Diversity of Hispanic identity in the bilingual fiction series *Now and Then*

Diversidad de la identidad hispana en la serie de ficción bilingüe *Now and Then*

Diversidade da identidade hispânica na série de ficção bilíngue Now and Then

Saida Santana Mahmut, Universidad Complutense de Madrid y Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. Madrid, España (saidasan@ucm.es)

Vicente Sanz de León, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (URJC), Madrid, España (vicente.sanz.deleon@urjc.es)

Gustavo Montes Rodríguez, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (URJC). Madrid, España (gustavo.montes@urjc.es)

ABSTRACT | Audiovisual fiction can reinforce social stereotypes, but it can also break them by showing characters whose actions are normally categorized into other types of behaviors. The objective of this study is to understand the characteristics of the representation of the diversity of Hispanic identity in the fictional series *Now and Then*, the first Spanish-language series on Apple TV that attempts to break with the usual negative stereotypes of Latinos in international fiction. To this end, a narrative analysis is conducted, focusing on the characteristics of the main characters and an in-depth interview with the show's creators. It is found that *Now and Then* differs from the series that standardize the Hispanic as an underclass stereotype with a single neutralized accent, and that it portrays multiculturalism and Hispanic diversity in roles of different nationalities that preserve their language and accent, reflecting their place of origin and idiosyncrasy and a different economic status.

KEYWORDS: *Now and Then*, Hispanic identity, diversity, multiculturalism, stereotype

RESUMEN|*La ficción audiovisual puede reforzar estereotipos sociales, pero puede también derribarlos mostrando personajes cuyas acciones son normalmente encasilladas en otros comportamientos. Este estudio busca conocer las características de representación de la diversidad de la identidad hispana de la serie de ficción Now and Then, primera serie española de Apple TV que busca romper con los estereotipos negativos habituales de los latinos en la ficción internacional. Para ello, se utiliza el análisis narrativo, centrado en las características de los personajes principales y la entrevista en profundidad a sus creadores. Se constata que Now and Then se diferencia de las series que uniformizan al hispano como estereotipo de clase baja con acento único neutralizado y que representa la multiculturalidad y diversidad hispana en roles de distintas nacionalidades que conservan su lengua y acento, reflejan su lugar de origen e idiosincrasia y otro estatus económico.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Now and Then, identidad hispana, diversidad, multiculturalidad, estereotipo.*

RESUMO|A ficção audiovisual pode reforçar estereótipos sociais, mas também pode demoli-los, mostrando personagens cujas ações são normalmente classificadas em outros comportamentos. O objetivo deste artigo é conhecer as características de representação da diversidade da identidade hispânica na série de ficção Now and Then, primeira série espanhola de Apple TV que procura romper com os estereótipos negativos habituais dos latinos na ficção internacional. Para isso, utiliza-se a análise narrativa, focada nas características das personagens que quebram estereótipos e entrevistas em profundidade com seus criadores. Observa-se que Now and Then se diferencia das séries que padronizam o hispânico como um estereótipo de classe baixa com um único sotaque neutralizado e representa o multiculturalismo e a diversidade hispânica em papéis de diferentes nacionalidades que preservam sua língua e sotaque, refletem o seu local de origem, a sua idiossincrasia e outro nível econômico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Now and Then*, identidade hispânica, diversidade, multiculturalismo, estereótipo.

INTRODUCTION

The series *Now and Then*, produced by Bambú Producciones for Apple TV+ and released in 2022, is the first Spanish-language series for the platform. It is set in the city of Miami and serves as a meeting point between Latin America, the United States and Spain (Mantilla, 2022). Bambú Producciones is known for its internationally successful series, including *Velvet*, *Las chicas del cable*, *Gran Hotel*, and *El caso Asunta*. With 15 years of experience, Bambú has created and produced "the first Netflix fiction series in Spain, the first Netflix docuseries in Spain, the first Apple TV+ series in Spain, the first Movistar+ series, and the second Starz series in Spain" (https://bambuproducciones.com/).

This eight-episode bilingual thriller, directed by Giddeon Raff and Carlos Sedes[1], follows a group of six Spanish-speaking friends of different nationalities. On the eve of their college graduation, they embark on an epic weekend of celebration that ends in tragedy when one of them dies — a moment that will change their lives forever. Almost 20 years later, they are forced to meet again when a blackmailer threatens to expose the truth (https://www.apple.com/es/tv-pr/originals/now-and-then/).

The series is part of the original content developed by this streaming platform for Latin America. According to one of its executives at the time, it was created with the aim of producing "Latin American content where quality is paramount" (Cine Magna, 2022, 4'17"). As the series' creator and executive producer, Ramón Campos, explained in an interview with Mantilla (2022):

> In fiction, Hispanics are almost always represented by certain stereotypes. We found it very interesting to show the contrasts between rich and poor people, but also to show how some work as surgeons or politicians. It's unfortunate, but it's still something you rarely see.

To address the issue of Hispanic stereotypes in international fiction, it is important to clarify a few points. While the terms Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably, the term Latino has acquired an identity-based meaning in the United States that distinguishes it from Hispanic (Barragán & Romerales, 2019). A 2019 study by the Pew Hispanic Center found that 47% of Hispanics describe themselves based on their family place of origin, while 39% identify as Hispanic or Latino and 14% consider themselves American (Hugo Lopez et al., 2022).

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1. Original idea and creation by Ramón Campos and Gema R. Neira, executive production by Ramón Campos, Gideon Raff, and Teresa Fernández-Valdés, and written by Gema R. Neira, Ramón Campos, Paula Fernández, Curro Serrano, and Javier Chacártegui (https://www.apple.com/es/tv-pr/originals/now-and-then/cast-crew/).

This is a remarkable percentage, especially considering that the 2021 census reported 62.6 million Hispanics in the United States, representing 19% of the population (Hugo Lopez et al., 2022). Importantly, the term Latino includes not only non-Hispanic populations such as Brazilians, but also English-speaking Latinos in the United States (Scolari & Piñón, 2016). Moreover, this is the term that has been predominantly used for their representation in Hollywood for more than two decades (Ramírez Berg, 2002).

On the other hand, it is important to consider the term *latinidad*, which scholars use to refer to the cultural identity and collective identification of Latinos in the context of the United States (Avila-Saavedra, 2010; Rojas, 2004). *Latinidad* encompasses the cultural identity of individuals of Spanish-speaking descent living in the United States and is described as "anyone currently living in the United States who is of Spanish-speaking descent" (Molina & Valdivia, 2004, p. 207).

In this context, in recent years, many scholars have turned to television series as a subject of study through narrative analysis (Wilke François & Seide Froemming, 2021; Castro & Cascajosa, 2020; Barra & Scaglioni, 2020; De-Caso Bausela et al., 2020; Masanet & Fedele, 2019). This work is complemented by studies that examine audiovisual productions that challenge stereotypes associated with certain groups or minorities (Navarro et al., 2022; Elías-Zambrano et al., 2023; Báez, 2007). A stereotype is understood as a widespread prejudice about a social group that categorizes people based on their appearance, behavior or habits (Quin & McMahon, 1997). In cinema, it is described as "the act of judging others by ascribing negative characteristics to individuals or groups" (Choi, 2007, p. 2).

This study aims to examine how Hispanic identity is portrayed in Now and Then in relation to common stereotypes of Latinos in international fiction, which various authors have argued are often negative (González Aguilar & Mayagoitia Soria, 2017; Ramírez Berg, 2002; Villumsen, 2017; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2018). Just as other authors explore the importance of a Latino showrunner in the Starz series Vida to create an authentic Latino show (Ruiz et al., 2021), we aim to examine whether Campos' stated intention (Mantilla, 2022) to break negative stereotypes of Latinos in international audiovisual fiction is achieved, and if so, how.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Various studies have investigated the role that audiovisual fiction plays in reinforcing social stereotypes, particularly in relation to minorities (Igartua et al., 2012). These studies also emphasize that fiction can challenge these stereotypes by portraying characters whose actions contradict the typical behaviors with which

they are usually associated (Lozano, 2020). Stereotypes as mental constructs can sometimes be necessary for the creation and understanding of fiction, as they simplify information and make the narrative easier to follow (Galán-Fajardo, 2009). Social representations and stereotypes are crucial for the construction of a group identity, as the shared system of representations of a group allows it to differentiate itself from others. Prejudice is closely related to stereotypes and involves unexamined judgments about individuals or groups that can be either positive or negative (Bourhis & Leyens, 1996). To change a stereotype, one must understand that positive information is easier to disconfirm than to confirm, whereas negative information is more likely to be confirmed than disconfirmed (Doise, 1982; Tajfel, 1984). Ultimately, changing a negative stereotype is more challenging than changing a positive stereotype.

As Montero states (in Elías-Zambrano et al., 2023), fictional television has a greater impact on the public's perception of the world than advertising or institutional communication campaigns. Thus, it is important to examine how Hispanic identity is portrayed in contemporary audiovisual fiction, particularly in the series *Now and Then*, and whether it reflects the diversity suggested by the aim of the study.

One of the main negative stereotypes imposed on Latinos in audiovisual fiction is the "homogenization of ethnicity, culture, and characteristics, rejecting the ideas of multiethnicity and multiculturalism present in Hispanic territories" (Choi, 2007, p. 2). Latino characters are often portrayed as criminals, law enforcement officers, or sexual objects, and their behavior is often associated with inarticulate speech, limited intelligence, laziness, and lack of education (Mastro et al., 2008).

Despite the increasing visibility of Latino representation in U.S. literature in the 21st century (González Aguilar & Mayagoitia Soria, 2017) and the emergence of new positive stereotypes, the negative ones persist. Ramírez Berg (2002) categorizes these negative stereotypes into roles such as the bandit, the buffoon/clown, the Latin lover and the dark lady. In comedy, Villumsen (2013) identifies additional stereotypes, including the lazy or criminal Latino, the loud one, the absent father, and the inferior Latino. González Aguilar and Mayagoitia Soria (2017) propose eight Latino character models: the exuberant woman, the professional, the ambitious criminal, the Chicano drug dealer, the new generation, the marginalized Latina, the assimilated Latino/a, and the generation of the past.

This lack of representation of Hispanic diversity is also evident in the use of neutral Spanish, a dialect variant known as Spanish Latino that lumps all Hispanics into a single linguistic category (Pérez, 2022). Between 1928 and 1929, U.S. producers modified the Spanish language to create a version that did not

contain specific features of a particular culture, calling it neutral Spanish (Marcos, n.d.). This form contains mainly elements of Mexican Spanish, while localisms, cultural idiosyncrasies and characteristic slang were eliminated.

Another analytical tool for examining stereotypes in audiovisual fiction is intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (cited in Valiña, 2009) that describes how systemic inequalities arise from the intersection of different social factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class (ParlAmericas, n.d.). This concept states that a person is either oppressed or privileged depending on their membership in certain social categories. In this context, social class can be an important source of inequality in a person's life.

HISPANIC REPRESENTATION IN INTERNATIONAL AUDIOVISUAL FICTION

The representation of Latinos on U.S. television has never been proportional to their share of the population, even though Latinos make up nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population and are the second largest racial and ethnic group in the country. Latinos are featured in only 7% of leading roles and less than 6% of major film writers are Latino (Burga, 2023). Hollywood undoubtedly fails to accurately portray ethnic groups and minorities, instead creating its own stereotypical character patterns (Martynuska, 2013). Research also shows that more than a third of Latino characters are portrayed as criminals, according to a study by the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, which analyzed the highest-grossing films from 2007 to 2019 (Burga, 2023).

In a study by Mastro and Greenberg (2000), which examined 1,757 main characters on U.S. television between 1966 and 1992, white characters dominated, while the representation of Latinos, Asians and Native Americans was barely noticeable.

According to Persánch (2017), the representation of Latinos in North American film production is typically embedded in a Eurocentric, white and heteronormative cultural norm that shapes the way their image is codified.

Nevertheless, there are efforts to explore the diversity of Latino identity, as demonstrated by the series *Jane the Virgin*, which aired on The CW from 2014 to 2019. The series, adapted from the Venezuelan series by Perla Farías, follows in the footsteps of *Ugly Betty*. As Doise (1982) and Tajfel (1984) noted, the series dispels negative preconceptions about Latino identity and introduces more positive portrayals. While it maintains the value of family — a common trope in the portrayal of Latinos in audiovisual media — it subverts this by showing a third-generation Latino family led by strong female characters. Some characters,

like the grandmother Alba, embody traditional Latino stereotypes, while others, like Jane, reflect a more diverse, modern Latino identity rooted in values such as citizenship, empowerment, Western rationality and moral principles (Piñón, 2017).

The series also challenges stereotypes regarding Latino men, homosexuality and single mothers (Piñón, 2017).

Another series that highlights the diversity of Latino representation is *Gentefied*, which premiered on Netflix in 2020. The first season revolves around the lives of three cousins struggling to maintain their family's *taquería* (taco restaurant) in a gentrified Los Angeles neighborhood. While the series challenges negative stereotypes, it also preserves positive ones, such as familism, a concept deeply rooted in Latin American heritage, particularly in Mexican culture (Kalafati & Thomathou, 2024). Familism emphasizes values such as loyalty, support and solidarity (Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002).

In their study of *Gentefied*, Kalafati and Thomathou (2024) highlight the representation of marginalized Latino identities, particularly within the working class, in which Latinos from diverse backgrounds, such as queer individuals and Afro-Latinos, are given a voice. The series features characters who embody traditional values, but also those who reflect the challenges faced by Mexican-American parents today. Characters like Beatriz, who is more conservative, are contrasted with her daughter and her black friend who challenge the stereotypes of Mexican women typically portrayed in television series.

There have been numerous attempts to reflect Latino reality in television series, including Netflix series *One Day at a Time* (2017–2020), the Spanish-language series *La Casa de las Flores* (2018–2020), and the bilingual series *Narcos* (2015–2017).

METHODOLOGY

To examine the representation of Hispanic diversity in the series *Now and Then*, a narrative analysis of the scripts was conducted (Vale, 1989), which focused on the construction of the main characters. In addition, one of the authors of the article conducted a participant observation during rehearsals and filming over a period of six months, following the classification of Sanjuan Núñez (2019). In addition, two in-depth video call interviews were conducted with the director Carlos Sedes and the author Gemma R. Neira.

To analyze the main characters, we applied the denotative study by González Aguilar and Mayagoitia Soria (2017), focusing on physical attributes such as gender, age, physique, clothing, occupation or profession, marital status,

cultural background and social class. In addition, we examined character traits and personality — such as environment and past— - and integrated them into the framework for character asa person proposed by Casetti and Di Chio (1991) and implemented by Egri (1960), Dyer (2001), Suurmond (2013) and Field (1995), as described below.

RESULTS
Character analysis

In the following section, the main characters of the series are analyzed in both their adolescent and adult stages, with the aim of identifying the characteristics that challenge negative stereotypes of Latinos in audiovisual fiction, as discussed by the aforementioned authors. These characteristics, in turn, reflect a broader diversity in the representation of Hispanics in contemporary media. The characters Alejandro, Ana, Pedro, Marcos, Sofía and Inspector Flora will be examined in both their younger and adult versions. However, Alejandro and Isabel are only analyzed in one stage: Alejandro in his youth, as he dies early in the series, and Isabel in adulthood, as she is the girlfriend of the adult Marcos. Inspector Flora is the only character portrayed by the same actress at both ages.

CHARACTER Alejandro, a character who dies at the age of 20	AGE 20	ACTOR Jorge López
Character / Personality	The son of a Cuban father and a Chilean mother is a one-dimensional character: he concentrates on sport, swimming, his studies and his girlfriend Ana. He does not develop further, as we only see him in his youth, when he dies at the age of 20. His personality is straightforward, consistent and well-calibrated, following in his father's footsteps. He remains static—stable and constant throughout.	
Appearance	He is described in the script as: "(…) Chilean, handsome and athletic, he uses all his charm with the guitar and plays a tune. All his friends' eyes are on him. He is the center of attention" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). He lives in a luxurious villa with his swimming trophies and photos with Ana on display in his room.	
Verbal expression	He speaks Spanish with a Chilean accent and uses morphosyntactic features unique to Chile, such as voseo, usteo plural and personal forms of simple tenses. There are notable similarities between the 2nd and 3rd conjugations, as well as the predominant use of certain periphrastic conjugations instead of the simple tenses in Spanish. In addition, certain simple or compound tenses are obsolete or no longer used, there are analogous tendencies in regularity, irregularity and incorrect verb forms, and the conjugations of verbs ending in -ear and -iar get mixed up (Morales Pettorino, 1998).	
Backstory	Born in Miami.	

CHARACTER Ana	AGE 40 20	ACTOR Marina de Tavira Alicia Jaziz
Character / Personality	A complex and multi-layered character, with dreams and ambitions. She feels guilty about Alejandro's death. In adulthood, she is married to Pedro and they live in a mansion in the upscale area of Key Biscayne. As an adult, she becomes a one-dimensional and straightforward character who focuses solely on making her husband the mayor while remaining stable and static. "Ana is a girl who wanted to be a politician; she was very capable and had many ambitions, but then this tragedy happened that affected everyone, and in the end it didn't come true," explains Marina de Tavira (CineMagna, 2022, 5'16"). Her character is shaped by Alejandro's death, her decision to marry Pedro and her commitment to help him become mayor of Miami.	
Appearance	As a young woman she is described as: "Mexican, well-dressed, neat, (...)", and in adulthood she is described as: "neat, with well-applied makeup" Her facial expression is described as "serious, worried, and absent" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). Physically, she is petite and elegant — tall, with fair skin, deep brown eyes and light brown hair. Her appearance deviates from the typical stereotype of Mexican women in North American fiction. As a young woman, she dresses in jeans and casual tops in pastel colors. As an adult, she opts for high heels and three-quarter-length skirts, also in pastel shades.	
Verbal expression	Her linguistic expression reflects her origin. With Alejandro, who is Chilean, she uses fewer localisms than as an adult with Pedro, who is also Mexican. She uses ustedes for the second person plural, practices seseo and uses local expressions such as órale, güey, ándale, no mames and pendejo as well as verbs such as chingarse and platicar. Notable features of Mexican Spanish described by Gutiérrez Bravo (2020) include plural agreement in contexts where it does not normally occur, "the presence of intensive datives, the wide range, use and distribution of different reporting elements, the extensive use of relative clauses of possession without the relative pronoun cuyo, similar structures, constructions expressing time with tener, various periphrastic constructions with lo que es, and less flexibility in word order" (pp. 67–68). She is bilingual and her children are native English speakers, which contributes to her use of Spanglish: "Oh, my God. Sí, luego hablamos," "No, ni hablar. No way" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). She speaks English with her son's school principal, the police, Marwen, and the federal authorities.	

CHARACTER Pedro	AGE 20 40	ACTOR Dario Yazbek José María Yazpik
Character / Personality	Mexican. In his youth he seems emotionally shallow in his personal relationships, but inwardly he is very versatile and complex. He is Alejandro's best friend and harbors a secret love for him. His character is shaped by his past and his decision to marry Ana. Over time, he develops into a dynamic character.	
Appearance	As a young man he is not particularly handsome, he wears glasses and braces. In his youth he is described as "Mexican, shy, with glasses and braces," and it is noted that he is clumsy, "unable to catch a bottle in the air" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). As an adult, he tells his son about the difficulties of his childhood: "Yes, I wasn't the most popular boy at school. My classmates had a vivid imagination and called me all kinds of names... I really had a tough time". His physical appearance changes considerably in adulthood, as the script describes: "(...) he is no longer the boy with glasses and braces from twenty years ago. Now he's a fit, dark-haired man with perfect teeth, wearing a designer suit" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). Although he has learned to control his impulses, he still speaks with a slight stutter. He is tall, has tanned skin and dark brown hair.	
Verbal expression	He shares similar traits with Ana. Both are the Hispanic characters who speak the most English in the series.	
Backstory	His past plays a decisive role in shaping his character. He comes from humble beginnings and his mother Bibiana, who dies during the pandemic, was the cleaning lady in Alejandro's villa where he grew up. Alejandro's parents treated him like a son and financed both his education and his political campaign. As an adult, he embarks on an affair with his campaign manager Ernesto, whom he eventually betrays for the good of his family.	

CHARACTER Marcos	AGE 20 40	ACTOR Manolo Cardona Jack Duarte
Character / Personality	Colombian. This character is complex and multi-layered throughout his life. He is also unstable and contradictory and is constantly evolving. He is studying medicine and is Sofia's boyfriend. Together they dream of going to Colombia to work for an NGO: "Screw my father (excited), we're going to Colombia" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). On the night of Alejandro's tragic death, Marcos argues with him and feels responsible. His father steps in to get him out of the mess and Marcos is in his debt, which leads him to leave Sofia and work in his father's cosmetic clinic. Twenty years later, as he prepares to marry Colombian Isabel, Sofia reappears and reignites the passion between them.	
Appearance	In his youth he is described as: "(…) Colombian, attractive, with a bob haircut, wearing jeans and a T-shirt", and as an adult as: "(…) he wears a tie, has gray hair and a charming smile" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). His status is made clear by his well-groomed appearance, his Porsche and his luxurious clinic and home with a private elevator and sea view in the Zaha Hadid building. He is tall and slim, with dark hair, fair skin and blue eyes. His Colombian identity is reflected in his habits. During Christmas dinner in 2000, the description states, "Colombian food on the table, along with the traditional turkey: tamales, fried plantains, empanadas…" (Campos et al., 2022 – present).	
Verbal expression	He speaks with a Colombian accent. The actor Jack Duarte, who is Mexican, mimics the paraverbal elements of Cardona's communication: well pronounced vowels, the tendency to close unstressed vowels and form a diphthong with the following vowel, the use of usted and ustedes for the second person plural (Espejo Olaya, 2007) and seseo, but without aspirated final s-sounds. He switches to English when speaking to the staff, some of his customers and the police.	
Backstory	As a child, he lost his mother to addiction, a condition he later inherits and which leads to problems that his father repeatedly helps him out of, increasing his dependence on him. His dream is to go to Colombia "to do humanitarian work when I finish my medical degree," he explains (Campos et al., 2022 – present). In their adult relationship, he would also like to return to Colombia with Sofia.	

CHARACTER Sofía	AGE 20 40	ACTOR Maribel Verdú Alicia Sanz
Character / Personality	One of the most complex and volatile characters in the series, with a very dynamic and evolving role. Together with her best friend Daniela, she has the lowest economic status within the group of friends.	
Appearance	In her youth, she is described as: "(…) Spanish, beautiful, sexy, in a hippie dress, smoking a joint while stroking Marcos' hair (…)." In adulthood: "(…) Her appearance has changed considerably. She now wears jeans and a sweatshirt, her hair tied back and no makeup. She does not look like she's had an easy life" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). Although she graduated from law school, her life has been a challenge. She believes that people can "learn to live with less (…), to be free, to have rights…" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). She is a beautiful woman with fair skin, brown hair and greenish eyes.	
Verbal expression	She has a peninsular Spanish accent, pronounces the c (as in ce) and the z clearly, as well as the final s sounds, and she uses the pronoun vosotros for the second person plural. She does not use localisms and maintains a Spanish accent when speaking English. She does not use Spanglish.	
Backstory	She has a bad relationship with her father. In a dialog she confesses: "(…) I am not a successful lawyer and to pay the blackmail I asked the wrong person for money. Also, I got kicked out of the motel today because I have no credit on my card. I have nowhere to go" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). She reflects on the peculiarities of her country and explains: "(…) In Spain, we tend to criticize rather than show gratitude" (Campos et al., 2022 – present).	

CHARACTER Isabel	AGE 40	ACTOR Juana Acosta
Character / Personality	She undergoes a transformation after breaking up with Marcos because of his infidelity. As a character, she is complex and multi-layered, but remains consistent and uncompromising in her approach to the separation.	
Appearance	She is presented as "(…) Colombian, an executive and beautiful" She has a high social status and works at the Figueroa company, where she has to "fight with lawyers" every day (Campos et al., 2022 – present). She is slim, attractive and likable, has fair skin and blonde hair.	
Verbal Expression	She has the same characteristics of Colombian Spanish as Marcos and often uses Spanglish. She speaks fluent English.	
Backstory	We only know of her mother, who is a wealthy woman.	

CHARACTER Isabel	AGE 40	ACTOR Soledad Villamil Miranda de la Serna
Character / Personality	A complex and multi-layered character, characterized by contradictions and constant development, who is deeply affected by Alejandro's death. On the night of the accident, she collides with Jessica Thompson's car, killing Thompson and injuring her arm, leaving her with a lifelong scar. She dreams of becoming a documentary filmmaker, but this dream remains unfulfilled. Daniela becomes the caretaker of Hugo, Thompson's baby, and later the widower's partner until his death. She lives with Hugo in Little Haiti, one of Miami's most Caribbean and dangerous neighborhoods ("Is Miami Safe?", n.d.). Daniela feels that she is the one most affected by the accident, which leads her to conspire with Sofía to blackmail her former classmates. In the end, Sullivan murders Daniela. She lives in the disadvantaged neighborhood of Little Haiti.	
Appearance	As an adult she is described as "(…) looking sickly. Her right hand trembles", with "a large scar along her right arm" (Campos et al., 2022 – present), which she conceals by wearing long-sleeved shirts. She is beautiful, tall, has fair skin and blue eyes and is modestly dressed. Like Sofía, her social status is lower than that of her university peers.	
Verbal expression	Her Argentinian origins are explicitly shown. She is seen drinking mate and pointing out the peculiarities of her country: "We are more into psychoanalysis, you know?" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). In her language, she shows typical linguistic characteristics of an Argentine from the province of Buenos Aires, as noted by the Centro Virtual Cervantes, such as intonation, "lengthening of stressed vowels, seseo, a tendency to aspirate final s sounds and yeísmo" (Centro Virtual Cervantes, n.d.a). In terms of grammar, she uses voseo, the prefix re- with a superlative value, among others. She speaks in English with her son Brendan and the police.	
Backstory	She did not have a good relationship with her family: "(…) I moved thousands of kilometers away from them. I would rather not have them around" me (Campos et al., 2022 – present).	

CHARACTER Flora	AGE 55 35	ACTOR Rosie Pérez
Character / Personality	A complex individual. Like the actress, she is second-generation Puerto Rican and American-born. Both in her youth and adulthood, she is a multi-faceted character — complex and multi-layered. She is single-minded in her obsession with Alejandro's case, but unstable and conflicted in her personal life. In 2000, she is rather innocent and submissive to her boss Sullivan. As an adult, she struggles with exhaustion after her battle with breast cancer.	
Appearance	In her youth she is described as: "Puerto Rican, a novice in the third degree of delinquency, immaculate and impressionable." In adulthood: "(…) the rookie detective we have seen in the past who has now, after many years, become a seasoned homicide sergeant. Her appearance is very different from 20 years ago. She has a much more relaxed look" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). She is athletic, slim, has Hispanic features and a dark complexion.	
Verbal expression	Her first language is English. With the young suspects, she alternates between Spanish, which she speaks with a Puerto Rican accent, and English. She uses Spanish to empathize with the Hispanic characters. An example of this is the scene in which Flora asks Isabel to put microphones in her house to spy on Marcos: "Then we won't be able to find out if he's going to marry a murderer (…) If Marcos has nothing to hide, he has nothing to worry about" (Campos et al., 2022 – present). The actress's accent is a mixture of Puerto Rican and American. Among the most distinct features she retains from her original accent are the intonation, the lengthening of the last stressed vowel in sentences, the *seseo*, the pharyngeal aspiration and "the lateralization of /ɾ/ (*lambdacismo*)" (Centro Virtual Cervantes, n.d.b), mixed with a North American English accent.	
Backstory	She lives in Hialeah, a city in Miami-Dade County in South Florida, which has the highest percentage of Spanish-speaking residents in the United States. 95% of the population is Latino and 92% of them speak only Spanish ("What Hialeah Is Like", 2017). In Hialeah, her brother was falsely accused of murder, imprisoned, and eventually died. Although the dialog does not explicitly attribute this to the fact that he was Latino, it is implied that his social status played an important role. This motivates Flora's obsession with finding culprits among characters who, despite being Hispanic, come from a higher social class than herself.	

After analyzing each of the main characters individually, we find that in addition to the diverse cast chosen for the story, other elements help to reflect Latino realities in the United States. First, the choice of Miami — a multicultural and bilingual city — as the setting plays an important role, as Sedes (personal communication, 2022) explains. The diversity of the project is also reflected in the composition of the team and in the co-direction by a Spanish and an Israeli director. In order to increase realism, the Spanish used in the dialog was tailored to the place of origin of the individual characters. An American screenwriter ensured that the translation was not literal, while a Latin American screenwriter adapted the script to reflect regional characteristics. "Each actor then took their

lines and added a personal touch", explains author Gema R. Neira (personal communication, 2022). Furthermore, the use of Spanglish — "a language form of some Hispanic groups in the United States in which lexical and grammatical elements from Spanish and English are blended" (Real Academia Española, n.d.) — further enriches the dialog. Another integrative aspect was the casting of an American actress of Puerto Rican origin in the role of Flora, who bridged the two worlds by using Spanish as a means of creating empathy, the screenwriter adds (personal communication, 2022).

All the characters belong to the upper echelons of society, with the exception of Daniela and Sofía. Each character reflects the unique characteristics of their country of origin by presenting their customs, language, distinctive accent and idiomatic expressions. Among them, Ana, Pedro and Isabel regularly use Spanglish. The six friends do not conform to the negative Latino stereotypes typically portrayed in American fiction, either in terms of their appearance or their professional roles. However, they do reinforce other identity-based stereotypes in the way they eat, dress, and speak. Each character is portrayed as acting in accordance with their individual personality, which determines their actions.

In Flora's case, she conforms to the physical stereotype of a Puerto Rican woman, and her Spanish is less fluent, reflecting her status as a second-generation speaker.

Script notes and certain dialog help to reveal the characters' backstories, which are essential for the development of realistic identities. Only in Isabel's case are there few details about her past. In addition to their place of origin, the neighborhoods in which they live in Miami also play an important role. Ana and Pedro live in affluent areas such as Key Biscayne, as do Marcos and Isabel, who live in the Zaha Hadid Building. In contrast, Daniela lives in Little Haiti and Flora in Hialeah, both working-class neighborhoods.

The characters' appearances help to dispel negative stereotypes about the portrayal of Latinos in audiovisual media and emphasize more positive attributes, such as the higher social and economic status of Latinos in the United States. This is reflected in their clothing, homes, cars and accessories.

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that the fiction series *Now and Then* successfully achieves its director Ramón Campos' goal of portraying Hispanics in a way that departs from the typical negative stereotypes. This approach allows for a more realistic and diverse portrayal of Hispanic characters (Mantilla, 2022).

This diversity and multiculturalism is also achieved through the use of two languages — English and Spanish — and the different nationalities of the members of the production team. The collaboration between American and Spanish crews during filming in Miami, the co-direction of a Spanish and an Israeli director based in Los Angeles, the involvement of an American and a Latin American screenwriter alongside the Spanish production company Bambú, and the collaboration between Apple TV+ and Bambú Producciones have all contributed to this result.

The traditionally stereotypical and limited representation of Latinos in U.S. television series is counteracted by the involvement of Latino television professionals in the production process (Higueras Ruiz et al., 2021). Another aspect of this diversity is reflected in the narrative itself, which captures the complexity of Hispanic identity in a country that is home to nearly 62.6 million Hispanics. The script features characters of different Spanish-speaking nationalities whose origins and characteristics are explicitly highlighted, including Spaniards, Cubans, Chileans, Mexicans, Colombians, Argentinians, and Puerto Ricans.

The series achieves what Rodrigo Alsina (1999) considers fundamental to true diversity: the representation of multiculturalism, defined as the "ideology that promotes the coexistence of different cultures in the same real, media or virtual space" (p. 74).

Another factor that emphasizes Hispanic diversity is the choice of Miami as the setting of the story — a city where people from different backgrounds live side by side and respect each other and their way of speaking. By portraying the city beyond the usual tourist stereotypes and focusing on working-class neighborhoods like Hialeah and Little Haiti, the series reinforces this diversity, defining the characters' social class and shaping their experiences.

The use of Spanish by Hispanic characters, the respect and representation of their particular accents and the integration of Spanglish are also important elements. These results are the outcome of a conscious script design and a previous collaboration with the actors, each of whom brings their own identity and characteristic expressions based on their origin. Localisms and regional idiomatic expressions are included, emphasizing differences as a defining feature in a world that combines a variety of accents. This approach counters one of the main stereotypes about Latin Americans in audiovisual fiction: the "homogenization of ethnicity, culture, and idiosyncrasies, rejecting the ideas of multiethnicity and multiculturalism present in Hispanic areas" (Choi, 2007, p. 2). For American characters of Hispanic origin, the use of the Spanish language serves as a strategy to foster empathy and build trust, as the character Flora demonstrates.

The Mexicans, Colombians, Cubans and Chileans in the series are portrayed as having a high economic status, while the Spanish and Argentinian characters are shown in more disadvantaged situations. The American character of Puerto Rican origin represents the working middle class. This realistic portrayal of Hispanic identities is crucial in combating social rejection and racism, because one of the main causes of this rejection is the lack of understanding of other cultures, which leads to stereotypes. When stereotypes are used to form ideas and opinions, they can become problematic (Alsina, 1999, pp. 82–83). In this regard, Now and Then avoids presenting the negative Latino stereotypes described by Berg (2013), Villumsen (2021) and González Aguilar and Mayagoitia Soria (2017). Instead, the series presents a variety of Hispanic characters that better reflect the realities of today's society and promote the creation of new positive stereotypes, such as the successful Latino who realizes the American dream. These positive traits are reinforced through the characters' appearance, clothing and possessions. To preserve and emphasize the unique cultural characteristics of each country, identity-based stereotypes are expressed through verbal expressions, traditional foods and drinks, and clothing styles.

The choice of a diverse cast, with actors from a variety of Latin American countries and from Spain bringing the characters to life, as well as the inclusion of a first-generation American actress of Hispanic origin, is another key factor in strengthening the diversity portrayed in the series.

Several elements align with the goal set forth by the show's creator and executive producer, Ramón Campos: to create a series that represents the complex diversity of Hispanic identity— - something not previously shown on television — a goal that was successfully achieved (Mantilla, 2022). While the study shows that the series aims to break negative stereotypes by introducing more positive stereotypes that emphasize diversity and multiculturalism, further research is needed to examine the balance between these stereotypes. As Galán (2009) has pointed out, stereotypes will always be necessary for the audience to understand the narrative.

It would be valuable to further analyze whether these new positive stereotypes in contemporary audiovisual fiction truly represent Hispanic diversity or merely create a different, albeit less negative, reality. In addition, ongoing research should continue to examine the impact of negative stereotypes.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SAIDA SANTANA MAHMUT, Ph.D. (URJC), holds a degree in Journalism (UCM) and a master's degree in Performing Arts (URJC). Accredited by the ANECA as a contracted doctor. Research sexennial (CENAI). Research group: Internet research and analysis in journalism (GIAIP-UCM). Reserarch Nebrija Group of Transversal Studies in Contemporary Creation (ETCC). Screenwriter, playwright, multimedia creator, actress, and coach with international experience whose works have been promoted and awarded in public tenders from the Government of the Canary Islands, the Community of Madrid, SGAE, the Atlantic Center for Modern Art, and the Cuban Cultural Center of New York.

iD   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5248-337X

VICENTE SANZ DE LEÓN, Ph.D. in Audiovisual Communication (UCM), holds a degree in Information Sciences (UCM) and a master's degree in Interactive Digital Technologies in Audiovisual Communication. Accredited by ANECA as a contracted doctor. Research sexennial (CENAI). He has worked as a camera operator and photographer. Professor and coordinator of the Audiovisual Production Company of the FCCOM of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Member of the COMMRADES Research Group (High Performance Research Group in Communication, Media, Marketing, Representations, Audiences, Speeches and Semiotic Studies).

iD   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6875-4130

GUSTAVO MONTES RODRÍGUEZ, Ph.D. in Audiovisual Communication, he holds a degree in Journalism from the UCM. Member of the High Performance Research Group in Innovation, Education and Communication (INECO) and the Center of Media Political Communication Research Group of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. He has participated in publicly funded research projects, such as *Analysis of Current Dramaturgy in Spanish* (ADAE) of the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC). He is a playwright and stage director. He has received the José Martín Recuerda theater award.

iD   https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1811-0737