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Gender Equality through Media Investigation
and New Training Insights

Co-funded by the European Union (CERV Programme)
under the Grant Agreement No. 101088073

GEMINI-SCAPES

DETECTING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SERIAL DRAMAS, GENDER ISSUES AND EUROPEAN YOUNG AUDIENCES

Link Campus University, Rome 10-11 April 2025

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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COMMUNICATING GENDER:
ON GEMINI AS A EUROPEAN CULTURAL COUNTER-NARRATIVE

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This paper reflects on GEMINI's communicative practices through social media, addressing the challenges of disseminating research in an era of digital abundance. While the goal of research dissemination is to inform the public about publicly funded activities, breaking through on platforms governed by opaque algorithms and evolving digital media practices has become increasingly difficult.

GEMINI's focus on gender issues and popular series drama offers a fertile ground for both constructive critique and provocative debate. However, the shift towards lower direct engagement and increased "viewer practices" on social media necessitates evaluating GEMINI's social media success by reach rather than engagement.

The counter-cultural politics of GEMINI pose significant dissemination challenges, particularly for young adult audiences on platforms like TikTok. Additionally, recent changes in social media ownership, such as Twitter/X, complicate the presentation of liberal views on gender. GEMINI must balance maintaining research credibility with the need to engage in contemporary political and cultural debates.

This paper does not present best practices but instead offers an open reflection on the difficulties of research dissemination today. By examining GEMINI's communication strategies, we highlight the effectiveness of gender issues and serial drama in online communication while acknowledging the political and industrial challenges that hinder the presentation of liberal views on gender identities. Recent changes in the political climate around gender identities underscore increasing difficulties of presenting research as an open-minded counter-narrative to traditionalist mind-frames around gender.

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SCREENING EQUALITY. THE AUDIOVISUAL TURN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR GENDER-SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION

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In recent years, the European Union has increasingly recognized the role of audiovisual media as a meaningful tool for raising awareness on gender-related issues. Notable initiatives, like the *CharactHer* campaign and the *Media and Audiovisual Action Plan* reflect the EU's proactive efforts in promoting gender equality and challenging stereotypes, while emphasizing the importance of communication strategies in achieving these goals.

Within this framework, institutions across Europe are increasingly incorporating audiovisual media into their communication strategies, blending traditional approaches with innovative ones (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013). Visual communication practices started with the landing of public entities on visual-driven social media—such as Instagram, YouTube, or nowadays TikTok—and followed by the development of visual strategies, which seem to address the need to engage with different publics, particularly the younger segments, combining a strengthened digital identity of public sector communication with a long-term perspective (Luoma-aho & Canel, 2020).

This shift is particularly evident in the domain of gender-related topics, where institutions face the dual challenge of developing communication strategies that reflect inclusivity and diversity, as highlighted in international debates (e.g.: UNESCO, 2020; European Commission, 2020), while enhancing the skills and capacities of public sector professionals to address these issues effectively (OECD, 2021).

Our research builds on previous studies on visual storytelling strategies (Ducci *et al.*, 2019) and gender-sensitive communication practices (D'Ambrosi *et al.*, 2023, 2024; Spalletta *et al.*, 2023), which have highlighted, on the one hand, the need to realign the languages of institutional communication with the codes and styles of social media, and, on the other, a marked mismatch between regulation and communication practices in Italian institutions.

Expanding on this line of inquiry, the study explores the role of audiovisual in shaping gender-sensitive communication strategies within public administrations, and how social media sites of intensive use are used in innovative ways (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok). From a methodological perspective, the research adopts a qualitative approach, carrying out a media content analysis aiming to investigate how institutions disseminate audiovisual messages addressing gender-related issues, from an intersectional perspective. Particular attention is devoted to social media's impactful and successful campaigns—focusing on their narrative structures, thematic emphasis on inclusivity, and the portrayal of gender roles—to uncover *whether* and *how* audiovisual communication drives tangible progress in fostering equality within society.

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CELEBRITY, TEEN DRAMA AND GENDER ISSUES, BETWEEN FICTION AND REAL LIFE: THE CASE OF "EUPHORIA" STARDOM

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The TV series *Euphoria* (2 seasons-ongoing), produced by HBO, is the ideal audiovisual product for investigating the status of celebrities in the contemporary mediascape, where an incessant production of TV series, primarily if produced and distributed by SVOD services and platforms, allows young actors to acquire notoriety and recognizability even in a short time.

For many actors and actresses, *Euphoria* was a springboard to stardom: although some were already known to the public, some underwent a process of celebrification (Rojek, 2001) through the series. In addition to the rise of many young stars, the peculiarity of this audiovisual product lies in the complex and multifaceted treatment of specific themes, such as gender identities, queer identity (Macintosh, 2023), masculinity and patriarchy (Lizana, 2024).

This paper aims to analyze the teen drama in question and the gender perspective by reasoning on two levels: the off-screen life of celebrities and narration and characters, focusing specifically on the characters of Jules (played by Hunter Schafer, a transgender actress) and Rue (played by Zendaya). The research objectives are twofold: a) to understand how these issues are treated and represented, from a narrative but also a visual and aesthetic point of view, within a teen drama; b) to understand how the celebrities who play some of the characters in the series have crossed the narrative events with their private lives.

To do this, we decided to use media content analysis (Macnamara, 2005) of the Instagram profiles of Zendaya and Hunter Schafer and to use content analysis (Schreier, 2012) for the interviews on the topics in question by the two actresses.

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HASHTAGS, HOMEMAKING, AND HEGEMONY: THE TRADWIFE PHENOMENON ON INSTAGRAM

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The "Tradwife" movement represents a multifaceted sociocultural phenomenon thriving in the digital age, where nostalgic domesticity intersects with entrenched gender ideologies. Rooted in conservative Christian values and amplified by Instagram's visual storytelling, Tradwives advocate for a return to mid-20th-century home-making ideals centred on submission, modesty, and religious devotion. Their curated personas blend traditional ideals with modern social media strategies, garnering both admiration and critique. Beyond individual expression, this movement represents a socio-technical imaginary that reflects collective desires for specific social orders.

This paper examines the Tradwife movement through three critical sociological frameworks.

First, it addresses the concept of cultural lag, highlighting the temporal disjunction between rapid technological innovation and slower cultural adaptation. Instagram emerges as a platform where Tradwives romanticize past traditions while leveraging modern technology, exposing tensions between digital modernity and ideological traditionalism.

Second, Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction contextualizes how Tradwife influencers simultaneously adapt to and disrupt prevailing feminist narratives. By rejecting "girlboss" ideals of professional and personal autonomy, they position homemaking as a subversive alternative to neo-liberal success models, while reintroducing traditional gender norms.

Third, the paper explores the movement's intersection with cancel culture, as Tradwives experience both fervent support and public backlash. Their aestheticized portrayals of domesticity spark polarized debates, with critics condemning their perpetuation of regressive stereotypes. This dynamic underscores the fragility of their socio-technical imaginary, where claims of cultural and moral superiority clash with contemporary feminist values. Simultaneously, cancel culture paradoxically amplifies their reach, driving further visibility of their ideology.

Drawing on Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic, the paper unpacks the paradox of Tradwife labor. Despite rejecting capitalist structures, Tradwives' unpaid domestic work and social media engagement reinforce capitalist values of productivity and efficiency, perpetuating systemic economic dependencies. Additionally, the study critiques the racial and class exclusions inherent in Tradwife narratives, which often portray whiteness and privilege as the standard for the ideal home-maker. These performances sustain socio-technical imaginaries of moral and cultural superiority, complicating debates on gender, agency, and modernity.

By analysing the interplay between cultural lag, creative destruction, cancel culture, and gendered labour, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how the Tradwife movement re-imagines and reinforces traditional norms in digital spaces. It contributes to GEMINI-SCAPES' focus on gender and digital media narratives, illuminating broader tensions between tradition, progress, and digital performativity.

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audiences

BETWEEN NORMALISATION AND MINIMAL EFFECTS: GENDER ISSUES AND SERIAL DRAMAS THROUGH THE LENS OF EUROPEAN YOUNG AUDIENCES

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Over the last few years, serial dramas have increasingly become a key cultural space to encounter representations of gender equality and diversity (Sulimma, 2020; Pietaryte & Suzina, 2023), acting both as a *mirror* of traditional gender roles or norms and as a *shaper* of progressive representations (Heim, 2020; Andò &Hipkins, 2022; Cuklanz & Erol, 2021). From the audience perspective, these narratives have a particularly strong impact on young adults, offering them frameworks to interpret questions of identity, belonging, and social values, while also providing opportunities to challenge traditional gender portrayals of youth (Díaz-Fernández, 2022; Masanet *et al.*, 2022).

Drawing from the European project GEMINI–*Gender Equality through Media Investigation and New Training Insights*, this paper presents findings from 15 focus group interviews with 190 high school students across four European countries (Denmark, Italy, Ireland, and Romania). The research explores the ways in which media consumption shapes young people's engagement with gender-related issues, while also examining the connections between serial dramas and attitudes toward diversity and equality within different sociocultural contexts.

The comparative analysis shows a complex dynamic between media consumption and the views of young people, highlighting the importance of understanding media consumption as an interplay of cultural context, narrative framing, and audience agency (Hall, 1980; Livingstone, 2003).

On the one hand, while "diversity" is increasingly seen as normalized and perceived as part of everyday life, the extent and depth of this normalization vary significantly across countries, shaped by local societal attitudes and

media consumption habits. On the other hand, in line with the minimal effects paradigm (Klapper, 1960; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008), the findings reveal that while serial dramas occasionally provoke reflection or challenge stereotypes, they predominantly reinforce pre-existing attitudes rather than generating significant ideological shifts.

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GENDER AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION IN THE "LONG TAIL" OF MEMORY AND IMAGINARIES

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The paper presents the results of a research focused on the current capability of media fruition to activate specific forms of sharing and participation in a media environment characterized by deep mediatization and full hybridization. In a media ecology perspective, transmedia narratives tend to expand horizontally through the process of spreadability, thus fuelling the sedimentation of contents and symbols, that become a starting point for users to negotiate shared meanings and activate co-creative practices. Nonetheless, this same process appears to lack in the capability to create a common shared intra-generational and inter-generational memory and imaginary, moving from a collective imaginary to a fragmentation of imaginaries that refers back to the "long tail". Therefore, media contents no longer seem capable of being an unambiguous tool for dialogue, preservation and sharing with respect to social values.

The research aims to investigate the ways in which specific transmedia narratives manage to create relations of meaning with users even when the latter have not directly accessed the texts. These narratives are used as topics in focus groups, where the participants were selected from inter-generational and intra-generational cohorts, in order to understand whether and to what extent these products are known and still part of shared imaginaries.

Therefore, the paper presents the results of an ongoing part of the research, focused on series produced in the 1990s and 2000s that were considered relevant (and "cult") because of their ability to address and innovate gender-related issues in the media landscape (as for example *Sex and The City* and *Desperate Housewives*). These products were discussed within focus groups in which participants belonged to Generation Z.

The first results of the research show that a new approach to cultural products and consumption seems to be taking shape: the fruition of

meanings related to them appears to be increasingly disconnected from the roots of narratives and, as a paradoxical consequence, increasingly linked to their representations, deprived of meaning. The considered products appear to be still well-known, but in a way that appears deeply disconnected from the reasons of the original success of the series, and especially to the disruptive approach to gender issues.

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PATTERNS OF INDIVIDUALIZATION IN DANISH CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULTS' CONSUMPTION OF AND TASTE IN FILMS AND SERIES

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This paper investigates the patterns of individualization in Danish children's and young adults' media diets of and taste in films and series, nuancing them in relation to gender and social groups. It brings together findings from two distinct research projects, *Reaching Young Audiences* (Independent Research Fund Denmark, 2019-2024) and *CresCine* (Horizon Europe, 2022-2026). Methodologically, the study employs various qualitative data collection methods, including focus group interviews (3 with 8 young-adult participants), individual interviews (20 with Danish children, 4 with young-adults) and mobile ethnographies (20 children).

In doing so, it becomes clear that children and young adults alike have a highly individualised consumption of and taste in films and series, in which they pursue personalised interests to do with, for example, sports, hobbies, or educational background. Something which of course is made possible by the abundance of content and content providers available to them. In this individualised consumption, there are also very marked—and highly stereotypical—gender differences, where men and boys seek out noisy content with big effects, big laughs and "banter", whereas women and girls seek out content containing (romantic) melodrama, big emotions, bling and glamour.

The second study's focus on the impact of group-based (family, friends) media tastes and consumption, shows how these individualized patterns, on the one hand, persist in young-adulthood, but are also broken up by different social dynamics such as media consumption as gift-giving, collective mood-management or re-enforcement of group identities. This highlights the situational character of young people's media tastes, which in fact, persists also among older audiences.

Therefore, we end our contribution with a discussion on the differences and similarities of patterns of tastes and media consumption across generations

and countries for which we draw on a wider range of empirical material and studies the authors have been involved in.

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WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON? TEEN DRAMA BETWEEN MAINSTREAM AND BOLD REPRESENTATIONS

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Over the past 30 years, teen dramas have undergone an evolution impacting the issues addressed, the representation of characters, as well as a significant hybridization with other genres. More recently, we've seen a proliferation of teen series, especially following the emergence of numerous streaming platforms.

This abundance has fostered greater openness and a less stereotyped approach to gender issues and the portrayal of sexuality. On the one hand, this trend seems to reflect younger generations' growing sensitivity towards a more inclusive and diverse representation of gender identities and sexual orientations, better mirroring their everyday experience; on the other hand, this scenario has led to the production of more complex, varied and nuanced teen series, including more "universalist" themes able of appealing to intergenerational audiences.

This phenomenon could be described as a "new Golden Age" of teen series, embracing international titles such as *Sex Education* (2019-2023, Netflix), *Never Have I Ever…* (*Non ho mai…*, 2020-2023, Netflix), *Euphoria* (2019- , HBO), *We Are Who We Are* (2020, HBO e Sky), *Élite* (2018-2024, Netflix), *Heartstopper* (2022-, Netflix), *SKAM* (2015-2017, NRK), *Heartbreak High* (2022-, Netflix). This group of teen series has undeniably influenced Italian teen series production, as we observe in series like *SKAM Italia* (2018-, TimVision, Netflix), *Nudes* (2021-RaiPlay), *5 minuti prima* (2022, RaiPlay), Prisma (2022-2024, Amazon Prime Video), *Adorazione* (2024, Netflix).

This paper aims to explore two issues that we consider crucial for contemporary teen drama and its future developments: *a)* to what extent the hybridization with other genres leads to an "adultification" of audiences and, consequently, to a mainstreaming of content; *b)* how the primary target audience perceives the diversification of gender representations, and the other themes addressed in teen series.

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e|quality

E|QUALITY. STRATEGIES OF INCLUSION IN ITALIAN CINEMA AND TELEVISION. 2000-2023
[pre-constituted panel]

Gender inequalities remain a significant issue in the Italian audiovisual sector, affecting how work is organised "off-screen" and how women are represented on-screen. Women are segregated both vertically and horizontally, often confined to lower-tier positions and excluded from creative leadership roles. Research indicates that when productions adopt more inclusive practices off-screen, on-screen narratives and representations become more diverse and less marginalising for women.

This panel builds upon the findings of the PRIN research project E|Quality-*Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Italian Cinema and Television*, which seeks to understand the mechanisms of exclusion in contemporary Italian film and TV productions. The E|Quality project emphasises that sustainable transformation within the industry is attainable with strategies that ensure the meaningful inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly women and individuals from historically excluded backgrounds.

By integrating media studies with social sciences methodologies—such as the sociology of work and organisational processes—the panel examines critical issues affecting gender equality in the audiovisual sector. These include the evolution of gender dynamics within audiovisual occupations over time, the persistent segregation limiting women's roles and advancement opportunities, and the impact of public policies on workforce diversity and inclusion. Additionally, the panel explores the determinants of women's on-screen representation in different productive contexts.

Through in-depth discussions, the panel aims to highlight existing challenges and propose actionable strategies to foster inclusiveness within the Italian audiovisual sector. The goal is to contribute to developing standards, guidelines, and tools that enhance the industry's capacity to incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion parameters, aligning with the objectives of the E|Quality project. By addressing these issues, we seek to advance our understanding of exclusion mechanisms, ultimately contributing to the sustainable transformation of the industry.

MAPPING GENDER EQUITY IN ITALIAN FILM PRODUCTION NETWORKS: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS (2000–2023)

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Over the past two decades, the Italian film industry has increasingly focused on issues of diversity and inclusion. However, significant gender disparities persist, as Italy remains one of the European countries with the worst gender equality performances in the audiovisual sector (Simone, 2021). Although the most recent Film law (L. 220/2016) introduced gender parity incentives for film production funding in 2017, the consensus is that, overall, progress is slow (Fanchi & Giannattasio, 2022).

This study, conducted as part of the PRIN-funded project E|Quality-*Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Italian Cinema and Television*, provides a quantitative analysis of the gender composition of film crews in Italy, mapping over 100,000 professional roles in 6,763 films from 2000 to 2023. Using Social Network Analysis (SNA) to evaluate recurring collaboration patterns between production companies and professionals, the study explores the role of network centrality and openness in shaping inclusivity (Lutter, 2015; Verhoeven, 2020). Employing the software Centric and the digital archive CineAF, developed at Università Cattolica (Barotsi, Fanchi & Tarantino, 2022), the research considers 11 primary professions (director, screenwriter, editor, DoP, composer, lead producer, set-designer, make-up artist, costume designer, SFX supervisor, sound designer) and analyses additional key variables such as gender and achievements (nominations and awards).

Findings evaluate the presence of women in Italian film crews, identify the professions that are most and least inclusive and the significant correlations between inclusivity score and type of production (in terms of genre, production and distribution companies, budget, public funding, etc.). This research, rooted in the broader objectives of the E|Quality project, contributes to the growing body of knowledge addressing diversity and equity in audiovisual production

and highlights the necessity of comprehensive data-driven approaches to understand and challenge systemic exclusion.

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PREDICTING THE SPEAKING TIME OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ITALIAN FICTION

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Speaking time represents a significant indicator of the structure and relationships among characters within an audiovisual product. Analysing speaking time provides valuable insights for examining the centrality of specific characters within such products.

This contribution explores the relationship between the narrative genre, which categorises and organises audiovisual products, providing the public with a framework for understanding and interpreting their content (Altman, 2004; Creeber, 2015; Grignaffini, 2021) and the speaking time allocated to female characters in Italian fiction produced between 2008 and 2023. We use software developed by researchers at the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, which employs an artificial intelligence system trained for speech recognition using neural networks, including the assignment of each speaker's gender (Doukhan *et al*., 2023, 2018; Pietaryte & Suzina, 2023). Finally, we apply decision tree models estimated using machine learning (ML) techniques, which are better suited than regression models for capturing nonlinear relationships between variables.

Findings reveal that the narrative genre is a crucial predictor of female characters' speaking time and that different genres vary in their receptiveness to various degrees of women's on-screen presence.

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WOMEN OFF-SCREEN: A DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN ITALIAN TV SERIAL PRODUCTION (2000-2023)

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Cultural and creative industries are often perceived as progressive, yet gender inequalities persist across various sectors (Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Lauzen, 2023; Smith *et al.*, 2021). Using data from IMDb on 12,820 episodes and 524,406 credits, this study investigates gender disparities in Italian TV serial production from 2000 to 2023, focusing on women's involvement and employment trends across various professional roles.

Our findings reveal a significant gender gap, with women constituting only about one-third of the workforce. Despite a slight increase in female employment over the years, particularly in below-the-line roles, the overall trend remains marginal. Comparisons with broader Italian audiovisual and economic sectors show that TV serial production is less inclusive. This study highlights the persistence of gender disparities and calls for reevaluating cultural labour practices to increase women's meaningful participation (Bielby, 2009; Percival, 2020).

As part of ongoing research, we aim to explore additional factors influencing the gender gap, offering insights for fostering equality in media production and guiding policy interventions.

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gender equality

BRIDGING THE GAP: TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Although women constitute the majority in higher education institutions (HEIs), their persistent under-representation among academics highlights the deep-rooted gender inequalities that persist within academia.

This study examines the role of management's commitment to gender equality in addressing gender disparity and offensive behaviours in HEIs. Drawing on psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) and perceived organizational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986), we conducted two studies in a public HEI. Study 1 (n=120) explored students' perceptions of management's engagement with gender equality, while Study 2 (n=190) analysed staff perceptions regarding work-life balance culture (WLBC).

Findings reveal that women reported higher levels of gender inequality but no significant gender differences in offensive behaviours. A strong management commitment to gender equality and WLBC correlated with reduced gender inequality. However, staff with care-giving responsibilities faced heightened risks of offensive behaviours, echoing findings on work-family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

This study aligns with broader discussions on the structural barriers women face in HEIs (Morley, 2013), underscoring the importance of fostering inclusive environments. By prioritizing gender equality and supportive cultures, HEIs can mitigate disparities and promote academic success for all.

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SEXISM IN SCIENCE:
PARALLELS BETWEEN "LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY" AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN PORTUGUESE UNIVERSITIES

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This paper analyses the Apple TV series *Lessons in Chemistry*, highlighting the narratives of prejudice and gender stereotypes present in its first season. The focus lies on the representation of sexism within the scientific field and its connection to data and research on gender inequality in Portuguese universities.

Initially, we investigated the prejudices faced by the protagonist, scientist Elizabeth Zott, her undervaluing as a scientist because she is a woman and her dismissal due to her pregnancy. The protagonist also presents conflicts due to her firm position and the expectations of submission imposed by a male-dominated environment. Subsequently, we explored the series as a fictional representation of social dynamics, drawing comparisons between the prejudices experienced by the protagonist, set in the 1950s, and the current experiences of scientists in Portugal.

The study draws parallels between the issues raised in *Lessons in Chemistry* and the challenges faced by Portuguese female researchers, highlighting the persistence of sexism in the scientific field, despite social and cultural advances over time. The methodology combines filmic-comprehensive analysis of the serialised narrative with secondary data analysis, providing a critical reflection on the intersections between fiction and reality.

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NEW GIRLS: DIVERSITY, SISTERHOOD AND COMEDY IN "FÁCIL"

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The Spanish comedy series *Fácil* (Movistar Plus+, 2022) follows the lives of a group of disabled women as they navigate living together in an assisted apartment. Rooted in Spain's current inclusion strategies, the series re-imagines the familiar comedy trope of young friends cohabiting by addressing more complex themes of sexuality, personal autonomy, and self-expression.

This paper analyses *Fácil* through an intersectional lens. First, we examine the assisted apartment as a liminal space—simultaneously a site of self-determination and affection yet constrained by institutional control and surveillance. Second, we evaluate the effectiveness of the comedy genre in representing diversity. While the series is adapted from a book with more overtly radical political discourse, its television adaptation shifts focus. By emphasizing diverse casting and employing a nuanced mise-en-scène, we argue that *Fácil* successfully conveys the intricate experiences of its protagonists.

In conclusion, we advocate for the significance of integrating the aspirational themes of sisterhood and alternative family structures, common in television comedies, into narratives that are more self-consciously intersectional. This approach enriches the representation of marginalized identities while maintaining the genre's appeal.

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INCLUSION AND PREVENTION OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN SERIAL DRAMAS

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This study develops a multidimensional data matrix to analyse the impact of European serial narratives on young people's gender perceptions and their potential in preventing inequalities. Adopting an integrated methodological approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, the research explores the role of audiovisual productions as instruments of cultural signification, capable of promoting inclusive models and challenging entrenched stereotypes.

The analysis highlights how intersectional representations in serial dramas can raise young audiences' awareness of gender equality and social justice, fostering the development of greater critical consciousness and inclusive attitudes. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of media literacy in enhancing the effectiveness of such narratives, enabling young people to critically interpret the messages conveyed by the media.

The study emphasizes the need for production and regulatory policies oriented toward cultural responsibility, urging European institutions and the creative industry to adopt practices that encourage the production of ethically conscious and socially relevant content. From this perspective, the research provides practical recommendations for integrating principles of equity and inclusivity into the creative and regulatory processes of the European audiovisual sector.

Through this analysis, the study contributes to the academic and institutional debate on the intersection of media, education, and social justice, highlighting the transformative potential of serial narratives as tools for cultural and pedagogical intervention.

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(g)locality

VARIATIONS ON A (GENDER) THEME. "SKAM" AND THE DIFFERENT LOCAL VERSIONS OF A COMING OUT

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In my talk, I would like to address the issue of gender representation in the context of teen and young adults' seriality. The case study will be the TV series *SKAM*. As it is known, *SKAM* is a Norwegian series that has been made into several local adaptations. Due to specific production and distribution features, *SKAM* has become a real teenage phenomenon and not only. The transmedia storytelling distributed across multiple platforms, as well as the narrative depth of the characters' experiences, have contributed to making the series a highly recognizable product while still having the specificity of local adaptations.

The talk aims to analyse the role of the character of Isak Valtersen (*SKAM*) and the way in which the different local versions (Norway, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium), depict the coming-out of the character. The analysis of this episode will allow us to compare the different ways in which the individual local versions of the Norwegian franchise have adapted and translated the gender issue, and to examine the reception and cultural impact of this episode analysing user interactions (mainly via YouTube).

The paper thus has two goals. The first is to grasp specific features of the series that led to the retention of such a large and geographically differentiated audience. The second is to capture any national specificities in the representation and reception of gender-related issues.

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TRANSNATIONAL DIFFERENCES:
THE REPRESENTATION OF LGBTQIA+ TEENS IN "SKAM"

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Starting almost 10 years ago in Norway as a web series produced by the public national broadcast NKR, *SKAM* has become a format with national versions all over Europe. The format aims to represent the teens, their networks and friendships, and their sentimental and sexual relations.

In each version, one of the seasons is dedicated explicitly to teens who discover or recognize their identification as LGBTQIA+, dealing with homo-transphobia, the complexities of coming out in the digital age, and eventually, the consequences in terms of mental health. In most cases, the narrative assumes the form of an actual "queer text" (de Lauretis, 2011), dealing with the ruptures in the visual fabric and with the production of a queer orientation (Ahmed, 2006) that derives from the need for a new reading of personal experiences. Faithful to the public service nature of the original project, all the narratives use a didactic approach to the sensitive issues; however, the format lies upon the experiences of the actual teens from each country and of specific consultants to create characters to whom the public can easily relate.

The specificities of each national adaptation allow a comparison between gender positions and identifications among teens. The paper will focus specifically on the representation of desire and gender identities in Spain, with Cris (Irene Ferreiro García, 2nd season), in Italy, with Martino (Federico Cesari, 2nd season), in France, with Max (Sohan Pague, 7th s.), and in Germany, with David (Lukas von Horbatschewsky, 3rd s.) and Isi (Eren M. Güvercin, 7th s.).

The comparatist visual analysis of the characters' representation and their trajectories, according to the approach proposed by de Lauretis for queer texts, will allow us to delve into the performative nature of gender identification (Butler, 1990) and how this configures identity for teen spectators. In this way, the paper will also focus on the intersectional transfeminist lens that produced part of the *SKAM* narrative all over Europe, face to face with the idea of personal experience (hooks) as a value for the circulation of knowledge and relational energies among characters and spectators.

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IDEALISM, REALISM, OR SOMETHING ELSE. ROMANIAN TEENAGERS AND GENDER IN FOREIGN SERIAL DRAMA

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Romanian teenagers benefit from one of the best internet connections in Europe, hence endless possibilities to access digital content, ranging from social media to streaming.

A series of focus groups and an online survey carried out as part of the GEMINI project shows a clear preference for foreign serial dramas. While this may be due to ease of access (through widely available streaming networks), it may also relate to curiosity and openness to other cultures. And this curiosity may well help achieving a more gender inclusive future generation, as there is a clear need for gender studies and gender discussions in Romania (Bucur, 2021). Serial dramas being used as social prompts may lead to gender-related aspects being discussed more openly, as an outside reference instead of a direct experience.

In some cases, responses suggest that serial dramas may influence personal choices and behaviour, at least on the short term, particularly in how viewers interact with others or perceive themselves, a view that is supported by literature (Cabassi, 2023). Serial drama characters are "read" through the lens of personal history and beliefs, they are imbued with certain characteristics, necessary or desired for analysis and discussion. Such characteristics may be found in "realist" serial dramas, such as *Breaking Bad*, or those bordering the fantastical (*Wednesday*). It is interesting that the "realist" drama referenced includes toxic masculinity and violence, where the woman is abused and vilified (Joy, 2019; Work, 2016) while women are the main topic and the powerful characters in the imagined world. It is the imagined world that dares to defy established norms and integrate the Other, whether we read Wednesday Addams as a woman, as a differently-abled person (by reason of witch-like qualities or social awkwardness), or simply as a teenager.

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STREAMING GENDER: TRANSNATIONAL TALES OF NON-WESTERN DRAMAS ON NETFLIX

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The research examines the representation of gender dynamics in serial narratives produced in non-Western countries and distributed through Netflix, the most influential global digital platform (Lotz, 2021). Owing to the prominent role of television series as both entertainment and cultural platforms that facilitate societal engagement—particularly among young adults—and critical reflection on contemporary social issues, they represent an ideal medium for examining the social and political challenges faced by youth today (Boccia Artieri & Fiorentino, 2024).

The study focuses on three series of one season each from Netflix Italy's catalogue: *A Love So Beautiful* (China), *Sparta* (Russia), and *Love 101* (Turkey). The audiovisual products differ in their category: a romantic comedy series, a dramatic thriller and a teenage drama, respectively. Serial dramas share the common setting of school environments featuring adolescent protagonists.

The main objective is to understand how gender-related issues and gender roles are narrated in countries with political and cultural systems different from the so-called "Western" Europe. The study integrates qualitative content analysis (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992) and visual analysis (Rose, 2022) to evaluate 48 episodes. The methodology examines how these series articulate and mediate gendered identities (Harvey, 2023) towards a potentially globalized audience. For each product, an analytical-qualitative analysis sheet (Bartoletti *et al.*, 2020) was developed to explore how narratives surrounding gender-related issues, gender roles, and potential stereotypes (COM/2022/105) are constructed, from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) while considering the historical and cultural contexts of the countries under analysis.

This research seeks to deepen the understanding of identity phenomena associated with the social construction of gender (Butler, 1990), extending the analysis beyond the cultural framework characteristic of Western perspectives and neoliberal feminism (Vergès, 2020). It aims to bridge the local dimensions

of serialized audiovisual production with the global distribution context, focusing on younger generations as fictional protagonists and potential real-world consumers of the cultural products under examination.

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identities

«SEI UN MITO PER ME!». ADOLESCENCE, NERD CULTURE, AND MASCULINE IDENTITY IN TV SERIES "HANNO UCCISO L'UOMO RAGNO"

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From basement-dwelling outcasts to Silicon Valley icons, nerd culture has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent decades. While this evolution has been extensively documented in American media, its emergence in Italian popular culture remains largely unexplored. This study examines the emergence and representation of nerd (and geek) culture in Italian television, focusing on the TV series *Hanno ucciso l'uomo ragno*. Through a detailed analysis of this show, we uncover how Italian media is reimagining traditional concepts of masculinity and adolescence through the lens of nerd and geek culture, revealing a fascinating intersection of global cultural trends and distinctly Italian sensibilities.

The study begins by tracing how nerd and geek identity evolved from social stigma to cultural phenomenon. This transformation has reframed the nerd archetype from ridiculed outcast to celebrated innovator, epitomized by tech visionaries like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. This cultural shift gained momentum as traditionally nerd-associated practices—from comics and gaming to cosplay—moved from the margins to the mainstream, establishing a vibrant and recognized community. Within this community, masculine identity emerges as a crucial area of investigation. Research has revealed how nerd culture engages with masculinity in complex and multifaceted ways. While distancing itself from traditional markers of masculine status like physical prowess and athletic achievement, the subculture develops its own distinctive expressions of masculine identity. These alternative forms of masculinity centre on technological expertise, intellectual achievement, and mastery of subcultural knowledge, establishing new hierarchies of status and power that both challenge and reinforce conventional gender dynamics.

Using *Hanno ucciso l'uomo ragno* as a primary text, this research explores how contemporary Italian television adapts geek culture through a distinctly local lens. The series, named after 883's iconic 1992 song, blends nostalgic

elements of Italian pop culture with broader concerns about masculine identity in crisis. Our analysis reveals how the show repurposes familiar themes of social alienation and outsider status from global geek narratives to examine uniquely Italian anxieties around modern manhood.

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"PRISMA": FLUID IDENTITIES AND MARKETING DYNAMICS IN AN ITALIAN DRAMA SERIES

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The Italian series *Prisma* (Amazon Prime, 2022-) offers a narrative centred on adolescence and identity. Addressing themes of gender fluidity and queer representation, the series seeks to engage a young adult audience while reflecting broader societal debates on diversity and inclusion.

This paper examines *Prisma* as a case study to explore the interplay between its narrative focus, production context, and the broader dynamics of contemporary streaming platforms. Created by Ludovico Bessegato, the series aimed to portray identity as a fluid and multifaceted construct, resonating with societal shifts toward more inclusive representations. The analysis considers the strategies employed to position *Prisma* within the Italian and global media landscape, reflecting on how these choices may have shaped audience perceptions and expectations. Additionally, it explores how the narrative's focus on gender identity aligns—or clashes—with the broader commercial imperatives of global streaming platforms.

A significant focus is placed on the public debates sparked by the series' abrupt discontinuation after two seasons and the challenges faced by productions that diverge from mainstream conventions. These debates underline the tension between fostering innovative storytelling and the market pressures that increasingly mediate the space for cultural experimentation. The controversy also raises questions about the long-term sustainability of series addressing non-normative identities.

By situating *Prisma* within broader discussions on serialized dramas as cultural texts and commercial products, this paper examines the role of marketing in shaping narratives and their reception. In doing so, it highlights the opportunities and constraints that influence the representation of gender fluidity and queer identities in contemporary media, as well as their impact on young audiences negotiating gender-related messages.

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GENDER NARRATIVES AND SERIAL PRODUCTION: THE CASE OF THE TV-SERIES "NUDES"

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For some time now, storytelling of television series has proven its ability to reflect and, in some cases, anticipate the growing public attention on sensitive issues such as inclusion and the fight against gender stereotypes (Msofu, 2024). In the past, shows like *Beverly Hills 90210*, *The O.C.*, or *Dawson's Creek*—just to name a few—had already portrayed the youth universe, highlighting its complexity and offering young people identity models with which they could relate. Indeed, television series are increasingly becoming a complex narrative device that goes beyond its original scope to entertain, establishing as a means to tell—and perhaps better understand—the dynamics of contemporary youth.

Recent television productions like *Skam*, *Sex Education* and *Euphoria* (Masanet *et al.*, 2022) have gained widespread popularity by tackling often controversial topics such as sexual education and gender issues (Sundet, 2020), placing at the centre of their narratives the relational struggles of a generation forced to deal with a constantly changing reality.

In this context, the proposed contribution focuses on the analysis of the first season of *Nudes*, the adaptation of a Norwegian series centred on the stories of several teenagers who are victims of revenge porn and gender-based bullying, produced by Rai Fiction in 2021. The illegal distribution of sexually explicit videos is the main theme explored in the narrative, which illustrates the impact of such events on the lives of the young protagonists. In the ten episodes of the first season, one of the recurring themes is related to gender differences, as the consequences of sharing intimate images online affect girls much more severely than boys.

In the various episodes, it is highlighted how the non-consensual circulation of private content has more severe repercussions for adolescent girls than for boys, given that the young female protagonists navigate social contexts still marked by deep power imbalances. For girls, the circulation of intimate

images effectively becomes a tool of social control, materializing in the threat of stigma and subsequent social exclusion.

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REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITIES IN "ETHOS": AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF TURKEY

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This paper explores with an intersectional lens (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1991; Carastathis, 2016; Collins & Sirma, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006) the representation of gender, class, ethnicity and religion in Turkey in a Netflix series, *Ethos* (*Bir Başkadır* in Turkish), a ground-breaking drama that delves into contemporary Turkey's socio-political and cultural intricacies. The series provides a nuanced depiction of different social groups' complex intersections of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

This paper seeks to demonstrate how *Ethos* represents the lived realities of various social groups and the tensions between them within Turkey's fragmented sociocultural and political context.

Through the interconnected stories of its characters, *Ethos* offers a layered narrative on gender roles and violence, rural and urban divides, secular and religious worlds, and majority-minority dynamics. The series' portrayal of working-class and religious individuals, elites, ethnic Kurds, and others reveals the multiplicity and complexity of social groups' identities and the socio-political forces shaping them.

The paper pays particular attention to how the series challenges and reproduces stereotypes. The analysis focuses on gender representations and how the series juxtaposes veiled, pious women with secular urban women. Furthermore, it explores the depiction of ethnic minorities, including Kurds, and their negotiation of identity within a dominant Turkish nationalist framework, highlighting the intersections of ethnicity and marginalization. Using an intersectional theoretical framework, this paper analyses the ways in which *Ethos* both reproduces and disrupts dominant narratives about gender, class, ethnicity, and religion in Turkey. It also explores the implications of the series being produced for a global platform like Netflix, which necessitates balancing local authenticity with international marketability, imposing a major reproduction of stereotypes.

The discussion concludes by situating *Ethos* within broader debates about representation, diversity, and media globalization.

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inclusion

GENDER DIVERSITY REVALUED: A COMPARISON OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AVMSD IN LITHUANIA, SPAIN, AND SWEDEN IN TERMS OF DIVERSITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

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The European Audiovisual Media Services Directive (hereafter the Directive) recommends that all countries ensure cultural and linguistic diversity. Although most European countries value gender equality as central to democracy, there are very few explicit measures to ensure equality both on and off screen. From a commercial perspective, streaming platforms have introduced diversity schemes, but these are mostly related to representations in the televised content.

We undertake a comparison of how the Directive is implemented in Spain, Lithuania and Sweden and which values are emphasized. We focus in particular on how the new regulations affect gender equality and diversity goals. One example is how the directive accommodates the implementation of taxes or funding obligations on streaming platforms, which could level out the market and promote minority productions. While Spain has chosen to implement the financial support system and to allocate a percentage of that to women, Sweden and Lithuania have chosen not to do so.

In all three countries, national law stipulates that audiovisual products may not incite violence, hatred or discrimination on grounds of age, sex, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Yet, this is mostly delegated to public service.

In Sweden, the notions of freedom of speech and freedom of establishment motivate non-regulation of commercial players. The market is seen as a good provider of various opinions and perspectives in line with the democratic value of equality.

In Spain, diversity is mostly considered in terms of language and geographical origin. While the public broadcaster has an equality observatory, its role is limited to recommendations. While the law qualifies the broadcasting

of a discriminatory content as a serious offence, no rectification mechanisms are specified in case these criteria are not met through self-regulation.

In Lithuania the transposition of the Directive into the National Law implies a process of interpretation of the key terms and ideas, which is not always transparent and critically reflected upon. For example, general democratic values like "diversity" and "freedom of speech" come into conflict with nationally defined values of "morality" and "security".

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MISSING WORDS IN TV SERIES.
ABOUT MIS(S)REPRESENTATION IN TV SERIES IN ENGLISH

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This research investigates the representation of lesbian identities in contemporary television series through a transdisciplinary lens, integrating discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, media studies, and gender studies among the many possible critical stances. This multifaceted approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how language use and socio-cultural practice, intersects with media production and audience reception (Bednarek, 2018; Coupland, 2007).

The study combines the linguistic analysis of television scripts with critical discourse analysis of dialogue to identify patterns of inclusion and exclusion related to lesbian representation. Specifically, it examines the frequency and contextual use of the term "lesbian", exploring both its presence and absence in dialogue, and analysing how related concepts of gender and sexuality are constructed linguistically.

This analysis is contextualised within broader research on television's role as a cultural force, recognising its potential to both reflect and shape societal attitudes (Lippi-Green, 2012). The research draws on theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics, including language intensity (Bowers, 1963, 1964) and the concepts of censoring and censorship (Allan and Burridge, 2006), to interpret scriptwriters' linguistic choices and their potential impact on audience perceptions (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2011).

Preliminary findings often reveal a disparity in the representation of gay and lesbian identities, with "gay" being significantly more prevalent. This disparity prompts an investigation into the underlying socio-cultural factors influencing these linguistic choices and producing pragmatic effects (Parsemain, 2019). By combining diverse perspectives, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between language, media, and identity in contemporary television, contributing to a deeper understanding of how television can both perpetuate and challenge existing social norms around gender and sexuality (Melchiorre, 2022, 2023, 2024). The study ultimately seeks

to understand how these representations contribute to the broader social construction of lesbian identity.

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BEYOND "THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT": GENDER, IDENTITY, AND INCLUSIVITY IN THE ITALIAN CHESS COMMUNITY

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The practice of chess represents a rich social universe, deeply embedded in cultural relations, power dynamics, and identity nuances. In recent years, this activity has experienced a remarkable resurgence, largely driven by two interconnected phenomena: the success of the television series *The Queen's Gambit* and the increasing accessibility of online platforms. The series, in particular, has transformed chess into a cultural touchstone, introducing a global audience to its intellectual depth while challenging traditional gender norms in a historically male-dominated field. By presenting a compelling female protagonist, it has sparked new dialogues on the intersections of gender, identity, and inclusivity in chess.

This research examines the Italian chess community with a focus on these intersections, while also addressing the significant policy introduced by FIDE (the International Chess Federation) in 2023 concerning transgender participation in chess events. The new provisions, outlined in the document FIDE Regulations on Transgender Chess Players, temporarily exclude individuals transitioning from male to female from participating in women's events, pending further analysis. These regulations have provoked intense public and community reactions, providing an important backdrop for analysing inclusivity in the chess world.

The research methodology employs semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted during chess tournaments and gatherings, alongside a digital ethnography of online spaces dedicated to chess practices. The study aims to outline the emerging tensions and opportunities, investigating the role that cultural phenomena like *The Queen's Gambit* play in transforming chess's social universe.

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DECONSTRUCTING DIVERSITY IN ITALIAN SERIAL DRAMAS: THE ENHANCED VALUE OF A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

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In recent years, Italian academic debate has often questioned the opportunity to complement traditional media analyses—primarily inspired by qualitative logics—with a more distinctly quantitative approach. This shift aims to measure trends and patterns, allowing for comparison with major international reports—see, for instance, the numerous reports regularly released by the EAO (European Audiovisual Observatory) on various areas of investigation within the European audiovisual market, such as gender equality, public funding, the circulation of European works, and the use of SVOD platforms.

As a result, numerous research projects, both national and international, have increasingly incorporated quantitative methodologies for analysing audiovisual products (films, serial dramas, etc.), (e.g.: the *Atlante del giallo* and the *E-Quality* PRIN projects) and several international conferences have been dedicated to data-driven approaches in film and television studies (e.g.: the 13th Media Mutations International Conference). Moreover, scholarly research adopting these methods has been published in both national and international journals and books (e.g.: Fanchi & Giannattasio, 2022; Barotsi *et al.*, 2023; Rocchi & Avezzù, 2023).

This paper take shape within this theoretical framework and builds upon key findings from research on gender issues in Italian crime drama (Re & Spalletta, 2023a, 2023b), carried out by the Authors within the Observatory on Gender & Diversity in Audiovisual Media—established as part of the GEMINI project. Beyond individual results, these studies have highlighted significant biases inherent in a purely quantitative approach.

Firstly, measuring women's employment in behind-the-scenes roles certainly provides a useful parameter for comparison—both across different television genres and other media products. However, simply counting the number of women in professional roles risks offering a limited understanding of

the phenomenon. Research shows that women are not only underrepresented compared to men, but their participation also tends to be more sporadic, while male employment follows a markedly stable pattern.

Secondly, quantitative approaches—perhaps even more than qualitative ones—require the certainty of data accuracy. Yet, our research has exposed the many uncertainties stemming from the exclusive reliance on major public databases (such as IMDb), which often contain significant inaccuracies or outright errors. Similarly, collecting data from opening credits does not always resolve the challenge of recoding professional roles, which may be labelled differently across various series while referring to the same professional function.

Lastly, the analysis of on-screen representation has revealed an additional bias linked to coding activities. Defining coding variables is, in fact, an inherently qualitative action, as it cannot be separated from the analysis (that is: the knowledge and understanding) of the socio-cultural context in which the audiovisual content is produced and/or refers to. While this approach may limit data comparability, particularly in relation to major international reports, it proves highly effective when focusing on comparisons within a single country or between socio-culturally comparable contexts. A paradigmatic example of this bias is the categorization and sub-categorization of diversity (aging, race, ethnicity, etc.).

In conclusion, our research confirms that while it is both useful and necessary for audiovisual studies to integrate quantitative approaches, measuring phenomena also requires blending methodologies. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods—within a mixed-methods perspective (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2015)—represents the most effective and widely recognized analytical approach in contemporary media research.

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media literacy

DIFFERENT SOCIAL REALITIES, SIMILAR CHALLENGES IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ON USING SERIAL DRAMAS TO TEACH GENDER EQUALITY

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Starting from 42 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers and trainers in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania, we present the challenges of teaching gender equality using serial dramas, in (apparently) functional institutional frameworks.

The theoretical approach is informed by the diffusion of innovation research, with a focus on the challenges encountered by change agents (Rogers, 2003) in promoting the idea in communities with different social realities.

More specifically, we focus on the role of serial dramas and of visionary high school teachers and trainers in shaping a better, kinder future for all of us, despite gender differences or sexual orientations. In all countries, teachers interviewed consider they have a responsibility in educating young adults about gender equality and are open to using new teaching instruments such as popular serial dramas. All our interviewees have a genuine interest in promoting gender equality, yet they fear socio-cultural resistance to gender topics from students, parents, other teachers and even from school management. In addition, teaching gender topics with the help of serial drama may encounter institutional challenges, such as different copyright provisions and available technical infrastructure, as the teachers interviewed revealed.

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PLAYING (ON THE COUCH) WITH IDENTITY. LEARNING GENDER ROLES THROUGH NETFLIX AND BEYOND

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This contribution focuses on the importance of TV series in the socialization and education of adolescents regarding gender roles. Informal contexts have long been increasingly significant in the acquisition of gender roles. Media, through the effectiveness of their languages and their ability to captivate, constitute important sources of information (L'Engle *et al.*, 2006) and daily propose models that influence the development and growth of adolescents and, more broadly, young people. These individuals, in turn, spend much of their daily lives with and within media environments (Tirocchi, 2024a).

Moreover, the media offer a complexity and plurality of perspectives, often presenting a less biased view than what schools and families are typically able to provide (Masanet & Soto-Sanfiel, 2024). These dynamics are even more significant given the substantial absence of institutionalized programs on gender and sexuality education, at least in the context of Italy.

In this framework, the extraordinary popularity of new audiovisual formats such as TV series, distributed through on-demand platforms like Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video, or Now TV, has undoubtedly opened new avenues for the representation of various types of subjectivities (consider LGBTQIA+ identities) and for fresh portrayals of femininity, to name just two examples (Fedele & Masanet, 2021).

Building on these two strands of representation, this contribution will provide examples of how TV series, as part of pop culture, can serve as a foundation for the development of joint projects in media education and in gender and sexuality education (Tirocchi, 2024b).

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EDUCATION AND INCLUSION: THE USE OF WORDS AND BEST PRACTICES IN SERIAL NARRATIVES AS A TOOL FOR PREVENTING INEQUALITIES

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This study aims to investigate the pedagogical effectiveness of serialized narratives as tools to promote education on diversity and prevent gender inequalities among younger generations. Through an integrated matrix of quantitative and qualitative data, the analysis explores significant examples of audiovisual products addressing themes such as gender equality, identity, and inclusivity. The research focuses on the educational potential of these narratives within the school context, highlighting their role as catalysts for cultural change.

The findings reveal that integrating inclusive audiovisual content into educational curricula can foster greater critical awareness among students, contributing to the deconstruction of gender stereotypes and the promotion of more open and inclusive thinking. In particular, the consumption of serialized dramas that authentically and critically portray the dynamics of diversity proves to be an effective tool for stimulating deep reflection and attitudinal changes.

Considering the evidence, the study proposes an innovative educational model that envisions a synergy between schools, audiovisual producers, and cultural institutions. This model aims to enhance the impact of serialized narratives within formal education, promoting awareness of issues related to equity and inclusivity. The goal is to foster the development of a more equitable social culture capable of addressing contemporary challenges linked to gender discrimination and diversity.

The objective of this research is to contribute to shaping a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach that employs serialized dramas as educational tools, underscoring their capacity to generate far-reaching cultural and social transformations.

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GEMINI EDUCATIONAL TOOLKIT:
AN INTERACTIVE DIGITAL PLATFORM
FOR APPROACHING GENDER ISSUES IN SERIAL DRAMAS

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Research on media education and studies on visual culture converge in emphasizing the centrality of educational pathways that foster awareness and critical reflection on the content shaped and transmitted by media. Educating about media therefore means considering their languages both as expressive forms to analyse and deconstruct and as creative tools capable of enhancing individuals' imaginative capacities and improving ways of living together. Indeed, education about gender issues is fundamental to addressing systemic inequalities and fostering a more inclusive society. By empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools to critically engage with gender representations, such education acts as a catalyst for social innovation, enabling cultural transformations that promote equity and collective well-being.

The GEMINI Educational Toolkit, hosted by the GEMINI Interactive e-platform, was designed to foster the development of a learning and practice community. It aims to enable in-depth exploration of gender-related issues through the lens of serial dramas, approaching to creative writing, and ultimately engaging young adults to become ambassadors for gender equality in their everyday lives.

The toolkit is structured into three main teaching units aimed at supporting high school students and teachers to: 1) recognize the most recurrent gender stereotypes and detect how serial dramas deal with them; 2) learn the basics of serial dramas' languages and formats (productive, narrative, technical and ethical aspects); 3) approach the writing and narration techniques of serial dramas.

More in detail, the GEMINI Educational Toolkit is designed in a modular way in order to realize a direct and interactive learning experience. The platform, divided into four educational units, offers a structured organization of content and is inspired by the principles of active learning. The first unit delves into the theme of the narrative of stereotypes in serial dramas, alongside a series of case studies that analyse in detail how some of the most popular European serial dramas portray gender dimensions. The second and third units address the content of serial dramas from the perspectives of production and writing. These two units aim to make secondary school students, who are the target audience of the project, aware of the creative and organizational processes behind every television content production.

The final unit provides an opportunity to apply the acquired skills through a guided creative writing process, starting from plots of possible narratives and encouraging students to expand the narrative process, thereby engaging in a genuine writing experience related to the narration of gender stereotypes.

The paper therefore has three main objectives: 1) exploring how media education can address gender issues and promote a critical engagement, by emphasising the central role of the visual culture to reach this aim; 2) analysing the potential of an integration of gender-focused media education in educational practices to drive social innovation and foster inclusivity; 3) clarifying the role of the GEMINI Educational Toolkit in this context, emphasizing how the tools it provides to young adults and teachers contribute to fostering critical media literacy and awareness.

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motherhood

MOTHER BY NATURE. MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERHOOD AND FEMALE IDENTITY

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In Media Studies, the representations of women in TV dramas have played a fundamental role in the reflection on female identity (Buonanno, 2009; Meyrowitz, 1985) and in addressing women to recognize themselves as belonging to a distinct social group (Howard & Katz, 2013).

Since the 2000s it has been increasingly easy to meet productions of emancipatory stories with female protagonism: women inserted in the world of work in male roles and professions (Hidalgo & Tatiana y Palomares Sánchez, 2020), eminent women in the field of science and culture and, in even more recent years; wicked and violent women (Buonanno, 2017; Giomi & Magaraggia, 2017) who defy male domination with ferocity and perfidy (Bourdieu, 1998).

Even in the latter case, there are often representations of dimensions capable of re-enrolling women in traditional role expectations: first of all, the role of mother.

Our paper aims to analyze if, in tv series representation, *being mother* is still a central element in the definition of the female gender or whether, possibly, TV representations are capable of challenging gender stereotypes and identifying different ways of being a woman (Natale, 2021).

Through an analysis aimed at identifying the interpretative strategies present in the TV series the contribution compares 9 products (3 Italian, 3 Spanish, 3 American—years of production 2016-2023) investigating if, and possibly in what way, the change in the representation of gender identity also changes the representation of the motherhood.

Using some categories of literature and identifying new ones, we verify the persistence of the idea of the "good mother" (Feasey, 2012) and of that of the "intensive mother" (Ennis, 2014; Hays, 1996), or the presence of other and different representations, closer to the concept of "good enough mother" (Wardrop, 2012).

MARINA BRANCATO received her PhD in Anthropological Science and cultural change analysis from L'Orientale University in 2011 working on the relationship between anthropology and journalism with a focus on the media coverage of Italian earthquakes. Her research areas fall within the media and feminist anthropology. Currently, she is a full professor of Cultural and Visual Anthropology at the Academy of Fine Arts of Florence.

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FROM CONFLICT TO CONNECTION. THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN CINEMA AND TV

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The aim of this proposal is to reflect, starting from the results of *A Girls' Eye View* project (2021-2024), on the relationship between mothers and adolescent daughters in Italy, as it is represented in Italian TV series and perceived by female adolescent audiences nowadays.

On the one hand, observing and analysing the most recent Italian contemporary teen series (namely the ones produced by Over the Top Television services like Netflix, Prime Video etc.) we can immediately notice that parents emerged as almost entirely invisible or marginal, or represented as even instable and destabilizing (see *Baby*, *Skam Italia*, *Summertime* [2020-2022] or even *Mare Fuori*).

On the other hand, interviewing Italian girls aged 14-19 years about their idea of female adolescence and their relationship with the most important female adult figures in their life, we discovered that mothers were mostly depicted as someone who is always present, someone to confide in, someone to be admired for her ability to manage a life in constant balance between work and family. Mothers are portrayed as strong, courageous women, aspirational figures who have chosen resilience and versatility to manage an increasingly complex life.

Where then has the traditional conflict with parents and for girls with the mother figure gone? What has happened to the idea that becoming an adult also involves separation from the mother? And what role media representation have had and still have in building a new mother and daughter relationship?

Presuming that the turning point of a process started in the Nineties, was the shift introduced by *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2016) in the 2000s, this presentation aims at investigating how this shift has involved the mothers (who were daughters at that time) and successively the girls who are daughters nowadays and how it is still ongoing in the continuous exchange of reciprocal references about the definition of both the relationship itself and the female identities.

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MATRIARCH. THE FEMALE DOUBLE IN "L'AMICA GENIALE", BETWEEN ANCESTRAL ROOTS AND EXPERIENCES OF FREEDOM

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The talk will analyse the unresolved conflict represented in the book and series *L'Amica geniale* between the crystallization of female protagonists in the role of mothers and guardians of the primordial fire that ignites life, sentinels of tradition, and the willingness to break such pre-established patterns to contend with men, becoming sparks of progress and not reflected light of male achievements.

The relationship between Lenu and Lia unfolds between love and hate, conflict and mutual dependence. Their relationship re-proposes the eternal clash between Nature and Culture, between power and might, becoming in the eyes of the scholar a miniaturization of a broader social theory that it is interesting to be able to locate and analyse in the present.

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MOTHERS IN CRIME. THE REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE ITALIAN TEEN DRAMA "MARE FUORI"

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Motherhood is a recurring topic in serial dramas, spanning across different genres. While it is an essential narrative element in family dramas, it has become increasingly rare to find a series that does not feature aspects related to motherhood, parenting dynamics, or the mother-child relationship. This focus on motherhood is also reflected in academic literature, which have explored, from various perspectives, how these narratives address motherhood and, more importantly, the socio-cultural models they mirror and/or shape.

In this context, feminist theory, gender studies and media studies have played a crucial role in theorizing the portrayal of motherhood on screen, particularly by examining the extent to which cinema and television reproduce dominant patriarchal ideologies and reinforce the subordinate role of mothers (see: Kaplan, 1992; Fischer, 2014; Feasey, 2012; Podnieks, 2012).

Turning to the Italian context, recent scholarship has delved into the representation of motherhood in Italian cinema (Faleschini Lerner & D'Amelio, 2017; Morris & Willson, 2018; D'Amelio, 2024). However, the mother figure in Italian serial dramas is understudied, with the notable exception of Buonanno's edited volume *Television Anti-heroines* (2017). Additionally, it's noteworthy that Italian academic interest in the representation of motherhood in cinema and television has often been coupled with the analysis of the persistent stereotype of "mammismo" in Italian culture and media (Morris & Willson, 2018; Patriarca, 2018; D'Amelio, 2024).

Building on these discussions, this study expands the analysis of maternal representations in Italian media by examining the portrayal of mothers in the Italian teen/crime drama *Mare Fuori* (*The Sea Beyond*, 2020-), which has emerged in recent years as one of the most significant phenomena in Italian popular culture both in terms of its audiences and the recognition garnered by its cast (Spalletta *et al.*, 2025). Through a qualitative content and narrative analysis (Mihas, 2023; Riessman, 2007; Schreier, 2012), the study aims to explore the

Mare Fuori phenomenon through the lens of motherhood, addressing several key research questions: the models of motherhood portrayed, the relevance of the maternal characters in the narrative, the (im)balance of power between matriarchy and patriarchy, and the relationship between teen characters and their mothers in the perspective of "mammismo".

The research findings show that *Mare Fuori* provides a comprehensive portrayal of motherhood, presenting characters who embody various models, such as victims, conflicted, teen, lost, resistant, and absent mothers. In most cases, the maternal figure does not hold a central role in the storyline, and relational dynamics often highlight a significant power imbalance between matriarchy and patriarchy. The only clear exception is the character of Wanda Di Salvo, a very "GodMother". Additionally, the series includes depictions of toxic motherhood, which both reflect the traditional idea of *mammismo* and reframe it by underlining its specular side, which is the dependency of the mother from their biological or acquired child.

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production & distribution

CASTING GENDER: THE ROLE OF THE CASTING DIRECTOR IN "MARE FUORI" AND "SEX EDUCATION"

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This paper explores the role of casting in shaping gender representation in contemporary teen dramas, with *Mare Fuori* and *Sex Education* as case studies. At a time of questioning and renegotiation of gender roles, teen dramas are a fertile ground and a privileged vantage point from which to investigate, both from a national and transnational perspective, the role of popular culture in the processes of redefinition and renegotiation of gender identities and their representations, starting with the political, aesthetic, historical and social role of casting.

Through interviews with the serial dramas' casting directors and a close examination of casting choices—including the selection of actors based on physicality, ethnicity, and gender identity—this study investigates how these decisions contribute to constructing and challenging traditional gender norms.

Furthermore, this paper positions the casting director as a crucial yet often underappreciated figure in the production process, whose work significantly impacts the aesthetic, visual, and narrative focus of a series. By selecting performers who embody or challenge societal expectations of gender, casting directors negotiate and guide the audience's engagement with gendered identities and relationships onscreen. This process becomes particularly significant in teen dramas, where character types frequently intersect with emerging cultural discourses on gender fluidity, intersectionality, and diversity.

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FRENCH *BANLIEUES* AND FEMALE IDENTITIES ON-SCREEN. UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON THROUGH PRODUCTION, REPRESENTATION AND RECEPTION

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French banlieues are frequently examined and depicted as «»marginalised and highly-stigmatised outskirts of France's big cities' centres» (Van de Wetering, 2020), represented in mainstream media as deprived and marginalised areas inhabited by «the others": "seen as the poor-, the problematic-, the migrant-, the criminal-, the unemployed-, the dangerous-, the different *banlieusards*» (*ibid*.). In the 80s and 90s, cinema took up the suburbs as a topic, initially to offer different representations of this public issue and to contribute to its dramaturgy (Gusfield, 2007). For a long time, these films were made by male film directors: only issues of "class" and "race" were prominent in these narratives, focusing mainly on young male, delinquent and racialised characters (Mamé-Fatou Niang, 2020). Women were and still are often invisible or very secondary.

The mid-2010s and a broader access to creative work by women filmmakers have opened the door to thinking the *banlieue* in terms of gender identities (Munier, 2023:5). Nevertheless, Mamé-Fatou Niang points to the existence of numerous gender stereotypes when representing women from *banlieues*, both within and outside their social environment (2020: 80). She links these stereotypical representations and the access of more women affected by these representations to the activities that produce or fund them. In a context where streaming tends to offer greater access to production and where platforms are committed to diversity, claiming to promote new voices and new narratives (interviews with people working at Netflix and France.TV, 2024), it is relevant to look at the way in which these platforms represent French banlieues and their inhabitants in the TV series they produce.

Between 2023 and 2024, three TV series with female main protagonists were commissioned by three streaming platforms with different (commercial/public) interests and audiences: *Jusqu'ici tout va bien* (Netflix, 2023), *66-55* (Canal+, 2023) and *93-BB* (France.TV Slash, 2024). In this paper, I will examine

the production context of each series (identity of the creators, platform of origin and editorial line, etc.) in relation to how women from *banlieues* are portrayed on screen, and what relationships of domination are shown on screen between these women, the banlieue as a social environment and the other inhabitants. I will also look at the genre of these series. Finally, to reflect the working method that we are using in the DIGISCREENS project, I will examine the reception of these series (via focus groups or the study of reviews by French television viewers) and explore how on-screen representations are perceived.

The aim of this paper is to share some thoughts on how suburban women are currently represented in recent television series, the stereotypes (positive or negative) or counter-stereotypes that seem to be emerging (Hall, 1994), and the role of streaming platforms in these new politics of representations, particularly in terms of promoting new voices or taking new young audiences into account.

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ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED HARMS IN THE PLATFORM ERA: EUROPEAN REGULATORY APPROACHES TO PROTECT UNDER-AGE MEDIA USERS

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Young audiences are increasingly exposed to a wide range of harmful materials, including pervasive gender stereotypes. Research conducted by European media regulatory authorities highlights the alarming prevalence of such stereotypes, with findings showing that YouTuber videos in children's toy advertising category feature advertising narratives steeped in gender biases. Additionally, children are frequently exposed to commercials and subliminal advertising in child- and teen-oriented YouTube channels. This form of commercial communication often lacks clear identification of products and brands, creating confusion among inexperienced young media consumers.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the regulatory measures implemented by the European Commission to enhance the protection of underage media users from potentially harmful and prejudicial content on video-sharing platforms and social media networks. It provides an in-depth analysis of the European Digital Services Act Package, which includes the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), the Digital Services Act (DSA), and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). These legislative instruments impose obligations on digital platforms to address systemic risks such as gender-based violence, cyberbullying, and hate speech, factors that pose significant threats to the physical and mental well-being of minors.

This longitudinal study explores the obligations aimed at safeguarding minors from harmful content that could jeopardize their rights. Data is drawn from multiple publicly available sources, including European databases, government reports, ministerial records, and regional agency publications. Recognizing the relevance of media literacy as a European policy priority, this study underscores its role in equipping young audiences with the critical skills needed to navigate digital environments safely. Previous scholarly work has emphasized that protecting minors in the digital age is a key concern for both

public institutions and private stakeholders, making this a crucial area for ongoing research and policy innovation.

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GENDER ISSUES AND SERIAL DRAMA PRODUCTION IN IRELAND: THE PERSPECTIVE OF CREATIVE MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

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The nature of gender issues in serial drama production in Ireland, from on-screen representation to workplace culture, is ripe for analysis. This presentation focuses on findings from interviews conducted as part of the GEMINI research-action project with creative media professionals working on TV drama series that are at least partially made in Ireland.

While male-centred narratives, particularly crime dramas, have dominated Irish television screens over the past ten to fifteen years, we must look to other genres, particularly soap operas and children's animated TV series, for more diverse representations. Beyond on-screen representation, women are also underrepresented in both creative and technical roles in the audiovisual sector in Ireland, including in serial drama production. As the interviews discussed here illustrate, while some genres and sectors of the industry buck this trend, gender issues remain a concerning aspect, in terms of the programme content and crew demographics, of scripted TV series. Equally, while there has been some progress made in relation to more equal gender representation on screen in the industry in Ireland, this remains predominately both cisnormative and homonormative, with depictions of lesbians and other queer identities rendered to the margins (Hansen *et al.*, 2024, available at: https://gemini.unilink.it/delivables/, p. 16). The creative professionals interviewed recognised the need for more diversity both on and off screen in the screen industry in Ireland.

Furthermore, while issues concerning young people are explored in serial drama produced in Ireland; in terms of the types of series produced, teenagers have been largely neglected as an audience. This, coupled with the fact that both serial drama and gender issues are inadequately addressed in the Irish secondary school curriculum, means that teachers are not given sufficient opportunities to re-enforce lessons related to gender issues that may have been portrayed in TV serial drama. However, the flexibility of the non-examination Transition Year programme in Ireland, taught to 15–16-year-

olds, provides a chance for teachers to avail of GEMINI's online platform of educational resources, which includes both Irish and international series as case studies.

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sexualities

FIXING THE BI+ CANON. HOW FANS ARE COUNTERING BI-ERASURE IN "UN PROFESSORE"

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Co-produced by RAI Fiction and Banijay Studios Italy, the Italian adaptation of the Spanish TV series *Merlì*, *Un professore* (2021-) has reached a great level of success and record-level TV ratings. The series, set in a high school in Rome, revolves around the life of an unconventional philosophy professor, Dante (Alessandro Gassmann), and his teenage students, dealing with the coming-of-age classic themes: friendship, school, and falling in love.

Un professore has garnered a large following, especially amongst young audiences, who are mostly interested in the interactions, disputes, and love stories amongst the younger cast members, particularly enemies turned best friends turned love interests, Simone (Dante's son, played by Nicolas Maupas) and Manuel (the school's bad boy, played by Damiano Gavino).

This contribution examines the show's fandom and its efforts to address the inadequate representation of non-monosexuality and bisexuality in the younger characters Simone, Manuel, and Mimmo. It is noteworthy that *Un professore*, in fact, perpetuates the most clichéd stereotypes of bisexual representation, significantly deviating from the Spanish original, which, in contrast, engaged with the bisexual identity of one of the primary characters in a significant manner. Even with recent quantitative advancements in the media portrayal of bisexuality, Maria San Filippo's theoretical insights on media (in)visibility (2013) continue to be significant. Bisexual individuals appear prominently in media but are often rendered invisible through practices of bi-erasure and bi-assimilationism (Eisner, 2013).

Fans took matters into their own hands and are trying to "fix" the bi+ canonical elements of the original show through a variety of creative initiatives. These initiatives include the creation of fanworks, including fanfiction and fan edits, and a plethora of web discourse surrounding the show's bi-erasure issues. Additionally, they have vocally campaigned against the problematic responses they received from the show's producers and writers concerning their expressed concerns.

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GENDER AND Z GENERATION: ANALYSIS AND CATEGORIES OF QUEER CHARACTERS IN CONTEMPORARY SERIALITIES

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According to a report by the American nonprofit association GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), which since 1986 has been concerned with analysing the representation of the LGBTQIA+ community within the mass media context, with a focus on television seriality and today's platforms, the presence of queer characters in contemporary serial products is increasing dramatically and very diversified.

Looking at the transcending of disciplines and following pop dynamics and aesthetics as indicated by the works dedicated to pop culture by Bowman (2007; 2008) and Reynolds (2011), today it is possible to analyse the device of contemporary seriality-which moves between post-seriality (Brancato, 2011) and what can now be called pop platform seriality, a new, inescapable dimension of audiovisual fruition and experimentation-not only as a narrative space, but also, and above all, as a cultural space.

Following this linear, the aim of the contribution is to investigate the relationship between genre, seriality and Generation Z by intercepting some of the characters of contemporary TV series—from the 1980s to the present—who have represented fundamental reference points in the evolution and transformation of the representation of the LGBTQ+ universe and analysing the influence they have had on young people belonging to Generation Z (Aroldi & Colombo, 2003) who represent today the main audiences of the platforms and who construct their own identity-personal and gender-immersed in digital practices and dynamics (Prensky, 2001). From Steven Carrington (*Dallas*) to Dennis/Denise Bryson (*Twin Peaks*), from Jack McPhee (*Dawson's Creek*) to Sophia Burset (*Orange is The New Black*) to Teri (*Baby Reindeer*), how have queer characters in TV series evolved and what categorizations have they given rise to?

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HORROR IS QUEER. "AMERICAN HORROR STORY" AND THE TRIUMPH OF BAD TASTE

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The anus is the black hole of *jouissance*, and the rectum represents the tomb of proud, macho, homophobic subjectivity, to be celebrated for its thanatological potential. It is on this unscrupulous, unproductive, and eccentric enjoyment that *American Horror Story* defines the bad taste that sets it apart, bringing together the excesses of the horror genre with the camp aesthetics typical of the queer community, to which the series is aimed.

My aim is to ascertain to what extent the purpose of the series is to delineate a repugnant experience that, being obscene and perverse, disrupts norms of taste, ethics, and normativity by fracturing the pre-established order.

By means of a psychoanalytic methodology, predominantly drawing upon antisocial queer theories, the aim is to illustrate how the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the death drive correlates with the intrinsic traits of queerness: akin to Ricoeur's broken cogito, queerness denies the sovereignty of the Cartesian cogito in the name of unstable identities, capable of embracing the negative that exceeds the horizon of symbolic signification. The antisociality inherent in queerness would, therefore, rediscover the instinctual and discontinuous core of subjectivity, disrupting both romantic love and domestic intimacy ingrained within the social fabric through which civilization seeks to mitigate the unacceptable aspects of primal sexuality. Instead, it embraces a residual normative and civilized framework, characterized by symbolic constructs of modesty and morality, against which horror and queerness stand opposed in the pursuit of the liberation of instinctual drives.

Upon this mortiferous primacy, *AHS* constructs its unscrupulous spectacle, wherein camp and trash become veritable hallmarks. Its garish and anti-aesthetical content conveys a disquieting, hybrid, and metamorphic experience akin to the creature it portrays, thereby engendering a novel perception of beauty as a distortion of nature and commonsense.

Through its lack of refinement, the series endeavours not for beauty and agreeableness, but to exalt all that imperils its integrity. The series achieves

heightened success when it manifests as unkempt and excessive, echoing the queer identities it targets, in the name of a gender and sexuality concept that challenges (hetero)normativity.

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BETWEEN STEREOTYPES, AWKWARDNESS, AND QUEER UTOPIA: SERIAL UNCERTAINTY AND THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP

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Television series provide fertile ground for exploring the complexities of adolescence, challenging—while also relying on—stereotypes, gender expectations, and chrononormativity (Freeman, 2010). This presentation examines how series aimed at young audiences represent the paradoxical moment of adolescence, where one is neither a child nor an adult. We will focus on the feeling of awkwardness tied to gender expression and identity, highlighting characters who counter binary norms and face embarrassing or painful scenarios, in their "sideways growth" (Bond Stockton, 2009), as well as in their queer utopias (Muñoz, 2009). This analysis adopts an intersectional perspective, considering factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity, and aims at contributing to an "affective turn" in media studies (Bao, 2015; Ames, 2020).

The case study will be the French series *Chair Tendre* (2022), available on France Télévisions's Slash platform. The platform, launched in 2018, targets an audience of high-school students and young professional. It seeks to foster a deeper and more nuanced understanding of sexuality and gender by challenging stereotypes and offering young viewers alternative models of development and self-understanding.

By proposing alternatives to conventional expectations and linear developmental paths, *Chair Tendre* stands out as an intriguing project. While it may not be a "successful" series in traditional terms—and perhaps precisely because of this—it allows us to engage with dissonant emotions and uncertainties that mark both adolescence and serial narratives. These include frustration, injustice, and boredom, which are not resolved simplistically. Such "minor feelings" (Hong, 2020) intertwine with characters' everyday lives, challenging the societal imperative of "growing up well," as well as the injunction to "happiness"—the idea that everything is in place for anyone to thrive (Ahmed, 2010).

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stereotypes

GENDER IN PRESCHOOL CARTOONS BETWEEN SIMPLIFICATION AND STEREOTYPING: THE 'TOON GAZE' RESEARCH AND THE CASE OF "BLUEY"

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The paper presents the latest findings of a four-year research project (*The "Toon Gaze": an ecological analysis of media representations in children's animated television series*), aimed at analysing the ethical and aesthetic dimension of the main characters of children's cartoons with respect to the representation of diversity and stereotypes. The concept of "toon gaze" aims to reinterpret the concept of the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) from the perspective of a dominant productive vision that conveys a simplified and stereotypical reality in order to ensure on the one hand high accessibility, nonetheless, potentially leading on the other hand to knowledge disorder.

The study includes preschool and school-age cartoons (3-6 and 6-12-years old) and focused initially on gender, then a specific intersectional analysis of gender with other concepts and identity markers such as ethnicity, disability, class, age, and sexuality were carried out. As a result, the analysis of the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the main characters in animated series was enriched, tracing several other elements to a productive and narrative dimension, such as the protagonist characters system, the narrative roles, the process of worldbuilding, etc.

The paper proposes the results of a specific part of the research focused on the Australian preschool animated series *Bluey*. This series represents a particularly significant case not only because of its worldwide success, but also and especially because of the aim to deal with the complexity of the afore-mentioned social issues, avoiding oversimplification and stereotypes. This aim takes shape through the activation of a plurality of textual and narrative levels and the use of realistic and creative choices, based on the consideration of the different relational and social aspects that children face, representing to some extent a virtuous application of the "toon gaze".

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«LO PUOI DIRE, NON È UN'OFFESA»: DIVERSITY AS DEPRIVATION OR SUPERPOWER IN "BLANCA" (2021–)

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From page to screen, specifically from the adaptation of Patrizia Rinaldi's novels (2009; 2019) into the television series "Blanca" (2021–) by Lux Vide for Rai, Blanca Occhiuzzi/Ferrando offers an opportunity to reflect from an intersectional perspective on a character who, at least within the context of Italian crime television, represents an exception: a blind female detective.

This study aims to intersect gender analysis with genre analysis to examine the interplay between transgressions and stereotypes, regressive and conservative elements on one side, and innovative and emancipatory aspects on the other.

One of the most intriguing aspects concerns the various ways the protagonist's disability is conveyed—through specific stylistic choices, often commented on by the producers and directors of the series themselves, as well as through particular narrative and rhetorical strategies. A case in point is the problematic monologue delivered by actress Maria Chiara Giannetta at the Sanremo Festival in 2022. The series risks falling into ableism by portraying Blanca as a heroine who relies on the stereotype of compensatory sensory enhancement: she possesses exceptional hearing, which enables her to solve episodic cases, and she also has an additional "superpower" that allows her to mentally "visualize" and thus "see" certain scenes through sounds, particularly the sound of rain.

At the same time, a form of disempowerment is at play in relation to gender: within the traditionally male-dominated crime genre, the female detective is often portrayed as imperfect or flawed. By combining the approaches of disability studies and gender studies within the context of crime fiction, this study highlights how "Blanca" engages in a contradictory discourse on vision and the female subject. The series oscillates between potential disruptions of stereotypes—introducing subtle cracks in the Italian television landscape— and normative counterforces. On one hand, the character's exceptional nature reflects the persistent need to enhance and thus render disability "appealing".

On the other, certain traits of "Blanca"—above all, her irony and the depiction of her everyday life—open up possibilities for more inclusive storytelling.

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BEYOND THE RAINBOW: DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES AND REDEFINING IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY SERIES

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This study investigates the representation of gender identities and sexual orientation in the media, focusing on series such as *The Umbrella Academy*, *Sex Education*, *Pose*, and *Euphoria*. Utilizing content analysis, based on Bardin's studies (2016), we examine how these portray the LGBTQIA+ community.

Grounded in Martín-Barbero's cultural mediation theory (1990, 1987) and Kellner's cultural critique (2001), the study contextualizes these representations within a broader sociocultural landscape. We observe a significant evolution, where negative stereotypes have been replaced by more authentic and complex portrayals, reflecting the social and political changes discussed by Junqueira (2018) and Bourdieu (1997). However, challenges such as tokenization and superficiality in some narratives persist.

The issue of intersectionality is also addressed, as exemplified in *Lessons in Chemistry*, integrating matters of race, class, and gender. We conclude that although contemporary media has advanced in promoting minority visibility, there is still a way to go to achieve inclusive and accurate representation. Television, especially through streaming platforms, remains vital in the fight for equality and respect for differences.

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PRIME TEENS: AMAZON PRIME ITALY STUMBLING ITS WAY TOWARDS AN ITALIAN TEEN DRAMA

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Bang Bang Baby (2022) was the third original series produced by Prime Video in Italy, and it was advertised as «an explosive coming-of-age story and a dark rock comedy, all merged with the pop-culture of the 80s». This kind of show could be seen as embodying the "grammar of transnationalism" defined by Mareike Jenner, and like other Prime European products (i.e. *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*, 2022) uses the young adult drama genre as a mean to create a transnational appeal.

But *Bang Bang Baby* was also the first in a string of Italian young adult dramas created by the Prime: it was followed by *Prisma* (2022-24), *Love Club* (2023), *Sul più bello* (2024) and the slightly more adult-oriented *Antonia* (2024). In this respect, by producing shows appealing to a young adult audience, Prime Video undoubtedly followed the path already traced by Netflix, which identified in the young adult drama genre the opportunity to serve an audience traditionally neglected by other broadcasters (Barra, 2023). However, it must be noted how profoundly different these shows are in terms of tone, genre approach, transnational aspirations and production values.

Through a production studies lens and an analysis of representation, this contribution will explore how Prime Video's editorial strategy positions its Italian young adult dramas within both its global catalogue and the emerging contours of the Italian young adult genre. Particular attention will be given to how these narratives and characters attempt to challenge established stereotypes, sometimes at the risk of creating new ones.

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teen

GENDER, INTIMACY, AND DIGITAL PRACTICES: INSIGHTS INTO ITALIAN TEENAGERS' EXPERIENCES

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The use of digital media by young people in relation to intimate relationships and practices has received increasing attention, often framed in an alarming or sensationalized manner, which over-simplifies the debate on media usage to a focus on its effects (Bragg & Buckingham, 2009; Tiidenberg & van der Nagel, 2020). Moving beyond a media effects approach, sociocultural digital research has addressed gender and intimacy by adopting a mutual shaping perspective to explore the interactions between digital media and gender (Van Zoonen, 2002). This approach seeks to understand how the social meaning of digital media is shaped by prevailing gender conceptions (Wajcman, 1991) and contributes to co-constructing gender as "something that is done" and continuously re-created.

This paper analyses how Italian teenagers (aged 16–18) (re)define their understanding of gender and intimacy through their engagement with digital media and its integration into their daily lives. The paper presents results from the qualitative phase of the multi-level, mixed methods project, consisting of three sequential steps involving teenagers from various Italian cities: (1) six focus groups, (2) 60 individual semi-structured interviews, and (3) a nationally representative survey. Using a participatory design approach, each research instrument is co-constructed with a group of 10 teenagers. Qualitative thematic analysis will be used to analyse the empirical material collected in the focus groups (completed) and interviews (in progress).

The initial qualitative findings encompass a broad range of digital practices in connection with gender and intimacy, including the management of teenagers' gendered representations on social media, attitudes to and experiences of gender-based violence, re-imaginings of gender through LGBTQIA+ visibility and activism, and gendered expectations and interactions with sexually explicit content (including sexting and pornography).

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NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS-SYNDROME? IN SEARCH OF DIVERSITY IN THE REPRESENTATION OF GIRLS IN DUTCH FICTION YOUTH TV SERIES & FILMS (2019-2023)

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The Netherlands has a long tradition of successful youth feature films and television series, as evidenced by books such as *From Abeltje to Zoop* (Schmidt & Veenendaal, 2011) and the annual international Cinekid Festival in Amsterdam. Despite the small size of the Dutch audiovisual industry and the fact that Dutch youth are reportedly less interested in Dutch TV series (Esser, Hilborn & Steemers, 2024), children's and youth feature films are still very much in demand. For this reason, youth feature films and series were included as a separate genre in the quantitative content analysis of a random sample of 112 Dutch audiovisual feature film productions from 2019 to 2023. The study was conducted in collaboration with the Scenarioschrijvers network (Dutch Network for Screenwriters) and the foundation Vrouwen in Beeld (Women in the Picture), established in 2020 with the aim of increasing the visibility of women in the audiovisual industry by Esther Schmidt (see Schmidt & Veenendaal, 2011), among others.

As both the expert panel of scriptwriters and coders expressed concern about the dominance of female "tomboy"-characters and characters with the *not that kind of girl*-syndrome, we critically compared the information from the scripts with the coding of female characters at the beginning and end of the productions in our sample. Are female characters in recent Dutch youth productions given space to develop in the course of the narrative? Are there tendencies in the portrayal of female characters in the youth genre that differ from those in the rest of the corpus of 112 productions?

This paper reflects on successes and areas for improvement in the portrayal of female characters in recent Dutch youth productions as diverse and complex characters based on the intersectional analysis of age, ethnicity, class and sexuality as well as their storylines in youth productions (2019-2023).

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ESCAPE FROM THE STREETS: THE SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL OF ADOLESCENTS IN TEEN DRAMAS OF THE LAST DECADE

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The term "adolescent" emerged in 1904 to describe the sinister behaviours of urban youth rejecting traditional social structures (school, family, work), often engaging in deviant activities. By 1945, "teenager" gained traction, marking a distinct life stage with its own culture, codes, and rituals, often opposing adult norms. Early depictions, from Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* to James Dean's *Rebel Without a Cause* and the Punk movement, highlighted adolescence as a rejection of institutional spaces for the freedoms of the streets, embracing nomadism, creativity, and autonomy.

In the 1980s, adolescence began to shift into enclosed spaces like bedrooms and schools, driven by sitcoms such as *Happy Days* and *Beverly Hills 90210*. However, street-based portrayals persisted through the long tail of youth subcultures, such as *Trainspotting*'s chemical generation or rap's gangsterism.

From the 2000s, adolescence—and its representations—retreated entirely from the streets. Streaming platforms accelerated the "adolescentization" of TV series (*Elite*, *Euphoria*, *Skins*, *Mare fuori*), confining teenagers to narrow settings like homes, schools, and prisons. Streets now symbolize crime (*Gomorra*) or moral downfall (*Euphoria*), rarely freedom or creativity.

This paper explores the "spatial retreat" in adolescent representation through:

- The rise of digital media and social platforms
- Informational capitalism's exploitation of youth
- Increased social pressures
- New introspection forms focusing on identity and emotional management, detached from the physical external world.

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EMOTIONS AND NARRATIVES IN TV SERIES: IMPACT ON YOUNG AUDIENCES

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The potential influence of serial dramas addressing gender-related issues on young audiences has become a subject of growing academic interest. Television series are often regarded as agents of secondary socialization, shaping values, beliefs, and behaviors during critical developmental phases. This research explores how narrative content and emotional dimensions within these dramas impact young European viewers, with particular attention to their engagement and perception of gender issues.

While emotional resonance is pivotal in the consumption of cultural products, sentiment analysis provides a valuable methodological approach to evaluate the emotional tone and polarity of such narratives. By analyzing the emotional valence of these serials, we can infer their potential to influence attitudes and foster dialogue around gender norms. However, sentiment analysis alone may oversimplify the complex interplay between narrative content and audience interpretation. Meaningful insights into the impact of serial dramas require a deeper understanding of how young audiences perceive, interpret, and emotionally connect with these narratives.

To address this complexity, this study combines sentiment analysis with qualitative audience research, engaging young viewers in discussions about their reception of gender-related content in serial dramas. By bridging emotional analysis with self-reported audience perceptions, this research aims to highlight the multifaceted mechanisms through which serial dramas contribute to shaping perspectives on gender among young Europeans. Ultimately, the findings will offer practical insights for media producers and educators on how to create content that fosters critical engagement and positive social influence in young audiences.

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violence

"THE YOUNG BEYOND". DIVERSITY, VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION, BETWEEN REPRESENTATION AND REALITY

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Over the last decade, public debate has often focused on youth crime and deviance phenomena, detecting both the social, psychological and relational effects of prison (Combessie, 2001; Mears & Siennick, 2016) and the related processes of social reintegration (Decembrotto, 2020; Borghini & Pastore, 2024).

This is also due to the imagery provided by cultural products (Pezzoli, 2016) such as the cult serial drama *Mare Fuori* (*The Sea Beyond*, Rai, 2020-), which provides an insight into a little-studied context such as that of juvenile detention centres, highlighting the complex relationships between young inmates and the adult professionals working within the prison, who play a critical role in guiding their paths toward rehabilitation.

This study investigates the relationship between on-screen representations and real-life experiences in Italian youth penal institutions by combining different qualitative research tools: media content and narrative analysis (Krippendorff, 2018; Mihas, 2023) of 50 episodes of *Mare Fuori* (seasons 1-4), along with 10 in-depth interviews with key informants (Bichi, 2007; Corbetta, 2015), selected from among directors, penitentiary police officers, educators, psychologists, and social workers serving in three Italian juvenile prisons (Napoli, Rome, and Bologna).

While the series offers a dramatized portrayal of juvenile detention, often reinforcing stereotypical gender roles in relation to the crime experiences and the relational dynamics, the interviewed professionals emphasize a broader range of diversity-related challenges, which are deeply shaped also by the different inmates' nationalities and socio-cultural context of origin. These variables not only influence daily life within detention centres—affecting coexistence, power dynamics, and access to resources—but also play a crucial role in determining the success of rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Furthermore, the study underscores how the series' narrative approach enhances viewer empathy but often tends to oversimplify the nature of

detention, as well as to underrepresented professional roles, limiting the public's understanding of the full range of rehabilitative efforts involved.

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TEEN DRAMA AS A VEHICLE TO REPRESENT AND TALK ABOUT CYBER-VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (CYBER-VAWG)

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The issue of violence against women and girls through digital technologies (or cyber_VAWG) has now emerged as a social issue as well as a focus of research. This kind of violence, which has not yet been fully investigated, takes place mostly online, where women and girls are humiliated, harassed and silenced, with severe repercussions on their well-being (Citron & Franks, 2014; Vakhitova *et al.*, 2021) and the choice of fully exercising their rights.

At the moment, the discussion about the consequences of cyber-VAWG seems to follow several and diverse modes and tools, as shown in the PRIN Project *Social representations of cyber-violence against women and girls: advancing knowledge on an under-conceptualized issue*, in which this contribution finds its points of reference.

In the media landscape, audiovisuals and in particular TV series play a relevant role: products that, although starting from different genres, provide complex storytelling offering a range of potential narrative implications, and capable of attracting audiences on multiple levels (Mittell, 2015).

Our proposal would seek to investigate some teen dramas where themes such as gender inequality, cyber-bullying, the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images (also known as "revenge porn") emerge alongside love and friendship relationships. These are themes present in many features, which become part of the stories through dynamics linked to the use and sharing of self-produced digital contents in peer groups. Even if moving within the boundaries of a total or partial fiction, these narratives propose powerful representations of events that, if not actually happened, are very close to what the daily news tells us.

By taking into consideration features like *Nudes* (Bim – Rai Fiction, 2021), *AlRawabi School for Girls* (Filmizion Productions – Netflix, 2021 -) and *Euphoria* (HBO, 2019-), although clearly differing in terms of production and cultural setting, the analysis would focus on the ways the different forms of violence are represented (Brüning, 2022; Barker, Gill & Harvey, 2018). The assumption

is that at times serial narratives encompass not only the telling of difficult situations, but also the discussion about them and their potential solutions (Potvain *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, in a completely informal way, they act as tools for dialogue with the audience, proposing structured stories with multiple points of view that end up by taking shape in displaying specific repertoires of action, or in offering useful interpretations for contrasting aspects, including the secondary victimization that often accompanies this type of violence.

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THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ITALIAN AUDIOVISUALS BETWEEN SERIALIZATION OF INFORMATION AND TV SERIES: TOPICS, PERSONS, NARRATIVE PATTERNS AND AUDIENCES OF FEMICIDE CASES

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Violence against women and femicide are particularly significant issues in Italian society. Between 2019 and 2021, even because of COVID-19, there was an overall decrease in offline criminal activity, yet cybercrimes and violence against women increased. In 2023, 117 women were killed, and many of these were killed by a partner or ex-partner (Istat, 2024).

However, this is not a new phenomenon: cases of femicide have been a persistent feature of Italian crime reporting. The cases that maintain long-term media visibility are those most suited to being treated as "news drama" (Bennett, 2005), journalistic products that deviate from traditional standards. These stories prioritise short, emotionally charged visual narratives that are more compatible with television formats than reality (Benedict, 1992; Belluati, 2021).

Hundreds, even thousands, of hours of audiovisual content flood Italian homes with stories of crime, particularly femicide, oscillating between news drama, docu-fiction, and TV series. These productions employ narrative styles and formats that blur the line between information and fiction. The composition includes victims, criminals, and law enforcement (Fishman & Cavender, 1998; Cavender & Bond-Maupin, 2007; Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2011), while viewers themselves are drawn in through phone calls, testimonies, and in-studio participation—transforming into quasi-investigators searching for missing persons or contributing to solving major Italian and international mysteries. On the other side, these productions often feature predominantly female leadership in hosting, authorship, direction, and editorial roles.

How is this violence portrayed through the media, particularly in news and infotainment programmes (such as TV news, investigative reports, and talk shows) and in television series? What effects do these representations have on audiences and Italian society? Can the serializations of these crime cases and

their happening almost live on TV be configured as true *Live Broadcasting of History* (Dayan & Katz, 1992)?

Does the abundance of narratives and the continuum between the serialisation of crime cases in Italian television news and films or TV series based on real cases of femicide contribute to reversing the trend, or is there a risk of fostering audience desensitisation and a gradual "normalisation" of the phenomenon (Grusin, 2010; Diamanti, 2019), with the subsequent difficulty of constructing a sustainable imaginary (Tota, 2008).

To address these questions, this contribution will examine three femicide cases from the past thirty years that transitioned from Italian crime news to docu-fiction content and television series. The study will reconstruct the number of prime-time news reports and the airtime dedicated to these cases in major Italian talk shows before analysing the dominant themes, represented persons, verbal and audiovisual languages, narrative plots, strategies of "mise en scène" of the motives of feminicides, stereotyped and/or asymmetrical representations (Bennett, 2013), differences in the representation of female victims based on nationality, age, profession, and highlighting the continuities between the narrative styles of news contents and that used by TV dramas dealing with the same cases of femicide.

Significant attention will be given to the analysis of audience, starting from the observation that many of the analysed contents are primarily targeted at a female audience, thereby excluding a substantial portion of the recipients of these messages: the male audience.

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MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER CRIMES: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION BROADCAST NARRATIVES

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In recent years, media attention has increased for crimes committed against women by partners or ex-partners. Violent crimes dominate the news and mass media, recounting in the typical forms of television fiction crimes that seem increasingly heinous. It is important to note, without entering into the merits of historical truth and narrative truth, how criminological knowledge is conveyed to the general public in popularized form and contributes to creating a shared representation of these crimes.

The study was motivated by an interest in understanding what representations are conveyed by television broadcasts and how closely they relate to criminological theories and literature on the subject. We therefore examined with thematic analysis 17 episodes of the programme *Amore criminale* with the aim of tracing two interconnected levels of knowledge: a) the level of representations of the individual stories of the victim and the murderer; b) the representation level relating to the couple's relationship and the representation of the couple in the reconstruction broadcast.

The objective of the proposed qualitative research is to examine the media portrayals proposed in thematic television programs, as well as the narrative profiles of the victims, perpetrators and their relationships, as described in the account of the drama, by the presenter and the numerous characters involved in the narrative (relatives, friends and professionals).

EUGENIO DE GREGORIO is an associate professor of social psychology; over time, he maintained research interests in various areas of applied social psychology with a distinct interest in the use of qualitative data collection and analysis tools. Alongside his research interests, he was a professional psychologist at the External Execution Office of the Ministry of Justice (Genoa office) and currently an honorary judge at the Juvenile Court of Genoa.

LORENZA TIBERIO is a researcher in social psychology; her work examines the psychological and social dynamics of human behaviour, focusing on sustainability, aging, and social processes from a lifespan perspective, as well as environmental education. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, her research aims to advance the understanding of social interactions and promote well-being in educational and community settings.

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INVESTIGATING REPRESENTATION, INCLUSIVITY, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN RAI'S FICTIONAL CONTENT, FROM PRODUCTION TO RECEPTION
[pre-constituted panel]

This panel presents some preliminary findings from the PRIN 2022 PNRR funded project WokeIt-*Investigating Representation, Inclusivity, and Social Responsibility in Rai's Fictional Audiovisual Productions*. The project examines how Rai's TV series and films navigate the challenges of representing diversity and inclusion, balancing public service mandates with industrial and cultural constraints. Through interdisciplinary approaches, the research investigates Rai's strategies across production, representation, and reception, shedding light on their broader societal and cultural implications.

The three papers in this panel showcase the work of the project's research units, addressing key aspects of Rai's output and offering critical insights into its role in shaping inclusive narratives in Italian media, also through studies of reception and pedagogical strategies.

NEW GIRL(HOOD). DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND GENERATIONAL AUDIENCES IN RAI'S TV SERIES

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Stefano Guerini Rocco **|** University of Bologna – stefano.guerinirocco@unibo.it

The arrival of international OTT platforms such as Netflix in Italy has significantly influenced domestic broadcasters, particularly Rai, pushing them to rethink their representation policies to align with contemporary sensibilities around the themes of diversity and inclusion. This shift is particularly evident in Rai's TV series, where a stark contrast emerges between traditional broadcast channels and the digital platform RaiPlay. From this perspective, the generational differences in audience preferences and expectations plays a crucial role in this divergence.

On the one hand, indeed, Rai's prime-time television series tend to cater to an older, more conservative demographic, and typically focus on adult, often male, protagonists, with minority and teenage characters typically confined to secondary roles or moralistic subplots addressing societal issues with a moralistic and cautionary tone. Examples include series such as *La compagnia del cigno*, and *Vivere non è un gioco da ragazzi*, where youth narratives remain subordinate to adult-centric storytelling.

In contrast, and on the other hand, RaiPlay targets a younger, more progressive audience with series that adopts inclusive storytelling approaches. Its original series, such as *5 minuti prima* and *Shake*, frequently feature teenage protagonists, often female ones, and explore themes such as sexual orientation, body positivity, mental health, and gender identity. These narratives adopt an empowering tone and incorporate intersectional perspectives, resonating with Generation Z and Millennial viewers and positioning RaiPlay as a platform that is in tune with evolving social sensibilities.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the representation of adolescence, and girlhood in particular, as a key site for intersectional and progressive storytelling within Rai's productions. Through a comparative analysis of selected case studies from both Rai's prime-time broadcast series and RaiPlay Originals, it aims to highlight how girlhood narratives serve as a

lens for examining broader societal dynamics and shifting cultural paradigms. To what extent does Rai's representation of girlhood challenge traditional norms? Can these narratives serve as a lens for fostering more intersectional storytelling practices? In answering these questions, this paper examines the transformative potential of girlhood narratives in redefining inclusivity within Italian audiovisual culture.

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TO WHOM DIVERSITY MATTERS. UNDERSTANDING THE RELEVANCE OF DIVERSITY AMONG YOUNG AUDIENCES

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The question of diversity is often studied from a text-oriented perspective (Giuliani, 2016) or in critical analyses of diversity/equity/inclusion policies (Nwonka, 2015; Nwonka & Malik, 2018). While these fields of study are certainly crucial, we argue that it is beneficial to complement them with studies of audiences and reception. As part of the WokeIt research project, and following a qualitative analysis of audiovisual content, we have therefore undertaken audience research to understand, on the one hand, the effectiveness of the audiovisual fictional production of the Italian public service broadcaster in meeting these representational needs and, on the other, the perceived need for these policies. To this end, with reference to previous comparable studies (Cooper, 2003; Hall, 2022; Marks, 2001; Lind, 2023 as well as the work of the GEMINI project's focus groups, cf. Hansen *et al.*, n.d.) we surveyed a young audience (aged between 18 and 25) on these issues using a questionnaire aimed at answering the following questions:

- What is the relevance of the representation of diversity among young audience members?
- How important is it when assessing the quality of a film or series?
- What is the role of cinema and TV series to identification dynamics for young people?
- To what extent do these audiences see diversity as a priority of public service broadcasting?

The aim of this paper is therefore to present, on the one hand, this research tool and the choices underlying its development and, on the other, the provisional qualitative results obtained from a small sample of respondents. Finally, the paper will signal how we intend to move forward after these preliminary results, insofar as they will also serve as a basis for further refining the questionnaire itself and extending the sample in order to bring the results to a quantitatively relevant level.

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EDUCATIONAL TOOLS FOR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN RAI'S TV SERIES: COMPARING TWO MEDIA EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

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One of media education's most ambitious and significant aims is to foster critical and ethical awareness among young adults about the interpretation of audiovisual content consumed through various media platforms and the sharing, remixing, and creation of images.

This paper aims to compare the methodologies and results of two media education workshops held with Italian high school students, which focused on inclusion and diversity through the lens of TV series produced by the Italian public service broadcaster Rai.

Serial Communities is a media education workshop organized in Potenza, concentrating on inclusion strategies in Rai's TV series. It was developed thanks to the collaboration between the *Città delle 100 scale. International festival of urban dance and performing arts in city landscapes*, and the *WokeIt* research project. After viewing and analyzing a corpus of selected series, the students used generative AI tools to create an original storyboard. Finally, they presented the outcomes in public seminars.

The second workshop, entitled *What is a serial storytelling? Let's learn to build inclusive stories* took place in Rome. Organized like a writers' room, it was structured in various phases, including the analysis of gender stereotypes in TV series and the creation of an original concept. The workshop utilized both theoretical and empirical materials developed as part of the GEMINI project's educational toolkit, as well as research on Rai's TV series conducted within the *WokeIt* project.

The paper therefore has two objectives. The first is to examine the skills of Italian high school students to critically evaluate, analyze, and reflect on the representation of diversity and gender issues in Rai's TV series. The second is to assess their ability to engage with screenwriting techniques and the limitations and potentials of generative AI tools to imagine and create new inclusive stories.

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