

**SACRED? FAMILY: THE DESACRALIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE NETFLIX
SERIES
¿SAGRADA? FAMILIA: LA DESACRALIZACIÓN DE LA MATERNIDAD EN LA SERIE DE
NETFLIX**

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ABSTRACT

Key words:

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La representación de las madres en el cine y las series de televisión españolas se ha concebido sobre la idea de la mujer perfecta y, por ende, madre ideal, lo que provoca aún más presión sobre los personajes femeninos. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo estudiar las maternidades de la serie *Sagrada Familia* (Netflix, 2022-2023) con objeto de comprobar si estas mujeres se alejan de la idealización de la imagen atribuida a las madres. Con un enfoque cualitativo-descriptivo se analizan los siete personajes cuyas tramas giran sobre el cuestionamiento de la maternidad biológica o la representación de familias con madres disfóricas, entre otras. Partiendo de los estudios de género y el análisis de personajes, esta investigación analiza a estas madres desde diferentes puntos de vista como el tipo de maternidad que ejerce, cómo desarrolla la protección hacia sus hijos o su desarrollo laboral y vida sentimental, que tradicionalmente son dos aspectos que se utilizan para limitar a los personajes femeninos. Así, el presente estudio determina cómo *Sagrada Familia* contribuye a mostrar otro tipo de mujeres desacralizando así el concepto de maternidad.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

series de televisión, series
españolas, género, familia,
maternidad.

La representación de las madres en el cine y las series de televisión españolas se ha concebido sobre la idea de la mujer perfecta y, por ende, madre ideal, lo que provoca aún más presión sobre los personajes femeninos. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo estudiar las maternidades de la serie *Sagrada Familia* (Netflix, 2022-2023) con objeto de comprobar si estas mujeres se alejan de la idealización de la imagen atribuida a las madres. Con un enfoque cualitativo-descriptivo se analizan los siete personajes cuyas tramas giran sobre el cuestionamiento de la maternidad biológica o la representación de familias con madres disfóricas, entre otras. Partiendo de los estudios de género y el análisis de personajes, esta investigación analiza a estas madres desde diferentes puntos de vista como el tipo de maternidad que ejerce, cómo desarrolla la protección hacia sus hijos o su desarrollo laboral y vida sentimental, que tradicionalmente son dos aspectos que se utilizan para limitar a los personajes femeninos. Así, el presente estudio determina cómo

Sagrada Familia contribuye a mostrar otro tipo de mujeres desacralizando así el concepto de maternidad.

Introduction

The study of the representation of female characters in film and television must inevitably consider the question of motherhood, whether by presence or absence, since the idea that women have an obligation to the concept of their possible progeny is extraordinarily rooted in Western culture.

The term *new momism* (Douglas and Michaels, 2004) was coined to refer to these representations of deified, romanticized motherhood, based on the fantasy perfection of these characters and is built on the locution of intensive motherhood, characterized by absolute dedication to the care of children, especially putting them before the personal and professional spheres (Hays, 1996). For his part, Kaplan (2000) speaks in taxonomic terms, where the representation of the mother is reduced to the self-sacrificing as opposed to the selfish, that is, the good as the antithesis of the bad.

In 2008, Guarinos defined the most common stereotypes of women in cinema and, of the twenty she detailed, six of them are related to motherhood, namely: *mater amabilis* (happy housewife who takes care of her children and husband); *mater dolorosa* (suffers because her children are not happy); castrating mother (with strict values who restricts the freedom of her offspring); stepmother (similar to the previous one, but with non-biological children); monster mother and childless mother, the latter unbalanced by her infertility. However, an update of this typology carried out by Pacheco-Jiménez (2022) warns that Spanish fiction develops another stereotypical mother who, under the term deranged mother, endangers her children due to some kind of mental disorder and points out that this type of characters are of special relevance in psychological *thrillers* or horror films or series. In this sense, (Arnold, 2013; O'Donohoe, 2006; McRobbie, 2009, Lacalle, 2022) also point out that the imperfections and moral ambiguity of the characters on which *thrillers* are built are the perfect ground for demystifying the concept of ideal motherhood. However, two of them are the same stereotype, but in a different context - the castrating mother and stepmother - and the third, the childless mother, actually refers to the disorder caused by the impossibility of motherhood for these characters; for its part, the addition of Pacheco-Jiménez already points to a group of characters that, although stereotypical, do not sacralize the idea of the good mother.

The imperfect motherhood that Lacalle outlines has a certain tendency to be related to the professional development of the female character, frequently associating ambition -represented as something excessive, sometimes irrational- with the absent mother as the main axis of both the plot and the traumas of her descendants. This eagerness to stand out in the workplace is based on the concept of *can-do girls* (Harrys, 2004), young women whose main objective is self-improvement, very much in line with the stereotype of a female character capable of anything (Wood, 2010; Lacalle and Sánchez, 2015). This imposition for this type of women represented as mothers comes with the requirement to stand out professionally, but also with the requirement to be present -sometimes alone- in the upbringing of their children, which causes a double imposition on the female characters that can then be apprehended as a model of social behavior. Moreover, it is striking that independent women are faced with the dilemma that their only possible choice to feel like women is to be mothers (Douglas and Michaels, 2004), so that this constraint is more than often inevitable.

Representation in fiction series differs considerably from cinematographic models due to two fundamental issues: on the one hand, series tend to be closer to current events, to exhibit other types of models and, on the other hand, but related to the above, television series can afford to delve deeper into their characters, building complex actors, whose roles allow them to actively intervene in their plots, if not build them, in Casetti and

Dichio's terminology (1991). In this regard, Press (2018) pronounces when she talks about the relationship between the proliferation of these multidimensional female characters and the greater participation of female creators in the contents and who, by the way, also kindly specifies that the values in criminal families -and, therefore, in *thrillers*- deserve separate mention insofar as and insofar as it is the most favorable environment to question the traditional models of female characters. However, this greater complexity of the representations of women still has its Achilles heel: the reconciliation of social life with work is more, Pacheco-Jiménez (2023) warns of the traditional lack of women in Spanish cinematography in professions related to action and even in the concept of criminality considered as work - insofar as it is the livelihood of the characters - and its relation to the need for these women to devote their efforts to the care of their children, while male characters boast greater freedom to develop professionally. Spanish television series opt for a greater representation of women in positions of action, as Lacalle (2022) shows, however, this causes an increase in what he calls dysphoric maternity (ibid.), due to the complexity involved in reconciling jobs in high positions with childcare which, in turn, leads to the redefinition of family models and, therefore, of motherhood, which it seems that Spanish fiction is achieving (Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015).

In the aforementioned study by Lacalle and Sánchez (ibid.), which collects 709 female characters to analyze how motherhood is constructed in Spanish fiction series, four fundamental family models visible in recent serialized fiction are established, which are:

- The integrated family, whose mother "reinforces unity among its members by implementing traditional family canons" (p. 232). Their protective instinct goes beyond morality, and they may even cover up for their children in criminal acts such as murder. This obsession with protecting the family institution persists even when the offspring are adults, falling even further into the stereotype of unhealthy motherhood.
- The flexible family is based in part on questioning traditional models of motherhood so that the mother has to adapt to the context, being a "chameleon mother" (p. 233). This is where mothers of stolen children or adoptive motherhood come into play, seeking to legitimize their own position vis-à-vis the biological mother.
- The dysfunctional family is headed by a mother whose actions lead to the dissolution of the family unit because she puts her own welfare before that of her offspring.
- Finally, the basic characteristic of the unstable family is the absence of these mothers in the lives of their children, who often appear little or not at all in the plots, that is, motherhood is a title, not a real role with implications for the characters.

Other relevant questions for this same study are: whether the actions of the mothers reinforce or weaken the family unit and the sentimental situation of these characters who, in order of highest to lowest frequency of representation, are married, widowed, single, divorced, in a couple living together, in a couple not living together and, lastly, their social status is unknown. All these variables, in line also with Press (2018) in the international scientific literature, evidence a new paradigm in the Spanish television landscape: the desacralization of motherhood.

In reference to the construction of characters, as previously mentioned, the terminology of Casetti and Dichio (1991) is taken into account, specifically the articulation of the character as a person, insofar as here the actions of the characters are defined that allow us to distinguish them as simple or complex in their construction, and whose

implication in the present study allows us to discern whether the possible desacralization of these maternities, once it is proven that they move away from stereotypical features, is due to the fact that they are actually simple characters, little treated, with few edges or little evolution. If, on the contrary, these mothers do not tend to stereotype and, in addition, they are constructed from complexity, it would be giving value to this possible distancing of these characters from the perfect mothers represented so far. Thus, it is determined whether these women are flat (one-dimensional) or round (complex and varied) characters; whether they are linear (stable) or contrasted (contradictory) and, finally, whether they are static or dynamic depending on whether they do not evolve or, on the contrary, undergo changes in this respect.

Method

Target

The present research aims to analyze the maternities shown in the Netflix series *Sagrada Familia* (Ley y Cordova 2022-2023) in order to, under the terminological umbrella described, check whether these new family models bring with them in the case of the aforementioned fiction the desacralization of the concept of maternity, based on the wide catalog of mothers it represents.

Methodology

In order to achieve the objective, a qualitative-descriptive approach is chosen, based on the literature review, on the one hand, of one of the main manuals on character construction and their place in the plot, i.e. Casetti and Dichio (1991); and, on the other hand, on the research on gender, representation and motherhood by Guarinos (2008) and Pacheco-Jiménez (2022); Lacalle and Sánchez (2015); Lacalle (2022). Based on these studies, and taking into consideration what is commonly considered in the scientific literature to be the main aspects of female characters marked by motherhood, the following variables are considered fundamental for the present research:

- a. Identification of the type of maternity (biological, adoptive, surrogate...)
- b. Description of the maternal conflict, that is, the relationship with each character's own concept of motherhood.
- c. Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.
- d. How you develop the concept of protection towards your children and whether this behavior strengthens or weakens the family unit.
- e. Sentimental life of the character.
- f. Professional development.
- g. Stereotypes according to Guarinos (2008) and Pacheco-Jiménez (2022)
- h. Character Complexity according to Casetti and Dichio (1991)

With the study of these eight variables, it will finally be possible to determine whether in *Sagrada Familia* the spectator witnesses a desacralization of the concept of motherhood.

The following table is proposed, which includes the variables described above, and which will be applied to each character separately:

Table 1
Character no.: character name

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	
b) Description of the maternal conflict	
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	
e) Sentimental life	
f) Professional development	

Series

The series, which consists of 16 episodes divided into two seasons, has as its starting point the move of Gloria (Najwa Nimri) to a residential neighborhood along with her baby and the alleged caretaker, Aitana (Carla Campra). Once there, she befriends Bianca (Macarena Gómez, mother of a child with Down Syndrome), Caterina (Alba Flores, who has a baby that she actually rents to a drug addict to pass herself off as a mother) and Alicia (Ella Kweku, who is considering whether to get pregnant or adopt). From this friendship, and a web of lies, *Sagrada Familia* moves between *thriller* and drama to make a portrait of Gloria, who is actually Aitana's mother and has her twin locked in the basement, and who became pregnant with the baby with genetic material from another son, deceased, before the impossibility of her partner, Natalia, to conceive. Once her son is dead, Natalia claims, as the mother who provided the genetic material, the maternity of the baby and Gloria, legitimized by the concept of gestation, steals the baby and runs away.

Characters

Around this main plot, a multitude of intertwined *storylines* are developed, usually starring a woman and revolving around some kind of motherhood motherhood. Thus, the female characters that are part of the present research are:

Table 2
List of characters and plots

CHARACTER	PLAYED BY	EVENTS
Gloria Roman	Najwa Nimri	<p>Mother of three children: Aitana and Abel (twins) and Santi (dies drowned)</p> <p>Santi wants to have children, but Natalia can't, so Gloria offers to get pregnant while Natalia pretends to be expecting a baby.</p> <p>When Santi dies, Natalia demands to take the baby to Argentina, her country, so Gloria kidnaps him with the help of the twins, they move and change their identities.</p> <p>In order not to be discovered, Aitana has to pretend to be the nanny and Abel ends up locking him in the basement.</p> <p>He murders his daughter's boyfriend, who is pregnant, to protect his identity and his secret.</p> <p>When, at the end of the series, she is about to get away with it, she realizes that she is not good for her children and takes them to safety from herself and Natalia by driving the car in which they are traveling down an embankment.</p>
Natalia	Laura Laprida	<p>She suffers from the stigma of not being able to get pregnant.</p> <p>He accepts that Gloria becomes pregnant with his child with his genetic material.</p> <p>When Santi dies, she considers herself the baby's legitimate mother, so she goes after Gloria when she kidnaps him.</p>
Bianca	Macarena Gomez	<p>Her son has Down Syndrome, she looks like a devoted mother, caring for her son with devotion.</p> <p>She unveils herself as a woman addicted to anxiolytics.</p> <p>One day, under the effects of pills, his son runs away and ends up in a pond. She sees him die and does not try to save him.</p>
Aitana	Carla Campra	<p>Pregnant</p> <p>Her boyfriend was killed by Gloria, her mother.</p>
Caterina	Alba Flores	<p>She claims to want to be a different kind of mother than Gloria.</p> <p>Criminal hired to spy on Gloria and take the baby.</p> <p>To fit into the residential neighborhood he needs his own child, so he rents a baby from a drug-addicted woman.</p> <p>When she is about to disappear, she decides not to return the baby to his biological mother and leaves him with Alicia and her partner, neighbors who are eager to have children.</p>
Claudia	Claudia Melo	<p>Drug-addicted mother who sells her son to Caterina by the hour in order to get money to continue using drugs.</p> <p>Lives on the street.</p> <p>When, after Caterina disappears, she discovers that her baby is with the neighbors, she tries to legitimize her motherhood, but she is invalidated by being a drug addict, so she decides to straighten out her life and quit drugs.</p>
Alicia	Ella Kweku	<p>Gloria, who has made a deal with the neighbor with whom she has agreed to kill Claudia, is going to convince her to use drugs (contaminated with pieces of crystal meth). After refusing several times, he finally gives in to temptation and dies.</p> <p>She seems to be eager to become a mother.</p> <p>The reality is that after three years of being with her partner she became pregnant and hid it from him because she has decided not to become a mother.</p> <p>She tells Pedro, her partner, that she cannot be a mother, so the pressure to adopt begins.</p> <p>She goes with her partner to find out about the adoption process and she has doubts.</p> <p>He takes care of Claudia's baby thinking he is Caterina's son, who has disappeared.</p>
Total	7 characters	

Note. Events = major events in the character's development and evolution related to motherhood.

Results

The proposed presentation of the results is that of a table per character in which the eight variables (a-h) studied are found. However, it should be clarified that due to the complexity of Gloria's character, who is also the protagonist, and the fact that her motherhood develops in three spheres: one with the baby, another with the twins Abel and Aitana, and a third with Santi, her deceased son, three different tables are detailed, since the development of the character and her concept of motherhood differs depending on which progeny Gloria is dealing with.

Thus, the results found in the analysis of female characters in relation to motherhood are:

Table 3

Character 1: Gloria in relation to the baby

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother, in that she has given birth despite not being her genetic material.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	She considers her motherhood to be more legitimate than that of Natalia, who provides the genetic material. She has given birth to the son of her son Santi.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Flexible, because it challenges traditional models of motherhood.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	Her eagerness to protect the baby leads her to steal him, change his identity and hide in a new life away from Natalia, the other biological mother. Strengthens the family unit.
e) Sentimental life	Nonexistent.
f) Professional development	He is dedicated to the design of stained glass, has a workshop at home. At the beginning of the series, this aspect has very little value and, what value it does have, is progressively reduced until it disappears completely.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 4

Character 1: Gloria in relation to the twins, Abel and Aitana

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	They, who helped her steal the baby out of loyalty to her mother, constantly rebel against the situation. She must make them understand that everything she does is for their good, but in reality the two of them are the most harmed.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Unstructured. They are the ones who suffer the consequences of Gloria's eagerness to attach the baby to the family unit. This constant attempt at union leads to dissolution.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	The intention to protect her children leads Gloria to lock Abel in a cellar. It weakens the family unit.
e) Sentimental life	Already described.
f) Professional development	Already described.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 5
Character 1: Gloria in relation to Santi, her late son

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	He gives birth to his son's child because he very much wants to be a father. In addition, he cannot accept that his son died in an accident.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Integrated. He goes so far as to help Santi cover up a crime. Santi runs over a young man when he is under the influence of alcohol and Gloria not only helps him cover it up, but ends up killing the young man, who was still alive, to keep the secret so that her son would not go to jail.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	Her desire for Santi's protection leads her to commit crimes to strengthen the family unit.
e) Sentimental life	Already described.
f) Professional development	Already described.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 6
Character 2: Natalia, the other biological mother

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother. The genetic material with which Gloria becomes pregnant is hers.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	Gloria has stolen her son and she crosses several countries in an attempt to get him back.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Flexible. She seeks legitimization of her motherhood vis-à-vis Gloria's motherhood.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	She wants to protect her baby from Gloria. After the death of Santi, his partner, his family unit is completely broken and he wants to reunite it to reinforce it.
e) Sentimental life	His partner is deceased. No further information is available.
f) Professional development	Nonexistent.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 7
Character 3: Bianca

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	Your child has Down syndrome.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Under the appearance of being the builder of an integrated family, with traditional values and a superb protective instinct, she may even seem like a <i>mater amabilis</i> at times, but in the end she reveals herself as the main component of a broken family, tired of her husband not wanting her, bored of being a housewife and capable of watching her son drown without doing anything because, in reality, it is a relief to get out of that disguise. Also, addicted to anxiolytics.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	He moves between the absolute protection displayed during the development of the series and the total lack of protection of his son as he watches him drown. Based on the end result, their actions significantly weaken the family unit.
e) Sentimental life	She is convinced that her husband is unfaithful, but she stays with him because she does not want to face giving up being a housewife.
f) Professional development	She was a flight attendant, when she tries to return to work after a long time and after the death of her son, she has a panic attack.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 8
Character 4: Aitana

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother. She is pregnant.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	Her mother has killed her partner, with whom she became pregnant before she died. She is clear that, despite the strong maternal instincts she knows Gloria has, she wants to be a different kind of mother to the baby she is expecting.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Flexible. As a daughter, she is questioning the models of motherhood and, as a mother, she has to adapt to her context.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	Her concept of protection with the baby she is expecting leads her to have the desire to move away from his mother to make him safe, so she would reinforce this coming family unit once her child is born (the series ends while she is pregnant).
e) Sentimental life	He fell in love and jeopardized the concealment of his identity, so when his boyfriend found out his mother killed him. After his death, he begins a relationship with the brother of his former partner.
f) Professional development	Student.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 9
Character 5: Caterina

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Rent a baby. She is not a mother, nor does she want to be, but she must pretend to be because she has been hired to find Gloria.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	After a long time renting the baby to a drug-addicted woman, Claudia, the time comes when she is going to run away and decides to make the baby safe, both from her and from the biological mother, and leaves it to the neighbors, who wish to become parents.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Unstable. The daughter is simply a consequence of her work.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	While she seems to have no concept of protection, in the end she decides to make the baby safe, so, without being her family unit because she does not have one, she helps to create one.
e) Sentimental life	He has sex with the partner he is assigned to spy on Gloria and with another criminal he knew before who is his accomplice.
f) Professional development	Criminal. The character is defined by this aspect, it is the only thing that matters to him and therefore he lacks personal ties.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 10
Character 6: Claudia

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	Biological mother.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	She is a drug addict and destitute. He rents his baby to Caterina on a daily basis to get money to keep getting high. When he sees that his daughter doesn't come back one day, he decides to get her back and stop using drugs. Finally, Gloria, intending to kill her, tempts her and she falls, dying because the drugs contained crystals.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Unstable. Her daughter is never with her, it is only a nominal position.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	Their concept of protection is altered by drug use. In any case, their actions weaken the family unit.
e) Sentimental life	Nonexistent.
f) Professional development	Nonexistent.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Table 11
Character 7: Alicia

Criteria	Description
a) Type of maternity	No mother.
b) Description of the maternal conflict	Your partner wants very much for you to be parents and puts pressure on you. She became pregnant by him three years into their relationship, but deliberately miscarried because she does not want to be a mother. The problem is that you don't know how to tell your partner. After much pressure, they decide to adopt, but she backs out. In the end, he ends up taking care, together with his partner, of Claudia's baby, the drug addict.
c) Type of family according to Lacalle and Sanchez, 2015.	Flexible family. Despite not wanting to be a mother, her concept of motherhood modulates with the development of the character and the contexts in which she is involved.
d) Does the concept of protection strengthen or weaken the family unit?	Her concept of protection leads her to take care of Claudia's baby even though she does not want to be a mother, thus reinforcing the family unit built with her partner.
e) Sentimental life	He has a steady partner.
f) Professional development	She is a teacher at Bianca's son's school.
g) Stereotypy (Guarinos, 2008; Pacheco-Jimenez, 2022)	No
h) Construction of the character (Casetti and Dichio, 1991)	Round, contrasted and dynamic. Complex character.

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

Determining whether the *Holy Family* proposes a destruction of the concept of ideal motherhood involves not only observing the most obvious aspects of this broad catalog of maternities, but also analyzing in detail what singularities make these characters truly different models from those that have been represented.

In the first section, the variable a. type of maternity, provides diverse results, such as:

- Traditional biological maternity (childbirth and genetic material: Gloria with her twins, Gloria with Santi, Bianca and Claudia);
- Biological motherhood based on childbirth (Gloria with the baby);
- Maternity based on genetic material (Natalia)

- Future Maternity (Aitana);
- Non-motherhood (Caterina and Alicia, the latter moving between the concepts of non-motherhood, adoption and foster care, but refusing motherhood).

Next, variable b. Description of maternal conflict, shows different points of view of different women on how to legitimize motherhood, from the struggle for who imposes her concept of biological mother between Gloria and Natalia, the need for domination and authority of Gloria with her children, and even the need to justify non-motherhood, given in the cases of Caterina and Alicia, but all conflicts revolve around imperfect mothers trying to reaffirm themselves in their decisions about motherhood.

The family types variable, variable c., provides interesting results. First, all the characters ascribe to the types delimited by Lacalle and Sánchez (2015) and, second, the four types they describe are represented in the study. Special attention deserves here the character of Gloria, who has three spheres and in each one behaves as the visible head and articulating axis of a type of family: flexible with the baby, unstructured with the twins and integrated with Santi.

In the section related to the concept of protection and whether this concept weakens or strengthens the family unit, diversity can also be found in spite of being a taxonomy because, with only these two options, it is found that all the characters have a particular context:

- Gloria, with the baby, intends to strengthen the family unit, but with the twins she ends up weakening it. Finally, with Santi she intends to strengthen it, but fate wants him to die, taking away Gloria's chance to strengthen the family unit.
- Natalia, stripped of her family unit, does not want to reinforce it, she wants to recover it.
- Bianca, under the guise of a protective and loving mother, is the one who ends up triggering the total destruction of their family unit.
- Aitana, in order to build a healthy family unit and strengthen it, must first weaken the current one.
- Caterina has no family unit.
- Claudia, by renting out her baby because of her drug addiction, ends up losing her family unit.
- The different contexts in which Alicia develops lead her to create a family unit, even though she denies it.

The sentimental life of the characters, variable e., presents different results, on the one hand, those whose partners do not exist and are not even mentioned (Gloria and Claudia), followed by those who have dead boyfriends (Natalia and Aitana); then those who neither have nor pretend to have ties, but do experience sexual desire (Caterina); finally, those who are in a couple (Bianca, married and frustrated; and Alicia, traditional except for not wishing to be a mother).

One of the main disadvantages that the female characters have to face is the reconciliation between care and the development of their profession. It is striking that, in this case, the work performance of these characters is not relevant at all and does not delimit them in any aspect, which is why they are barely developed, as the analysis of variable f shows. The professions are used to link some characters with others (Caterina is in charge of discovering Gloria and Alicia is the teacher of Bianca's son) or to link the characters with the school (Gloria designs a stained glass window for the school and Alicia works there), only in the case of Bianca, who also has no development, is used as a delimitation of the character to show at a specific moment that she has not overcome her

involvement in the death of her son, and she is shown in her job as a flight attendant but fails to take off because of a panic attack.

Finally, variables g. whether the characters comply with any of the stereotypes described by Guarinos (2008) and Pacheco-Jiménez (2022) and variable h. whether the characters are simple or complex in the terminology of Casetti and Dichio (1991), can be summarized together since none of the women tend to stereotypy and all of them are complex. The complexity of these characters is fulfilled in the three dimensions detailed by Casetti and Dichio, that is: they are rounded (varied), contrasted (contradictory) and dynamic (with evolution), so the fact that they move away from stereotypy and, at the same time, all women are complex in all their dimensions of the character as a person, contributes to the credibility of the desacralization studied here, since it shows that the results of the previous variables (a-f) are not the product of conceiving banal, stereotyped or simple characters.

Conclusions

The study of the motherhoods depicted in *Sagrada Familia* as a paradigm of the progressive departure of female characters in Spanish television series from what it means to be a perfect woman and, therefore, an ideal mother, shows that the diversity of mothers represented is wide, with conflicts, contradictions and built from complexity.

The character that moves the whole series and whose conception is more complex is Gloria, who has three spheres in which she plays as a mother and in all of them she is contradictory and a failure in spite of her evident efforts. She is also the one who carries the weight in the stark rivalry of two biological mothers struggling to legitimize their own motherhood, a struggle she maintains with Natalia and which ends when Gloria realizes that neither of them is the right mother, takes her children to safety and drives the car in which they are both traveling down an embankment. Bianca, on the other hand, is a character who moves between two extremes, excessive protection and paralyzed assistance to the death of her son, that is, between care and homicide. Aitana is torn between her loyalty to her mother and her instinct to protect her unborn child; Claudia dies in the dilemma between drugs and motherhood; and Alicia is a kind of mother forced by circumstances. Only Caterina, a woman of action and therefore outside of care (Pacheco-Jiménez, 2023; Lacalle 2022) actively decides and manages to live outside of motherhood, except when she rents the baby for her work. However, it is striking that women who are not mothers end up conditioned by motherhood (Caterina and Alicia), as noted by (Douglas and Michaels, 2004), nevertheless, they face the situation and redefine it: in Caterina's case by reaffirming themselves; in Alicia's case, by leaving the decision without making it.

The professions and professional lives of these women, two of the most delimiting aspects for the female characters, become completely irrelevant in *Sagrada Familia*. Only in the case of Alicia is her personal life important, but to show the situation faced by traditional women who decide not to succumb to the pressures related to motherhood. This absence of deep development in professions and personal lives ratifies, together with the fact that the characters do not tend to stereotype nor to simplicity, the achievement of the fundamental object of this research, which is none other than to verify that, indeed, these new family models bring with them the desacralization of the concept of motherhood, desacralization based on the failure as mothers of all these characters because none of them is a perfect woman, much less an ideal mother.

Once this case has been substantiated, it is hoped, with future research work, to use this as a starting point to monitor similar Spanish fiction series that are produced with the aim of questioning the model of self-sacrificing motherhood and even to make a

comparison between the representation of mothers in the East and the West; in addition, the possibility of extending this work by checking whether these new models are far from or close to what is currently called real motherhood, whose objective, on many occasions, is precisely to question the pillars of what has traditionally been conceived as motherhood, is raised. Finally, and leaving the field of representation, this study aims to expand to include the users and the discussions that have been generated around motherhood thanks to the broadcast of the series.

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