

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17058/rzm.v14i2.20730>

A MINISSÉRIE ADOLESCÊNCIA: DA RECONFIGURAÇÃO MIDIÁTICA DA VIOLÊNCIA À ESTÉTICA DA RECEPÇÃO

MINISERIE LA ADOLESCENCIA: DE LA RECONFIGURACIÓN MEDIÁTICA DE LA VIOLENCIA A LA ESTÉTICA DE LA RECEPCIÓN

THE MINISERIES ADOLESCENCE: FROM THE MEDIATIC RECONFIGURATION OF VIOLENCE TO THE AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION



Brunilda Reichmann¹

Resumo: Este artigo examina a recepção da minissérie Adolescência, produzida por Stephen Graham e Hannah Walters, ao focalizar a representação da violência juvenil, da vulnerabilidade emocional e do conflito geracional entre pais e filhos no Reino Unido. A análise recorre a Ging e Baele para contextualizar a cultura incel e redpill, prejudiciais na sociedade hiperconectada, a Sobchack e Staiger para examinar a recepção audiovisual, e a Bourdieu para explorar as tensões geracionais e o habitus.

Palavras-chave: Série Adolescência; estética da recepção; teoria do efeito; conflito geracional.

Resumen: Este artículo examina la recepción de la miniserie Adolescence, producida por Stephen Graham y Hannah Walters, centrándose en la representación de la violencia juvenil, la vulnerabilidad emocional y el conflicto generacional entre padres e hijos en el Reino Unido. El análisis se basa en Ging y Baele para contextualizar la nociva cultura incel y de la píldora roja

¹ Universidade Federal do Paraná – (UFPR) - Paraná - Brasil

en una sociedad hiperconectada; en Sobchack y Staiger para examinar la recepción audiovisual; y en Bourdieu para explorar las tensiones y el habitus generacional.

Palabras claves: Serie Adolescencia; estética de la recepción; teoría del efecto; conflicto generacional.

Abstract: This paper examines the reception of the miniseries *Adolescence*, produced by Stephen Graham and Hannah Walters, by focusing on the representation of youth violence, emotional vulnerability, and generational conflict between parents and children in the United Kingdom. The analysis draws on Ging and Baele to contextualize incel and “redpill” culture, both harmful in a hyperconnected society, on Sobchack and Staiger to examine audiovisual reception, and on Bourdieu to explore generational tensions and habitus.

Key-words: Series *Adolescence*; reception aesthetics; effect theory; generational conflict.

Introduction

*A closed bedroom door doesn't guarantee that a teenager is safe.
Lights turned off don't necessarily mean the teenager is about to go to sleep.*
Reichmann

The miniseries *Adolescence*, released on Netflix in 2025, is among the most daring and sensitive audiovisual experiments in recent British fiction. Conceived by Stephen Graham in partnership with screenwriter Jack Thorne, the work springs from a desire to understand a troubling social phenomenon: the rise in adolescent violence, digital solitude, and new forms of aggressive behavior emerging on social networks and in quiet bedrooms. Although inspired by real cases, *Adolescence* is not based on any single event; rather, it fuses collective experiences and traumas to compose a fictional mosaic of great symbolic power.

From its inception, the project demanded uncommon technical and emotional rigor. Each of the four episodes was filmed as a long take, a technique that dispenses with cuts and requires the cast and crew to synchronize in choreographed, continuous movements. This aesthetic choice reinforces the immersive character of the narrative: the viewer is led to share the characters' breathing, their movements, hesitations, and silences. According to the team, some takes were repeated more than a dozen times before reaching the desired fluidity — especially in the complex school sequence that mobilized more than three hundred teenagers

and fifty adults. The camera — at times fixed, at times floating in drone-like movements — turns the gaze into a participant in the tension between space, body, and emotion.

The production brings together internationally prominent names and companies. In addition to Stephen Graham — who serves as co-creator, actor, and executive producer — the project involves Brad Pitt, whose company Plan B Entertainment is among the producers, alongside It's All Made Up Productions and Matriarch Productions. Plan B's presence — known for emotionally resonant projects with high technical quality — confers an aesthetic seal of trust and underscores the commitment to a cinematic approach within a television format.

Netflix, in turn, acts not only as distributor but also as a mediator between a globally oriented production and themes that demand delicacy and ethical responsibility. There are indications that Plan B is considering a second season, which attests to the critical reception and social impact the miniseries has achieved.

More than an audiovisual product, *Adolescence* asserts itself as a collective experience of empathy: an attempt to look into the abyss of youth isolation through the lens of art. The technical craft, the creators' courage, and the emotional investment of everyone involved reveal that, behind the violence the series exposes, there is a genuine effort to understand — and perhaps redeem — the silent pain that permeates contemporary adolescence.

This article is organized into three complementary parts. The first, informed by the theories of Debbie Ging and Stéphane J. Baele, examines incel and redpill cultures alongside the representations of violence and vulnerability in the miniseries *Adolescence*, highlighting how the audiovisual narrative articulates the tensions characteristic of contemporary adolescent experience. The second discusses how the principles of reception aesthetics have been reformulated by Vivian Sobchack and Janet Staiger for the analysis of audiovisual works, broadening our understanding of the forms of emotional engagement and interpretive response available to the viewer. The third part, grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, analyzes generational conflict as manifested in three family bonds: the relationship between Jamie's grandfather and father; between the father and Jamie himself; and, finally, between the investigator and his son, Adam. Each of these relationships reveals a distinct habitus, underscoring affective and behavioral legacies as well as attempts to transcend inherited patterns.

Youth Violence and Vulnerability in the Miniseries *Adolescence*

In recent years, the United Kingdom has faced a growing crisis of youth violence, especially involving the use of knives as weapons. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), offenses involving knives or sharp instruments have risen alarmingly, and 17.3% of offenders in 2023 were between 10 and 17 years old (BBC News, 2024). This statistic reveals not only an aggravation of youth crime, but also a profound social malaise marked by family breakdown, a lack of belonging, and the weakening of community networks.

Reports in *The Guardian* highlight that many teenagers spend long stretches secluded in their bedrooms, consuming content that reinforces narratives of resentment, exclusion, and victimhood. Social isolation — worsened by the pandemic and economic precarity — creates fertile ground for the normalization of brutality and the trivialization of others' suffering. In this context, violence becomes not merely an individual act but a collective symptom — a reflection of a society in which silence and digital solitude replace dialogue, and screens operate as catalysts for toxic ideologies.

In a recent statement, the British Prime Minister warned of the emergence of a “new form of terrorism,” linked to online radicalization and the spread of extremist ideologies on digital platforms frequented by isolated teenagers (Sky News, 2024). This often-silent radicalization has its roots in virtual communities associated with *incel* (involuntary celibate) culture, which is a complex sociotechnical phenomenon that combines emotional vulnerability, masculine resentment, misogyny, and online radicalization processes. Although the term *incel* originally emerged in contexts of emotional support, it has come to designate digital communities marked by fatalistic narratives, pseudoscientific structures such as the *redpill*² and discourses that naturalize gender inequality. In this environment, individual rejection becomes a collective identity, reinforced by algorithms, anonymity, and forum dynamics that intensify negative affects and facilitate the dissemination of extremism.

Drawing on Debbie Ging (2017), the text argues that incels should be understood as part of a broader ecosystem of wounded digital masculinities organized around an emotional

² The terms “redpill” and “blackpill” originate from cinematic metaphors that were later appropriated by online communities, particularly in manosphere and *incel* discourses. “Redpill” derives from the film *The Matrix* (Wachowski, 1999), in which Neo is offered a choice between the *red pill* — which reveals the uncomfortable truth of reality — and the *blue pill*, which keeps him in a state of comforting illusion. In internet culture, “to be redpilled” came to mean awakening to a purportedly hidden or oppressive truth. Although the original cinematic meaning is epistemological and philosophical, online subcultures turned it into an ideological metaphor for adopting contrarian or reactionary views. “Blackpill” is an extrapolation created within online communities, not derived from a specific film but from the logic of *The Matrix* metaphor. While “redpill” signals awakening, the blackpill represents a deterministic and nihilistic worldview — especially in *incel* culture — according to which social hierarchies (sexual, economic, or gendered) are fixed and unchangeable. It is not a cinematic term per se, but its genealogy is cinematic, since it emerges as a darker ideological reconfiguration of the *Matrix* pill metaphor.

economy of resentment. For Ging, these groups find within digital platforms a space of validation for feelings of humiliation perceived as losses of privilege, aligning themselves with *alt-right discourses*³ and misogynistic ideologies. She emphasizes that radicalization is not only cognitive but deeply affective, produced through the circulation of painful emotions that transform into hostility.

Stéphane J. Baele offers a more systematic approach by situating *incel* culture within the field of gender-motivated extremism. He demonstrates how the *redpill* reveals the uncomfortable truth of reality, “to be redpilled” came to mean awakening to a purportedly hidden or oppressive truth. Online subcultures turned the original cinematic meaning into an ideological metaphor for adopting contrarian or reactionary views. Beale’s model of radicalization includes social isolation, a search for meaning, community adhesion, and the escalation of violence, allowing *incel* attacks to be understood as a form of gender-based terrorism.

It is within this context that the miniseries *Adolescence* emerges, inspired by real-life events that shocked the British people — crimes committed by teenagers armed with knives, driven by resentment, isolation, and the influence of social media. Among the most emblematic tragedies are the murders of Ava White (2021), Brianna Ghey (2023), and Elianne Andam (2023), all widely reported by *BBC News* and *The Guardian*, and all committed by adolescents. These crimes are not merely isolated incidents but symptoms of a deeper social malaise that the miniseries dramatizes with symbolic intensity: impulsivity, loneliness, the need for visibility, and the absence of familial mediation. By transforming these events into an audiovisual narrative, the work invites a critical reflection on the contemporary mechanisms of youth violence and on how digital culture shapes new forms of identity, loneliness, and frustration.

The opening episode of the miniseries *Adolescence* introduces, abruptly and disturbingly, the violence that permeates the entire season. When the police break down the Millers’ door, institutional force invades a domestic space idealized as refuge. Jamie, only thirteen, is detained on suspicion of murdering a schoolmate, marking the rupture of his childhood. His insistence that he has “done nothing wrong” becomes the dramatic axis,

³ The “*alt-right discourses*” (alternative right discourses) designate a set of digital narratives that emerged in the United States in the 2010s, marked by identitarian nationalism, rejection of traditional conservatism, and an anti-establishment rhetoric. They circulate across forums and social networks through memes, irony, and coded language, articulating critiques of “political correctness,” feminism, and multiculturalism. According to scholars such as Debbie Ging and Michael Kimmel, these discourses mobilize affects such as resentment and perceived loss of privilege, interacting with subcultures like *incels*, MRAs, and *redpill/blackpill* communities, and operating more through affective and algorithmic circulation than through a stable ideology.

revealing anguish and the collapse of trust between individual and institutions. The contrast between the home's silence and the police's noise produces dislocation and tension, questioning premature judgments and the fragility of youths facing state power.

The second episode shifts to the school, a presumed space of safety that instead becomes a site of scrutiny. The police search for the murder weapon and interrogate students, yet silence and informational gaps persist. Only Bascombe's son offers potential leads regarding the meanings of emojis, *incel* culture, the *redpill*, and bullying dynamics on Instagram — elements that may point to a possible motive. However, his intervention preserves the atmosphere of opaque sociability shaped by loyalties, fears, and informal hierarchies. The investigative rhythm intensifies, underscoring that truth, when involving adolescents, is mediated by emotions, omissions, and shifting peer dynamics.

The third episode marks an emotional turning point. Jamie's meeting with a psychologist creates a slower, introspective interval focused on his inner world. His initial reticence — pauses, averted gaze, curled posture — reveals trauma and fear. Gradually, he articulates complex feelings toward Katie, oscillating between admiration, extreme anger, guilt, and longing for understanding and acceptance. The psychologist mediates this affective landscape, allowing the narrative to move beyond a binary guilty/innocent logic.

The fourth episode returns to the Miller household, now strained by emotional and social pressure. On Eddie's birthday, the family tries to preserve normality, but the celebration becomes a fragile façade. Small incidents and rising tensions push them to the brink, especially when Jamie says over the telephone that he intends to plead "guilty". The atmosphere alternates between melancholy and sudden conflict, showing how trauma reorganizes time and inflates the weight of gestures and silences. The crisis reshapes the relationships among the family members, revealing that any reconstruction will require empathy and attentive listening.

Aesthetics of Reception and the Miniseries Adolescence

Throughout history — especially from Romanticism onward — literature has been understood through different analytical lenses, at times focused on the author, at times on the work itself, and at times on the reader. This theoretical trajectory represents not merely a chronological evolution of critical schools, but a genuine shift in perspective: the focus of interpretation moves from the act of creation to the act of reception. As a result, literature —

and later, other artistic and media forms — comes to be understood as an open communicative process in which meaning is constantly negotiated and renewed.

In the contemporary context, this dialogue between text and reader is expanded from literature to audiovisual media, where the viewer assumes a role analogous to that of the literary reader. Films and series — such as *Adolescence* — not only reproduce narratives but also provoke reactions, identifications, and reflections that depend on the viewer's sensitivity. Therefore, the theory of reception aesthetics, inaugurated in the literary field by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, provides the foundation for understanding the transformation of reception studies in contemporary audiovisual contexts.

In Jauss, reception is conceived as the result of a dialogue between work and reader, guided by a historical horizon of expectations that shapes the interpretive possibilities available at a given moment. Reading, in this sense, becomes a historical event articulated with genre conventions, cultural practices, and the repertoire of a specific interpretive community. Iser, in turn, shifts the focus to the phenomenological process of reading, emphasizing the reader's active participation in the construction of meaning. His notion of structural “gaps” invites the reader to fill in, project, and revise hypotheses throughout the reading process, so that the work is actualized in the interaction between text and imagination.

These theoretical foundations significantly influence audiovisual reception studies, even as they are reconfigured by the sensory and technological specificities of cinema and contemporary media. In the phenomenological domain, Vivian Sobchack expands Iser's contributions by conceiving film experience as an embodied encounter between spectator and image. In *The Address of the Eye* (1992), she argues that meaning emerges from the intersubjective relation between body, perception, and temporality, so that audiovisual reception transcends cognitive interpretation and encompasses affective, sensory, and corporeal dimensions. Sobchack thus proposes a phenomenology of cinematic experience that emphasizes the materiality of vision and the co-experience between viewer and film.

Complementarily, Janet Staiger revisits and expands Jauss's legacy by approaching film reception as a historical, social, and cultural practice. In *Interpreting Films* (1992), she demonstrates that audience interpretations are shaped by production conditions, modes of circulation, collective identities, and technological transformations. Reception therefore becomes the effect of situated interpretive communities whose readings are traversed by economic, political, and media-related factors. Staiger shifts the focus from the direct

relationship between work and spectator to an ecosystem of mediation that includes consumption habits, social discourses, and cultural practices.

Thus, the migration of reception aesthetics from literature to audiovisual media occurs through two complementary movements: the phenomenological axis, which connects Iser to Sobchack, and the historical-cultural axis, which links Jauss to Staiger. While the former emphasizes the spectator's sensory experience and the corporeality embedded in the act of viewing, the latter highlights the collective historicity of looking and the sociocultural dynamics that shape meaning. Audiovisual reception therefore emerges as a hybrid field in which experience, affect, history, and culture converge, expanding the foundations of reception aesthetics and responding to the transformations of contemporary media and interpretive practices. The audience's response to the miniseries *Adolescence* can be significantly deepened by articulating the theoretical contributions of Sobchack and Staiger, whose frameworks illuminate distinct yet complementary dimensions of audiovisual experience.

From Sobchack's phenomenological perspective, the miniseries interpellates viewers not merely through discursive elements but through a bodily experience of youth violence, emotional vulnerability, and pervasive fear. Scenes such as Katie's murder, Jamie's sensitive response to bullying, and the escalating intergenerational tensions produce a sensorial impact that invites viewers to inhabit states of discomfort, suspension, and unease characteristic of contemporary adolescence. In this sense, *Adolescence* is not only watched but felt: shaky camera movements, claustrophobic framing, strategic silences, and the restrained gestures of the characters build a dramaturgy of sensation that engages the spectator's body as part of the interpretive act. The miniseries thus operates as a phenomenological event in which affect, perception, and corporeality converge, fostering an embodied understanding of the social tensions underpinning the narrative.

Conversely, Staiger's historical-cultural approach situates the reception of *Adolescence* within the broader landscape of contemporary British anxieties — such as the mental health crisis among youth, rising school violence, intergenerational conflict, and the isolating effects of digital culture. Audience interpretations are shaped by circulating public discourses, including debates on toxic masculinity, generational distrust, and the role of social media in amplifying affective conflicts. Within this framework, the miniseries is received not only as fiction but as a cultural commentary that resonates with lived social concerns, reinforcing or challenging prevailing political, moral, and media narratives. The identities of viewers — whether adolescents, parents, educators, or members of communities impacted by violence —

directly influence their readings, demonstrating that reception is mediated by biographical experience, social positioning, and cultural repertoire.

By integrating Sobchack and Staiger, the reception of *Adolescence* can be understood as a phenomenon that is simultaneously individual and collective. Sobchack's phenomenology reveals how spectators are sensorially mobilized by the narrative, while Staiger's sociocultural lens explains how such bodily experience is filtered through historically situated discourses and interpretive communities. The audience's response thus emerges as a hybrid process in which embodied experience and cultural mediation intersect — a dynamic that reflects, on the aesthetic plane, the psychological and political tensions shaping contemporary adolescence.

From the standpoint of Reception Aesthetics, *Adolescence* shifts the focus from representation to the experience of the viewer. The spectator is prompted to react — to feel discomfort, compassion, guilt, or identification — emotions that shape the true space of audiovisual reading. Rather than providing ready-made answers, the miniseries poses questions: What drives young people to act with brutality? What does the silence of parents, schools, and social networks reveal? And, above all, what do each of us, as viewers, do in the face of another's pain?

The violence portrayed in the work takes on multiple forms — physical, symbolic, emotional. Yet it is fragility — almost imperceptible but ever-present — that gives meaning to this representation. The camera lingers on glances, gestures, and silences, revealing that the violent act is often the last resort of someone who has not been heard. In this reading, the miniseries not only exposes youthful aggression but also calls upon the audience to exercise empathy and to reflect on the social role of affection and listening.

Watching a series is, in essence, reading with one's eyes and ears. Every facial expression, restrained gesture, and prolonged silence is a sign to be deciphered. The aesthetics of reception recognizes in the viewer the same creative status as the reader: they recreate meanings, reinterpret scenes, and transform the aesthetic experience into a personal journey. This multiplicity of interpretations allows a single scene — for example, a silence between father and son — to be understood as love, pain, or estrangement, depending on the viewer's sociocultural and emotional context. Thus, the audiovisual medium becomes a polyphonic mirror of human experience.

The emotional impact of a work is not defined solely by what is shown, but also by what is omitted or merely suggested. Silence, absence, the sound that never plays — all of these form what Iser would call a “productive void”, a space that invites the viewer to complete the

meaning. An absent piece of music can generate tension; a character off-screen can evoke unease; an abrupt cut can provoke reflection. These choices create an aesthetic distance that prevents blind immersion and instead encourages the viewer to think about what they see — and about themselves as they watch.

Generational Conflicts in the Miniseries *Adolescence*

One of the most delicate threads in the miniseries *Adolescence* is the generational conflict — the emotional and symbolic distance between parents and children, expressed not only through words but, above all, through silence. Scholars such as Karl Mannheim (1952), Margaret Mead (1970), and Pierre Bourdieu (1990) help illuminate how this distance is historically and culturally produced: Mannheim highlights the formation of distinct “generational consciousnesses,” shaped by different social experiences; Mead contrasts the dynamics of post-figurative, configurative, and prefigurative cultures to show how rapid societal change destabilizes traditional intergenerational authority; and Bourdieu reveals how *habitus* and dispositions collide when younger generations inhabit social worlds unfamiliar to their parents. Other thinkers, such as Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2015) and Christopher Lasch (1991), note that digital acceleration and the cult of individualism intensify feelings of discontinuity, contributing to a pervasive sense of relational fragility.

In the *Adolescence*, the home — traditionally idealized as a space of protection and listening — emerges instead as a territory of noise, opacity, and miscommunication. Closed doors, glowing screens, and averted gazes produce an atmosphere of isolation that mirrors the crisis of intergenerational contact described by these theorists. From a well-suited Bourdieusian perspective, such tensions reveal the collision between distinct *habitus*: parents carry dispositions formed in analog, hierarchical, and face-to-face social fields, whereas their children are shaped by digital, horizontal, and hypermediated worlds whose logics of interaction their elders cannot fully apprehend. When younger generations inhabit social environments that did not exist during their parents’ formative years, their practices, affects, and ways of perceiving the world cease to be immediately intelligible. Thus, miscommunication is not only emotional but structural — the effect of dispositions that no longer “fit” the same social world.

The distance between generations is intensified by the pervasive presence of digital technologies that, paradoxically, both connect and separate. Social media, instant messages, and the constant glow of screens transform communication into a fragmented and often muted exchange. Here again, Bourdieu helps atmosphere the tension: digital interaction belongs to a social field governed by dispositions foreign to older generations, who were formed in environments where authority circulated vertically and communication required physical co-presence. Adolescents, in contrast, develop a digital *habitus* attuned to speed, simultaneity, multitasking, and anonymity. The mismatch between these dispositions produces a structural misalignment that the series renders with striking visual clarity: the cold blue light of the computer illuminates a single, isolated face, while the uneasy atmosphere of the household and the artificial cadence of its dialogues expose what remains unheard and unseen. In this interplay of illumination and dimness, the series reveals a shared yet unspoken pain — one that circulates through the house but never fully finds a listener.

Family silence, therefore, is not merely a backdrop but a structuring element of the narrative. It reveals the difficulty of recognizing otherness within one's own emotional circle and exposes the weakening of intergenerational bonds. From a Bourdieusian lens, silence is also the sign of *habitus* rendered incompatible: practices shaped by older dispositions no longer generate the expected responses in children whose orientations are defined by new cultural, technological, and affective grammars.

In *Adolescence*, violence emerges not as spectacle but as language — an extreme form of expression when dialogue fails. The series constructs a sensitive and unsettling portrayal of youthful brutality, manifesting not only in physical acts but also in the micro-violences of everyday life: the judging gaze, the wounding word, the silence that abandons. These gestures can be read as symptoms of a *habitus* under strain, a set of dispositions struggling to adapt to fields marked by precarity, digital alienation, and emotional disorientation. The brutal gesture becomes the last resort of a fragmented subjectivity, unable to translate its pain into words.

The visual construction such as tight framing, contrasting lighting, and prolonged silences heighten the feeling of tension and introspection. The camera seems to hesitate between a gaze that denounces and one that embraces, mirroring the spectator's own ethical dilemma. Thus, *Adolescence* transforms suffering into aesthetic material and discomfort into an instrument of awareness — an artistic experience that seeks not merely to move, but to awaken.

The miniseries also constructs a sensitive, intergenerational portrayal of family relationships, revealing how emotional and behavioral patterns are perpetuated or transformed

across generations. Bourdieu's insights clarify how these patterns endure: dispositions formed in previous generations are transmitted through everyday practices — gestures, prohibitions, fears — that children internalize long before they can name them. Yet when the social world shifts dramatically, as with the rise of digital culture, inherited dispositions may no longer provide adequate tools for navigating new environments. The frictions portrayed in *Adolescence* are, therefore, also frictions between inherited and emerging *habitus*.

According to Jamie's father, the grandfather embodies the Baby Boomer generation⁴, marked by values of discipline, virility, and authority. His way of raising children is grounded in repression and physical punishment — a reflection of an era in which male affection was suppressed and parental power was often confused with dominance. This education through force leaves invisible wounds on Jamie's father, who grows up fearful and resentful, deprived of the experience of vulnerability. Brutality, therefore, is not merely an individual trait but a cultural synthesis of a patriarchal model in which emotion was seen as weakness. The series invites the viewer to perceive that the violence of one generation echoes as silence in the next — a transgenerational transmission of dispositions that Bourdieu would call the “durability of *habitus*.”

Jamie's father, a member of Generation X, attempts to break the cycle of physical violence established by his own father. However, by rejecting aggression, he ends up perpetuating another form of distance: emotional absence. His *habitus*, structured by fear and withdrawal, cannot easily convert itself into warmth or expressivity. Present in the domestic space yet distant in affection, he embodies the paradox of a fatherhood that avoids brutality but does not know how to express empathy. Jamie, representing Generation Z, grows up amid digital hyperconnectivity but without emotional connection at home. The averted gaze, the awkward silence, and the restrained gesture replace dialogue. Absence becomes a constant presence — one that does not comfort, listen, or validate. Here the series reveals a key Bourdieusian insight: even when social fields change dramatically, the *habitus* inherited from previous generations continues to structure perception and affect, sometimes in maladaptive ways.

The third bond — between the investigator and his son, Adam — reflects an attempt at reconciliation between generations. The detective, also part of Generation X, initially

⁴ According to Kamel, generations are classified as follows: Silent Generation (1928–1945); Baby Boomers (1946–1964); Generation X (1965–1980); Millennials or Generation Y (1981–1996); Generation Z (1997–2012); Generation Alpha (2013–2024); and Generation Beta (2025–...).

reproduces the same pattern of neglect that marked his upbringing: underestimation. Yet throughout the narrative, a process of listening and transformation unfolds. In Bourdieusian terms, the father undertakes a rare act of reflexivity: he becomes aware of the dispositions that govern him and begins to modify them, revealing the possibility — difficult but real — of *habitus* reconfiguration. When he waits for his son after school and asks, “Are you hungry?”, and Adam replies, “I can be hungry,” the scene becomes an emblem of emergent mutual recognition.

These three relationships reveal, like a mirror, the movement of a society relearning how to feel. From the authoritarian grandfather to the silent father and the transforming detective, *Adolescence* shows that family cycles are not immutable destinies but stories that can be rewritten. The series suggests that only through respect, dialogue, and empathy — but also through the difficult work of recognizing and reshaping one’s dispositions — can we build bonds capable of embracing difference and healing intergenerational wounds. As viewers follow these intertwined journeys, they are invited not merely to judge, but to recognize themselves: in the flaws, the restrained gestures, and the attempts to love despite inherited limitations. In this way, *Adolescence* transcends individual drama and turns the portrayal of fatherhood into an act of ethical, sociological, and emotional reflection, where understanding the other becomes the first step toward breaking the silence between generations.

Final considerations

The analytical trajectory developed throughout this article sought to articulate the central dimensions of the miniseries *Adolescence* as they unfold through the viewer’s aesthetic reception — namely, the representation of youth violence, exemplified by Katie’s murder; the depiction of vulnerability, made visible in Jamie’s emotionally fragile response to persistent bullying; and the generational conflicts that permeate the narrative, each marked by specific values, traumas, and historical experiences. By foregrounding these elements, the study highlights how the series invites viewers to confront the complexities of contemporary adolescence in a manner that is both affectively resonant and critically engaged.

The application of principles from reception aesthetics deepened this understanding by showing that the viewer is invited not merely to watch the unfolding events but to inhabit the work through what Sobchack theorizes as an embodied, phenomenological encounter with

audiovisual images. In this framework, meaning does not reside solely on the screen, but emerges through a reciprocal exchange in which perception, affect, and lived experience converge and mutually inform one another.

At the same time, drawing on Staiger's insights regarding the historically and socially situated nature of reception, the article demonstrates that interpretation is never detached from cultural context. Viewers approach the miniseries with particular expectations, ideological frameworks, and socio-historical references that shape their comprehension of violence, vulnerability, and intergenerational conflict. These contextual layers not only influence the emotional responses elicited by the narrative but also condition the ethical and interpretive positions that viewers may adopt.

Finally, the examination of the family relationships among grandfather, father, and son illuminated the continuities and ruptures that traverse generations. In Bourdieusian terms, these dynamics reveal how inherited *habitus* and deeply rooted dispositions shape emotional practices across time, even when they carry the weight of a violent legacy. Yet the narrative also suggests that such dispositions are not immutable: confronted with new social fields and new affective demands, they may be questioned, reoriented, or slowly transformed. Through moments of recognition, empathy, and tentative reconciliation, the series gestures toward the emergence of reconfigured bonds — forms of dialogue capable of acknowledging the sedimented marks of past wounds while affirming the transformative power of care, reflexivity, and mutual understanding.

References

- Arendt, H. (1999). *Eichmann em Jerusalém: um relato sobre a banalidade do mal*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras. (Original work published 1963).
- Arnett, J. J. (2015). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Baele, S. J., Ging, D., & O'Malley, P. (2020). Incel ideology and online radicalization. *Political Studies Review*.
- Bauman, Z. (2008). *Medo líquido*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Modernidade líquida*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- BBC News. (2022, July 21). *Boy, 14, guilty of murdering Liverpool schoolgirl Ava White*. <https://www.bbc.com/news>

BBC News. (2024, February 2). *Brianna Ghey: Teenagers sentenced to life for murder of transgender girl*. <https://www.bbc.com/news>

BBC News. (2025). *Adolescence: Netflix drama explores teenage violence in Britain*. <https://www.bbc.com/news> (Accessed October 9, 2025)

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1972)

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979)

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1980)

CNN Brasil. (2025). *Adolescência: Netflix revela segredos de gravação em plano-sequência*. <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/entretenimento/adolescencia-netflix-revela-segredos-de-gravacao-em-plano-sequencia/> (Accessed October 9, 2025)

Debord, G. (1991). *A sociedade do espetáculo*. Lisboa: Antígona. (Original work published 1967)
Exame. (2025). *Produtora de Brad Pitt negocia segunda temporada de Adolescência, diz jornal*. <https://exame.com/pop/adolescencia-produtora-de-brad-pitt-negocia-segunda-temporada-da-serie-diz-jornal/> (Accessed October 9, 2025)

Ging, D. (2017). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 638–657.

IMDb. (2025). *Adolescence (TV Mini Series, 2025) – Full cast & crew*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt31806037/> (Accessed October 9, 2025)

Kamel, S. (2025, October 6). **From Baby Boomers to Generation Beta.** International Council for Small Business (ICSB). <https://icsb.org/central/from-baby-boomers-to-generation-beta/> (Accessed October 9, 2025)

Lasch, C. (1991). *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (Updated ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.

Mead, M. (1970). *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2024, July 18). *Crime in England and Wales: Year ending March 2024*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

Sky News. (2025, March 13). *Teenager who stabbed schoolgirl Elianne Andam to death in “frenzied attack” jailed for at least 23 years*. <https://news.sky.com>

Sobchack, V. (1992). *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton University Press.

Staiger, J. (1992). *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. Princeton University Press.

The Guardian. (2022, August 11). *Ava White: 14-year-old boy sentenced for killing Liverpool schoolgirl*. <https://www.theguardian.com>

The Guardian. (2024, February 2). *Brianna Ghey murder: Teens jailed for life for “exceptionally brutal” killing*. <https://www.theguardian.com>

The Guardian. (2025, March 13). *Hassan Sentamu jailed for life for murder of Elianne Andam in Croydon*. <https://www.theguardian.com>

The Independent. (2023, November 29). *Teenage knife crime reaches record high in England and Wales*. <https://www.independent.co.uk>

Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.

Wikipédia. (2025). *Adolescência (minissérie de televisão)*. [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolesc%C3%A2ncia_\(s%C3%A9rie_de_televis%C3%A3o\)](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolesc%C3%A2ncia_(s%C3%A9rie_de_televis%C3%A3o)) (Accessed October 9, 2025)