

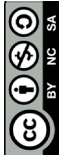
It Is Represented in the Media, So it Exists: Anxiety in the Movies 'Eighth Grade' and 'Silver Linings Playbook'

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*This paper aims to understand how anxiety disorders are represented in the films *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook*. A filmic analysis is conducted, specifically narrative analysis. Additionally, qualitative interviews with qualified informants bring a more robust understanding of anxiety disorders and explanation of the results obtained. The results reveal that the filmmakers choose to represent characters with characteristics that go beyond mental illness, enabling an identification by the viewers. In *Eighth Grade*, there are characteristics coincident with the symptomatology, such as apathy, restlessness, and irritability, and deviant ones, such as dependence on the Internet, the mani-*

*festation of increased maturity, and the revealing of confidence. In *Silver Linings Playbook*, irritability, mood swings, and refuge in sports are coincident particularities, and the expression of happiness, motivation, and recognition of overcoming are dissonant symptomatology. In both films, there was an attempt by the filmmakers to convey a positive message and a happy ending, condensing the idea of overcoming mental illness. The films, assuming an educational function, provide tools that teach how to deal with anxiety in everyday life.*

Keywords: anxiety disorders, media representation, *Eighth Grade*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, narrative analysis.

Mental health is the foundation of general well-being or, as the expression indicates, “there is no health without mental health” (WHO, 2018). Globally, 970 million people suffer from any mental health or substance use disorder (Statista, 2021), with anxiety disorders standing out—in 2019, 3.94% of the worldwide population suffered from anxiety disorders (Statista, 2022a) and 3.59% suffered from depression (Statista, 2022b). Additionally,

31% of adults all around the world say mental health is the biggest health problem facing people in their country (Statista, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened this picture, triggering a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide (WHO, 2022).

In the media context, since the 1990s, the media have played an important role in relation to mental health by being the first source of information to convey images and address psychiatric issues, both in television, movies and more news media (Stout et al., 2004, p. 543). Recognizing this role assigned to the media that also give visibility to mental problems and given that, in the literature review conducted, no research was found dealing with the filmic representation of anxiety, this study proposes to explore this issue.

Psychiatry officially recognized anxiety as a serious illness in the late 20th century (Cooke, 2013). This is “the most common mental illness” and an estimated 30% of humans are destined to suffer from severe anxiety (Pollan, 2019), with the number of people suffering from common mental disorders increasing, particularly in low-income countries (WHO, 2017). Concern is also increasing because anxiety can have multidimensional effects by interfering with the quality of work, school, and relational life (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018). Siegel and Dickstein (2012), for example, state that anxiety is the biggest mental health problem facing adolescents today (p. 1).

In this context, it is sought to understand how anxiety disorders are represented in the films *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook*. The choice of the film industry as a medium to represent anxiety arises from its increasing impact and educational contribution to people, especially young people (Singhal and Rogers, 2002, p. 117). As Aumont (2008) states, “cinema is not a language, but it serves to think” (p. 23), educating and entertaining simultaneously.

The object of study of this research assumes as theoretical anchor related to communication: a) the encoding-decoding theoretical model, by Hall (1997), taking into account that it will be about encoding (filmic representation) of messages; b) film studies and “film theory” (e.g. Aumont, 2008; Bordwell, 1991; Penafria, 2009) by the set of meanings that can be extracted from the film and, associated to these, the entertainment-education (E-E) (e.g. Sabido, 2004), which allows studying the pedagogical potential of the film which is an entertainment product and c) Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory of mass communication, because the research focuses on filmic content that can model thoughts, feelings and behaviours related to anxiety.

THE FILMIC REPRESENTATION OF MENTAL HEALTH

As one of the sources that most produces culture (Hall, 1997, p. 1), representation translates a double conceptualization, codifying and decoding. Hence Hall (1997) clarifies that this act translates into using language to say something meaningful—the encoding—, or in meaningfully representing the world to other—the decoding (p. 15). In the present article, codification is studied.

Thus, we refer to the media system, understood by Hall (1997) as the construction of a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, organized in various languages that represent it (p. 19). This system requires the use of a common language, composed of words, sounds, and images, and in this sense, anything that produces meaning is seen as culture (Hall, 1997, p. 19). Also Stewart and Kowaltzke (2007) define media representation and understand it as a portrait, a likeness or a constructed material image, which may have individual or group authorship (p. 35).

The set of meanings that are decoded produce effects, influence, entertain, instruct and convince, through perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences (Hall, 2005, p. 119). Hence the potential of filmic representation in the context of communication and education about anxiety. Thus, to better anchor the research theoretically, it is important to refer to film studies and "film theory" or what Bakhtin would call "historically situated expression" (Stam, 2000, p. 18). Stam states that the history of cinema is more than the history of films and filmmakers: it is the history of the set of meanings that audiences attribute to them (2000, p. 18).

Mental health is characterized by a good performance of mental function, which results in productive activities, relationships with other people, the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity (Goldman and Grob, 2006, p. 738). Mental illness is defined as a set of diagnosable disorders of the mind characterized by "changes in thinking, mood, or behaviour" (p. 738).

The most common mental illness in the European Union is anxiety and an estimated 25 million people, corresponding to 5.4% of the population, suffer from anxiety disorders (OECD/EU-EC, 2018, p. 25). When worries, fears or panic attacks start to appear in people's lives, one can speak of an *anxiety disorder* (Fredricks, 2005) (Table 1). Also Gale and Davidson's (2007) understanding is identical, assuming that anxiety should be seen as a problem when there are difficulties in controlling worries and experiences (p. 579). Anxiety as a negative emotion is understood by Rojas (2017) as something "that produces the experience of fear, of dread, of uneasiness, of restlessness" (p. 27). In its positive version, anxiety is a "state of mind presided over by interest, curiosity, eagerness to know and deepen the many attractive and suggestive things that life has", in which the person expresses interest in enriching oneself inwardly (p. 44).

According to Wahl and Kaye (1992), from 1950 to 1991, mental health has been present in various media, such as movies (6%), television (10%-20% of prime time programs), and in reputable magazines (p. 21). Movies, being able to be transmitted beyond movie theatres and television screens through, for example, download websites and streaming services, increase their reach.

Studies point to the scarcity of film and television representation about mental health. This is the case in the study by Smith et al. (2019), which shows that representations about mental health are rare in film and television (p. 1). Of the 4598 film characters analysed, only 1.7% portray a mental health problem, and of the 1220 television characters, only 7% represented mental health problems (p. 1). The study also notes that eight categories about mental health conditions appear (p. 2). From that categorical list, anxiety appears in the second position

within the most represented categories (p. 2). The authors also conclude that there are few young people represented in media entertainment about mental health, with only 7% of characters from this age group appearing in movies and 6% on television. These percentages are notably lower compared to the number of young people (20%) who suffer some mental health problem in the United States of America (USA) (p. 3).

Table 1. Anxiety symptoms

Anxiety disorders	Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)	Panic disorder or panic attack	Social phobic or anxiety disorder
Symptoms	Difficulties in controlling feelings of worry	Fear of dying, of losing control, or of going crazy	Acceleration of the heartbeat
	Easy fatigue	Cold and heat waves	Mental confusion
	Concentration difficulties (the mind becomes a blank)	Precordial pain or malaise	Unreasonable or excessive worry
	Irritability	Palpitations	Blush
	Muscle tension	Difficulty breathing	Sweating
	Fatigue		
	Apprehensive Expectation		

Source: Own elaboration based on Rojas (2017) and interviews with Maria João Ferro and Soraia Morais.

Despite the paucity of filmic representations of mental health, the idea that psychiatry and cinematography are inseparably linked, complementing each other, is espoused by Domjanović et al. (2009). In their analysis of the presence of psychological disorders in films, they use a set of categories, among them “insomnia,” “maladjustments,” “poor ability to adapt to environment and circumstances,” “anxiety disorder,” “emotional disturbance” (pp. 233-235).

Reflecting this connection and in an intention to assess which illnesses are most represented in films, Perciaccante et al. (2019) set out to analyse 554 films nominated for the “best image” Oscar, concluding that mental illnesses come first (21.9%) (p. 2351). Among the conclusions was that mental and psychological illnesses have a significant emotional and social impact, but the way in which therapy is provided is still very much in question (p. 2351). Wahl (1992) explained that because films portray characters with mental disorders as violent, audiences are quick to assume that someone in real life with this disorder would also be violent, which contributes to misinformation. Wolcott and Kurtz (2021), through a mixed-method descriptive approach to analyse 16 teenagers’ attitudes, hypothesized that participants would develop a more negative opinion of people with anxiety and depressive disorders after watching the film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* as compared to their initial survey. But the results did not support the authors’ hypothesis: they found that participants used more adjectives with positive connotations to describe the character Charlie

than they had used to describe someone with anxiety and depression. Analysing fiction films and television programs, Middleton (2013) explores the symptoms that best represent mental illness (p. 180). In the study she conducted, she notes that one film that promoted increased awareness of mental health problems was *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) —a film that will be analysed in this study— and concludes that there is a significant need on the part of filmmakers to create films that represent mental illness (p. 180). Characters suffering from some mental illness are characterized by symptoms, such as loss of control and disorder, and illustrated visually with “unkempt hair and tattered clothes” (p. 181).

THE CONTRIBUTION OF FILM TO MENTAL REPRESENTATION ABOUT ANXIETY

The literature has shown that the media is an important source of information for the public about mental health (Diefenbach, 1997, p. 182). The use of media as educational entertainment has seen a large growth (Brown and Meeks, 2015, p. 35) and some studies highlight the contributions of media in portraying and shaping viewers' conceptions of reality (Brodie et al., 2001, p. 192).

Portraying mental health problems in films has a significant impact on audiences and, consequently, on how people suffering from these problems are regarded and treated (Darbyshire and Baker, 2011, p. 30). Neto et al. (2018) conducted a study that consisted of analysing 53 Alfred Hitchcock films that represented psychopathology (p. 2). The qualitative study aimed to assess the didactic and pedagogical contribution of Hitchcockian films and, specifically, whether they negatively influenced the formation of stigma and stereotypes (p. 2). The results indicate that these films can be useful in the study of psychiatry and, in this regard, the authors suggest considering from among the films analysed those that contribute to aggravating stigma (p. 1). Five films represent mental illness criteria included in DSM-5 —*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (pp. 13-14).

Also Gabbard and Gabbard (1999) preconize that some of the prejudices and conceptions about mental health problems derive from television and film images (p. 207). In this sense, the influence of films on education can be both positive and negative (Wedding and Niemiec, 2003, p. 207).

From a positive perspective, Wedding and Niemiec (2003) state that film can be a useful tool to represent content about mental health, stimulating discussions about the topic (p. 207). Also Granello et al. (1999) reinforce that media offer a constructive contribution in educating the public about mental illness, helping to reduce the emergence of stereotypes (p. 108). From a negative perspective, film has been described as a “space of prejudice, ignorance and fear that fuels stereotypes regarding people with mental health problems” (Byrne, 2009, p. 3). Rössler (2016), in this line of thought, advocates that “media coverage of mental illness has been consistently negative and inaccurate” (p. 1251) and that “there is no country, society or culture in which people suffering any mental illness have the same social value as people without mental illness” (p. 1250). Middleton (2013) concluded that media representations have a strong impact and social

relevance and that most filmic representations, being negative, strongly contribute to the increased stigmatization of illness (p. 180). However, he notes that representations can be positive if they suggest and show that mental health problems can be easily treated, thus contributing to decrease stigma (p. 180).

Applying a survey on a sample of adolescents, Granello et al. (1999) seek to identify the most commonly used source of primary information about mental illness and to collect their perceptions of mental health. They conclude that digital media (34%) is the most commonly used source, followed by a family member or friend's diagnosis of mental illness (25%), classes and content taught (18%), someone whose professional occupation involves dealing with people with mental health problems (16%), and traditional media such as books, newspapers, or magazines (6%) (p. 101). The researchers also sought to find out whether adolescents who live directly with a family member or friend suffering from a mental illness have a greater awareness of the illness than others who receive the information directly through the media, a hypothesis that was verified (p. 101). Rössler (2016, p. 1253) also validates this idea.

However, Stringer (2016), advocating the role of media, mentions that movies and media content can be a powerful tool in helping recipients achieve positive behaviours. The author explains that when one watches a movie by attending to the characterization of a particular character, one trains oneself "to become familiar with these virtues" (p. 44). The theorist also mentions that this "method" can be used by psychologists in order to help their patients recognize that the mental health problems portrayed affect other people (p. 44). Sabido (2004), also, asserts, with E-E, that entertainment products, through lighter and more lucid content, can function as a strategy that leads to behavioural and social change (Singhal and Rogers, 2002, p. 117).

The perspective, which has been adopted by several researchers, such as Granello et al. (1999), Stringer (2016), Wedding and Niemiec (2003), can be linked to the social cognitive theory of mass communication, coined by Bandura (2001). The theory advocates that symbolic, media-disseminated communication, such as movies, can influence thoughts and actions (p. 265), and it is important to understand the psychosocial mechanisms (p. 94). According to this view, human behaviour can be understood based on unidirectional phenomena and is controlled through influences from the environment, such as the media (p. 99). However, the author points out that people are proactive, self-regulated and self-reflective, that is, they are not only knowledge holders and interpreters, but also have a capacity for self-direction (Bandura, 2009, p. 95).

METHOD

The present research is guided by the starting question: how do the films *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook* anxiety disorders? The specific objectives formulated are: a) to characterize how characters with anxiety are represented in movies *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook*; b) to understand how the

characters with anxiety in the films *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook* cope with the disorders.

The method is qualitative, being realized through film analysis, specifically narrative analysis. The interview is also used as a technique, to bring a more robust understanding about anxiety disorders (with psychologist and cognitive-behavioural specialist Maria João Ferro [15-11-2019] and clinical psychologist Soraia Morais [09-12-2019]) and to help validate the choice of films; and as an explanatory technique of the results obtained (with Mário Augusto, presenter of the TV program about cinema *Janela Indiscreta* and cinema expert [15-05-2020], and Carlos Capucho, professor and specialist in Film Studies [04-06-2020]). The last two interviewees were invited to give meaning to the results and to interpret them through the prism of their knowledge and expertise. The ethical recommendations to be followed when conducting interviews, such as not suggesting the interviewee's answers, were followed.

The films chosen are *Eighth Grade* (2018) and *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) (Table 2). The choice was based on the criteria: a) representation of anxiety, b) high rating on specialized websites for audiovisual content, such as IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes, c) representation of more than one anxiety disorder, d) topicality, filmmaking in the tenth decade of the 21st century, e) awards and nominations, f) validation by experts, Maria João Ferro and Soraia Morais, and g) evaluation as a realistic representation —Critics say about *Eighth Grade* that it is “a coming-of-age story that captures a generation weaned on screen time with astonishing honesty” (Chow, 2018, para. 2) and National Alliance on Mental Illness places *Silver Linings Playbook* among movies that realistically show what it is like to experience mental illness (Greenstein, 2017).

Table 2. Composition and information about the corpus

Film	<i>Eighth Grade</i>	<i>Silver Linings Playbook</i>
Year of completion	2018	2012
Director	Bo Burnham	David O. Russell
Country where the narrative takes place	USA	USA
Language	English	English
Gender	Comedy, Drama	Comedy, Drama, Romance
IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes ratings	7.4 (IMDb) 99% (Tomatometer) and 82% (audience score)	7.7 (IMDb) 92% (Tomatometer) and 86% (audience score)

Film	<i>Eighth Grade</i>	<i>Silver Linings Playbook</i>
Synopsis	An introverted girl, Kayla, tries to survive her last year of elementary school. She suffers from social pressure and an internet-obsessed culture. At school, she is afraid to speak in public, but at home, it is as if she has a <i>second life</i> online, posting videos on YouTube. He has no friends, but everything seems to change when he starts high school.	Patrick Solitano (Bradley Cooper) suffers a betrayal by his wife and is committed to a psychiatric hospital. In a relentless quest to win back his ex-wife, he meets Tiffany (Jennifer Lawrence), with whom he falls in love and makes him overcome his personal problems and his mental illness.
Awards and nominations	Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Young Artist - Elsie Fisher; Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay; Gotham Independent Film Awards for Best Breakthrough Actor/Actress; Writers Guild of America Award for Best Original Screenplay; Gotham Award for Breakthrough Director; Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directing - First feature film; New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best First Film.	43 awards, including Best Actress (Jennifer Lawrence) and in the AFI Movies of the year category by the American film Institute in 2013; 91 nominations, including Oscars for Best Film and Best Director.

Source: Own elaboration based on Bradshaw (2012), Bradshaw (2019) and IMDb.

The film *Eighth Grade* focuses on a teenager who suffers from social anxiety, an anxiety caused by life situations and the pressure of society (Maria João Ferro). In *Silver Linings Playbook*, the protagonist, in a pathogenic comorbidity, suffers from PAG and an obsessive-compulsive disorder, hereditary, triggered by a relational disappointment (Maria João Ferro).

The narrative analysis, proposed to answer the objectives, presupposes the idea that films have the primary function of telling a story (Nelmes, 1996, p. 78). In this sense, narrative analysis focuses on the story that encompasses a set of events and experiences over time (Breheny and Stephens, 2015, p. 275). In the optimal fulfilment of both goals, one focuses “attention focused on the characters —on their difficulties, choices, conflicts, complications, and developments” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 5). Thus, one accepts the challenge set by Bauer and Gaskell (2002) to know the plot —the soul of the film (Aristotle, 4th century BC/2008, p. 9), which focuses on the action and includes the main features and events (Teays, 2012, p. 13)—, the coherence and meaning of the narrative, as well as events, actors, descriptions, goals, morality and relationships that generally constitute the story (p. 92) and have an effect.

To achieve the first objective, we took into account the symptomatological characterization of the characters, as in Middleton's study (2013). In order to have the knowledge to competently identify the typical symptoms of anxiety disorders that the characters reveal, we reviewed the literature, which was

supplemented by two interviews with qualified informants. Additionally, the physical (as in Middleton's study, 2013), linguistic, and behavioural characterization of the characters is also important. Thus, based on the literature and the specificities of the films under study, five categories of analysis were defined to shape the narrative analysis: a) physical characterization, b) behavioural/functional characterization coincident with the symptomatology, c) behavioural characterization dissonant with the symptomatology, d) linguistic characterization coincident with the symptomatology, and e) linguistic characterization dissonant with the symptomatology. To realize the second objective, the category "how the character with anxiety copes with the disease" was used. All categories gave rise to specific subcategories for each of the films (Table 3).

Table 3. Matrix for the narrative analysis

	Movies	
	<i>Eighth Grade</i>	<i>Silver Linings Playbook</i>
Category	Subcategory	
Characters with anxiety disorders	Kayla Day	Pat Solitano Tiffany Maxwell
Linguistic characterization coincident with the symptomatology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Discomfort talking to people . Constant hesitation in public exposure and interaction . Stutter . Selective mutism . Difficulty articulating words 	
Linguistic characterization dissonant with the symptomatology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Repetition of expressions . Use of linguistic slang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Use of linguistic slang
Behavioral characterization coincident with the symptomatology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Acceleration of breathing when socializing with strangers . Difficulty in facing situations . Difficulty expressing feelings . Restlessness . Irritability . Manifestation of boredom . Manifestation of apathy . Manifestation of lack of self-esteem and insecurity with the body . Manifestation of loneliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Mood swings . Hallucinations . Difficulty with self-control . Apprehensive expectation . Irritability . Medication denial . Refusal of therapy . Refuge in dance . Refuge in sports . Manifestation of fatigue . Manifestation of loneliness . Manifestation of impulsive behaviour . Tendency to family conflicts

	Movies	
	<i>Eighth Grade</i>	<i>Silver Linings Playbook</i>
Behavioral characterization dissonant with the symptomatology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Internet dependency . Change in the way of dressing . Denial of the introverted state . Manifestation of trust . Manifestation of initiative to act . Manifestation of increased maturity for her age . Manifestation of being a believer . Overcoming the fear of exposing oneself . Willingness to let go of the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Stuck in the past . Overcoming recognition . Manifestation of positive emotions . Happiness expression . Motivation manifestation . Manifestation of a constant state of lying
How the character with anxiety copes with the disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Overcoming the disease . Unconsciousness of mental condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Overcoming the disease . Awareness of mental condition

Source: Own elaboration.

Several previews of the movie and the most iconic scenes were made to ensure that the categories defined were the appropriate ones. After this confirmation, the film was watched and re-watched very carefully in order to analyse shots, scenes and sequences in both films that could fit into these categories. We tried to make the analysis as extensive and complete as possible.

RESULTS

REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANXIOUS CHARACTERS IN THE FILMS 'EIGHTH GRADE' AND 'SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK'

The film *Eighth Grade* represents, on a physical level, Kayla Day, a blonde, green-eyed teenager. The protagonist reveals problems of obesity and insecurity with her body and suffers from social anxiety. The film *Silver Linings Playbook* has as co-protagonists, Pat Solitano and Tiffany Maxwell, who suffer from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). In his physical representation, Pat is an adult, blue-eyed and with weight problems. In terms of clothing, he tends to be represented in a tracksuit or wearing a jersey of his American soccer team, The Philadelphia Eagles. Tiffany is an adult, good-looking, brunette, and green-eyed. She almost always dresses in black, to symbolize mourning the loss of her husband.

As for the linguistic characterization of the characters coinciding with the symptomatology, Kayla shows discomfort in dialogue, showing discouragement when talking to the camera or to other people and constantly hesitating, both in conversations and in attitudes. This profile is noticeable when, speaking to the camera, she expresses difficulty in developing a chain of ideas or, when at the

pool party, she hesitates to enter and socialize with her peers, shutting herself in the bathroom for a few minutes in an effort to control her breathing. Stuttering, selective mutism, and difficulty articulating words are common linguistic features of social anxiety disorder, when Kayla cannot speak in certain situations, expressing a psychological block.

Pat and Tiffany do not present linguistic features that coincide with anxiety disorders, so we only identify linguistic features that are dissonant with the symptomatological representation, such as the repetition of words and expressions, such as "excelsior" and "juju". The latter symbolizes "luck" and is associated with the superstition of gambling and betting by Pat's father. Tiffany tends to use the expression "me reading the signs". As for the linguistic characterization dissonant with the symptoms of Kayla, we highlight: a) the use of linguistic slangs, typical of her age, such as "whatever" and "thanks"; and b) repetition of expressions and words, such as "you know" and "Gucci", the latter used at the end of each video, as a farewell.

Given the behavioural/functional characterization of the characters coinciding with the symptomatology, Kayla reveals: a) apathy, when she does not react to various situations throughout the film, such as when she is apathetic and inert in the classroom surrounded by classmates, who interact with each other. Kayla reveals inconsistency between what she encourages and what she does: when she records videos to post on YouTube, *she* encourages exposure, exploration of different environments, and to "get out of the comfort zone," but she herself, knowing consciously what is right, fails to comply with what she advises; b) sleep disturbance; c) moments of fatigue and rapid breathing, especially when confronted with strangers, which leads her to a panic attack; d) restlessness and nervousness when exposed to social interaction situations and e) lack of self-esteem and insecurity with her body, visible at times when she can only talk when she is behind a camera or when she walks and reveals discomfort at being exposed, as at the pool party. Pat, in turn, reveals insecurity with her body, resorting to sports to lose weight and improve her physical image. She also has panic attacks, specifically at times when, in obsessive mode, she listens to the wedding music and hallucinates.

In terms of interpersonal behaviour linked to the symptomatology, Kayla, at school, expresses loneliness, by not socializing, acting in contrast to the class, where all classmates talk. Loneliness is also visible in Tiffany, when she confesses to not having a healthy relationship with her sister and not having someone in her life besides her parents and Pat. This is evident when Pat forgets a dance rehearsal, leaving Tiffany alone to wait for him.

Kayla reveals irritability and hurt when her father tries to talk to her and Kayla feels that he is invading her space, asking him to leave her alone. Throughout the film, the father tries to establish a connection with Kayla, after the loss of her mother, but the character is constantly bothered by her father's presence, revealing difficulties in expressing feelings when the father says that he loves her, but Kayla cannot reciprocate, remaining silent. Irritability is a behavioural trait linked to anxiety, also present in Pat and motivated by obsession with his wife and marriage, not being able to overcome these losses, and in Tiffany,

when she reveals severe mood swings and gets easily aggravated with the people around her.

Pat, in addition to the traits described, reveals the presence of behavioural symptoms associated with anxiety, such as: a) fatigue and b) apprehensive anticipation. The fatigue manifests itself when Tiffany challenges him to the dance contest and the rehearsals leave him exhausted. He also displays a c) denial attitude when he refuses to receive therapeutic help and refuses to take his medication, justifying that he doesn't like the side effects they cause in him. His impulsive behaviour leads to d) constant mood swings and a personality clash with Tiffany.

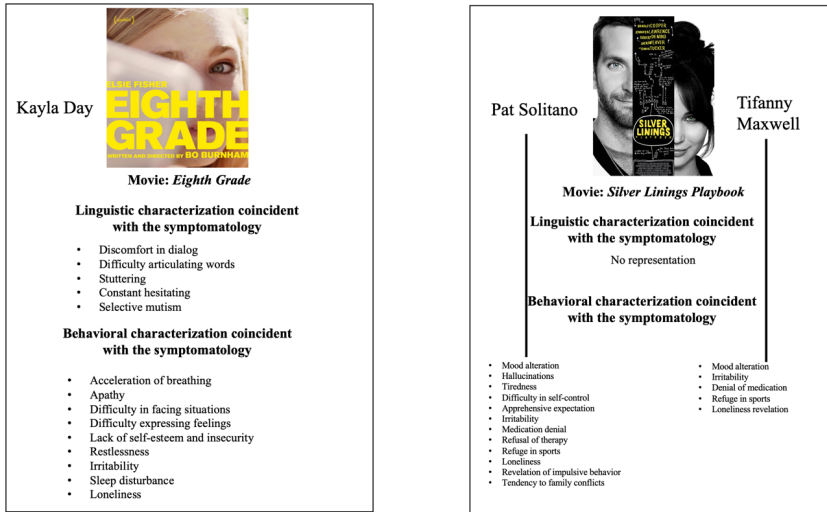
Pat reveals difficulty in controlling his attitudes and emotions, showing aggressiveness and impulsiveness in several situations and getting involved in the surrounding conflicts, even though he resists staying oblivious to them. Pat's symptomatology has hereditary traits and, in this sense, there is a tendency for family conflicts, a trait also visible in her father and brother, who easily get involved in trouble and are constantly creating instability in the family.

Regarding behavioural characteristics that are dissonant with the symptomatology, Kayla is influenced by what she finds on the Internet, revealing dependence on this medium, very common in the *millennial* generation. Kayla a) denies her introverted state, claiming not to be afraid to speak in public and justifying that she just "prefers not to" and b) based on the topics—nowadays pertinent and common problems for young people—that she discusses in the videos she posts on YouTube, she reveals an increased maturity for her age.

Also in terms of behavioural characterization dissonant with the symptomatology, Pat is attached to the past and to memories, visible by never taking the wedding ring off his finger and by incessantly seeking a reunion with his wife. He also manifests a constant state of lying in a quest for attention. Throughout the film, the character reveals emotiveness in moments when he expresses gestures of affection for his father or brother, or when he recognizes wrongdoing in a certain situation and apologizes. Tiffany, in turn, adopts behaviours far from the symptomatological representation, such as: a) the constant state of lying, which leads her to various problems, such as losing her job and b) the expression of happiness, when she falls in love with Pat.

Figure 1 summarizes the filmic representation of the characteristics, coinciding with the symptomatology, of the characters with anxiety.

Figure 1. Representation, in the films under analysis, of the characteristics of the characters with anxiety coinciding with the symptomatology



REPRESENTATION OF HOW CHARACTERS WITH ANXIETY COPE WITH THE DISORDER IN THE FILMS 'EIGHTH GRADE' AND 'SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK'

There is a set of characteristics and attitudes present in the characters that translate the way they deal with the disease. It is noted, positively with Kayla, an attempt to overcome it. An example of overcoming the fear of public exposure is the decision, at her birthday party, to participate in karaoke *in front of everyone*, or when she takes the initiative to act on her first romantic encounter with a boy.

The overcoming of the social anxiety disorder is also visible when the teenager starts living, in the new school, with an older friend, Olivia, who will contribute to her integration and will help her to change her way of dressing, making her feel more confident. The character in the film *Eighth Grade* reveals, throughout the film, a gain in confidence, projected in her posture: at the beginning of the film, she walks with her head bowed and downcast, and at the end of the film, with her head held high and with a firm position.

Also evident is a change in the character's attitude towards her father, showing herself to be more open and interested in talking to him and showing him that she has grown up and lost her fear of social interaction. Additionally, Kayla has a willingness to let go of her past, asking her father for help to burn all her memories and material memories, which she says she doesn't want to belong to her future, showing, in this way, that she wants to overcome the previous condition.

Also in *Silver Linings Playbook*, Pat's character represents an evolution, evident in his behaviour. This is seen when he confesses to his mother, Dolores Solitano,

that he is rebuilding his life, or when he tells his therapist that he is ready to take responsibility for what he has done. Throughout the film, the character seems to be happy, finding this happiness in dance and love, which form the dual basis that motivates the overcoming of the illness. It is noticeable that the new focuses, such as the passion for Tiffany and the motivation and determination attached to the dance project, contribute positively to overcoming the illness. Tiffany is also a protagonist of overcoming, when she reveals happiness and walks hand in hand with Pat, demonstrating that she is in love.

The films show two different approaches of the characters dealing with the illness: unconsciousness and consciousness. In *Eighth Grade*, it is apparent that Kayla, perhaps because she is a teenager, does not realize that she suffers from social anxiety, just as the people around her do not seem to understand her mental illness and the need for medical help. In turn, the film *Silver Linings Playbook* represents two main characters who are aware of their pathological mental condition.

However, both films, with a pedagogical and hopeful approach, share mechanisms and ways to learn how to deal with the disease and overcome it. In Mário Augusto's understanding, it is important for movies to contain a positive message and the added idea of overcoming mental illness, since the film has the purpose of "telling a story". The interviewee explains that the happy endings of films are the "films' way of giving us hope" and, in this sense, the message that the film leaves "deserves to be followed". Cinema thus fulfils its contribution of constantly launching "perspectives and bridges" (Mário Augusto), so that those who suffer from some mental disorder or disturbance can identify with some character in the film and derive practical benefits from that identification.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The filmic representation (encoding) about anxiety shows characters with behavioural characteristics coinciding with the symptomatology, such as a) irritability, b) tiredness, c) difficulty breathing, d) apprehensive expectancy, e) restlessness, and f) difficulty expressing feelings. This symptomatological representation is validated by other studies, such as those presented by Rojas (2017), the National Institute of Mental Health-NIMH (2018), and the interviews conducted to psychologists Maria João Ferro and Sorais Morais.

It becomes evident the exploration of the characters' physical characterization—manifested in both characters, Kayla and Pat—through characteristics such as obesity and the use of baggy clothes to hide the prejudice with the body. Pat also appears represented in a tracksuit and Tiffany dressed in black, to symbolize mourning. Similarly, we find in the study conducted by Middleton (2013) the importance of physical characterization to represent the characters beyond symptoms, better evidencing the presence of mental illness.

Kayla's linguistic characterization is coincident with the symptomatology of anxiety in features such as: a) discomfort talking to people, b) constant hesitations, c) stuttering, d) selective mutism, and e) difficulty articulating

words, symptoms also validated by DSM-5 (2013). The repetition of words and expressions, fitting according to Coseriu (1952) into the “individual norm,” is a dissonant characteristic with the symptomatology present in the representation of both films, such as “Gucci” in *Eighth Grade*, and “excelsior” in *Silver Linings Playbook*.

With regard to the characteristics that reflect a behavioural evolution of the characters, we highlight a) a manifestation of confidence, b) initiative to act, and c) willingness to let go of the past in *Eighth Grade* and a) an expression of happiness, b) motivation, and c) recognition of overcoming in *Silver Linings Playbook*. Middleton (2013) highlights that representations are positive if they “show that the mental problems can be easily treated” (p. 180), adopting characters who learn to cope with and overcome their illness.

The characters have a set of characteristics that coincide and disagree with anxiety disorders and the directors make an effort to convey a hopeful message, a perspective recognized by Mário Augusto. Trustworthy filmic representation can contribute, according to Middleton (2013), to raise awareness about anxiety and mental health. In the same vein, Stringer (2016) advocates that when considering the particular characterization of a character, one trains oneself to “to become familiar with these virtues” (p. 44). Grodal (2009) explains that the feeling of reality and realism is based on and serve our pragmatic interaction with the world, since we make and use concepts of what is actually and uniquely real, and we trust some communicators or representations as being better guides for our actions and concerns than others (p. 27). The analyst, also, considers that concepts, like *real*, *realism* and *truth*, are pertinent even for a postindustrial society with pervasive audiovisual representations (pp. 27-28). Additionally, Coleman (2014) highlights the use of irony as a resource in much of *Silver Linings Playbook*, emphasizing certain aspects worthy of attention and reflection. “If one can control one’s irrational impulses and only express them when socially acceptable, one is sane. If not, one is insane” (p. 311).

The filmic representation of how characters deal with anxiety is seen in two different ways—in *Eighth Grade*, the character is not aware of their mental condition and in *Silver Linings Playbook* and contrarily, the characters are aware. It is in this line that the importance of film studies and “film theory” (e.g. Penafria, 2009) is highlighted by the meanings that can be extracted from films and attributed by viewers, who may have access to information that allows them to identify or suspect their condition, leading them to ask for help, and who may assimilate images “that are perceived as almost real” (Prince, 2004, p. 43).

We acknowledge the intention of both directors in transmitting pedagogical tools, so that people with some anxiety disorder can recognize themselves in the characteristics represented by the characters. This idea confirms a) what Bandura (2001) advocates in the social cognitive theory of mass communication: that films allow to model thoughts, feelings and actions concerning anxiety; b) the E-E binomial, that film, through “light and lucid content” can educate by entertaining (Singhal and Rogers, 2002, p. 117).

The interviewees recognize a “formative role” to cinema (Mário Augusto) and equate it to the role of television, stating that “television and cinema

will both be important” by proposing “ethically and deontologically worthy” narratives (Carlos Capucho). This defense has similarities with the study by Canudo (1995) who describes film as “the visual and immediate expression of all human senses” (Penafria, 2009, p. 4). Also in the study conducted by Wahl and Kaye (1992), cinema (6%) appears as the second medium that most represents themes associated with mental health (p. 21), glimpsing its significance and its contribution on the subject, including in the deconstruction of prejudices and false ideas associated with anxiety and mental illnesses and in the promotion of empathy for those who suffer from these illnesses.

CONCLUSIONS

The effort made by the filmmakers to represent anxiety beyond the associated symptomatology is noticeable, aiming at the identification of the public with the characters and, thus, eventually a self-awareness and self-diagnosis. The end of both films, with the protagonists overcoming the disease, is positive, showing that the filmmakers build a message of hope for those who are anxious and that there is no fatality or irreversibility in suffering from the disease. Cinema, in its capacity as an educator (cinema-education), can provide tools that can help to deal with anxiety and even overcome it, functioning as an educational-therapeutic guide.

For future research, we propose more studies on the representation of anxiety disorders in different media, such as television, movies or magazines, as there are few studies in this area and also few films that feature characters with anxiety disorders, since film directors have placed more emphasis on other mental disorders. Given the widespread access to the Internet and the trend towards a qualitative approach on the topic of mental health, we propose quantitative studies, such as the use of a questionnaire survey to gauge online (e.g. websites, social networks, YouTube) and mental media representation of anxiety. Outside academia, and because there is a perceived scarcity of film representations, it is recommended, in a film-education context, that filmmakers explore the various symptoms associated with different anxiety disorders.

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