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Minority groups in Spanish television fiction: content analysis and citizen perceptions for the creation of a diversity index

Grupos minoritarios en la ficción televisiva española: análisis de contenido y percepciones ciudadanas para la creación de un índice de diversidad

Grupos minoritários na ficção televisiva espanhola: análise de conteúdo e percepções dos cidadãos para a criação de um índice de diversidade

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ABSTRACT | This paper analyzes gender, sexual orientation, nationality and age diversity in the Spanish television series broadcasted in prime time during 2016 and the first semester of 2017. We used content analysis on a sample of more than 700 characters to create a diversity index and conducted a survey to analyse the perception of the population. Thus, two studies were carried out in this analysis, in addition to the creation of an ad-hoc index. After analyzing the data, it is concluded that, in general, the diversity shown in Spanish audiovisual fiction is low (0.76 on a scale of 0-4), with significant differences among the series; however, Spanish citizens expressed a slight agreement (2.16 on a scale of 0-4) that women, people over 65 or the LGBT+ population were accurately represented in TV series, while they neither agreed nor disagreed that the percentage of foreign characters corresponded to reality.

KEYWORDS: TV; gender; sexual orientation; nationality; age; Spain; surveys; content analysis.

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RESUMEN | *El artículo analiza la diversidad de género, orientación sexual, nacionalidad y edad en las series de televisión españolas emitidas en prime time durante el año 2016 y el primer semestre de 2017. A partir de un análisis de contenido realizado a una muestra de más de 700 personajes se creó un índice de diversidad y se realizó una encuesta para analizar la percepción de la población. De este modo, en este trabajo se presentan los resultados de dos estudios, además de la creación de un índice elaborado ad-hoc. Una vez analizados los datos, se concluye que, en general, la diversidad mostrada en la ficción audiovisual española es baja (0,76 en una escala de 0-4), con diferencias importantes entre las series; sin embargo, cuando los ciudadanos españoles fueron preguntados sobre este aspecto, expresaron estar ligeramente de acuerdo (2,16 en una escala de 0-4) en que las mujeres, los mayores de 65 años o la población LGBT+ estaban correctamente representados en la ficción, mientras que no se mostraron ni en acuerdo o desacuerdo con que el porcentaje de los personajes no nacionales se correspondiera con la realidad.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *televisión; género; orientación sexual; nacionalidad; edad; España; encuestas; análisis de contenido.*

RESUMO | O artigo analisa a diversidade de gênero, orientação sexual, nacionalidade e idade nas séries de televisão espanholas transmitidas em *prime time* durante 2016 e no primeiro semestre de 2017. A partir de uma análise de conteúdo feita para uma amostra de mais de 700 personagens, foi criado um índice de diversidade. Além disso, foi realizada uma pesquisa para analisar a percepção da população. Assim, neste trabalho se apresentam os resultados de dois estudos, além da criação de um índice ad hoc. Após a análise dos dados, conclui-se que, em geral, a diversidade demonstrada na ficção audiovisual espanhola é baixa (0,76 em uma escala de 0 a 4), com diferenças importantes entre as séries; no entanto, os cidadãos espanhóis expressaram um ligeiro acordo (2,16 em uma escala de 0-4) com que as mulheres, pessoas com mais de 65 anos ou a população LGBT + foram corretamente representadas na ficção, enquanto não se mostraram nem de acordo ou desacordo que a percentagem das personagens não nacionais correspondesse à realidade.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: TV; gênero; orientação sexual; nacionalidade; idade; Espanha; pesquisas; análise de conteúdo.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, diversity is a topic of great importance and social consideration, both in the workplace and in education, as well as in public policies or the medical-scientific area.

The aim of this study is to analyze the diversity of gender, sexual orientation, nationality and age in Spanish television series broadcast in prime time to find out if there is an inclusion of characters traditionally underrepresented, both from the content perspective and citizen perceptions. To do so, we applied a statistical index to audiovisual products that measures the sociodemographic diversity present in the characters and we conducted a survey with the Spanish population to find out their perception of diversity in television fiction in that country. In the following sections, we present the review of the scientific literature that supports our research questions, we explain the methodology applied in both field works, we show and analyze the results, and, finally, we include a section for discussion and conclusions.

Television has "the power to create empathy, awareness and equality throughout society" (Comer, Bower, & Sparkman, 2014, p. 47). George Gerbner (1972) used the now classic term symbolic annihilation to point out the lack of cultural and media representation of some social groups. In this regard, there is already a great empirical tradition to analyze and measure the media representations of women (Collins, 2011), LGBT+ people (Gillig, Rosenthal, Murphy, & Langrall, 2017; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018; Soto -Sanfiel, Ibiti, & Palencia, 2014) or migrants/racialized (Igartua, Muñiz, & Cheng, 2005; Igartua, Muñiz, Otero, & de la Fuente, 2007; Igartua, Moral, & Fernández, 2011; van Dijk, 1989; Van Gorp, 2005) in fiction through content analysis in the international context. However, there are not many studies of this type in the Spanish sphere (especially regarding the LGBT+ group and the elderly), and little that compare the results of content representation with the audiences' perceptions of such representations.

This article contributes to this academic niche in two areas: methodological –by combining representation with its perception, i.e., content analysis with surveys– and thematic, since there are few studies on certain social minorities in the Spanish audiovisual.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the perspective of social representations (Moscovici, 2002), communications about identity are based on the representations that we have about ourselves and about others. Based on this theoretical framework, in recent years academics have approached the analysis of minorities representation on

television (Abrams, Eveland, & Giles, 2003; Amigo, Bravo, Sécail, Lefébure, & Borrell, 2016; Cukier, Jackson, & Gagnon, 2019; Daalmans & ter Horst, 2017; Marcos-Ramos, 2014b).

The cultivation theory (Cohen & Weimann, 2000; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Signorielli & Morgan, 1990) points out the primary role that the media has to reproduce behaviors and ideas, since it should not be forgotten that much of the knowledge that we have about the world and society comes from the mass media (Luhmann, 2002). As an example, the investigations conducted on the socio-cognitive effects of news frames on immigration –the treatment carried out by the media– have shown that these influence the perception of immigration as a social problem, as well as attitudes and in beliefs about the consequences of immigration for the receiving country (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999; Igartua & Cheng, 2009, among others).

One of the main consequences of this informative treatment is the creation or maintenance of certain stereotypes and prejudices about immigrants, in addition to generating certain attitudes of rejection towards them (Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Igartua et al., 2011). In this regard, Seiter (1986) points out that the media, especially television, actively participate in the generation of stereotypes, being a cultural instrument that socializes by showing behaviors and social roles while modeling basic assumptions of reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Signorielli & Morgan, 1990). Despite being a study from two decades ago, the meta-analysis carried out by Shanahan and Morgan (1999) continues to be relevant as the influence that television exerts on viewers was empirically verified (r=.10); some research also show the way in which television consumption influences the social perception of ethnic minorities (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999 ; Tamborini, Mastro, Chory-Assad, & Huang, 2000). Mastro (2009) indicates that the image of ethnic and immigrant minorities in fictional television content contributes to the construction or maintenance of stereotypes and prejudice, in addition to a distorted and stereotypical image of ethnic minorities.

Fiction –represented mainly by audiovisual series– has become increasingly important as a means of television entertainment, placing itself above programs such as contests or reality shows in terms of leisure preferences (Bermejo & Núñez, 2008; Moreno & Rodríguez, 2016). As Elena Galán (2007, p. 236) points out, "fiction series, in addition to serving as entertainment, present identification models that are imitated and tend to further encourage and root stereotypical representations". In the same vein, Montero-Rivero (2005) states that collective perception is created with what is transmitted through television fiction, which can

shape the attitudes of an entire generation. On the other hand, a recent study in the Spanish context conducted on 70 students who were asked about their perception on prejudices regarding cultural diversity in television series, concluded that the immigrant characters are, according to them, non-protagonist secondary characters, very stereotyped and whose topics of conversation revolved around social and money differences (Santana Mejía, Martínez de Morentín, & Medrano Samaniego, 2018, pp. 219-220).

Audiovisual fiction not only plays a role of leisure, but also reflects reality, projecting and disseminating frames of reference, images and stereotypes that directly affect the way in which citizens interpret social reality. It should not be forgotten that audiovisual fiction is a shaping element of collective imagery, and in a specific way in the Spanish case (Mateos, 2014). Therefore, the appearance, to cite an example, of a character belonging to an immigration minority will serve the audience not only to be aware of the existence of that social group, but also and above all to create a mental image of it. It has been shown that vicarious contact can have a positive impact on the reduction of prejudice and, thus, favor the establishment of more harmonious relationships between citizens of different ethnic and national origins (Müller, 2009; Igartua, 2010; Park, 2012). Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that approximately half of young people who sees immigration in television content do so in television series (Prats, De Régil, Lobarte, Higueras, & Santamaría, 2006).

In fact, many studies have already verified the influence of audiovisual stories on the reproduction of behaviors and attitudes in the public, evidencing that research on fictional content and its relationship with the attitudes of citizens must be a study trend to be followed by social sciences. However, regarding immigration, Eberl et al. (2018) indicate that:

> (...) even though this audience is more likely to be exposed to entertainment content than news in the media. By ignoring social media and entertainment discourses on immigration and migrant groups, we neglect a part of the media reality that a large portion of European audiences use exclusively or in addition to news stories (p.128).

Gender and sexual orientation

As Puleo points out "our ways of relating, loving, desiring and communicating are socially shaped by a clear, but not always perceived, hierarchization between sexes" (2007, pp. 17-26). According to this academic, the components of our social system are the roles and the sexual division of labor, sexed identity, gender status, gender norms and sanctions, stereotypes, and discourses of legitimation. Those societies in which there is this differentiation by sex –most of the current

ones– often have the support of stories, since "human beings need narrations –socially shared– that account for our reality, thus allowing us to elaborate it" (Aguilar, 2007, p. 129). In this way, prejudices and stereotypes have been transmitted over the years and continue to be transmitted today through myths, popular stories, novels, children's stories, songs, etc., and, of course, the media. It is what is known as *discourses of gender legitimation*.

Those narrations are currently monopolized by the audiovisual, in which we spend most of our time, in the form of television programming, videogames, cinema, etc. Thus, imbued in the so-called Knowledge Society and the globalization of technologies, countless studies have demonstrated the social influence of audiovisual messages. Pilar Aguilar (2010) observed how in a sample of 42 films released between 2000 and 2006, 61.9% of the main characters were male and only 35.7% were female. According to the author, "the gender of the protagonist largely determines the circumstances, characteristics and type of story being told" (Aguilar, 2010, p. 219).

According to data from the National Statistics Institute (INE[1], from its Spanish acronym), in 2016 of the total Spanish population 23,713,398 (50.93%) were women and 22,843,610 (49.07%), men; in 2015, women were 50.9% of the population and in 2014, 50.86%. However, of 3,933 episodes of 2014 Spanish television series analyzed by the AISGE Foundation, only 43% of the characters were female; from 5,830 episodes in 2015, the figure was only 45% of the total characters, and 46% in 6,614 episodes in 2016 (Giménez, 2017). Therefore, the constant underrepresentation of women is confirmed. According to Sangro and Plaza (2010)

> scientific literature on the subject lead us over and over to the same conclusion, with very similar figures in practically all works: the presence of women in newspapers, movies, radio, television and even the Internet it is at most between 17% and 25%, depending on the case. In other words, the important social and institutional changes (...) have a limited reflection in the media (p. 28).

Men actively have the leading role in stories, except in two spheres: the domestic one and that of romantic relationships. It is what Sangro and Plaza (2010) called *sexual dimorphism*. This was corroborated by a study by the Instituto de la Mujer (2007) stating that, in most of the analyzed TV series, women had

1. The National Statistics Institute offers annual statistics on its website http://www.ine.es. This article refers to statistics from different years (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) based on the variable studied to obtain a more accurate and updated image of the country's sociodemographic reality.

a greater presence in emotional plots while men stood out in the public sphere. Regarding the professions attributed to men and women, it was corroborated that the distribution by gender is relevant in occupations, assigning professions such as childcare, cooking, stripper, secretarial, domestic work, only to women. In the same vein, García Muñoz, Fedele and Gómez-Díaz (2012) concluded that women continue to be associated with the home and family and occupy less prestigious jobs. González de Garay, Marcos-Ramos and Portillo-Delgado (2019) also confirm their underrepresentation and the feminization of certain occupations. On the other hand, according to Despentes, "men are urged to suppress their emotions, to silence their sensitivity, to be ashamed of their delicacy, of their vulnerability, to abandon childhood brutally and definitely (...),not knowing how to ask for help, having to be brave, even if they do not feel like it, value strength regardless of their personality or show aggressiveness" (2018, p. 33). Bourdieu already pointed out that "to praise a man it is enough to say of him that he is a man" (Badinter, 1994, p. 19).

However, there are some authors who have a positive perspective of the current television series panorama, both national and foreign. For example, Galán (2007, p. 230) explains that since the 90s there has been "an emergence of a current of realism in Spanish series, both in their plots and in the characterization of their characters", which would mean that the female characters began to occupy jobs that were traditionally held exclusively by male protagonists. It is in the context of the new television series where women begin to assume new, transgressive roles, breaking stereotypes by assuming leading roles, taking the initiative in sex or personal relationships or addressing taboo subjects (Menéndez, 2008 , p. 65).

Regarding sexual orientation, the absence of LGBT+ people in the media has been shown to have negative effects (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). According to the GLAAD (2018) report on LGBT+ representation on American television, in the 2017/2018 season, the percentage of LGBT+ characters that appeared on television in the United States was 6.4%. Despite being positive, the data hides notorious differences. For example, of the 86 LGBT+ characters analyzed on open television, only 36% were Latinos, African Americans, etc., so that racial diversity within the group had dropped six percentage points from the previous year. The LGBT+ representation has helped "to promote greater knowledge of LGBT+ people, to assimilate sexual diversity as another possibility, and to recognize the identities that can legitimately participate in the stories about daily life" (Rodrigo-Alsina et al., 2016, p . 1101).

There are not many exhaustive surveys or studies on the sexual orientation of citizens. Furthermore, many people do not acknowledge being members of the

collective, even in private settings where telling the truth would not entail any risk (Coffman, Coffman, & Marzilli Ericson, 2013). Despite these difficulties, a study by Dalia Research conducted at the European level (Lam, 2016) concluded that Spain was the second country in Europe with the highest LGBT+ population (6.9%), only behind Germany (7.4 %). Research that addresses the issue of LGBT+ representation in the media in the Spanish context is also recent (Alfeo Álvarez, 1997; Llamas, 1997; Melero Salvador, 2010, 2017; Mira, 2008; Nabal Aragón, 2007; Perriam, 2013; Smith, 1992). Even though, for obvious reasons, the representation of homosexuality during the Franco regime was prohibited, cinematography managed to circumvent this veto on some occasions, introducing characters that were beyond the control of the censorship agencies. In addition, certain exceptions for homosexual representation were also admitted "as the implicit condemnation in the cinematographic representation was considered punishment enough" (Melero Salvador, 2014, p. 195). Thus, it was allowed only if the character was punished for his/her conduct. It was usual that the representation was merely comic, i.e., the homosexual character was mocked to make the viewer laugh. As González de Garay and Alfeo Álvarez (2017, p. 62) affirm, "provoking hilarity has traditionally been the role reserved for the male homosexual character in popular discourses of all kinds".

Regarding female homosexuality, however, perverse traits were attributed to the character since this did not have the same comic effect. Alfeo Álvarez and González de Garay (2010) distinguish four modalities in homosexual representation in Spanish television fiction: hidden, marginalizing, activist (integrating and differentiating) and finally, integrated. In the hidden mode, the character's homosexuality is suggested in a veiled and ambiguous way, with the use of euphemisms, equivocal actions, and stereotypes. Therefore, representations that were not associated with tragic and unhappy destinies were not admitted, in order, consequently, to teach the viewer about the consequences of homosexuality. Subsequently, the predominant form of representation varies with the marginalizing modality, in which other characters or images are used to reveal the character's homosexuality. Furthermore, this type of behavior is associated with crime and marginality, offering a visibly negative approach to homosexuality.

As stated by Martínez Expósito (2013, p. 99), the repression of homosexuality "only began to be questioned when democracy was already well installed". With the activist modality, the discourse of tolerance and acceptance begins, promoting heteronormative behavior patterns, especially within the integrative activist modality. On the other hand, in the differentiating activist modality, a differentiation is sought regarding the heteronormative integrative model, enabling other non-assimilationist lifestyles. Finally, in the integrated modality, the importance of

the homosexual characters does not fall on their sexual orientation, which is only one more trait.

Currently, sexual diversity is increasingly present on screens around the world, although we can make a distinction between LGBT+ representation on mainstream television and that shown in online fictions or those specialized in LGBT+ content. The main difference is "the incorporation of riskier themes and more extreme characters, in addition to breaking formal standards, and in the divergence of environments, references and forms of expression" (González de Garay, 2009, p. 16). However, the complete elimination of stereotypes traditionally associated with male and female homosexuality may lead to their invisibility and disappearance. Andrea Puggelli (2016) defines as featherphobia the "irrational aversion towards the feminine mannerism of gays or masculine lesbians", i.e., the rejection of all those who challenge the appearance of gender imposed by society. In the case of lesbianism, this appearance is defined as butch, a word that "tends to denote the masculinity shown by a woman" (Pelayo García, 2009, p. 19) and, in the case of male homosexuality, reference is made to mannerism. As Ventura points out, "GLO (Gay and Lesbian Oriented) media products benefit the self-identification part for LGBT+ people, but hinder the visibility part, which is beneficial for their normalization" (2016, p. 945). If LGBT+ individuals are comfortable with this representation, they will not fight for varied representation on mainstream television.

Although television continues to retain part of its hegemonic position in today's society, the emergence of new audiovisual content platforms has gradually begun to shift its influence. This phenomenon is especially important among young people, according to the report Preferencia juvenil en nuevos formatos de televisión. Tendencias de consumo en jóvenes de 14 a 25 años (Youth Preference in New Television Formats. Consumption trends in young people from 14 to 25 years old), carried out in 2011 by the Observatory of Leisure and Digital Entertainment. Thus, between the ages of 14 and 25 they choose to access content through mobile devices and virtually, distancing themselves partially or totally from traditional television. The emergence in Spain of platforms like Netflix has contributed to a greater diversity in content, since its catalog is extensive and has many series or movies on the LGBT+ theme compared to mainstream television.

It is plausible, therefore, that research on LGBT+ representation in audiovisual media will move (in fact, they are already doing so) towards new digital platforms or social networks, since these are taking over from traditional television among new generations. Activism now occurs in the digital universe, YouTube being a good example of this. As Gálvez, Tortajada and Willem (2017, p. 355) affirm, "now it is YouTube where gays, lesbians, bisexuals and queers make their way before the

avalanche of male, macho and misogynistic accounts that dominate the rankings of the most popular accounts at the state level. ”

NATIONALITY

Regarding nationality and ethnicity, the picture is not much different. The image of immigration in television fiction has not been the object of analysis, or at least in such an extensive way[2], and studies on this subject are practically non-existent in Spain, despite being a basic component of the programming of television networks in prime time (Ruiz-Collantes, Ferrés, Obradors, Pujadas, & Pérez, 2006; Galán, 2006; Lacalle, 2008; Marcos-Ramos, 2014a). The studies on the representation of immigration in fiction –and, especially, in television fiction– have been quantitatively scarcer than those focused on news content. However, their number has been increasing in recent years.

Despite their scarcity, studies on the representation of ethnic minorities and immigrants in fiction have generated important and useful conclusions, coinciding in some cases with those derived from studies on news content. Thus, it has been pointed out that the phenomenon of immigration is barely present in the plots and characters of television series and that, when it appears, it is represented under distorted and stereotypical prisms (Marcos-Ramos, González de Garay, & Portillo-Delgado, 2019). This image can be a relevant element that explains the formation, reinforcement, and internalization of prejudiced attitudes towards immigrants and ethnic minorities, as indicated by the cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). The content analysis research of fiction television programs has concluded (Mastro, 2009), in short, that there is an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities. Immigrant characters have little dramatic weight in the fictional story

2. However, the analysis of immigrants in the media has been a recurring topic of study in recent years (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1992; Igartua et al., 2005; Igartua et al., 2007; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998; van Dijk, 1989). The research on immigration and ethnic minorities have focused on coverage and informative treatment, indicating that they are one of the factors causing the increase in xenophobia in the country (Igartua et al., 2008; Igartua & Cheng, 2009). The conclusions that these studies have reached is that the image of the immigrant and ethnic minorities in the media linked to socioeconomic and cultural threats, aberration, crime, and violence (Cea D'Ancona, 2004 or van Dijk, 2003). On the other hand, the research on the socio-cognitive effects of the news frames on the subject –the treatment carried out by the media– show that these influence the perception, attitudes and beliefs on immigration in the recipient country (Brader et al., 2008; Domke et al., 1999; Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Igartua et al., 2011).

and often have little relevant roles. In addition to the fact that their presence on television does not correspond to their demographic presence, it should be noted that the way in which they are usually represented is negative. Thus, they tend to be described in a stereotypical way, responding in all cases to similar patterns and frequently having conversations about aspects related to crime or violence (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). They are also often associated with lazy attitudes, low-skilled jobs, difficulties in communicating efficiently, and even low levels of intelligence (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

In recent studies carried out using the content analysis technique, in which the number of immigrant characters that appear in television fiction has been measured, the data is quite worrying. Thus, there is an underrepresentation of this sector of the population (Marcos-Ramos, 2014a, 2014b) in mainstream television fiction broadcast in prime time. A more recent study analyzing only national fiction broadcast in 2016 and the first half of 2017, shows an underrepresentation of immigrants/foreigners, in this case, of 2.4 percentage points with respect to the Spanish demographic reality[3] (Marcos-Ramos et al., 2019).

Failure to show immigrants enhances their social invisibility. The absence of diversity in television fiction can condition their visibility or social vitality, since there is a percentage of the population of Spain that not only does not appear represented but is also invisible to a certain population that may not have contact in their daily life with immigrants/foreigners and whose means of contact with this social group is through the media, especially television, which has the highest level of penetration (Marcos-Ramos, Igartua, Frutos Esteban, Barrios, Ortega Moledano, & Piñeiro Naval, 2014). This lack of media visibility makes it more difficult to establish a parasocial contact between the native population and characters from other origins who have an important presence in Spanish society (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Likewise, previous literature has shown that the image of immigrants/foreigners is usually stereotypical and negative, which can lead to the reinforcement or assimilation of prejudiced attitudes towards them. The role that the media can play may be the opposite, i.e., contribute to change attitudes and beliefs about immigration and promote vicarious contact, which, as has been shown, can have a positive impact on the reduction of prejudice and, therefore, can favor the establishment of more

3. According to the 2017 data provided by the National Statistics Institute, as of January 1, 2017, 46,528,966 inhabitants lived in Spain and 9.5% of the population was registered as a foreigner, which means 4,424,409 people. In the study sample, 7.04% of immigrant/foreign characters were detected. Since the Institute's figures do not differentiate immigrants from foreigners, we chose to group these variables.

harmonious relationships between citizens of different ethnic and national origins (Müller, 2009; Igartua, 2010; Park, 2012).

The scarce representation, the lack of diversity and the negative image that, in general lines, characterizes the representation of the immigrant collective in audiovisual fiction can condition the visibility of diversity in the real population, causing citizens to develop or promote prejudiced and stereotypical attitudes about the migrant community (Igartua et al., 2005; Igartua et al., 2007; Ruiz-Collantes et al., 2006; Van Gorp, 2005; van Dijk, 1989). The absence of immigrant characters also conditions the establishment of the parasocial vicarious contact (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005).

Age

Regarding age, it is worth noting the little diversity that exists, as there is hardly any representation of children or the elderly in audiovisual fiction (Ramos Soler & Carretón-Ballester, 2012). The low representation of older people is especially striking as it is one of the groups that consumes the most television (García de Castro, 2008). From the 70s, especially in the Anglo-Saxon field, there were many studies dedicated to analyzing the representation of society in television fiction. These studies indicated, among other conclusions, that the main and secondary characters were in the age range of 18-50 years and that groups such as the elderly hardly appeared in a residual way (Aronoff, 1974; Northcott, 1975). This is because "age and, more specifically, advanced age, constitutes in a certain sense an 'uncomfortable' sociodemographic variable and the focus of television series tends to be on relatively young adult characters" (Mancebo-Aracil & Ramos-Soler, 2015, p. 1140). Elderly characters usually tend to play secondary and comic roles (Kessler, Rakoczy, & Staudinger, 2004). In this sense, the tendency of fiction with regard to age –and also gender– is to reflect "a society of 'young culture'" (Mancebo-Aracil & Ramos-Soler, 2015, p. 1140), underrepresenting (Signorelli & Bacue, 1999; Signorelli, 2004), and in many ways devaluing collectives such as the elderly.

According to data from the National Statistics Institute, in 2018 the age distribution of the Spanish population was as follows: from 0 to 14 years, 14.83%; from 15 to 29 years, 15.19%; from 30 to 44 years, 22.53%; from 45 to 59 years, 22.59%; from 60 to 74 years, 15.44%, and, finally, from 75 years and over, 9.41%. In this study, age was distributed as follows: child (character representing between 0 and 12 years of age); teenager (character between 13 and 17 years old); young adult (character that can be classified between 18 and 30 years old); mature adult (character between 31 and 64 years old), and elderly (character representing more than 65 years), so if the sample were representative of Spanish society, there should be a greater number of characters between the ages of 30 and 59, as this

sector represents 45.12% of the population. However, the sample analyzed in this research indicates that the characters between 30 and 59 years old represent 79.4%, and the elderly (over 65 years old), only 6.9%, even if those over 60 years old constitute 24.85% of the population.

The National Statistics Institute also offers data on the average age of the population, indicating that in 2018 it is 43.14 years. If separated by gender, the mean for men is 41.82 years and for women, 44.41 years. However, the sample data show that the percentage of men is higher in the elderly age group (7.9% of male characters compared to 5.3% of female characters), which increases the invisibility of elderly women. The average age of the national inhabitants is 43.69 years and that of the foreign resident population in Spain, 35.76 years, according to the 2018 data. In the sample, immigrants/foreigners are not represented in the age groups children or adolescents, and their presence is very small among young adults and those over 65 years of age (3.8% respectively within their nationality). Therefore, the majority is in the range of adults between 31 and 64 years (92.4%), coinciding with the average age data of the foreign population residing in Spain.

Finally, as Mancebo-Aracil and Ramos-Soler point out

> we can conclude that there is a predominant way of making fiction, which consciously or unconsciously, and for reasons exogenous or endogenous to the industry, deforms or omits all plausibility of the plots or their faithful reflection on society at any period, to the detriment of the representation of the elderly or women, for example (2015, p. 1140).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The main objective of this study is to find out the levels of diversity in fiction television series in Spain, analyzing both their content and citizen perceptions. This general goal is subdivided into two purposes: to estimate the representation of diversity in fiction, and to find out the opinion of the Spanish population on gender diversity, sexual orientation and identity, age and geographic origin in national television fiction.

To this end, we posit the following research questions:

RQ1. RQ1. In what proportion do women, the LGBT+ community, migrants and the elderly appear among the characters in the Spanish prime-time series broadcast between 2016-2017?

RQ2. RQ2. Is there a correspondence between the representation of gender, sexual orientation and identity, migration and age, in Spanish prime-time

television fiction broadcast between 2016-2017 and the real data of the Spanish population belonging to these groups?

RQ3. RQ3. Is there a correspondence between the representation of gender, sexual orientation and identity, migration and age, in Spanish prime-time television fiction broadcast between 2016-2017 and the perception that citizens have of the proportion of diversity in such groups?

METHOD

In order to discover diversity in Spanish television fiction, we conducted two field work during the second half of 2018. The first work consisted of preparing a diversity index and applying it to a sample of Spanish TV series episodes from a content analysis previously carried out on television fiction in 2016 and the first semester of 2017. The second field work was applying a national survey to find out the perceptions of citizens on the degrees of diversity in national television fiction.

Index creation and serizes analysis

In this first stage, we developed and validated a *diversity index in audiovisual fiction* to assess the inclusion or not of characters with different characteristics and thus estimate the representation of reality in fiction. According to the previous scientific literature on communication, social studies on gender and migration, we established the degrees of representation of the characters in terms of gender, sexual orientation, age and nationality, based on the reference values of the real distribution of these characteristics in the Spanish population. For each variable, a 5-point scale was generated, where 0 represents less diversity and 4 greater diversity. The average of all the scores of the variables described below applied to both general characters (all characters with at least one line of dialogue) and main characters (defined in the codebook as "developed characters who generally lead the plot or on which most of the plot weight falls, they appear in most of the chapter. It is understood that, depending on the case, there may be more than one protagonist in each episode") or secondary (defined as" less developed characters than the protagonists and who usually contribute to completing either the main plot or the spheres and circles close to the protagonist(s). They continue to have some relevance to the plot and may have their own subplot or a small transformation arc. They do not appear as much as the protagonist(s) characters") generated the fiction diversity index (table 1) that can be applied to audiovisual content.

To validate this index, two coders were trained to analyze the characters of 25 Spanish fiction series. The following variables were analyzed for each character:

- *Type*. 1. Protagonist or secondary; 2. General: protagonist, secondary or background: character that is not developed and is peripheral to the main action of the episode (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). It is irrelevant to the main plot and appears in five scenes or less but says at least one dialogue sentence to another character.

- *Gender*. 1. Male –the physical appearance of the character is male or a man, or he considers himself as such. Therefore, it is presumed to be cisgender–; 2. Feminine –the physical appearance of the character is feminine or of a woman, or she considers herself as such. Therefore, it is presumed to be cisgender–; 3. Other –the physical appearance of the character is identified with another gender outside the masculine/feminine binomial. That is, non-binary (including trans and intersexual people)–; 4. Not identifiable –the coder lacks the information to place the character in one of the previously mentioned categories, it should be a residual category.

- *Sexual orientation*. 1. Heterosexual –towards another sex–; 2. Homosexual to the same sex–; 3. Bisexual –to the male and female sex–; 4. Other – asexuality, pansexuality, demisexuality.

- *Age*. 1. Child –(character represents between 0 and 12 years of age, the coder can identify them by height, way of expressing themselves, activities they practice, clothing according to age, by studying in primary school or mentioning age in the course of the plot)–; 2. Adolescent –character who goes to secondary school, high school or vocational training and who is between 13 and 17 years old, practices activities according to this category such as going out with friends to places for young people; another of the references to which the coder can resort is to observe in the character school or work obligations that can link him/her to this category, or, by the mention of age in the course of the plot–; 3. Adult –between 18 and 64 years, includes: young adult, character that can be classified between 18 and 30 years of age, for going to the university or working, for its language and form of expression, clothing, or for the mention of age in the course of the plot, and mature adult, a character who shows physical or practical characteristics of people between 31 and 64 years of age and can be identified by its jobs and occupations, clothing, or by mentioning the age in the course of the plot–; 4. Elderly –a character who represents more than 65 years; the coder can take as a reference his/her physical appearance, the activities performed, the role in the family nucleus, if he/she belongs to a family.

- *Nationality*[4]. 1. National –A character is national if he/she resides in his/her country of origin; 2. Immigrant or foreigner –foreigner, a person who comes from another country but who is in the foreign country temporarily (studies, vacations or business); immigrant, the one who emigrates, the one who leaves his/her country of origin and arrives in another host country, to settle there without an established return date. The character (or one of his/her parents) was not born in the country in which the main action takes place and establishes in another country for work motivation; 3. Not identifiable –the coder lacks the information to place the character in one of the previously mentioned categories, it should be a residual category.

These variables were added by TV series and transferred to the index previously described.

The corpus of analysis were 24 productions broadcast in 2016 and the first half of 2017, chosen for being Spanish fiction series, excluding international co-productions, on the six national general-interest channels: *TVE1*, *TVE2*, *Antena 3*, *Cuatro*, *Telecinco* and *La Sexta*. From each of them we chose the chapter with the largest audience (Kantar Media, 2018) and the characters were coded from it (Table 2). This gave a final sample of 723 characters.

The mean inter-judge reliability of the five variables using the Krippendorff Alpha statistical coefficient was 0.848. Specifically, for each variable the α value was: type of character = 0.85; character gender = 1; sexual orientation = 0.72; age = 0.85, and nationality = 0.82. The previous values individually, as well as the mean of all of them, are sufficiently high since they comfortably exceed the threshold of 0.70 (Igartua, 2006, p. 221).

4. Since in many occasions it will be difficult to discern the birthplace of the character, the identification of this criterion will be made from a set of traits or attributes to be evaluated jointly or separately: birth of the character (explicit mentions on this aspect in the show); birth of one of character's parents (outside or within Spain, or outside or within the country in which the main action of the narrative takes place), since the possibility of being a second generation immigrant is contemplated (when at least one of the parents has been born outside the country); biological characteristics or phenotypic traits (such as eye shape or skin color); cultural characteristics (such as dressing, character name, or accent).

Indicator	Reference value	Variables		Index score
Gender of the character	50.96% women, according to the 2017 INE data.	Percentage of female characters	<35%	0
			35%-45%	1
			45%-55%	2
			55%-65%	3
			>65%=	4
Sexual orientation	6.9% LGBT people (Lam, 2016)	Percentage of LGBT characters	<2%	0
			2%-5%	1
			5%-8%	2
			8%-11%	3
			>11%	4
Age group	18.7% of people over 65, according to the 2017 INE data.	Percentage of characters over 65 years	<10%	0
			10%-15%	1
			15%-20%	2
			20%-25%	3
			>25%	4
Nationality	9.5% of foreigners in Spain, according to 2017 INE data.	Percentage of foreign/immigrant characters	<5%	0
			5%-8%	1
			8%-11%	2
			11%-14%	3
			>14%	4

Tabla 1. Índice de diversidad en la ficción. Operacionalización de variables.

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Citizen survey

To find out the opinion of the Spanish population on diversity (women, the LGBT+ community, the elderly and immigrants) in television fiction, we conducted 390 telephone surveys (95% confidence, 5% sample error, with a pq of 0.5 for the maximum degree of indeterminacy) through a questionnaire applied randomly on a sample of the total population stratified by Autonomous Community. A group of 10 trained interviewers made calls to randomly generated mobile numbers (random digit sampling) between October 26 to November 9, 2018, until completing the quotas for each region of the country, following the proportions of the last population census. Table 3 shows the distribution of responses by Autonomous Community.

The survey consisted of two blocks of closed-ended questions. The first block included four statements measured on a Likert-type scale with five responses, totally disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and totally agree, with 0 being totally disagreeing and 4, totally agreeing. These four items measure citizens' perception of gender diversity, sexual orientation, age and nationality in Spanish television fiction:

4. The percentage of female characters in Spanish television series corresponds to reality.
5. The percentage of non-heterosexual characters (homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, or other orientations) in the Spanish television series corresponds to reality.
6. The percentage of characters over 65 in Spanish television series corresponds to reality.
7. The percentage of non-national characters (immigrants or foreigners) in Spanish television series corresponds to reality.

The second block included six questions to classify individuals depending on their gender, age, educational level, nationality, Autonomous Community and, finally, their sexual orientation. Prior to the field work, several pilot tests were carried out at different random numbers to verify that the questionnaire was understandable (the wording of the questions and answers) and that the way to carry out the telephone survey was correct (duration, interviewer presentation, etc.).

ID	Series	Episode	No. of characters
1	*Bajo sospecha* (Antena 3, 2015-2016)	S02e02 El oso	25
2	*Buscando el norte* (Antena 3, 2016)	S02e02 Berlín para principiantes	26
3	*El Caso: Crónica de sucesos* (La 1, 2016)	S01e01 El crimen del abrevadero	37
4	*Chiringuito de Pepe* (Telecinco, 2014-2016)	S01e01 Tradición	19
5	*La embajada* (Antena 3, 2016)	S01e01 La mano en el fuego	30
6	*El hombre de tu vida* (La 1, 2016)	S01e02 Recursos	14
7	*Mar de plástico* (Antena 3, 2015-2016)	S02e13 La última palabra	25
8	*El Ministerio del Tiempo* (La 1, 2015-2016)	S02e01 Tiempo de leyenda	24
9	*Olmos y Robles* (La 1, 2015-2016)	S02e03 El misterio del bosque tenebroso	22
10	*El Príncipe* (Telecinco, 2014-2016)	S02e18 Inghimasi	27
11	*La sonata del silencio* (La 1, 2016)	S01e01 Marta	32
12	*Velvet* (Antena 3, 2014-2016)	S04e11 El gran día	34
13	*Vis a vis* (Antena 3, 2015-2016)	S02e13 Líquido	28
14	*Allí abajo* (Antena 3, 2015-present)	S02e07 Mi gran boda vasca S03e03 Carpe diem	29 30
15	*Cuéntame cómo pasó*[5] (La 1, 2001-present)	S17e03 Lo que aprendí S18e19 Por ti contaría la arena del mar	40 30
16	*Águila Roja* (La 1, 2009-2016)	S09e13 Margarita reaparece en la villa y descubre que Gonzalo es Águila Roja	19
17	*La que se avecina* (Telecinco 2007-present)	S09e01 Una sonámbula, un hombre florero y un ácaro en chándal	50
18	*Merlí* (La Sexta, 2016)	S01e01 Los peripatéticos	19
19	*Victor Ros* (La 1, 2015-2016)	S02e02 Centauros de Sierra Morena	26
20	*Pulsaciones* (Antena 3, 2017)	S01e01 La memoria del corazón	27
21	*Sé quién eres* (Telecinco, 2017)	S01e01 Kilómetro cero	21
22	*La casa de papel* (Antena 3, 2017-present)	S01e01 Efectuar lo acordado	28
23	*El final del camino* (La 1, 2017)	S01e01 Bienvenidos a Compostela	40
24	*IFamily* (La 1, 2017)	S01e01 Y de repente un extraño	21

Tabla 2. Descripción de la muestra de series

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

5. In the case of *Cuéntame* cómo pasó, we selected two chapters, the first with 30 and the second with 40 characters, and the results were averaged to have a single unit of analysis added. The same happens with *Allí abajo*, where two chapters were analyzed: one with 29 characters and the other with 30.

Autonomous community	Total population	Percentage	Weighting over 390	Expected answers	Answers obtained
Andalucía	8,409,738	18%	14%	70	65
Cataluña	7,488,207	16%	12%	62	62
Madrid	6,549,979	14%	11%	55	55
C. Valenciana	4,946,020	10,6%	8%	41	41
Galicia	2,703,290	5,8%	5%	23	23
C. León	2,418,694	5,2%	4%	20	20
Canarias	2,177,155	4,7%	4%	18	18
P. Vasco	2,171,131	4,7%	4%	18	18
C. La Mancha	2,033,169	4,4%	3%	17	17
Murcia	1,475,568	3,2%	2%	12	12
Aragón	1,313,463	2,8%	2%	11	11
Baleares	1,166,603	2,5%	2%	10	10
Extremadura	1,070,586	2,3%	2%	9	9
Asturias	1,027,659	2,2%	2%	9	9
Navarra	643,864	0,001%	1%	5	5
Cantabria	581,403	0,001%	1%	5	5
La Rioja	312,83	0,001%	0%	2	7
Ceuta	85,219	0,0002%	0%	1	2
Melilla	84,721	0,0002%	0%	1	1
TOTAL	46,659,299	100%	100%	390	390

Tabla 3. Distribución de los encuestados, según estratificación territorial

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

RESULTS

Diversity index

The main objective of this study is to find out the levels of diversity in television fiction series in Spain, analyzing both their content and the perceptions of citizens. In this section we describe the results of the content analysis carried out on 24 Spanish series to find their diversity index, as well as the results of a national survey of Spanish citizens on the perception of such diversity in the series.

First, we analyzed the characteristics of the characters that appeared in a randomly chosen chapter from the 24 television fiction series in Spain shown in

Table 4. The characteristics (gender, sexual orientation, age and nationality) of the *general* characters (without leading role) and *recurring* characters (main or secondary) were analyzed separately, weighting percentage from 0 to 4 depending on their presentation of reality (see methodological section). In general terms, we find that series such as the comedy about Spanish emigration *Buscando el norte* (2.25), the thriller set in Thailand *La Embajada* (1.38), the series of adventures in seventeenth-century Spain Águila Roja (1 , 38), the fiction series about the magazine *El Caso: Crónica de sucesos* (1.38), the prison drama *Vis a Vis* (1.25), and the romantic melodrama *Velvet* (1.13) obtained the best scores of the proposed index, which means that these series have the highest level of character diversity. Conversely, series such as *Víctor Ros* (0), *La que se avecina* (0.13), *El hombre de tu vida* (0.25), *Chiringuito de Pepe* (0.25), *La Casa de Papel* (0.38) and *Allí abajo* (0.38) obtained the lowest diversity indicators.

On average, diversity in television fiction is set at 0.76 (scale 0-4), which can be defined as a low indicator and would express a limited representation of the real Spanish population on television. More specifically, we see that the worst data in this index is for the sexual orientation of the characters, since on average the generals obtained 0.3 and the recurring ones, 0.4, while immigrants are the ones best represented in the analyzed series with a 1 for the general characters and a 1.24 for the recurring ones. A representative case of this statistic is *La Embajada*, whose analyzed chapter clearly shows an underrepresentation of sex-diverse characters (0) but at the same time a complete representation of immigrant characters (4).

The data in Table 4 thus show a low diversity of gender, sexual orientation, nationality and age in the characters of Spanish television fiction, the most prominent case being sexual orientation, since 19 of the series analyzed did not include a general or recurring character belonging to the LGBT+ collective.

Survey on perception of diversity

Secondly, through a national survey applied during the second semester of 2018, we analyzed the perceptions of Spanish citizens regarding diversity in television fiction. Individuals were asked if the percentage of female characters, LGBT+, over 65 and non-nationals (immigrants and foreigners) corresponded to reality. The respondents (53.1% women) were mostly heterosexual (76.4%), of Spanish nationality (88.7%), with higher (55.9%) or secondary (32.8%) education, and had ages between 18-25 (31%), 26-35 (27.9%) and 36-45 (17.9%).

Series	Generals				Recurring				Index
	g*	so	A	n	g	so	A	n	
Víctor Ros	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La que se avecina	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.13
El hombre de tu vida	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.25
Chiringuito de Pepe	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.25
La casa de Papel	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0.38
Allí abajo	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.38
La sonata del silencio	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0.5
Sé quién eres	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0.5
IFamily	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0.5
Mar de plástico	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.5
Cuéntame cómo pasó	0.5	0	0.5	0	3	0	0.5	0	0.56
Merlí	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0.63
El Príncipe	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0.63
Allí abajo	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0.63
El Ministerio del Tiempo	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	0.75
Bajo sospecha	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0.88
Olmos y Robles	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0.88
El final del camino	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	3	0.88
Pulsaciones	0	1	1	0	2	4	0	0	1
Velvet	0	2	1	1	2	3	0	0	1.13
Vis a vis	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	1.25
El Caso: Crónica de sucesos	0	1	0	4	2	0	0	4	1.38
Águila Roja	0	0	4	2	0	0	1	4	1.38
La Embajada	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	4	1.38
Buscando el norte	2	1	2	4	2	3	0	4	2.25
Promedio	*0.78*	*0.3*	*0.7*	*1*	*1.2*	*0.4*	*0.1*	*1.24*	*0.76*

*g= gender, so=sexual orientation, A=age, n=nationality

Table 4. Diversity index in 24 Spanish TV series

Source: Own elaboration.

On average, Spanish citizens expressed a slight agreement that women (M=2.26, DT=0.91), those over 65 (M=2.23, DT=1.09) or the population LGBT+ (M=2.15, DT=1.04) were correctly represented in the television fiction series, but they neither agreed or disagreed that the percentage of non-national characters (M=2.03, DT=1.05) corresponds to reality. The perceptions means (scale 0-4) show, however, that in no case is there disagreement with the statements proposed in the survey.

In the case of immigrants, it is striking that while citizens perceive them as the least represented, the previous analysis of the series shows them as the most represented in television fiction in Spain. In fact, when we compare the survey responses, we found that said perception is significantly lower in the immigrants surveyed (M=1.73, DT=0.97) than in Spanish (M=2.07, DT=1.05), $t(388)=2.032$, $p<0.05$, $d=0.33$, although this difference is small. No significant differences were found in this response when contrasting the means according to gender, age, education or sexual orientation, so we found that the nationality of the respondent is the only variable that conditions the perception of the representation of immigrants in television fiction.

Regarding the perception of citizens on whether the percentage of non-heterosexual characters (homosexual, lesbian, bisexual or other orientations) in the Spanish television series corresponded to reality, we found that age, $F(6-383)=2.367$, $p<0.05$, and educational level, $F(2.387)=3.145$, $p<0.05$, were variables that affected the responses. Specifically, as we see in Figure 1, those over 65 had a very favorable perception (M=3.09, DT=0.83) of the representation of LGBT+ groups, compared to the average of the rest of the ages in the contrast tests, $t(383)=-2.81$, $p<0.01$. Likewise, we see that the respondents with secondary studies scored significantly higher (M=2.32, DT=1.02) when compared to those with primary studies (M=1.89, DT=1.04) or higher (M=2.11, DT=1.09), as revealed by contrast tests, $t(387)=2.503$, $p<0.05$.

On the other hand, we observe that the perception of citizens on whether the percentage of female characters in Spanish television series corresponds or not to reality was affected only by the gender of the respondent (there were no differences by educational level, nationality, sexual orientation or age). Specifically, women considered that this representation was significantly lower (M=2.16, DT=0.93) than men (M=2.37, DT=0.88), $t(387)=-2.269$, $p<0.05$, $d=0.23$, said difference being small. In the case of the perception on whether the percentage of characters over 65 corresponds to reality, we found that none of the variables studied (educational level, gender, nationality, sexual orientation or age) was decisive in the responses of the surveyed.

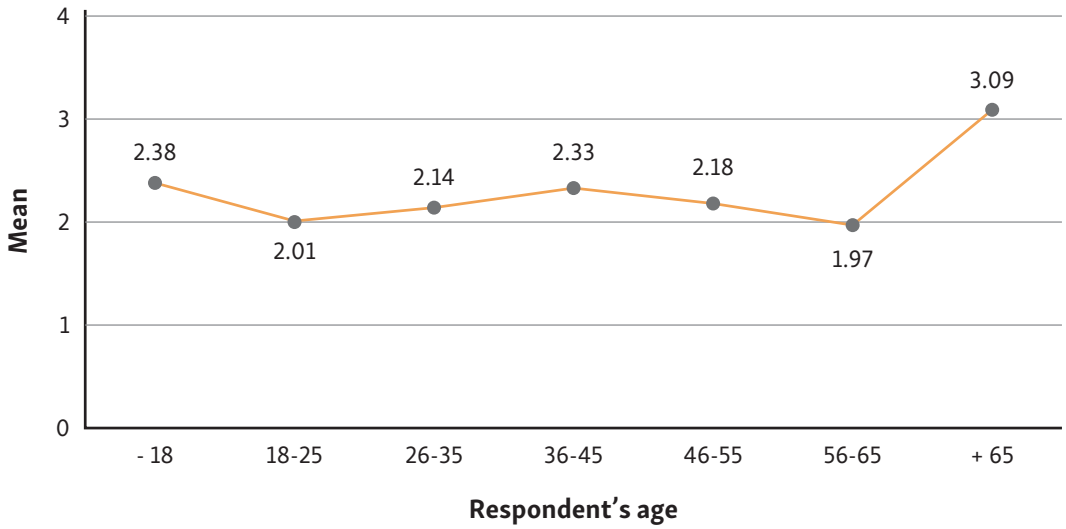

Figure 1. Differences of means in the perception of representation of the LGBT+ group in Spanish television fiction, according to age ranges

Source: Own elaboration.

In summary, we see that the previous data shows us that self-perception played a fundamental role in the responses related to nationality and gender. In other words, migrants and women were more aware of the underrepresentation of these groups in television fiction in Spain when compared to nationals and men, respectively. Likewise, we found that age and educational level affected the perception of the representation of sex-diverse groups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that there are significant differences between television content and its reception in the context of the Spanish television audiovisual. While the data derived from the content analysis shows that there is little diversity of gender, sexual orientation, age and nationality in the characters of Spanish fictions, the data from the population survey shows a significantly better perception of the situation: the mean of the content diversity index is 0.76 out of 4, while that of the perception survey is 2.167 out of 4, more than half. This means that the respondents agree slightly more that the representation of diversity in fiction coincides with the sociodemographic data of the Spanish reality. Therefore, there is no real awareness of the underrepresentation of society in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, or nationality.

These data fill an existing empirical gap and is apart from the previous theory (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999), pointing out that, although television consumption influences its recipients, the effect does not seem to be direct. They agree,

however, that this effect depends largely on the characteristics of the audience. Thus, we found that women were statistically more aware than men of the underrepresentation of these groups in television fiction in Spain. Likewise, the perception of the immigrants surveyed about the precision in quantitative terms of their representation on television is significantly less than that of the Spanish. These data are in line with the studies by Morgan et al. (2009) and Shanahan and Morgan (1999) on the social perception of ethnic minorities.

The low diversity indices found are consistent with previous studies on gender media representation (Aguilar, 2010; Giménez, 2017; Sangro & Plaza, 2010, in the Spanish context; meta-analysis of Rudy, Popova, & Linz 2010, 2011), LGBT+ (Gillig et al., 2017; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018; Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2014), of migrants/racialized (Igartua et al., 2005; Igartua et al., 2007; Igartua et al. , 2011; Mastro, 2009; van Dijk, 1989; Van Gorp, 2005) or people over 65 (Aronoff, 1974; Mancebo-Aracil & Ramos-Soler, 2015; Northcott, 1975).

The article presents two methodological novelties that expand the theoretical baggage of studies on television content and reception. On the one hand, the creation of a diversity index that can be applied to any fiction that takes the character as the unit of analysis and based on four sociodemographic variables: gender, sexual orientation, age, and nationality. On the other, the combination of methodologies (content and reception analysis) that allow a mixed and comparative view of the data.

A limitation to this study is the number of variables included in the diversity index. In future research, it is urged to expand the four characteristics considered in this study, so that variables such as the character's ethnicity (Caucasian, Gypsy, Asian, Arabic, etc.), the type of objectives (work/personal) based on gender, socioeconomic or cultural level, functional diversity, topics of conversation, etc., may be included. The study could also be expanded by adding experimental methodologies, using the audiovisual content of the sample itself and analyzing the effects by manipulating variables such as gender, sexual orientation, age, or nationality of the characters.

In conclusion and at a general level, the fact that there was never disagreement with the statements proposed in the survey stands out (the percentage of characters –female/non-heterosexual/over 65 years of age/immigrants or foreigners– in Spanish television series corresponds to reality), which means that there is no real awareness of the clear underrepresentation in audiovisual terms in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation or nationality.

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