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Postcensorship in Streaming: Political Alienation of Millenials and Centennials Toward Audiovisual Productions

Postcensura en streaming: Alienación política de millenials y centennials hacia las producciones audiovisuales

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Abstract: This study examines the degree to which political alienation viewers consider themselves to have audiovisual productions. To understand the preferences of millennials and centennials in the Spanish-speaking world, a survey was conducted with 998 individuals from Spain and Mexico, two countries with high rates of OTT consumption. The survey revealed that young people feel justified in expressing their discontent with audiovisual productions on social media, potentially leading to an "audience dictatorship, " which stifles creative freedom and expression. In this sense, young people with discursive power in social networks to change and censor production see it as plausible to use this channel as a denunciation or complaint.

Key words: television, series, movies, censorship, media psychology.

Resumen: Esta investigación examina el grado de alienación política que los espectadores consideran tener respecto a las producciones audiovisuales. Para ello, se aplicó una encuesta a 998 *millennials* y *centennials* en España y México, los dos países hispanohablantes que más OTT[1] consumen. Los resultados muestran que los jóvenes consideran legítimo quejarse en redes sociales a una productora audiovisual cuando una serie o película refleja una visión que no

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1 The acronym OTT stands for "Over The Top". In the world of technology and communication, this term is used to refer to "free transmission", i.e., content that does not require an operator for its distribution. The way in which this content is distributed is through the Internet via applications (AIMC, 2021).

les gusta, lo que posiblemente fomenta un escenario de "dictadura de la audiencia" sobre los creadores de contenidos audiovisuales, que afecta a la libertad creativa y a la libertad de expresión. En este sentido, parece que los jóvenes que tienen el poder discursivo en las redes sociales para cambiar y censurar producciones ven plausible utilizar este canal como denuncia o queja.

Palabras clave: televisión, series, películas, censura, psicología de los medios.

Introduction

The negative perception of politics is a reality of our time. Since Francis Fukuyama (1993) celebrated the *End of History* and, with it, the banishment of bloody ideologies and atomic technology in the name of the triumph of liberalism at the end of the last century, the world has moved on, demonstrating that there are still issues to be resolved: economic crisis, terrorism, and the impossibility of solving the problem of individual freedom in line with social justice and climate change. However, today's world presents alternatives for global political balance and solving the major social problems that globalization and the free market have generated (González Lara, 2011).

Embedded in today's social order of uncertainty, society has organized itself around the "self-consciousness of risk and its consequent flexibilization of identity and individual morality" (Dipaola and Lutereau, 2020: 107). Consequently, policies of the "new right" are primarily oriented towards combating imminent catastrophes such as ecological concerns, terrorism, and migration control, often evoking the specter of an impending apocalypse. The recent COVID-19 crisis further underscores this reality, highlighting that while death and disease are universal, their impact disproportionately affects certain individuals and groups (de Graaf *et al*., 2021: 363).

While political and health crises occur, they are increasingly open to the world thanks to digital media, fostering a sort of instated pessimism: "Reality passes through the screens, and these, right now, only show a sort of misanthropy that, increasingly, seems to be taken more and more seriously" (Fernández-Rodríguez and Romero-Rodríguez, 2022: 69). As Imbert (2019: 23) suggests, contemporary cinema impinges on imaginaries projected into the future as a reflection of current concerns such as the instability of the present, uncertain futures, economic threats, and turbulent politics. It is not in vain that political alienation is a clear symptom of our time, and audiovisual productions are nothing more

than a reflection of this fear: citizens feel bad, distrust politics, and feel threatened.

In this regard, it is worth asking: How do citizens experience, psychologically and politically, this feeling of alienation in audiovisual entertainment? Amid social turbulence and contemporary instability, cyber-activism movements that have emerged on social networks respond to these questions by asking themselves about the role of audiovisual narratives popularized by streaming platforms. Therefore, it is worth asking whether this audience perceives that what is shown is well or inadequately represented (for example, the vision of a political or social problem or the representation of a minority). In short, whether society believes that the embodiment of life in the films and series they consume promotes social change as a sign of progress or, on the contrary, that the narratives should be changed. This research examines whether millennial and centennial viewers in Spain and Mexico perceive that their preferred streaming content upholds censorship and cancelation culture aligned with their political leanings.

Political alienation

According to Long (1990), political alienation is an affective response of an individual to the political system and its leaders, which is negative and composed of four interrelated feelings: 1) political ineffectiveness, 2) dissatisfaction with the political system's performance, 3) distrust of the motivations and behavior of political leaders, and 4) alienation from the political system.

According to Thompson and Horton (1960), political alienation is a consequence of politicians' ineffectiveness, giving rise to apathy, anomie, and indifference as a response to the awareness of powerlessness and the diffuse discontent of being powerless in the face of those who wield power. Moreover, this feeling results in a "resentment vote or an organized opposition vote" (Thompson and Horton, 1960: 190). The authors above considered that political alienation is a "peculiarly sociological" concept that, although it can be confused with the "quasi-paranoia" of a misanthropic being, it responds to an "emergent response to the social structure" and as a reaction to the "relative inability to influence or control one's social destiny" (Thompson and Horton, 1960: 190-191).

However, Thompson and Horton's definition has expanded over the years, and scholars have encouraged the relationship between this affective concept and the sentiment of apathy. It was McDill and Ridley (1962) who characterized alienation as an element of apathy in response to the powerlessness of citizenship, and later, it was Finifter (1970) who finally considered that political alienation implies "an element of apathy" (Balmas, 2014: 436), concluding that alienation is a feeling that political choices (i.e., voting in elections) are meaningless since the ordinary citizen cannot change social and political conditions (Balmas, 2014: 436).

According to Finifter (1970: 390-391), political alienation is based on four potential pathways:

1. Political powerlessness: The feeling that an individual cannot influence government actions. This reaction is expressed as the "authoritarian assignment of values to society."
2. Lack of political sense: Citizens perceive political decisions as unpredictable, making it difficult to understand the political system. This mode of alienation differs from the first in that, in the case of powerlessness, decisions may be "clear and predictable."
3. Sense of anomie[2]: This is the perception that the norms or rules that should govern political relations have been destroyed, making deviations from prescribed behavior commonplace. For example, the belief that officials violate legal procedures in dealing with the public or political decision-making.
4. Political isolation: This is the rejection of the norms and objectives of politics because they are widely held and shared by other members of society. For example, feeling that voting or other socially defined political obligations are mere conformist formalities or that public participation is inadequate for formulating public policy.

McDill and Ridley (1962) stated that the sentiments of political alienation tended to be expressed through voting, thus fostering resentment against political power. In this way, the image of their city as a place of evil, corruption, deterioration, and degradation is fostered in the citizens. Both authors found that "education, anomie, and political alienation are significantly related to voting behavior and attitude on a government issue" (McDill and Ridley, 1962: 213). On the other hand,

2 In the words of Finifter (1970: 391), anomie is a concept that "denotes a devitalization of the social norms that regulate individual behavior".

they kept in mind that government failure should not be attributed to lack of awareness, social isolation, or distrust of political leadership and that the large "uninformed, as well as socially and politically withdrawn segment of the community" should also be taken into account (McDill and Ridley, 1962: 213).

In this respect, Holtz-Bacha (1990) concludes that, when comparing exposure to hard news content and entertainment programming, individuals who consumed less leisure programming and more political content (newspapers, news...) tended to have less feelings of alienation, and those who consumed entertainment were more alienated (Balmas, 2014: 436).

There is strong evidence of political alienation in the West, as in the case of *Brexit* in 2020. According to Fox (2021), approximately one out of four British adults is alienated from politics because they consider that the political elite or the system does not respect the norms of behavior and democratic discourse. For some authors, *Brexit* was a symptom of the growing levels of political discontent in the UK, similar to the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States or the support for parties such as the Five Star Movement [*Movimento 5 Stelle*] in Italy, Jobbik in Hungary, or Alternative [*Alternative für Deutschland*] in Germany (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Geddes, 2014; Vines and Marsh, 2018; Marsh, 2018). In short, the manifestation of a disconnect between the citizens of the West and their democratic institutions, going so far as to encourage support for anti-establishment causes such as those already mentioned.

In other latitudes, this apathy is also seen in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden or Norway, where symptoms of political alienation are also becoming evident. According to Orri Valgarðsson (2019), there is, on the one hand, a trend of low participation in electoral processes in Sweden, which seems to be due to citizens of all generations identifying less with political parties, and these citizens are less likely to vote, while, on the other hand, in Norway, voting turnout has also declined because young citizens tend to vote less.

On the other hand, according to Legget-James *et al.* (2023: 6), "political disaffection spreads from parents to children, which may have the unfortunate consequence of contributing to low political participation among young voters". In this vein, van Noord *et al.* (2023: 869) attend to the crucial difference, when speaking of political alienation, of discerning between social discontent and psychological feeling of lack

of recognition, which the authors define as "two sides of the same coin: one is a judgment about society and the other is a judgment about how one feels treated by society". The exclusion of less educated people "may increase feelings of lack of recognition and thus play a crucial, though hitherto often unrecognized, role in political alienation" (van Noord *et al.*, 2023: 869). Likewise, according to Fernández Rodríguez *et al.* (2024: 16), "the level of demand in contemporary life, where entertainment and politics are less and less separated, is responding to generalized dissatisfaction", denoting the presence of a relationship of disenchantment between politics and art in the younger generations.

Audience-pleasing narratives and audiovisual marketing

The Enlightenment (18th-19th century) was a movement that tried to guide human beings away from the narratives of the past and sought for the word "reality" to enjoy "great prestige among people of common sense" (Savater, 2008: 28), in which literature pursued, in all its ambition, the word "naturalism". Deleuze (1983: 181) explained that naturalism is one of the bases of modern cinema, revealing that this term "does not oppose realism; on the contrary, it accentuates its features by prolonging them in a particular surrealism". However, despite the optimistic view of storytelling, there are those who found that the narrative model proper to romanticism could come to shape the taste for failure. Playwright and film screenwriter David Mamet (2015: 59) put it this way when he stated, "The Romantic model is what tempts us to make such a statement. In the Romantic play, the period of struggle is truncated, formalistic, and crowned by the intervention of the Fairy Godmother".

> The family film is a romantic play. The hero-child wants to succeed in an adult activity (learning karate, baseball, gymnastics, winning a race), becomes the apprentice of a tutor-teacher, and reveals himself incapable. The teacher/godmother/godfather employs a magic wand or a spell, and the hero discovers that she or he has succeeded in overcoming the difficulty. These romantic works are a semi-religious formulation based on the supremacy of faith. In *Karate Kid*, *Star Wars,* or *A Christmas Carol*, the protagonists are granted their wishes as soon as they recognize that "everything is within them". A course of miracles, the modern cult best seller, like most self-help programs, is reducible to what amounts to this maxim: the moment you recognize that you are God, you will be God (Mamet, 2015: 59-60).

It is necessary to note that fictional narratives are not always "self-help" since there is also, as Bettelheim (2019: 36) stated, the view that "the story is therapeutic because the patient finds his or her own solutions through the contemplation of what the story seems to allude to about him or herself and his or her inner conflicts". Thus, it is intended to warn of the difference between a therapeutic and a self-help purpose. On the other hand, alluding to Mamet (2015) and his search for the inner and divine treasures of the modern individual, it becomes necessary to mention Walt Disney, whom Santos (2017: 334) defined as "the greatest creator of simulacra of all time".

In the opinion of Santos (2017: 335), Disneyland was "the utopia of a material and consumerist dream. A dream of our own time, in which consumption is the trivialized substitute of happiness", trying to recover its visitors of all ages and through the language of money the "most endearing utopia of each visitor: that of their own childhood" (Santos, 2017: 335). A place that ultimately allows "to revive fantasies of utopian nature that perhaps act as a balm against the rawness and violence of real life" (Santos, 2017: 337).

These ideas are inherited from Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's Marxist text *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (1971). In this text, the authors argue that Disney films are a dreamy, colonialist recreation that uses narrative as propaganda for the «American way of life» (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1979: 151). Likewise, the authors thought that the "children's imaginary", as a Disney project, allows the appropriation of real coordinates and the anguish of present-day man but deprives them of their denunciation, the effective contradictions, and the ways to overcome them.

This weakness of character in citizens can lead to the fact that when faced with the accumulative wave of works with romantic and enlightened qualities, they end up censoring the artist's vocation. In the same way, it is necessary to recall the "practical" roots that, for Savater (2008), any narration, specifically the short story outside the modern novel, should have.

Bret Easton Ellis (2020), author of *American Psycho*, argued that today, we have entered a dangerous kind of totalitarianism that abhors freedom of expression and punishes people for showing themselves as they are, resulting in a widespread epidemic of self-victimization that is a "new mania, a psychosis that the culture has been cultivating" (Ellis, 2020: 141).

In this sense, it explains the post-censorship society, which, according to Soto Ivars (2017: 31-32), is "a censorship that does not need the power to be exercised. It is a self-imposed censorship to express "certain ideas", which are lost amid a permanent ruckus". Bauman (2017), on his part, asserts that liquid life means constant self-scrutiny, self-criticism, and self-censorship. Liquid life feeds on the dissatisfaction of the "self with itself." Ultimately, art would exist "to delight people" (Mamet, 2015: 44) rather than transform them. All this nihilistic, post-censorial, and purely consumerist vision of art was fed in the sixties of the last century with the rise of performance, happenings, and "mixed media", where the spectator provided his point of view to what he saw in front of him (Mamet, 2015: 38).

To Bruckner (2002: 44), the cause of the unhappiness of human beings in the modern world is that they have been freed from everything, fostering a freedom that becomes unbearable and tyrannizes the individual, and for this reason, so many men and women console themselves by resorting to neo-tribalism, drugs, political extremism, and mysticism. According to Longo Berdaguer (2020: 277), human relationships are in crisis since friendship as a value has been displaced by competition, and the estimation of people does not respond to moral or intellectual characteristics but is measured by success and individual economic power, fostering a "Hobbesian" and "Lockenian" worldview that human beings have carried with them since the beginning of modernity, being "internalized in the collective subjectivity" (Longo Berdaguer, 2020: 292). However, contemporary distrust is not exclusive to human relations; it includes how individuals dialogue with the mass media.

One of the main factors explaining the origins of censorship in modern globalized mass society, according to Tejeda (2020: 91), was the confirmation of the failure of the American dream. This failure initiated an identity crisis in American youth starting in the seventies, due to war conflicts such as the Vietnam War and social conflicts like racism. Simultaneously, there was an accelerated "disenchantment of the new generation of young people who, fed up with a self-satisfied, intolerant, and violent society, became involved in pacifist movements." Consequently, humor was lost, and all content began to revolve around "political correctness," which became perilous for artistic freedom and freedom of expression.

According to Timón Herrero (2020: 219), when the sense of humor is lost, "the criteria for evaluating artistic content end up being circumscribed either to personal taste (which is irrelevant) or to the personal feeling of offense it has provoked in the viewer". Associations or individuals offended by certain artistic representations take criminal action and generate artistic self-censorship (or chilling effect) (Timon Herrero, 2020: 218).

Part of this shift is attributable to the structure of streaming platforms, exemplified by Netflix, which, according to Neira (2017: 48), embodies a cinema with a different, flexible industrial culture that allows the consumer to decide. The primary aim of this production revolution is to democratize access to exclusive content. Media consumption now adheres to the concept of atawad—anytime, anywhere, and on any device. The evolution extends to atawad+ac, encompassing all content types (Hernández-Pérez and Rodríguez-Mateos, 2016: 6). As a result, contemporary viewers no longer wish to be tethered to scheduled programming dictated by channels. Instead, they opt to watch content at their convenience, whether through recording (time shifting) or streaming (VOD or on-demand television) (Quintas-Froufe and González-Neira, 2016: 380). In essence, viewers are increasingly empowered, cultivating a more client-centric approach to cultural consumption. While ostensibly positive, this shift raises questions about how audiences judge content from the comfort of their homes.

For Fromm (2020: 27): "Modern European and American history is centered around the effort to achieve the freedom, to the detriment of the economic, political and spiritual chains that imprison men". Consequently, language will determine reality, as well as the shaper of thought, of the postmodern individual (Gutiérrez Correa, 2014: 290). Therefore, postmodern people rely on partial truths, with their horizon for understanding reality shaped by phenomena such as perspective and context, rather than believing in absolute or extreme discourses as was common in modernity (Gutiérrez Correa, 2014: 290). According to Lipovetsky (2018: 11), postmodern culture is "decentered and heteroclite, materialistic and psi, porn and discrete, renovationist and retro, consumerist and ecologist, sophisticated and spontaneous, spectacular and creative." In this way, the "dual logics" as Lipovetsky (2018) would call them, a way of thinking that goes from the contradictory and emotional to the logic of expression of the individual

of this historical period, are developed in this era. "Modernity can be cataloged as the affirmation that man is what he does, through deployment of science, technique, and administration at the service of production" (Carretero, 2000: 34). This is how a promise of progress gave way to a postmodern disenchantment: "Somehow, we are asked to raise our minds to a point from which we can understand that capitalism was both the best and the worst thing that had happened to humanity" (Jameson, 1991: 77). Thus, humans transitioned from faith in science as a source of reality to faith in contradiction and hedonism as methods of articulating thought since, for postmodernists, reason or science cannot monopolize everything.

For example, in Spain, there is the paradox where political and humoristic themes have become the most interesting topics, especially since the COVID-19 crisis. This has been considered to be "the most likely theme to have fake news" (Pérez Escoda and Pedrero Esteban, 2021: 81). On the other hand, according to Romero-Rodríguez *et al.* (2021: 476), people exposed to a majority of "pseudo-information" may interpret it as real meta-messages, even if the contents are humorous. This situation has led to an alarming distrust towards the media, which shows signs of a system in bankruptcy and a deep crisis for democratic countries based on freedom of expression and thought (Pérez Escoda and Pedrero Esteban, 2021: 81). According to a statistical study by Statista (Fernández, 2023), in April 2023, 44% of respondents had no confidence at all in national politics, 40% had little confidence, 14% had confidence, and 2% had complete confidence. Additionally, according to another Statista survey (Orús, 2023), Spain failed to rank among the 15 European countries with the most significant press freedom.

As pointed out, political alienation stems from a feeling of weariness and distrust latent in Western society, fostering a fertile field for pessimism, suspicion, polarization, and political radicalization. This turns anger and frustration into a need for popular protest and indignation.

This research seeks to evaluate the extent to which viewers feel disconnected from production companies, audiovisual creators, and the current audiovisual production system. The main research question (RQ1) is: Do audiences believe that the decision to make a certain audiovisual production and its framing responds to the different interests of the citizens?

As a starting hypothesis, we consider the feeling that viewers perceive that their social and cultural yearnings are mimicked, creating a sense of tranquility in this regard. In other words, «narrative clientelism» seems to have generated an impression that everything that interests the present moment is constantly represented in television series and mainstream movies. In this sense, it is felt that what should entertain them must necessarily be linked to current social debates.

From the main research question (RQ1), the following subsidiary questions arise:

RQ2: Do millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico feel that their vision of politics is represented in current movies and TV series?

RQ3: Do they feel identified with the issues represented in these narratives?

RQ4: Do they perceive audiovisual entertainment as a way to raise social awareness?

Materials and method

This research employs a field-based, descriptive, and quantitative approach aimed at quantify the extent of the studied phenomena among a representative sample of audiences in Spain and Mexico. To achieve this, a nationwide survey was conducted in both countries. A panel of experts validated the questionnaire used in the survey beforehand.

While we aimed for a sample size that statistically represents the entire population under study, it is important to acknowledge that certain demographic groups (clusters) are underrepresented in the research. Nevertheless, we employed proportional allocation, which aligns with an exploratory-correlational approach.

Quantitative methods involve gathering data to test hypotheses through numerical measurement and statistical analysis to identify behavioral patterns and validate theories (Hernández Sampieri *et al*., 2014). In exploratory research, basic data analysis is employed to determine the frequency and general characteristics of the phenomenon under study (Ramos Galarza, 2020).

Instrument

After developing the questionnaire based on theoretical concepts and dimensions, it was subjected to expert evaluation. These experts possess specialization, professional experience, or academic expertise relevant to the research topic, enabling them to assess the content and form of each item in the survey instrument (Soriano Rodríguez, 2015: 25). A single round of expert evaluation was conducted with ten experts evaluating the 18 variables (including the two questions related to political alienation) included in the survey, resulting in an average mean ($\bar{x}$) score of 3.47.

The finalized questionnaire included seven independent variables that facilitated the triangulation of responses from covariates related to the two dependent variables measuring alienation. The survey instrument was administered from April 26 to June 16, 2022, via Google Forms, yielding 1025 responses from participants in Mexico (primarily from major urban centers: Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey) and Spain (Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, and Huelva). The questions addressing the study's dependent variables were structured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

1. When a film or series changes its plot or perspective (historical, social...) in response to request or pressure on social networks, it reflects a clientelist and economic vision of the production companies rather than to the empowerment of the audience.
2. When a film or series modifies its narrative or plot due to social pressure on social networks, it is because many things that were previously overlooked are now considered unthinkable. Correcting mistakes is a sign of advancement and social progress, not censorship.

Sample

Millennials[3] are members of a generation who were born surrounded by mostly digital media but who have also had access to analog technology (Barrientos-Báez *et al*., 2022: 286) and whose identity is built on "cultural shifts resulting from the social changes, economic and political events that have occurred in the formative years of this generational

3 This study will employ the generational age classifications defined by Dimock (2009): millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, and centennials, born between 1997 and 2012.

development" (Ross and Rouse, 2022). For example, some characteristics of millennials are ethnic diversity, having lived through the rapid pace of globalization, technological proliferation, and economic recession. In addition, they are interested in "values of tolerance and social justice" (Ross and Rouse, 2022). Secondly, centennials, according to another analysis by the Pew Research Center (Parker *et al*., 2019), while sharing many of the same values as millennials, differ from millennials in two ways: First, members of Generation Z are more likely to say "they know someone who prefers that others use gender-neutral pronouns for them" (They) and, second, they are more likely to prefer that online forms or profiles that ask about gender "should include options other than male or female" (Parker *et al*., 2019).

The decision to focus this study on millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico was driven by several factors. A FINDER survey conducted by Laicock in 2021 revealed that Spain and Mexico are the two Spanish-speaking countries with the highest streaming platform consumption in their respective continents. In fact, in the list of countries worldwide that determined the percentage of the population with at least one streaming service at home for 2021, Spain was in 7th place with 57.67% and Mexico in 10th place with 56.01%. Spain and Mexico both rank among the top ten countries in the world for streaming consumption. They are also the only two Spanish-speaking countries in the top ten.

Netflix is the most popular streaming platform in both Spain and Mexico. It accounted for 33.8% of all streaming consumption in Spain in 2021 (Barlovento Comunicación, 2021). In Mexico, its market share was even higher, reaching 89% by 2020 (Chevalier Naranjo, 2020; Statista Research Department, 2021).

Millennials and centennials, the demographic cohort aged 18 to 44, are the primary drivers of OTT consumption in Spain, accounting for an impressive 88% of all streaming platform usage (Barlovento Comunicación, 2021). Similarly, in Mexico, millennials represent a significant portion of OTT users, with 53% seeking entertainment as their primary content preference and 78% opting for Netflix as their preferred OTT platform. Moreover, millennials in Mexico exhibit a strong preference for movies (93%) and series (88%), further solidifying their position as the leading consumers of online video content (IAB, 2017).

A simple random probability sampling technique was employed to select individuals from a homogeneous population of size (n), ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected (Tamayo, 2001). Given that the "target population" (millennials and centennials) in both countries exceeds 100,000 individuals, the calculation formula for infinite populations was utilized to determine the appropriate sample size for the survey (Aguilar-Barojas, 2005).

Considering a 95% confidence level and a +/-5% margin of error, and based on the population sizes of Spanish millennials and centennials (13,180,957 people according to INE, 2021) and Mexican millennials and centennials (46,200,000 people according to INEGI, 2020), we determined a minimum sample size of 345 participants for each region (Table 1).[4]

The study will have an effective sample size of 998 participants, with 347 participants from Mexico and 651 from Spain. All participants will be between the ages of 18 and 41. This is a random selection probability sample, which means that all elements of the population have an equal chance of being selected. The individuals who will be part of the sample will be selected randomly using random numbers (Casal and Mateu, 2003).

Results

Narrative framing and the clientelistic view of the viewer

As a general rule, millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico, with very little difference, agree that the changes that could occur in films or series, in terms of modifying plots or storylines, are more linked to a clientelist vision of the studios than to the empowerment of the audience. They perceive that the social or historical change that may exist (for example, the treatment of a minority) is due more to a business vision and the effect of audiovisual marketing than to a social or cultural conquest on the part of the audience. Despite the minimal differences, millennials agree more than centennials in this statement, which reflects a high level of political alienation in both generations (Figure 1).

There is no significant correlation between claiming that when a production changes its narrative or focus due to a request in social networks, it is because of a clientelist vision rather than the empowerment of the

4 The table and graphs are found in the Annex, at the end of this article (Editor's Note).

spectator and stating that series and films based on historical events, biographical or based on true stories must show rigor and historical fidelity and realism. Therefore, it could be assumed that this statement does not value how much creative freedom should be given to producers but rather values the causes of changes when they occur. In other words, this statement reflects the assessment that millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico make of the business tactics of those who produce entertainment, confirming a generally negative perception of them.

On the other hand, in Spain, there is greater agreement (M=4.07; SD=1.058) than in Mexico (M=3.77; SD=1.163), [t(649.915)=4.095, p<0.001] and, likewise, men show greater agreement (M=4.12; SD=1.077) than women (M=3.89; SD=1.091), [t(996)=3.298, p<0.01]. However, there are no significant differences derived from the age group according to the one-factor ANOVA test, nor are there differences between the different educational levels of the participants. Similarly, no significant correlations were found between the ideological profiles.

A statistically significant positive correlation was detected between the degree of agreement with the statement and the consumption of both Amazon Prime Video [R(1000) = 0.066, p < 0.05] and Filmin [R(1000) = 0.78, p < 0.05]. This observation implies that viewers who utilize Amazon Prime Video and Filmin are more inclined towards political alienation than consumers of other OTT platforms. Conversely, the correlation between the degree of agreement with the statement and the consumption of Netflix, HBO, Disney+, or other platforms was statistically insignificant.

Furthermore, a statistically significant positive correlation was observed between the degree of agreement with the statement and critically motivated consumption [R(1000) = 0.069, p < 0.05]. This finding suggests that viewers who engage with content driven by a critical evaluation of the material are likelier to experience political alienation.

In contrast, a statistically significant negative correlation was identified between the degree of agreement with the statement and companionship-motivated consumption (passive viewers) [R(1000) = -0.129, p < 0.001]. This observation indicates that viewers who consume content for social companionship are less likely to experience political alienation.

These findings suggest that political alienation is associated with consuming certain OTT platforms and specific viewing motivations.

Viewers who utilize Amazon Prime Video, Filmin, and critically motivated consumption are likelier to experience political alienation, while companionship-motivated consumption is associated with a reduced likelihood of experiencing political alienation.

Censorship or social progress? The perception of narrative alteration

Regarding the second statement,[5] as shown in Figure 2, centennials in both countries tend to agree more with the statement compared to millennials. Conversely, millennials exhibit a degree of indecision that leads many to neither agree nor disagree with the statement, whereas centennials generally express clearer opinions. Thus, 31.7% of millennials neither disagree nor agree, while 36.2% of the centennials surveyed agree and 24.8% strongly agree. Furthermore, in both cases, there is more agreement than disagreement with the statement, which reflects that both generations show less alienation than in the previous point.

There is a statistically positive and significant correlation [$R(1000)=0.257$, $p<0.001$] and of moderate size between affirming that when a series or film modifies its narrative or plot due to social pressure in the social media, it is because many things are no longer overlooked that were previously done, and affirming that series and films based on historical, biographical or true stories should show rigor and historical fidelity and realism. Again, both visions defend values superior to creative freedom.

Significant differences exist according to age [$F(3, 998)=20.531$, $p<0.001$], being greater among the youngest ($M=3.71$; $SD=1.120$) than among the oldest ($M=3.00$; $SD=1.260$). That is, younger individuals are less alienated than older people. Similarly, women show higher agreement ($M=3.65$; $SD=1.023$) than men ($M=2.85$; $SD=1.261$), [$t(719.823)=-10.577$, $p<0.001$] on this statement. Likewise, there is a significant and negative correlation [$R(1000)=-0.084$, $p<0.01$] between educational level and agreement with the statement, i.e., there is greater agreement with the lower educational level.

The study found a positive correlation between agreement with the statement and Netflix consumption [$R(1000)=0.161$, $p<0.001$], a negative correlation with Filmin consumption [$R(1000)=-0.192$,

5 When a film or series modifies its narrative or plot due to social pressure on social networks, it is because many previously overlooked things are now unthinkable. Correcting mistakes is a sign of advancement and social progress, not censorship.

p<0.001], and other platforms [R(1000)=-0.119, p<0.001]. The correlation was not significant for Amazon Prime, HBO, or Disney+. Additionally, agreement with the statement was positively correlated with leisure-fun motivated consumption [R(1000)=0.153, p<0.001], companionship [R(1000)=0.086, p<0.01], and negatively correlated with criticism motivated consumption [R(1000)=-0.140, p<0.001], art motivated consumption [R(1000)=-0.084, p<0.01], and education motivated consumption [R(1000)=-0.131, p<0.010]. Finally, the Students' t-test results indicate no significant differences in nationality or ideological profile.

Discussion and conclusions

As a general rule, a greater sense of political alienation and distrust was found among millennials than among centennials in Spain and Mexico. Whether viewers consider that the narrative changes are due solely to a business issue beyond the viewers' opinions, both generations showed a resoundingly positive response. However, this point presents some nuances, such as that those more in agreement with it are women, Spaniards, and those who consume the Amazon Prime Video and Filmin platforms.

Concerning the statement that changing a narrative is not an act of censorship but a sign of social progress, a positive response was found in general, but much less emphatically than in the statement referring to the clientelism of the producers. Specifically, centennials agree much more than millennials, which reflects that the feeling of political alienation is moderately higher among millennials than among centennials. Therefore, it is not surprising that it was found that younger people agree more with this point, so they would have less alienation (showing a contradiction with the previous response in which they showed a higher level).

Individuals with lower educational levels reach higher agreement and show a lower level of alienation among Netflix viewers and higher for those of Filmin and other platforms other than HBO, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney +. Therefore, the coincidences in greater alienation have occurred mainly among Filmin viewers and millennials, the oldest individuals.

The results are consistent with Holtz-Bacha (1990) findings, which described how individuals who consumed less leisure and entertainment

programming and more political content (newspapers, news...) tended to have a lower sense of alienation. In this sense, it was found that viewers with a greater sense of political alienation are those who view content motivated by a critical view of what they watch. On the other hand, viewers who consider that changing plot details is a sign of progress and not censorship tend to consume more entertainment and are less alienated than those who consume films or series motivated by criticism, art, or education.

Another relevant finding is that in both generations, their values are in higher regard than the creative freedom of the authors. In other words, they consider that the realism or historical fidelity of a narrative plot could be nuanced by the audience, which could even demand a modification of the context in which the narrative unfolds.

Social media and complaints to production companies by millennials and centennials seem to be, for both generations. However, there´s concern that this could lead to an «audience dictatorship» over creative freedom and freedom of expression. It is relevant here that millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico feel they have the right to demand changes when they disagree with a narrative's historical or social reflection.

In contrast to the enlightened prestige of the word reality (Savater, 2008: 28) and the naturalism of Deleuze (1983: 181) modern cinema, which sought psychological reality in films, today, the vision of the romantic model described by Mamet (2015: 59), whereby the viewer was offered the presence of magic for the sole purpose of bestowing a self-help message that allowed the audience to feel the validation of being the God of their own destiny, seems to continue to triumph. In other words, the viewer is constantly elevated to the status of God in the style of works that function as a semi-religious formulation based on the supremacy of faith in oneself (Mamet, 2015).

These attitudes have led to events such as the appearance of messages at the beginning of classic Disney films on the Disney+ platform, such as *Fantasia* (1941), warning of racist images. On the other hand, there was the disappearance of the classic feature film *Gone With the Wind* from the HBO Max platform catalog in 2020, following the murder of George Floyd in the context of the #BlackLivesMatter protests. Such 'evaporation' was the day after the Op-Ed article was published: *Hey, HBO, 'Gone With the Wind' romanticizes the horrors of slavery. Take it off your platform for now*, written by John Ridley for the L.A. Times. In the

cited article, Ridley called on Warner Media to relent in order to remove the classic film from the HBO Max platform based on being "a film that, when it doesn't ignore the horrors of slavery, stops short only of perpetuating some of the most painful stereotypes of people of color" (Ridley, 2020).

Moreover, we also find a clientelist vision in the adverse reaction to the end of HBO's hit *Game of Thrones* or Disney's new *Star Wars* episodes, in which viewers who had been enjoying an entertainment they liked for years began to put pressure on the production companies on social networks when they stopped doing so. Thus, it seems that young people who have the discursive power in social networks to change and censor productions see it plausible to use this channel as a complaint or grievance, which seems to encourage a «dictatorship of the audience» or «self-censorship» by producers when developing new audiovisual products.

Thus, if the fact of not agreeing with a film is a sufficient pretext to demand its suppression, it would infringe on human rights such as freedom of expression and free opinion, cementing, as expressed by Easton Ellis (2020:141), the emergence of a widespread epidemic of self-victimization, a "new mania, a psychosis that the culture has been cultivating" (Easton Ellis, 2020: 141). Simultaneously, streaming platforms increase the feeling of clientelism in the users of their service portals, resulting in the empowerment of an audience that decides how, when, where, and what to watch (Neira, 2017; Hernández-Pérez and Rodríguez-Mateos, 2016; Quintas-Froufe and González-Neira, 2016).

Political alienation is not only strengthened by political crises but also by those involved in general in human relations, being "internalized in the collective subjectivity" (Longo Berdaguer, 2020: 292), as shown by the boycotts of films and series. Besides, this high feeling of political alienation has to do with the ill-fated perception that Western citizens have of their rulers, as they feel disconnected from democratic institutions (Fox, 2021).

However, this psychological feeling is also rooted in the ideological relationships established between parents and children (Legget-James *et al*., 2023: 6), the sense of marginalization suffered by less educated individuals in Western societies (van Noord *et al*., 2023: 869), or the more diffuse relationship between politics and entertainment as a growing symptom of alienation and political cynicism (Fernández-Rodríguez *et al*., 2024: 16). This is directly related to the results of this

study, which show that young people with lower educational levels reach a higher degree of political alienation and that the values they defend are above the creative freedom of the authors, which denotes the ambiguous relationship between entertainment and political ideology (Fernández-Rodríguez *et al*., 2024: 16).

This exploratory study provides evidence that Spain and Mexico are also suffering the consequences of alienation as is happening in other countries in the West, as can be seen in the United Kingdom with Brexit, in the United States with Trumpism, or the support for extremist parties such as the Five Star Movement [Movimento 5 Stelle] in Italy, Jobbik in Hungary, or Alternative [Alternative für Deutschland] in Germany (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Geddes, 2014; Vines and Marsh, 2018; Marsh, 2018).

In today's post-censorship society, we breathe, according to Soto Ivars (2017: 31-32), "a censorship that does not need the power to be exercised". The citizens become the "watchdogs of thought", which is becoming evident in the cultural industries. The exploratory results of this research warn that new generations may become used, perhaps too quickly, to feel legitimized to demand changes in the narratives of the cultural industries. As Bauman (2017: 21) warned, "liquid life means constant self-scrutiny, self-criticism, and self-censorship," entailing a constant "feeding of the dissatisfaction of the «self with itself»". This is typical of Western postmodern cultures, which supports the fear of freedom explained by Fromm (2020: 27) or the dual and contradictory logics of contemporary individuals (Lipovetsky, 2018: 11; Jameson, 1991: 77). Likewise, it is also an expected behavior in millennial and centennial generations, since both are characterized by a cultural identity based on the high use of technology and social and cultural diversity and justice (Barrientos-Báez *et al*., 2022; Ross and Rouse, 2020).

Future research may focus on acquiring data from additional Spanish-speaking countries and investigating other political sentiments such as efficacy, cynicism, the third-person effect, and the spiral of silence. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of directors and screenwriters and their experiences with self-censorship could be an intriguing avenue of inquiry.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

CRediT (Contribution Roles Taxonomy)

Conceptualization [CFR and LMRR]. Data Curation [CFR and LMRR]. Formal Analysis [CFR and BCA]. Funding Acquisition [BCA]. Investigation [CFR and LMRR]. Methodology [CFR and LMRR]. Project Administration [BCA]. Resources [CFR]. Software [LMRR and BCA]. Supervision [LMRR]. Validation [LMRR]. Visualization [CFR]. Writing-Original Draft Preparation [CFR and LMRR] Writing-Review & Editing [CFR, BCA and LMRR].

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Annex

Table 1

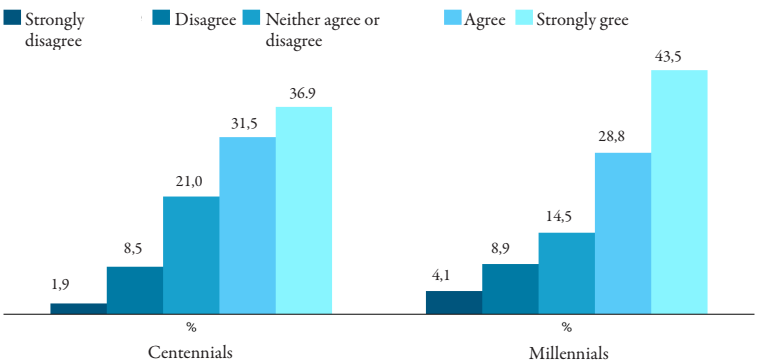
The National Political Alienation Survey Sample in Spain and Mexico

Generation	Spain	Mexico
Male Millennials	160	108
Female Millennials	139	172
Total Millennials	299	280
Male Centennials	100	27
Female Centennials	252	40
Total Centennials	352	67
Total both generations	651	347

Source: Own Elaboration based on the results of this research.

Figure 1

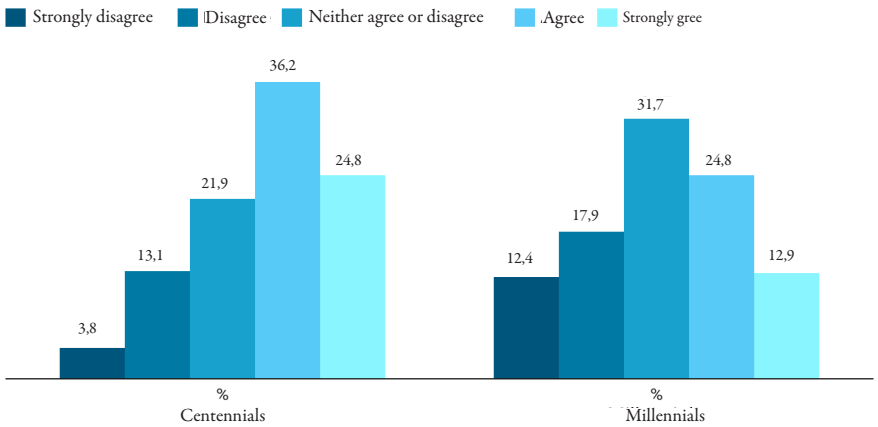
Narrative Framing and the Clientelistic View of the Audience



When a film or series changes its plot or perspective (historical, social...) due to a request or pressure on social networks, it reflects a clientelist and economic vision of the production companies rather than to the empowerment of the audience.
Source: Own Elaboration based on the results of this research.

Figure 2

Censorship or Social Progress? The Perception of Narrative Alteration



When a film or series modifies its narrative or plot due to social pressure on social networks, it is because many previously overlooked things are now unthinkable. Correcting mistakes is a sign of advancement and social progress, not censorship.
Source: Own Elaboration based on the results of this research.

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