presented by the conventional media always tend to reflect the dominant ideology and social power. As far as *Sex Education*, and also bearing in mind the study by Vázquez-Rodríguez et al. (2020), it could

be said that this series offers alternative sexual scripts, exempt from the values and norms of cisheterosexual. It presents models –western– of sexual behavior for those whose fantasies, orientations and identities do not coincide with the norm.

These models of alternative scripts will be mediated by the dubbing and subtitling of the original product. This is important since, in 2019, Netflix had some 167 million subscribers from 190 countries (Netflix, 2019, p. 46). This global market presence means that all its content, whether dubbed or subtitled, is available at least in three languages. Consequently, the processes of dubbing and subtitling constitute a key space for the negotiation of global and local identities and values.

Given all these considerations, the hypothesis articulated in this paper can be formulated as follows: *Sex Education*, the original British series produced by the North American company Netflix, is carrying out the transnational dissemination of discourses regarding LGBTIQ+ non-normative sexualities, equality and diversity in contexts where these are not recognized and/or in which any deviation from the cisheteropatriarchal norms is pursued. This is something that happens even in countries where the platform is not operative or in which this particular series is not included in the Netflix catalogue.

Starting with this hypothesis, to be validated, the following objectives were established: a) To determine the correlation between the inclusion of *Sex Education* in the Netflix catalogue offered in each country where it operates and the level of tolerance of LBGTIQ+ of said country; b) To identify the presence of *Sex Education* followers in countries where this series is not offered in the Netflix catalogue, especially where there is low social tolerance of the LBGTIQ+ rights and liberties or where there is State homophobia; c) To contrast the level of demand for *Sex Education* in countries where the series is offered in the Netflix catalogue with the level of viewer acceptance and the legal framework regarding the LBGTIQ+ rights and liberties.

METHODOLOGY

This research has a nonexperimental mixed design, of the ex post facto type, with a descriptive orientation and an attempt at improvement

(Buendía et al., 1998). For this reason, the paper will focus on the phenomenon of study, trying to offer answers involved in the state of the question. The method relies on the case study carried out by Yin (1994) as a valid methodology for the social sciences in order to respond to issues and to meet the needs for societal understanding.

Regarding the data collection, a limitation in this study has been the complicated access to Netflix's official data concerning the impact of their content upon the global audience. Nevertheless, social media offer data and patterns which convert the latter into a valuable source of data collection for the study of content impact of the Netflix programs meant for teenagers. Several social TV viewing practices, such as *binge-watching*—the generalized practice of watching an entire season of a series or a tv program at one sitting (Matrix, 2014, p. 124)—, tend to be accompanied by multi-screen viewing processes as well as audience transmedia interaction. Therefore, Netflix spectators are accustomed to going directly to social networks—sometimes even during the viewing—in order to share their criticism and opinions regarding what is/was being watched and also in order to connect with their peers. In this way, a certain opinion dynamics is established, as well as peer interaction and identity approval: “the virtual communities linked to fiction products establish an autonomous power, constructing a mediatic public opinion that becomes viral and obliges audiovisual corporations to take them into account” (Del Olmo & Bustos Díaz, 2020, p. 379). The social TV viewing practices provide new spaces for interaction and connection for audiences. That is why, according to Matrix (2014), the measuring of activity in social networks and Internet regarding media products has become so beneficial, in addition to other more traditional types of audience analyses, for example, surveys and focus groups.

When deciding upon the design of the methodology for this multivariable investigation diverse factors were taken into account in order to measure the extent of transactional influence of *Sex Education*. Even though this series is not available in all parts of the world, there are alternative websites and piracy services where spectators can view it and can receive it without being a subscriber. This is a phenomenon related to the adoption of piracy-based video offerings which the

company has evaluated as a business risk due to its rapid worldwide increment (Netflix, 2019, p. 3). In the same way, it is possible to access part of the Netflix content via local providers licensed to transmit its content.

Given the difficulty and limitations in establishing the universe of countries where *Sex Education* is available, the sample used in this study was designed keeping in mind data from the Netflix catalogue published by uNoGS (Unofficial Netflix Online Global Search). Together with other extra-official web comparison sites, such as Allflicks and Netflixable, the justification for the use of uNoGS is that it is used by numerous researchers (Aguar & Waldfogel, 2018; Lobato, 2017). The support for these comparative data sites thus points to their degree of validity in spite of their limitations and their unofficial status. Bearing in mind this sample of countries, the number of languages for which *Sex Education* has been dubbed or subtitled was counted while taking into account the situation of the LBGTIQ+ community in said countries.

Regarding the data collection in order to analyze the level of demand for *Sex Education* where this series is distributed –the third variable– data was gathered for the month of November, 2020, as offered by Parrot Analytics. They examined the level of demand for this series in 21 countries during 30 days by comparing it to the demand for an average series. The selection of this month corresponded to an average criterion given that it did not coincide with the two premiere seasons. Complementarily, Parrot Analytics data was also collected regarding the level of media *travelability* of the series. This variable measures the demand that *Sex Education* has in each one of the countries in relation to that experienced in the country of origin, in the case of this series, the United Kingdom.

For the study of the languages spoken by official subscribers of *Sex Education* in social media, we used data provided by Audiense for October, 2020. In order to obtain an approximation to a target audience, they collected a representative sample of 10 000 profiles of watchers who follow a specific account on social media. Lastly, for the data collected regarding the levels of social acceptance and legal frameworks which affect the LBGTIQ+ community globally, and

which are used to triangulate with the previous variables, the referent work was the report on *State-Sponsored Homophobia*, elaborated by ILGA World (2020) and the report on *Global Attitudes* published by the Pew Research Center (2019).

RESULTS

Of the 190 countries where the platform operates (Netflix, 2019, p. 1), uNoGS offers data (October, 2020) for *Sex Education* for the following 36: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States. Regarding the languages for which Netflix has dubbed the series (December, 2020), it is available in 14 languages⁴: German, Czech, Spanish, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, Polish, Thai, Turkish and Russian. Regarding the different contexts where *Sex Education* is viewed, within the sample countries, the data on State-sponsored homophobia included in the ILGA World 2020 report show that this series is emitted in countries that have a varying degree of legal protection for the LGBTIQ+ community, as shown in Table 1.

Although the complexity of these data published by the ILGA should be placed in context –country by country– it is significant that *Sex Education* is emitted in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, where sexual relations between persons of the same sex are illegal and are penalized with a maximum of 20 years to 2 years of incarceration, respectively. Also relevant is the case of India, where the government eliminated the penalization of these same-sex acts in 2018, only one year before the international emission of the series. As a complement

⁴ For the research presented here, we have not counted as different peninsular Spanish and Latin American Spanish; peninsular Portuguese and Portuguese of Brazil; nor simplified Mandarin and traditional Mandarin (only used in subtitles)

Country		Global attitudes 2019	Criminalization			Protection				Recognition	
			Social acceptance ho-mosex.	Same-sex sexual acts legal	Date of dectrim.	Max penalty	Const	Hate crime	Incitemnt	Ban conv. therapies	Same sex marriage
Argentina		76	Yes	1903		No	Yes	No	Limited	Yes	Yes
Australia		81	Yes	1975-1997		No	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes
Belgium		92	Yes	1795		No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Brazil		67	Yes	1831		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canada		85	Yes	1969		No	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes
Czech Republic		59	Yes	1962		No	No	No	No	No	Yes
France		86	Yes	1491		No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Germany		86	Yes	1968-1969		No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Greece		48	Yes	1951		No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hong Kong			Yes	1991		N/A	No	No	No	No	No

TABLE 1

COUNTRIES IN WHICH *SEX EDUCATION* IS INCLUDED IN THE NETFLIX CATALOGUE IN RELATION TO THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND STATE-SPONSORED HOMOPHOBIA

Country	Global attitudes 2019		Criminalization			Protection				Recognition		
	Social acceptance ho-	mosex.	Same-sex sexual acts legal	Date of dectrim.	Max penalty	Const.	Hate crime	Incitemt	Ban conv. therapies	Same sex marriage	Civil unions	
Hungary	49		Yes	1963		No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Iceland			Yes	1940		No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
India	37		Yes	2018		No	No	No	No	No	No	
Ireland			Yes	1993		No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Israel	47		Yes	1988		No	Limited	No	No	No	Yes	
Italy	75		Yes	1890		No	No	No	No	No	Yes	
Japan	68		Yes	1882		No	No	No	No	Limited	No	
Lithuania	28		Yes	1993		No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
Malaysia			No		20	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Mexico	69		Yes	1872		Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	
Netherlands	92		Yes	1811		No	Limited	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Poland	47		Yes	1932		No	No	No	No	No	No	
Portugal			Yes	1983		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Romania			Yes	1996		No	Yes	Limited	No	No	No	

Country	Global attitudes 2019		Criminalization			Protection				Recognition		
	Social acceptance ho-	mosex.	Same-sex sexual acts legal	Date of decrim.	Max penalty	Const.	Hate crime	Incitement	Ban conv. therapies	Same sex marriage	Civil unions	
Russia	14		Yes	1993		No	No	No	No	No	No	
Singapore			No		2	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Slovakia	44		Yes	1962		No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
South Africa	54		Yes	1998		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
South Korea	44		Yes	Never crim		No	No	No	No	No	No	
Spain	89		Yes	1979		No	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes	
Sweden	94		Yes	1944		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Switzerland			Yes	1942		No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Thailand			Yes	1957		No	No	No	No	No	No	
Turkey	25		Yes	1858		No	No	No	No	No	No	
United Kingdom			Yes	1967-1982		No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
United States	72		Yes	1962-2003		No	Yes	No	Limited	Yes	Limited	

Source: The authors, based on uNoGS data, the report on *Global Attitudes 2019* of the Pew Research Center, and the report on *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020* by ILGA World.

to the markers of State-sponsored homophobia, to the degree of social acceptance of homosexuality in countries where the Netflix platform exists (the ones that form part of the sample), the *Global Attitudes* report⁵ shows that the level of acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people is lower than 60% in countries like South Africa (54%) and the Czech Republic (59%); and lower than 50% in the following countries: Hungary (49%), Greece (48%), Poland (47%), Israel (47%), Slovakia (44%), South Korea (44%) and India (37%). In this respect, the following countries are significant due to their low degree of tolerance and acceptance: Turkey (25%), Lithuania (28%) and especially Russia (14%).

In spite of the fact that uNoGS does not study Indonesia (a country in which the degree of acceptance of homosexuality is only 10%), Netflix does offer *Sex Education* dubbed into Indonesian in The Netherlands as well as in Turkey. It is notable that the Indonesian Internet Service Providers (ISP) and Telkom Indonesia has blocked Netflix since 2016; they consider that Netflix is not operating with the necessary licenses and that it exposes the subscribers to violent and pornographic content prohibited by their national laws (Azher, 2019). Notable as well is the case of the dubbing and subtitling of the series in Mandarin and in Vietnamese, even though the series is not emitted in China nor in Vietnam.

Another aspect to be considered is the impact of the series in social media. The data provided by Audiense show that in the ranking of the 25 countries with the most subscribers who follow *Sex Education* in the social media, The Philippines is the 9th place, Indonesia is in the 11th place and South Africa in the 16th. Turkey, Poland and Nigeria close the ranking positions by occupying the three last positions. This is important because in the twelve Nigerian states, sex acts between persons of the same sex carries the death penalty (ILGA World, 2020). Additionally, the degree of acceptance of homosexuality in Nigeria is

⁵ The *Global Attitudes* report, carried out by the Pew Research Center in 2019, includes 34 countries representing the five continents. It does not include Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Malaysia, Portugal, Rumania, Switzerland, Thailand and United Kingdom, countries where uNoGS includes *Sex Education* in the Netflix catalogue. See Pew Research Center (2019).

7% and in Indonesia, 9% (Pew Research Center, 2019). In the case of Poland and Turkey, countries in which same-sex relations are not legally penalized, institutionalized homophobia enjoys legitimate status, and there is an acceptance level of 47% for Poland and 25% for Turkey, among the lowest in Europe.

Regarding the language groups that most follow the *Sex Education* series on a global level, the most used is English (40.84%), followed by Spanish speakers (18.44%), Portuguese speakers (8.75%), French speakers (3.87%), Tagalo speakers (1.72%), older Indonesian (1.56%), Thai (1.15%), Turkish (1.06%), Arabic (0.86%) and Russian (0.81%).

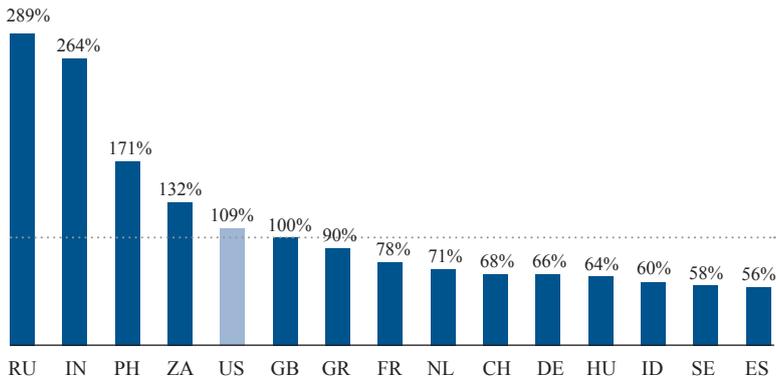
Tagalo, the official language of The Philippines, is in the 5th place for language users, while The Philippines is the 9th country in the ranking of users of these accounts (Audiense, 2020). *Sex Education* is offered in a Malaysian subtitled version in the official Netflix catalogue in Malaysia, Singapore (where it is the official language) and Thailand. Within the context of Malaysian speakers, censorship and limitations of content, possibly due to religious reasons or sexual topics, has been the object of diverse investigations, such as the one carried out by Adnan Pitchan et al. (2019). Another singular case is that of Arabic. *Sex Education* is offered with Arabic subtitles in 17 countries in which this language is not the official one: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and United Kingdom. Nevertheless, uNoGS points out that the series is not available in any Arabic-speaking country where Netflix operates.

As for the popularity of *Sex Education* in the varied contexts (Figure 1), measured through travelability (a variable that alludes to the level of demand of the series in the country of origin within a time span of 30 days), Parrot Analytics, for November of 2020, places Russia in the highest category (289%), followed by India (264%), Philippines (171%), South Africa (132%) and United States (109%).

Russia, at the head of the ranking, has an audience demand almost three times that of the original country (UK). As well, the series is 16 times more popular than an average television series distributed in Russia. This is a significant finding, since in Russia, with the excuse of the protection of minors, there is a law against homosexual propaganda

since 2013. It imposes fines for the dissemination of any content that normalizes sexual relations outside of the traditional ones and, in this way, it has aided institutionalized homophobia (ILGA World, 2020).

FIGURE 1
TRAVELABILITY OF SEX EDUCATION DURING NOVEMBER, 2020



Source: Parrot Analytics (2020).

In India, which occupies the second place in level of demand in comparison with UK, homosexual relations were decriminalized in 2018, one year before the first season's showing of the series. Here, as well, the demand for *Sex Education* in comparison to the media average is significant, a 14.3% more (Parrot Analytics).

CONCLUSION

Now that all the results have been described, the hypotheses and objectives should be revised. Regarding the first objective presented, from the sample of countries taken from uNoGS data, the only two countries in which Netflix offers *Sex Education* as part of their official catalogue and in which sex acts among persons of the same sex is penalized are Singapore and Malaysia. This does not mean that the series is not available in other places where the socio-political situation

of the LBGTIQ+ community does not enjoy a comprehensive level of acceptance, respect and tolerance, as well as adequate governmental protection. In this respect, the fact that *Sex Education* is part of the Netflix catalogue in countries such as Turkey, Lithuania and Russia –in which the level of social acceptance of homosexuality is 25%, 28% and 14% respectively, as well as the existence of institutionalized homophobia– confirms the initial hypothesis: Netflix does facilitate the transnational dissemination of non-normative discourses concerning LBGTIQ+ sexuality, equality and diversity in contexts lacking a public agenda that includes the rights and liberties of this community. But, as the analysis of the other variables studied indicates, *Sex Education* has breached the geographic barriers supposedly established by the availability of the Netflix catalogue. Thus, this series has become very popular even in contexts openly hostile to the LBGTIQ+ community like those previously mentioned. The popularity of the original Netflix series is relevant, since the company itself estimates that it is a key element in the services it offers and that it enhances the Netflix image (Netflix, 2019, p. 4).

In this regard, the fact that the series is dubbed and/or subtitled into more languages than the official ones where *Sex Education* is distributed means that this series' original content (either dubbed or subtitled) can be seen through extra-official channels in those regions where the series is not available on the Netflix platform. This trend may respond to a Netflix strategy of offering content in the native language to migrant communities in the diaspora; these communities actually constitute a representative percentage of the population in the countries where the series is emitted. Among the most notable cases are those of the Chinese diaspora (for example, those living in the US and the UK) or what is occurring with Vietnamese dubbing that is offered in Australia, a country with crucial influence in the Asian-Pacific zone.

These trends do not eliminate the possibility that *Sex Education* has been dubbed and/or subtitled extra-officially into more languages than those appearing in uNoGS with commercial and activist ends in order to introduce into those countries via alternative and illegal copies from the diaspora to LBGTIQ+ persons in other countries. For example, it is quite striking that, in spite of being distributed in South Africa,

the series offers no dubbing or subtitling for none of the autonomous languages of the region, except for English.

As well, it is also possible that in South Africa, where the social acceptance of homosexuality is only 54% (Pew Research Center, 2019), there are illegal copies circulating via shops, street vendors, fans or LGBTIQ+ activists. Those would be extra-official copies of the series, locally translated to the language spoken in that country or others in the continent of Africa.

Bearing in mind the possible contexts of reception of the series depending on the languages into which it has been translated, special cases are Arabic, Indonesian, Mandarin, and Malaysian. The only country where *Sex Education* is distributed in Malaysian is in Thailand, where LGBTIQ+ persons are not subject to legal penalties, but Malaysian is not the official language of the country. Although Arabic is the 5th most spoken language in the world, and Mandarin (the official language in Hong Kong and Singapore) is the second most spoken (Eberhard et al., 2021), both languages are spoken in countries with a marked State-sponsored homophobia. The only exception to this situation is Hong Kong, where marriage equality is not legal, but there is a limited acknowledgment of LGBTIQ+ couples' rights. In Indonesia (official language, Indonesian) where the acceptance level of homosexuality is 9%, and in East Timor and in some areas of Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesian is the sixth most spoken language by the persons following *Sex Education* on social media. Indonesia is as well in the eleventh place as far as geographic origin of its followers. In addition, Arabic occupies the tenth position. Both of these latter data illustrate the cultural relevance of the series for the dissemination of pro-LGBTIQ+ discourses in contexts where these rights are not valued, including those in which *Sex Education* has not been officially emitted.

In this regard, quite notable is the pedagogic function the series fulfills related to LGBTIQ+ sexualities and sexual practices in general. In this way, it completes possible informative deficiencies among its audience and thus may stimulate spectator interest. This need, both informative and affirmative for self-identity, is even more necessary in those contexts in which LGBTIQ+ realities are particularly invisible. On the European continent, for example in Russia, Hungary, and Poland,

which have lately been especially hostile to the LGBTIQ+ community (ILGA World, 2020) the fact that *Sex Education* has been emitted points to an opening for the production of LGBTIQ+ subjectivities, as well as the generation and circulation of information about sexuality in which sex-gender diversity can exist. As well, Russian is a language which continues to be spoken in the former USSR countries, where audiovisual content is regularly hacked. In this regard, especially notable are the Caucasic countries, such as Armenia and Georgia. On the other hand, studies such as those carried out by Condy and Ivan (2019), focusing on Singapore, confirm that Netflix teen fictions contribute to the empowerment of youth as far as sexual information, especially in contexts where sex education is limited to pointing out the risks of premarital sex and Internet is seen as a corruptive influence on the young (Liew, 2014, p. 710).

The data regarding the level of demand and travelability of *Sex Education* even in countries with a lower level of acceptability of homosexuality show the impact of *Sex Education*. As well, it is clear that this series can act for LGBTIQ+ collectives as a source of information concerning emotional relations, sexual orientations or gender identities in countries where these tendencies have a greater social and legal acceptance. Proof of this is that *Sex Education* has a level of demand 15.5 times more than other similar audiovisual products distributed in Russia; the demand is 14.2 times more than similar products in India; and it is 7.1 times higher in South Africa. These are countries, as well, that occupy the first, second and fourth place in the ranking of travelability. As far as India, homosexual acts were depenalized only one year before this series was premiered. In South Africa, in spite of the legalization of marriage equality, there is no legal protection in the face of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes and the level of social acceptance is only 54%.

Sex Education, being an audiovisual product specifically articulated to revolve around characters with a non-normative affectivity and sexuality and with whom teen audiences can identify, contributes to visibility and the global progressive acceptance of the diverse LGBTIQ+ realities. This is so even in contexts where these collectives do not enjoy social acceptance or legal and governmental protection and in which

the very contents of the series might be a risk for the company (Netflix, 2019, p. 6). All this should be considered in light of the other Netflix initiatives such as *Élite* (2017-) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018) or the film *Alex Strangelove* (2018). These are audiovisual products that allow a certain range regarding what is possible to say, to represent, to consume. Netflix fosters openness towards these discourses vis-à-vis non-normative sexualities.

The fact that Netflix is not subject to geographic barriers means that –as is reflected in this study of *Sex Education*– the dissemination of the sex-affective diversity and equality exists, even in countries where there is no legal protection for this diversity. The transnational dissemination of discourses concerning non-normative sexualities, in the end, make possible the construction of other subjectivities and thus generate changes in the perception towards the varied LGBTIQ+ realities.

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