

2018-01-01

No habrá rey sin reina: Gender Discourse in Isabel, A Contemporary Representation of Queen Isabel I of Castile and King Fernando II of Aragon

Michelle Sabrina Peters

University of Texas at El Paso, mspeters94@outlook.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd



Part of the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Peters, Michelle Sabrina, "No habrá rey sin reina: Gender Discourse in Isabel, A Contemporary Representation of Queen Isabel I of Castile and King Fernando II of Aragon" (2018). *Open Access Theses & Dissertations*. 147.

https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/147

NO HABRÁ REY SIN REINA: GENDER DISCOURSE IN *ISABEL*, A CONTEMPORARY
REPRESENTATION OF QUEEN ISABEL I OF CASTILE
AND KING FERNANDO II OF ARAGON

MICHELLE SABRINA PETERS
Master's Program in Communication

APPROVED:

Roberto Avant-Mier, Ph.D., Chair

María de los Ángeles Flores, Ph.D.

Barbara Zimbalist, Ph.D.

Charles Ambler, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright ©

by

Michelle Sabrina Peters

2018

NO HABRÁ REY SIN REINA: GENDER DISCOURSE IN *ISABEL*, A CONTEMPORARY
REPRESENTATION OF QUEEN ISABEL I OF CASTILE
AND KING FERNANDO II OF ARAGON

by

MICHELLE SABRINA PETERS, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Communication

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take advantage of this space to thank all who have played a role in this process. First, I would like to thank my family. Mom and Dad, thank you for your steadfast support in all that I do and for investing in me and in my education in every sense of the word – financially, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Me han proporcionado la estabilidad que permite el desarrollo y el crecimiento, y no es algo que tomo por sentado. También me gustaría expresar mi agradecimiento hacia mis abuelos maternos, Octavio y Graciela; la constancia de su cariño y apoyo es un don inmenso. The same can be said of my paternal grandparents, Edward and Betty. Your support and interest have always been so complete, which I appreciate immeasurably. A mis padrinos Yolanda y Emilio, gracias por acompañarme en todos mis retos y aventuras.

I would also like to thank my committee. I feel fortunate to have had a group in which each member was so valuable and vital. Dra. Flores, cuando comencé este trabajo, me dijo que estaría ahí para ayudarme con cualquier cosa, y así fue; para cada duda, usted estuvo ahí para orientarme. Dr. Zimbalist, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to continue profiting from your incredible insight and intellect, and I rather hope I can keep doing so. Dr. Avant-Mier, thank you for taking my work seriously from the beginning and for helping steer this project to fruition. Our chats about television and media along the way have ensured that this process was edifying both because of the work and because of the company.

Next, I would like to thank my friends. Mariana, Natalia, and Chris –thank you for your friendship and for listening with interest whenever I talked about this project. Your generous words of encouragement were a balm to me during the most stressful hours. Fran, gracias por todo y tanto. Gracias por introducirme a *Isabel* y por disfrutar de la serie conmigo. Este trabajo

no hubiera salido de tan alta calidad de no haber sido por tu ayuda, tu apoyo inagotable, tu buen criterio, y tus ojos, que ven con una agudeza envidiable. Quedo muy agradecida.

También me gustaría reconocer a las personas cuyo trabajo fue la inspiración para esta tesis. Siempre he tenido la convicción que el arte bien hecho es el que mejor se presta al estudio y a la tarea de engrandecer y enriquecer las perspectivas de las personas que lo consumen, y esto es plenamente cierto de *Isabel*. Extiendo mi agradecimiento a Jordi Frades, Michelle Jenner, Rodolfo Sancho, Jaume Banacolocha, Joan Bas, Pepe Reyes, Federico Jusid, Fernando López Puig, Javier Olivares, José Luis Martín, y a todas las demás personas que trabajaron para crear y sacar adelante esta serie de tan excelente calidad.

Finalmente, extiendo mi gratitud a mis tres intercesores y al que los puso en mi camino.

ABSTRACT

By examining the figures of the Catholic Monarchs -Isabel and Fernando- in the popular television show *Isabel*, this research demonstrates how the historical fiction genre tends to privilege the stories of exceptional women and the men surrounding them. Unlike other historical fiction shows where the emphasis is placed on the empowerment of a single female character, *Isabel* emphasizes the mutual empowerment and equitable dynamic between a woman and a man. In an era when gender roles and prejudice were particularly strict, Fernando and Isabel enter into marriage with diametrically opposed notions of gender roles. However, when they begin ruling and sharing political responsibilities, the gender perspectives of both characters adapt to produce an equitable gender dynamic. The present study utilizes content analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively to analyze the representations of gender content incidents in *Isabel* as they pertain to the spouse and monarch facets of both Isabel and Fernando's characters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
ISABEL: LA GRAN APUESTA.....	1
The Sovereign Audience Responds	4
The Critics Second the Public.....	10
The International Audience Vindicates the Spanish Audience and the Critics	12
Isabel Reigns.....	13
THE CULTURAL STORYTELLER	16
Fiction’s Golden Age.....	17
Televised Historical Fiction: History for the Public	19
“Fictionizing History”	20
Nomenclature Within the Historical Genre	21
Fiction and Truth Intertwined	23
Constructing Social Reality: Gender in TV Fiction Shows	24
Familial Context.....	25
Professional Context	27
Trade-offs: Professional or Personal Success	30
Gender in Isabel	32
METHODOLOGY	36
Content Analysis Application.....	38
RESULTS	44

Quantitative Analysis.....	44
General Incidents	44
Conflictive Incidents.....	46
Conflictive and General Incidents Throughout the Entire Show.....	48
Conflictive and General Incidents Per Episode	50
Qualitative Analysis.....	51
Introduction: Gender in Isabel	52
Gender in the Professional Realm: Monarchs	53
Isabel: Initium Phase.....	53
Fernando: Initium Phase.....	54
Isabel and Fernando: Prima bellum Phase.....	55
Isabel: Post bellum Phase.....	58
Fernando: Post bellum Phase.....	59
Gender in the Familial Realm: Spouses.....	61
Isabel and Fernando: Prima bellum Phase.....	61
Isabel and Fernando: Post bellum Phase.....	62
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	65
Review of Thesis Project	65
Isabel.....	65
Gender in Television Fiction	66
Methodology.....	68
Findings and Contributions.....	69
Research Question 1	69

Research Question 2	70
Research Question 3	71
Research Question 4	72
Implications.....	73
Limitations	75
Directions and Suggestions for Future Research	76
REFERENCES	78
CURRICULUM VITA	88

CHAPTER 1

ISABEL: LA GRAN APUESTA

In August of 2010, squarely within Spain's economic crisis, the filming of the television series *Isabel* had begun. The show was the product of the collaboration between the production company Diagonal TV and *Radio y Televisión Española* (RTVE or Radio and Television Spain), the state-owned public corporation that assumed the indirect management of the Spanish public radio and television service in 2007 (Ponce, 2012b). *Isabel* was to air on prime time and narrate the life of Queen Isabel I of Castilla together with her husband King Fernando II of Aragón and V of Castilla -or, as they are known to Anglophones, Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon and V of Castile. The pair, known jointly as *los Reyes Católicos* or the Catholic Monarchs, ruled in the 15th and early 16th century and are considered two of the most influential individuals in the history of Spain (Liss, 1992/1998; Suárez, 2004). Depicting their life and reign was a considerable endeavor and perhaps especially so given the lack of portrayals of Isabel and Fernando; Javier Olivares, the series' head screenwriter, asked himself why their story had not been depicted on television before (Ponce, 2012b). The pair have a story that perhaps others would have been quicker to capitalize on. As Rosa Belmonte of the Spanish newspaper *ABC* notes, "Si la BBC hubiera tenido a Isabel la Católica, contaríamos ya seis versiones de su vida." (2011, para. 1).¹

Though Isabel and Fernando's story had perhaps been somewhat overlooked before, *Isabel* promised to deliver. Jordi Frades, the director of the series, said that the intention of the

¹ "If the BBC had had Isabel the Catholic, we'd already have six versions of her life." Translation is author's own.

entire staff was “hacer una serie lo más seria posible, contar los hechos lo más parecido a cómo sucedieron” and, simultaneously, to ensure the series was “más digerible a los espectadores” (“Televisión Española finaliza,” 2011, para. 11).² This intention seemed to have been heeded because even before its first season was released *Isabel* was being called *Televisión Española*’s (TVE or Television Spain) most ambitious series of the season (Belmonte, 2011). Perhaps more fitting, it was being called “*la gran apuesta*,” or TVE’s “big bet” since it was a foray into the historical genre (Belmonte, 2011; “Televisión Española finaliza,” 2011). The staff of *Isabel* had assumed the challenge of creating a serious, accurate retelling of the lives of the Catholic Monarchs. The question that followed, of course, was whether the wager would pay off.

The artistic and technical staff of *Isabel* embarked on the challenge they had assumed, and they soon saw it compounded by budget cuts due to the economic recession. Fernando López Puig, TVE’s director of fiction, said that the production staff of *Isabel* initially went for the most spectacular options but soon found out that there wasn’t enough money in the budget for them. As a result, they had to opt for more cost-effective production choices (Belmonte, 2011). Moreover, if there wasn’t enough money to film the second season, it simply wouldn’t be filmed.

The effects of the economic crisis were so substantial, in fact, that even broadcasting the finished first season was a challenge. TVE planned to premiere it in January or February of 2012 (Belmonte, 2011); however, the release was delayed for months while its new directive board tallied up its accounts (Lacalle, 2013). When the series finally premiered in September of that year, the cast and crew of *Isabel* expressed relief at the fact that the first season was finally going

² “to make a series that was as serious as it could be, to recount the events as accurately as possible” and, simultaneously, to ensure the series was “digestible for the viewers.” Translation is author’s own.

to be released. Rodolfo Sancho, who plays Fernando *el católico* in the series, said, “Ha habido momentos en los que pensábamos que no se estrenaría” (Ponce, 2012a, para. 4).³ Throughout the wait, the cast and crew had placed their faith in the hope that a series of such high quality wouldn’t be kept from the public. Michelle Jenner, who plays Isabel, said, “No podía pensar que una serie de 13 capítulos hechos con tanto esfuerzo y de esa calidad se quedaran en un cajón” (Ponce, 2012a, para. 4).⁴ *Isabel* had indeed surpassed the hurdle of getting its first season released amidst the throws of an economic recession, but TVE’s “big bet” still had to prove whether or not it would pay off.

With its first season guaranteed release, the next challenge *Isabel* would have to overcome was securing a second season, a feat that depended both on audience response and funding. Even prior to the release of the first season, the chances of filming a second season seemed slim. Shortly before the first season was released in September of 2012, the production company, Diagonal TV, had dismantled the sets and removed set decorations with little hope of being able to film a second season (Ponce, 2012b). The removal of the set also meant that more difficulties would arise even if a second series was approved. When *Isabel* and the other series for TVE’s 2012 season were released, neither the dates nor the possibilities of signing for new seasons had been set; Ignacio Corrales, the director of TVE, said, “Depende de la audiencia y de los presupuestos, pero no queremos renunciar a un género que nos aporta buenos datos de

³ “There have been moments when we thought that it wouldn’t be released.” Translation is author’s own.

⁴ “I couldn’t think that a series with 13 episodes made with so much effort and of that quality would be left tucked away in a drawer.” Translation is author’s own.

audiencia” (Ponce, 2012a, para. 2).⁵ This meant that *Isabel* would have to secure a large audience if it was to have funding allocated for a new season. To this condition, the viewing public provided a prodigious response that demonstrated it was interested in seeing more of the story of the Catholic Monarchs and that *Isabel, la gran apuesta*, was a bet that would pay off tenfold.

In the subsequent sections, the following will be discussed: the domestic audience’s response to *Isabel*; the critics’ response; the show’s international reception; and finally, the show’s importance within communication studies, especially as they relate to gender.

The Sovereign Audience Responds

During the release of its first season, *Isabel* attracted a viewing public of considerable size. The season contained 13 episodes, and as each new episode was released, the number of viewers increased. Episode six, wherein King Fernando is introduced in the storyline, secured 3,801,000 viewers and 18.3% for its share, which is the percentage of in-use television sets in television equipped households that are tuned to a program (RTVE, 2012a). This marked the beginning of an increased interest in the series.

Both the number of viewers as well as the share rose in the next episode, which is of special importance. In the seventh episode, *Isabel*, effectively rejects the proposal to marry Charles, the French Duke of Guyenne, and chooses to marry Fernando amidst enormous pressure to accept the former. This episode of *Isabel* had 3,952,000 viewers and a share of 18.9%,

⁵ “That depends on the audience and the budgets, but we don’t want to give up on a genre that gives us good ratings.” Translation is author’s own.

demonstrating an increase of 151,000 viewers and an increase of 0.6% in share (RTVE, 2012a). Moreover, 6,662,000 viewers saw the episode at some point in time (RTVE, 2012a).

These ratings for episode seven suggest its importance in elucidating Isabel's character and establishing the trajectory for the rest of the story. It brought to the screen a fact about Isabel that historians have documented and attested to: she maintained that she would not be wed against her will (Liss, 1992/1998; Suárez, 2004). In keeping with this important detail, the most-watched minute of the episode -gathering 4,219,000 people in front of their televisions- was the one in which Isabel stalled when presented with the Duke of Guyenne's proposal, making it clear to the other characters and to the audience that she had no intention of accepting it (RTVE, 2012a). That fact that this was the golden minute of the episode is indicative of the viewing public's interest in seeing Isabel, a 15th century woman, dig in her heels and decide for herself who she would marry and share the throne with.

This interest in Isabel's life and choices grew even more with the release of subsequent episodes. The eighth episode of *Isabel*, in which Isabel finally meets Fernando, succeeded in breaking the series' own audience record; it secured 4,278,000 viewers and a share of 20.7% (RTVE, 2012b). This marked an increase of 326,000 viewers and an increase of 1.8% in share compared to the previous week (RTVE, 2012b).

When the next episode was aired, the numbers climbed even higher, continuing the upward trend that had been demonstrated since Fernando had been introduced in the plot. With the release of episode nine, *Isabel* broke its own record yet again as Isabel and Fernando celebrated their wedding onscreen after overcoming numerous obstacles. The episode brought in 4,626,000 viewers and a share of 22%, making it the most-watched program of the night and showing an increase of 348,000 viewers and an increase of 1.3% in share (RTVE, 2012b).

Moreover, the episode's success well exceeded the night it aired; a whopping 7,417,000 viewers saw the episode at some point in time (RTVE, 2012b).

These staggering ratings for episode nine as well as the overall increase in ratings since Fernando's arrival perhaps seem typical since they coincide with plot events focused on the romantic relationship that is at the centerfold of the series. Indeed, the most-watched minute in episode nine was the one where Isabel and Fernando said "*sí, quiero,*" or "I do," at their wedding; it amassed 5,047,000 viewers and a share of 26.8% (RTVE, 2012b). These high ratings could easily be dismissed as byproducts of the romantic element; however, it should be noted that the way the series handled romance was unorthodox, and by extension, so was the way it achieved its ratings. In an article titled *Why do we like Isabel?*, Ponce cites the lack of nudity and sex scenes as one of the things audiences like about the series:

Alejada de series del mismo corte histórico como «Los Tudor», donde el desnudo es la clave, en «Isabel» no hacen falta los pechos ni las escenas sexuales para captar la atención del espectador... Han creado momentos especiales gracias a miradas, como las de Isabel y Fernando cuando se conocieron, o diálogos apasionantes sin recurrir al morbo como estrategia. (2012b, para. 10)⁶

There were actually a few sexual scenes in the entire series, but Jordi Frades, the director, was clear that their inclusion had to make sense: "Hay alguna escena de sexo pero es un sexo que

⁶ "Unlike series of the same type, the historical kind, like *The Tudors*, where nudity is key, in *Isabel* you don't need breasts or sexual scenes to capture the audience's attention... They have created special moments thanks to glances, like the ones Isabel and Fernando shared when they met, or passionate dialogues, without recurring to nudity or sex scenes as a strategy." Translation is author's own.

tiene que ver con lo que sucede a los personajes” (Belmonte, 2011, para. 4).⁷ More importantly, he noted that there are no erotic scenes of Isabel and Fernando (Belmonte, 2011). In other words, *Isabel* achieved its considerable ratings without recurring to the commonplace strategy (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005; Al-Sayed & Gunter, 2012) of saturating the audience with sexual content.

It had demonstrated that a romance portrayed without sexual scenes could capture an audience’s attention, but *Isabel* had another “without” to prove. In episode 13, the finale of the season, the king of Castile dies, and in accordance with historical documentation (Liss, 1992/1998; Suárez, 2004), Isabel proclaims herself queen and is crowned on her own, *without* waiting for Fernando, who was in another kingdom at the time. For this episode, *Isabel* garnered 4,651,000 viewers and a share of 22.6%, breaking its own record yet again by surpassing both the number of viewers and the share of the wedding episode by 25,000 and 0.6% respectively (RTVE, 2012c). *Isabel* had achieved its best ratings with an episode wherein Isabel lived the most pivotal event of the entire season *without* a male figure by her side.

The viewing public proved to be interested in seeing how the young queen came to assume the throne on her own and, particularly, in seeing the attitude with which she did so. The last minute of the episode was the most watched, boasting of a share of 26.7% (RTVE, 2012c). In this minute, Isabel tells her political advisers that she will not be a weak ruler like her late brother, stating that she will face her opponents in war if that is what they want. She then assumes the throne and proclaims, “Todos en este reino tienen que tener algo muy claro: que yo,

⁷ “There are a couple of sex scenes, but it is sex that has to do with what happens to the characters.” Translation is author’s own.

Isabel, soy la reina de Castilla. Y sólo Dios podrá apartarme de este trono” (Frades, 2012).⁸ The fact that this was the golden minute of the episode is telling because it indicates that the 21st century viewing public was not only willing watch this 15th century woman staunchly reject one suitor (the Duke of Guyenne) and get married to the one she chose herself (Fernando). It was also willing to congregate around televisions to watch this woman assume and assert her role with conviction to spare.

This exceptional audience response to Isabel’s determination and to the entire first season was proof enough that *Isabel* had resonated with audiences. It had been one of the most-watched programs of 2012, and RTVE took notice (RTVE, 2013c). In the press release announcing the ratings for the final episode of season one, TVE announced that there would be a second season: “The life of the queen has much to give and because of this TVE has decided to bet on this quality product” (RTVE, 2012c, para. 6). This announcement came on the heels of the government’s announcement that RTVE’s budget would face a 17% decrease in budget, meaning that even in the face of a shrinking budget TVE had deemed *Isabel* worthy of continued funding (Lacalle, 2013). It had bet on the historical production that had made do with a reduced budget and struggled to get its first season released, and the audience had responded, making it clear that *la gran apuesta*, or big bet, had paid off and deserved continued investment.

The audience response that had ushered Isabel through the broadcast of its first season and helped secure its continuance faithfully accompanied it through two more 13-episode seasons. The second season, which focuses on events like the War of Spanish Succession and the

⁸ “Everyone in this kingdom needs to have this clear: I, Isabella, am the Queen of Castile, and God alone can separate me from this throne.” Translation is author’s own.

re-conquest of Granada, secured an average of 3,351,000 viewers and an average share of 17.6% prior to the broadcast of its final episode (RTVE, 2013b; Lacalle, Castro, & Sánchez, 2014). The third season, which centers on the determination of the succession to the joint crown of Aragon and Castile, saw similar ratings. For instance, episode 38, the penultimate installment of the whole series, brought in 3,347,000 viewers and a share of 16.8% (RTVE, 2014b). The episode was viewed by 5,566,000 individuals at some point in time, indicating a sizable viewing public interested in keeping up with the series (RTVE, 2014b).

This interest spiked with episode 39, the season and series finale. This episode, which aired in 2014, gathered 3,835,000 viewers and a share of 19.4% and was viewed by 5,885,000 people at some point in time (RTVE, 2014a). With the broadcast of this episode, *Isabel* had come full circle. The third season aggregated an average of 3,142,000 viewers and an average share of 16.4% (Lacalle, Castro, & Sánchez, 2015), and the series as a whole had achieved an average of 3,500,000 viewers and an average share of 17.7% (RTVE, 2014a). Moreover, it finished its run as one of the successful series in all of Spain, accumulating 28 million contacts, meaning that 64% of the population had seen at least one minute of the series since its broadcast began in 2012 (RTVE, 2012a). What is more, *Isabel's* audience was not only large, but also highly engaged, as evidenced by the strong response to its social media presence; the series' official Facebook page amassed more than 73,000 followers, while its official Twitter account reached nearly 24,000 followers (Aparicio, 2014). The audience response that had been needed to secure the funding and commitment for *Isabel's* continuation had been achieved. The Spanish audience had ruled in favor of *Isabel*, as would many others.

The Critics Second the Public

Just as it had won over the viewing public, *Isabel*, too, had won over the critics. Shortly following the broadcast of the first season, the series was soon trailed by a list of accolades that grew considerably with time. In 2012, the awards began streaming in, with *Isabel* winning the *Ondas* award for best series (RTVE, 2015a). Then, in 2013, the series won *la Antena de Oro de la Federación de Asociaciones de Radio y Televisión* (the Golden Antenna Award from the Federation of Associations of Radio and Television) for best series of 2013 as well as the award for best television series for the 2012-2013 season at the MADRIDIMAGEN Festival and at the Hamburg World Media Festival (RTVE, 2013b; RTVE, 2015a). Additionally, Michelle Jenner, who played Isabel, received the *Fotogramas de Plata* award and the *Ondas* award for best actress (RTVE, 2013c; RTVE, 2015a). Also in 2013, *Isabel* was awarded three Latin ACE Awards: best series/cultural program; best actress for Michelle Jenner; and best supporting actor for Pablo Derqui, who played King Enrique IV (RTVE, 2015a). To cap off the list of awards received in 2013, *Isabel* won four *IRIS* awards from *la Academia de Televisión Española* (the [Spanish] Academy of Television): best fiction; best director; best art direction and production design; and best actor for Rodolfo Sancho, who played Fernando (RTVE, 2015a). In 2014, *la Academia de Televisión* granted the series further recognition, awarding Rodolfo Sancho with the *IRIS* award for best actor (RTVE, 2015a). Then, in 2015, Rodolfo Sancho and Michelle Jenner each received the *Fotogramas de Plata* award for best TV actor/actress, respectively (RTVE, 2015b). That same year, *Isabel* also claimed four more Latin ACE Awards: best series/cultural program; best actress for Michelle Jenner; best supporting actress for Irene Escolar, who played Juana *La Loca* (Joanna “the Mad”); and best director for Jordi Frades (RTVE, 2015a).

In addition to these run of the mill awards, *Isabel* also received recognitions that were more particular in their scope. For instance, the costumes from the series starred in an exhibit at the *Museo Del Traje* (Costume Museum) in Madrid, marking the first time that an exhibit in a museum of national caliber was dedicated to a series (RTVE, 2013a). Another unique recognition that *Isabel* received was *el Premio Prestigio Turístico Nacional* (the Prestige National Tourism Award); it was granted to the series by the Granada City Council as an expression of gratitude for the promotion it brought to the city of La Alhambra by filming scenes for the second season there (RTVE, 2014d). Just as it received recognition for its touristic impact and the artistry of its costume design, *Isabel* was also recognized for its use of television to diffuse culture. *El Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte* (The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports), by unanimous decision, granted the series the 2014 National Award for Television (RTVE, 2014c). According to the ministry's judge, *Isabel* received the award for “el tratamiento conjunto del rigor histórico, la divulgación para todos los públicos y su contribución a la difusión de valores” (RTVE, 2014c, para. 1).⁹

As if this plethora of awards, both the common and the less common, were insufficient proofs of *Isabel*'s positive critical reception, it continued to round up awards even up to two years after the broadcast of its final episode. The Episcopal Conference of Spain gave *Isabel* the ¡Bravo! 2016 award (RTVE, 2017), and *La Asociación de Productores Audiovisuales* (the Association of Audiovisual Producers) gave it the *FAPAE* award for being the Spanish series with most international repercussion –which goes beyond the response it gained during its

⁹ “the rigorous historical treatment in both the disclosure to the entire public and its contribution to the diffusion of values.” Translation is author's own.

broadcast (RTVE, 2016). Beyond the scope of awards, this aspect of the series -its vast international reception- was one that would mark it as one of great international reach and importance.

The International Audience Vindicates the Spanish Audience and the Critics

The Spanish viewing public and the critics had attested to *Isabel*'s value, and it was further reinforced by the broad and eager reception it has enjoyed in the international community. Before it had finished broadcasting its third season in Spain, *Isabel* was already at the top of the list of TVE's fictions most demanded in foreign countries (RTVE, 2014c). The rights to broadcast it were sold to an abundant array of countries. In Europe, the show was broadcasted in the United Kingdom, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, France, Russia, countries of the former Soviet Union, and several Baltic countries (RTVE, 2014c; Mondo TV, 2016). The rights were also sold to more than 15 Arabic countries as well as to nearly all of the countries in the American continent (RTVE, 2014c). Together, these countries form a sizable list, indicating that *Isabel* was in actuality a highly demanded series all over the world.

In the four years that have passed since its broadcast finished in Spain, *Isabel* has continued to accrue a large international reach, with new networks and platforms still purchasing its broadcasting rights. In May 2017, Cubaplay, the network owned and operated by Olympusat, Inc., announced that it would premiere *Isabel*'s first season later that same month (Olympusat, Inc., 2017a). A few months later, the network, which delivers top Cuban and Spanish language entertainment, announced that it would premiere the second season of *Isabel* in September 2017 (Olympusat, Inc., 2017b). Jesús Piñango, the Director of TV Content Strategy at Olympusat, praised the series and attested to its historical importance and resonance with audiences:

To this day, Queen Isabella the Catholic is still considered one of the most accomplished monarchs the world has ever seen. Her actions helped shaped the world we know today. I'm certain that *Isabel* will continue its international success. The director, Jordi Frades, once again did an incredible job portraying such a complex story; his attention to detail captured the historical importance of these events and introduced the public to a Queen Isabella that they had never seen before. (Olympus Entertainment, 2017c, para. 4)

Confident that the third season of *Isabel* would enjoy the same success as the previous two, Cubaplay announced in January 2018 that it would begin broadcasting the third and final season that same month (Olympusat, Inc., 2018). Also in 2018, all three seasons of *Isabel* became available for streaming on Amazon Prime Video, Univision NOW, and DirecTV. *Isabel's* value in conveying historical events and its success with audiences had been recognized, and networks and streaming platforms around the world have continued to capitalize on it.

***Isabel* Reigns**

Before its first season had even premiered, both the public and the production staff of *Isabel* knew that the series was a wager of sorts. There were few representations of the lives of the Catholic Monarchs to speak of, and their story had not been depicted on television before (Ponce, 2012b). The staff of *Isabel* sought to fill that void by delivering a product that was both substantially historically accurate and appealing to the masses (“Televisión Española finaliza,” 2011). RTVE had taken the risk and invested in the series before knowing whether or not the public would respond favorably to the historical genre. When *Isabel* faced off with these challenges, it received the hearty approval of critics, who bestowed it with a great many awards, and it attracted a large viewing public in Spain and in a host of foreign countries. It created a

product that related historical events and characters without compromising either its integrity or its ability to resonate with a diverse, international 21st century audience.

This feat makes *Isabel* a vastly important text within communication studies. The fact that it was widely viewed indicates that there is a large audience sector interested in historical television series. Given that historical knowledge is relying increasingly on audiovisual products (Salvador, 2016), it is important to study historical television shows which convey history to mass audiences. In *Isabel*'s case, the story of the Catholic Monarchs was conveyed to mass audiences both within Spain and in a host of countries across the globe, making it a product of international impact and significance.

What is more, the series presents its audience with characters that are not subject to the typical hallmarks in television fiction shows. To begin with, Isabel is a female protagonist that is markedly present in the sociopolitical realm and not all confined to the domestic one -a tendency which prevails in representations of women (Hidalgo, 2017). In addition, the series also breaks with a limitation often observed in male thematic roles. Fernando is portrayed largely through his role as monarch; however, his role as a spouse plays an equally important role in the definition of his character, breaking with the tendency of defining male characters primordially through their work life (García, Fedele, & Gómez, 2012). *Isabel* explores these and many other facets of gender, but the research that has been conducted on them has been scarce and largely insufficient (Castillo, 2015; Hidalgo, 2017).

This reflects a broader tendency in which European countries study the representations of women by focusing *not* on their domestic shows, but on the analysis of U.S. television fiction

broadcast abroad (Lacalle & Castro, 2017).¹⁰ If U.S. scholarship on gender issues within mass media focuses primarily on U.S. television fictions and the European scholarship does the same, the implication is that European television shows have received insufficient attention. This indicates a gap in our understanding of gender within European television fiction shows. Given that the representation of women in narrative discourses in television series contains a strong ideology capable of transmitting social values (Hidalgo, 2017), the representation of the genders and of negotiations both individual and between the genders merits continued study. Thus, it is especially necessary to conduct further research on the gender issues within *Isabel*.

¹⁰ Examples particular to Spain include the following: Chicharro, 2013; García & Fedele, 2011; Fernández, 2009; Trapero, 2010.

CHAPTER 2

THE CULTURAL STORYTELLER

The important role that television plays as a medium available to diverse mass publics is one that has been widely noted. Gerbner and his colleagues hold that television is “the chief creator of synthetic cultural patterns (entertainment and information) for the most heterogeneous mass publics in history, including large groups that have never before shared in any common public message systems” (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978, p. 178). Since it creates cultural patterns, television functions as a message system or cultural storyteller. This function is especially significant given the importance of stories: “We live in terms of the stories we tell -stories about what things exist, stories about how things work, and stories about what to do- and television tells them all through news, drama, and advertising to almost everybody” (Gerbner et al., 1978, p. 178). Given its role as the main creator of cultural patterns for the largest and most diverse mass publics, television undoubtedly influences its viewers with the stories it transmits.

According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), television’s influence stems from its role as a cultivator -it cultivates a certain consciousness in its viewers through the stories it tells. They note, however, that the substance of that consciousness cultivated by TV isn’t so much specific attitudes and opinions as it is “more basic assumptions about the ‘facts’ of life and standards of judgment on which conclusions are based” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 175; Potter, 2014). In other words, television media assumes a socializing role since it tells culturally relevant stories, myths, and lessons which in turn cultivate those “more basic assumptions” in its viewers. For example, with regard to gender differentiation, the media assign a different value to men and women (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), and this could help shape the viewing public’s basic

assumptions about the characteristics and abilities of the sexes as well as transcribe roles and behaviors (Hidalgo, 2017). The basic assumptions cultivated by television, however, are not perfectly universal since every country's unique television system mirrors the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has been developed (Gerbner 1958, 1969; Potter, 2014). Despite this variance, television's power to cultivate consciousness and therefore serve a socializing role is amply recognized by scholars around the world (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008; Fernández, Revilla, Domínguez, Gimeno, & Almagro, 2009; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010; García et al., 2012; Hidalgo, 2017).

Fiction's Golden Age

While television exerts its socializing influence across genres, the fiction genre appears to be ideally positioned to maximize that impact both because of what it offers and because of its recent popularity. Hidalgo (2017) emphasizes that this is because of the social and everyday life elements that are brought to the screen by television fiction shows -which shall hereafter be called fiction(s) or fiction shows/series. Perhaps, though, the emphasis on the influence of fiction can also be attributed to the immense popularity the genre is enjoying. According to Ruiz, “La gran mayoría de los críticos de cine y televisión coinciden en el hecho de que las series de ficción en este momento viven una época dorada (refiriéndose a las norteamericanas, sobre todo, y a ese universo de éxito que es la HBO)” (2016, p. 319).¹¹ Surpassing the borders of the U.S. market, signs of this golden age have been seen across the globe; Ruiz notes that globally successful BBC and HBO fiction series have served as the inspiration for the creation of similar

¹¹ “Most film and television critics agree that fiction series are currently living a golden age, referring to recent U.S. productions and very especially to HBO products.” Translation is author's own.

series in countries like Spain (2016). This renewed interest in the genre has manifested itself in fiction's exceptional presence in program grids since the beginning of the 21st century (Salvador, 2016). The surge of fiction programming peaked in both 2013 and 2015 when it was the most frequent genre on TV programming in Spain (Lacalle, 2013; Lacalle, Castro, & Sánchez, 2015). Moreover, fiction is not only enjoying vast reception among diverse countries; it also enjoys wide reception among diverse audiences, as it is still the main genre favored by highly varied audience types (Garcia et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that the primary objective of fiction is to entertain, not educate, it nonetheless holds a formidable power to bring certain topics into the consciousness of its viewers and help shape their perspectives, which compels increased attention on the power that the genre wields. Fiction symbolizes the real environment, and when this occurs, the audience can understand social reality through the onscreen depictions (Hidalgo, 2017). One of the ways that fiction illustrates social realities to its viewers is through its representation and transmission of social roles and values. This is especially true with regard to the construction of gender roles portrayed on screen. According to Hidalgo, TV fiction has the ability to configure identities, influence behaviors, and condition the socialization process, which makes fiction's influence on the social construction of women exceedingly important (2017). In addition to its ability to do the aforementioned, fiction can also bring into the public spotlight topics about which the public opinion might be indifferent, ambivalent, or contrary (Medina, Aran, Munté, Rodrigo, & Guillen, 2010). Thus, fiction possesses a wide array of strategies that allow it to educate viewers and shape their perspectives according to what it represents and transmits.

In the subsequent sections, the following will be discussed: the socializing and didactic role of the historical fiction subgenre; the types of historical fiction and (historical) fiction's

potential to convey truth; the portrayals of gender in TV fictions, both in the personal and professional realms; and finally, *Isabel*'s innovative posture in its portrayal of gender.

Televised Historical Fiction: History for the Public

Fiction's potential to shape and educate viewers might be further augmented when it is expressed in historical fiction since often it depicts real individuals, events, and contexts and is becoming an increasingly important tool in the transmission of knowledge. In 2007, scholars acknowledged that there had been a burst in history programming across a variety of television networks and channels (Bell & Gray, 2007). More recently, the tendency to broadcast series that represent a recent or distant past, with the goal of helping recuperate historical memory, has been observed (Hidalgo, 2017), suggesting that historical fiction has enjoyed the fruits of fiction's golden age. Moreover, it's been noted that the series representing recent or distant pasts are produced with a certain pedagogical, cultural, and educational responsibility (Hidalgo, 2017). This sense of responsibility is not only admirable, but also perhaps necessary, given the evolving role of audiovisual media in the access of information. Salvador says that, "In view of the fact that current access to historical knowledge is steadily departing from bookish culture and hinges more and more on audiovisual products, historical fictions reveal themselves as a valuable tool in reaching out to mass audiences" (2016, p. 152). Additionally, some scholars (Sorlin, 1998; Montero, 2001) have theorized that historical memory is founded more on the realities that movies and television have portrayed than on the reading of historical books, which further highlights the growing role of the historical genre as an avenue for learning. Furthermore, if historical fiction products are to successfully fulfill the task of sharing historical knowledge with mass audiences, they must not only be entertaining, but also accessible.

To achieve this, historical fiction series must account for substantial disparities in

characteristics like age and educational level among audience members and furnish stories that propose a common learning. Indeed, De Groot poses the concept of public history through television, and he emphasizes that the essence of television series of the historical genre is that they explain the past and make it accessible to a social majority (2008). Bell and Gray (2007) echo this idea; they hold that historical fiction is conditioned in part by the consumption of such products, which is not directed at a reduced target, but rather at a wide public with large educational disparities. They also point out that the professional norms that have developed for television producers, such as elements like a linear narrative, suggest that television itself also conditions the historical fiction genre (Bell & Gray, 2007). They conclude that “the medium itself imposes limitations on how and what kinds of history reach the screen” (Bell & Gray, 2007, p. 117). As a response to such limitations and conditions, historical television series propose a common learning of history on the basis of simplified criteria (Sorlin, 1998). It appears that as a genre historical fiction accomplishes this, seeing as its series have been well and widely received by diverse audiences, from the youngest to the oldest members of the public (Ruiz, 2016).

“Fictionizing History”

Though historical television series across the board aim to use simplified criteria to ensure their widespread accessibility, not all historical fiction series are equally “historical” or equally suited for the task of entertaining and educating diverse masses. This discrepancy amongst shows can be partly explained by the issue of categorization. According to Rosenstone, fiction series that use the past as a somewhat exotic or distant decoration to narrate adventures and romances cannot and should not even be considered “historical” (Rosenstone, 1995). Though there isn’t a closed and agreed upon taxonomy that allows us to assess the historical degree of an

audiovisual fiction product (Rueda & Coronado, 2009), it can generally be said that there are two fundamental tendencies in series of the historical genre: period series and historical series (Salvador, 2016). Many scholars have proposed taxonomies for historical fiction media in both television and film; however, for the present study the focus will be exclusively on Salvador's (2016) taxonomy since it proposes the most comprehensive set of categories.

Nomenclature Within the Historical Genre

Period series are those that are set in a certain historical period and evoke it with a variable amount of rigor, typically relying more on fictional contributions (Salvador, 2016). Within period series, there are two subcategories: period-as-pretext series and documented period series (Salvador, 2016). The criterion that enables distinctions to be made between the two is the amount of rigor present. As their name suggests, period-as-pretext series are those dramas where history acts as a mere background, independently of any references made to real events and people (Salvador, 2016). Moreover, historical deviations are common in period-as-pretext series since their principal aim is not to pursue historical rigor, but to offer an entertaining product to viewers (Salvador, 2016). While series in this category tend to show relatively low degrees of historical rigor, the same cannot be said of documented period series. These are series in which the central characters are fictitious, but the ambience and historical allusions are real and plausible -evidencing a thorough reliance on historical documentation (Salvador, 2016). As such, documented period series indicate that high degrees of historical rigor can be found in some period series. Nonetheless, as a whole, period series tend to rely less on historical components and more on fictional ones.

In contrast, historical series are those in which the plot hinges tightly on historically documented facts, events, and individuals (Salvador, 2016). Moreover, historical series pursue

historical rigor above entertainment (Salvador, 2016), though, of course, the two need not necessarily be at odds. As with period series, historical series can be more or less historically rigorous depending on the show in question; however, the documented facts generally weigh more heavily in their narration than do the fictional elements. And, as Salvador explains,

En muchos casos, la introducción de elementos de ficción se produce como consecuencia de la inexistencia de fuentes o en un intento del creador de enriquecer el relato incluyendo tramas que ayuden a definir la mentalidad y la realidad social, política o cultural del período recreado. (2016, p. 158)¹²

As such, even when historical series utilize fictitious elements, it is always in the service of the historical narrative that is being told. Since the narrative is primordial across the board, the subcategories under historical series merely indicate differences in narrative focus. First, there are historical fictions; these are series in which the motif of the narration is the recreated historical period or event, placed above the real individuals that experienced it (Salvador, 2016). The second subcategory is when the opposite is the case; historical biopics, like *Isabel*, are series in which the represented events are subordinate to the life of a main character or characters whose lives serve as the nucleus for the narrative (Salvador, 2016). Within historical series, then, there are differences in rigor and in narrative focus; however, they are all sustained and shaped by the historical narrative, above all else.

¹² “In many cases, the introduction of fictitious elements occurs as a consequence of the inexistence of sources or as the creator’s attempt to enrich the story by including plot lines that help define the mentality and the social, political, or cultural reality of the recreated time period.” Translation is author’s own.

Fiction and Truth Intertwined

Since academic history and historical fiction possess distinct aims and characteristics, it is worth questioning if the narratives produced by each are drastically different, even antagonistic. To this inquiry, historian Robert Rosenstone (1995) responds that, despite the fact that the discourses of academic history and historical fiction are sustained on diametrically opposed discourses, the “truth” that the audiovisual realm poses does not have to be antagonistic to the written truth. In fact, Rosenstone notes that since literal truth can’t be truly achieved by either the audiovisual or the written, the difference between the two is *how* each develops and presents its respective final product, or truth: “The difference between fiction and history is this: both tell stories, but the latter is a true story...On the screen, history must be fictional in order to be true” (1995, p. 69-70). Thus, if the key difference between the two is the kind of strategies they employ, it is possible for each to accomplish a similar, if not identical, result –meaning that fiction and written or academic history are not always opposed.

Creators have echoed this scholarly perspective and expanded on it, arguing both that academic history and fiction are not simply not always opposed but actually capable of working together, and that the use of fictitious elements is sometimes necessary to create a wholesome historical narrative. Since content creators are the individuals tasked with fashioning entertainment media for the masses, they can provide valuable insights. For instance, Javier Olivares, the head screenwriter for *Isabel*, explains that history books recount the facts but fail to explain things like personal motivations: what moved the characters on a personal level to take one decision instead of another or what made them arrive on one day as opposed to another (as cited in Salvador, 2016). In fiction, on the other hand, Olivares says, “es misión nuestra [de los guionistas] imaginar lo que movió a nuestros protagonistas a actuar de una manera u otra” (as

cited in Salvador, 2016).¹³ He deems this approach “fictionizing history,” explaining that it permits one to “create” or “imagine” things about the personal relationships, or to pose situations that we don’t know for certain actually occurred, in order to arrive at the point signaled by history (as cited in Salvador, 2016). Here Olivares validates Salvador’s (2016) assertion that in historical series fictional elements are born from the lack of sources about specific topics and/or as attempts to enrich the quality of the historical narrative. Olivares adds that to do this properly there are certain rules that must be adhered to in order to safeguard historical rigor. Supposing the rules are respected, “fictionizing history” produces a historical fiction television product that both encourages the audience to reflect on the motivations of historical figures and directs it toward the narrative and the conclusions widely accepted by historians -an indication that history and fiction, or indeed, truth and fiction, are not always at odds and at times even intertwine.

Constructing Social Reality: Gender in TV Fiction Shows

Fiction symbolizes the real environment and allows for the understanding of true social reality, making it a useful means by which we can understand complex topics such as gender roles. Television fiction shows convey social reality to viewers through representations embedded with social roles and values. These have been studied from various perspectives, among them educational (Lacalle, 2011) and social or comparative ones which examine genders or other groups (Galán, 2006; Belmonte & Guillamón, 2008; González de Garay, 2009; Ramírez & Cobo, 2013). The research that has focused on examining and comparing the representations of genders has yielded particularly insightful findings. It indicates that although there is a

¹³ “it is our mission [as screenwriters] to imagine what moved our protagonists to act in one way or another.”

Translation is author’s own.

growing number of fiction shows that contemplate the feminine gender from a position of social equality, especially with regard to the representation of the working woman (Ortega & Simelió, 2012; Sánchez, Fernández, Gil, & Segado, 2011), the representation of the domestic sphere, or the homogeneity of thematic roles, continues to prevail (Hidalgo, 2017). In fiction shows, the narration is a social product (Pacheco, 2009). For this reason, it is essential to understand the representation of women in the two contexts that most influence the construction of their social identity: the familial context and the professional context (Hidalgo, 2017).

Familial Context

Thus far, the research conducted on the representation of women in the familial context has suggested that women are quite strongly linked to social and familial relationships, especially as they pertain to the role of mother. In their research, Lauzen et al. (2005) noted that the representation of femininity in television appears to be conditioned by interpersonal roles. Similarly, García et al. (2012) found that women are portrayed through their family, home, and social relations with higher frequency than men. In this same vein, Lacalle and Hidalgo (2016) found that in fiction series women continue to be linked to traditional family structures in spite of assuming some more innovative roles. One notable role within the familial structure is foreseeably that of the caring mother; this role carries a great deal of power in fictional representations, as it tends to condition to a large extent another role: that of wife. When a female character assumes the role of wife, it's most often positive, and it is both nourished and defined by the role of maternal protector (Hidalgo, 2017). It is important to note, though, that previous studies have established that the role of wife is not common in national fiction; women tend to be relegated to the role of mother, which is the one that has received the greatest importance in the long tradition of fiction (Sánchez et al., 2011). Thus, the role of wife is often

subsumed by that of mother or is simply not represented at all. When women are portrayed as partners in intimate relationships, their relationships often evidence an uneven, gender-based distribution of penalties and power that favors men and disadvantages women (Lips, 2014). In unison, these findings suggest that in fiction women are occasionally portrayed as partners in intimate relationships and are overwhelmingly portrayed in relation to their identities as mothers.

As mentioned earlier, though, there have been some representations of women in fiction series that deviate from that mold, with those in historical series being the most positive. One of the more innovative roles for women appears in series focused on neighborhood communities. In these series, women are disconnected from their traditional role of caring mother, however, at the cost of a frustrated life, no expectations of professional success, the responsibility of children (if she has them), or the weight of the debate over whether or not her time to have them has passed (Hidalgo, 2017). This tendency to represent women in innovative roles as unfulfilled and, ultimately, still largely constrained is notably absent from historical fiction series. In fact, when series focus on representing women of previous eras, the woman's role changes dramatically, beginning with her presence and leadership within the story:

Son mujeres fuertes, con coraje, que se enfrentan a la época y a sus propias convenciones. Rompen con los lazos familiares más directos en aras de la libertad o el bienestar colectivo. Son las heroínas de un estado, un pueblo o una comunidad. (Hidalgo, 2017, p. 303)¹⁴

¹⁴ “They are strong women with courage who face the time period they are living in as well as their own conventions. They break direct family ties for the sake of liberty or collective well-being. They are the heroines of a state, a town, or a community.” Translation is author's own.

These representations, so fundamentally different from those in series about modern neighborhood communities, embody in the most emblematic way possible a paradox unique to women in historical fiction shows.

The narrations in historical fiction series represent historical moments in which women were generally more subject to male power, control, and decisions, yet they do so by enhancing - not diminishing- the leadership and importance of the female role in the transgression and change of values and conducts (Hidalgo, 2017). The results of this approach are the portrayals of women who, despite increased challenges on the societal level, are able to make meaningful choices and find fulfillment. For example, the representations demonstrate how women can be willing to break familial ties if doing so serves a specific good. Moreover, the portrayal of women in historical fiction series is innovative in that it highlights women who act as individuals who can shape their own lives and even the existing status quo. Taking stock of this fresh approach in the representation of women serves an important purpose: it indicates a way to add meaningful diversity to the thematic roles held by female characters. Additionally, since it is most often historical series that opt for these meaningfully diverse female roles, this indicates that historical fiction as a genre tends to privilege the stories of exceptional women and the men surrounding them.

Professional Context

The representation of a character's relational/familial context, or the lack thereof, holds repercussions for how they are represented in the professional context since for both genders there seems to be a polarity between the familial and professional spheres. To begin with, it has been determined that work life significantly defines the characters in fiction series (García et al. (2012). There have been many studies that have verified that the professional sphere tends to be

dominated by men (De Fleur, 1964; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Elasmár, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999; Emons et al., 2010; García et al., 2012). In their study of gender differences in Dutch, U.S., and other fiction programs, Emons et al. (2010) reported that approximately half of all male characters (52.4%) and only 33.3% of female characters were depicted at work. To put it differently, male characters are more likely to be shown in the public realm, while female characters are more likely to be shown in the private one (Fernández et al., 2009). Lacalle and Gómez (2016) have also noted this contrast, saying that, “While the men portray the details of the socio-political space, the women are usually limited to the emotional universe” (p. 4). Thus, while men are notably absent from relational settings and present in professional ones, the opposite is true for women, meaning there is not much overlap wherein men and women are represented as inhabiting and negotiating within the same realm(s).

These representations, based on differences between the genders, appear to be somewhat reflective of the real world as well as able to evolve to reflect changes in it. Lacalle (2016) notes that the limited presence of women in the public sphere in the sixties and seventies was reflected in the restricted array of roles played by female characters in television fiction -mainly those of mothers and wives. Since then, the panorama has changed both for television and for life outside of it. In 2012, García et al. noted that within their research the results with regard to the gender variable demonstrate that although the representation of male and female occupational roles in fiction remains unequal, there has been some improvement in relation to previous studies. The continual and growing incorporation of women to the workforce has progressively altered the representation of feminine roles in fiction generally and in television fiction particularly, stimulating the presence of feminine characters in the work place (Hidalgo, 2017).

This incorporation of female workers is commonly observed in professional series, with

female professionalism being portrayed positively in terms of performance, albeit limited in various other dimensions. In professional series, or those in which the workplace and the relationships in it hold the greatest importance in the narrative, female characters tend to occupy technical posts or those with minor responsibilities (Hidalgo, 2017). García et al. (2012) came to the same conclusion, noting that prestigious occupations were more closely associated with male (63.5%) than female characters (36.5%). In some series, the female characters do climb the professional ladder; however, they don't tend to reach the positions that the men occupy, and professional successes tend to fall mainly on male characters (Hidalgo, 2017). It has also been noted that even when women are represented as having occupations their importance in the plot and the configuration of their characters is typically determined by their personal life, and their professional development falls in second place (Hidalgo, 2017). Nonetheless, across the board women are typically portrayed as being good professionals who perform their duties optimally (Hidalgo, 2017). These findings together indicate that representations of females in the workforce, while typically positive in terms of performance, are somewhat limited in terms of the scope of the work, the level or prestige of the positions, and the importance their profession grants them in the narrative.

When such limitations are surpassed and female professionals are portrayed as important, influential figures, however, the depictions become quite negative –to the point that representations of female professional success become intimately associated with stigmas that call into question the woman's character and work success itself (Lacalle 2016). For the most part, power-defined women are negative characters: unscrupulous, vengeful, despotic, etc. (Lacalle, 2016). Their professional success is often belittled by associating their positions of power with male characters such as fathers and husbands (Van-de-Berg & Streckfus, 1992),

insinuating, for example, that they achieved their success through personal or familial connections as opposed to their own merit (Hidalgo, 2017). In addition, when female characters are successful professionally, their success is at times presented as compensation for an unsatisfactory personal, family, or love life (Lacalle, 2016). These stigmas frequently attached to power-defined professional women suggest that they are largely negative individuals or that their successes aren't truly their own. As such, the tendency of portraying them contributes to the homogeneity of female roles by perpetuating the understanding that female professional success nearly always has an overbearing *schattenseite*, or shadow side.

It is evident that there are many factors that can limit the variety of roles for female characters in the professional sphere, and just as historical fictions have offered innovative representations of women in familial contexts, they do something similar with the professional context, portraying women as valuable assets. Generally, the representation of working women doesn't tend to be very present in the plots of historical series due to the historical and societal conditions. However, Hidalgo (2017) notes that it is present in a host of series, and in these the women are given important roles in the workplace, not relegated to roles of minimal impact or responsibility. The level of the positions occupied by women is but one of the limitations on representations of women in the professional context. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that historical fiction series can and do place women in important positions, indicating their potential for presenting inventive representations of women in the professional sphere.

Trade-offs: Professional or Personal Success

As the aforementioned findings from both the personal/familial and professional spheres indicate, women's experience in one sphere tends to forcefully shape the way they experience the other. This is why it can at times be difficult to distinguish whether the limitations observed

in representations of women originate mainly from the familial or from the professional context. In some representations, women's dissatisfactions in the personal/ familial sphere are dealt with at the cost of dissatisfactions in both the personal/familial sphere and the professional sphere. As Hidalgo (2017) notes, the characters who disconnected from the maternal role in neighborhood series ended up leading frustrated personal lives with null expectations for professional success. Another, perhaps more prevalent, tendency is that of representing women who are successful professionally but lacking considerably in their personal lives. For example, when female characters are triumphant in the professional sphere, their success is sometimes presented as compensation for an unsatisfying personal or familial life (Lacalle, 2016). To put it differently, successful female characters are oft portrayed as women who have not been able to satisfy their instincts as mothers or wives (Lacalle, 2016). Hidalgo (2017) has also noted this tendency; in her analysis of the representation of working women in police series, she noted that, while the women were professionally successful, they tended to have little success in their affective relationships, usually because of their masculinized character. Infante and Marín (2005) came to the same conclusion, noting that, "Se relaciona el trabajo de la mujer con pobre éxito sexual y con dureza de personalidad y física" (p. 16).¹⁵ All of these findings signal that, at least for women, there is a strong connection between the personal and professional realms in which the successes or failures in one either enhance or hinder the other; the two areas are seldom independent from each other.

These representations are varied, but they all share a common essence. They all call into

¹⁵ "Women working are related with poor sexual success and with a hardness of personality and physical appearance." Translation is author's own.

question whether or not fictional female characters and, by extension, actual women can enjoy fulfillment in both contexts. Moreover, they seem to answer the question they pose: they imply that when working women experience tensions between their personal and professional spheres, ultimately, these tensions tend to be “resolved” with brusque trade-offs in which success in one sphere indicates overwhelming dysfunction or lack of fulfillment in the other.

Gender in *Isabel*

Within the realm of television fiction shows, *Isabel* positions itself as an innovative production because its portrayal of gender is not subject to the limitations and tradeoffs commonly observed in said genre. While *Isabel*'s screenwriters duly receive credit, the core reason for this feat is the historical figure who inspired their work: Queen Isabel herself. Given the historical rigor that qualifies *Isabel* as a historical biopic (Salvador, 2016), *Isabel*'s portrayal of gender was hugely conditioned by what historians have affirmed about the Catholic Monarchs and particularly about Isabel.

Perhaps the single incident which best encapsulates Isabel's character is that of her coronation. In the show -just as in reality (Liss, 1992/1998; Suárez, 2004)- Isabel proclaims herself queen and is crowned on her own, without waiting for Fernando, who was away at the time. Historical documentation indicates that her contemporaries saw this as an impulsive and decisive act unfit for a woman, and her chroniclers tried to soften this both for her subjects and for Fernando and his Aragonese advisors by arguing that her proclamation simply could not have been postponed (Ortega, 2004). Historian Ágatha Ortega notes that this argument was in fact a mere pretext:

Sin despreciar este razonamiento, no cabe duda que Isabel tenía muy claro de que ella era la reina de Castilla y no su marido, por lo que no dudó, pesase a quien pesase, en mostrarse como tal ante sus súbditos. (2004, p. 583)¹⁶

This is the character that *Isabel* portrays for its audience: a woman who did not see her sex as an impediment to her ability and whose strong character inevitably shaped both her reign and her marriage. This portrayal is the crux from which *Isabel*'s novel and intriguing representation of gender emanates.

Both Isabel and Fernando's representations in the show are based on two primary facets - monarch and spouse- and the show's representation of these signals the unique gender dynamics at play. To begin with, Isabel's role as monarch is central to the plot and enables her representation as a woman who inhabits the sociopolitical realm, which is atypical considering that the tendency is for female characters to be portrayed mainly in the realm of personal relationships while the male characters are portrayed in the public realm (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016). Moreover, the spousal dimension of Isabel's character is extremely salient in the series. Since the role of wife is not frequently explored in national fiction and is often subsumed by that of mother (Sánchez et al., 2011), this distinguishes *Isabel* from the pack. Her role as a mother is certainly explored, but her role as a spouse is arguably more developed and demonstrates how she negotiates her expectations in both the private and public spheres. Together, these elements

¹⁶ "Without discrediting this [her] reasoning, there is no doubt that Isabel had it clear that she was the queen of Castile and not her husband, and for this reason she did not doubt, bother who it may, in showing herself as such before her subjects." Translation is author's own.

yield a representation of a female character that suggests a couple of important things. First, it moves beyond the seemingly exclusive focus on the role of mother and encourages consideration of how women inhabit the role of spouse. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the portrayal of Isabel suggests that women can be active in both the familial and professional realms without having to make those brusque trade-offs that grant success in one sphere at the cost of overwhelming dysfunction or lack of fulfillment in the other.

A similar deviation can be observed with Fernando, signaling that the unique gender dynamics are not limited to female characters. The monarch dimension of his character foreseeably receives substantive attention, which supports the tendencies identified in the existing research (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016; García et al., 2012). However, Fernando's character is, at the same time, hugely defined by his role as a spouse and, to a lesser degree, his role as a father. This is unusual since the relational/familial sphere tends to be dominated by female characters (Lauzen et al., 2005; Lacalle and Hidalgo, 2016; García et al., 2012), while men occupy the professional one (De Fleur, 1964; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Elasmir, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999; Emons et al., 2010; García et al., 2012). This deviation indicates an important consideration about how characters are defined. While there is a tendency for work life to largely define male fiction characters, *Isabel* somewhat debunks this by stretching the boundaries. It represents a strong male character who is defined both by his interpersonal roles *and* his professional one, suggesting that characters don't need to be defined by strictly one sphere.

Since *Isabel* portrays Isabel and Fernando robustly within *mutual* professional and familial spheres, there is a great amount of fertile terrain from which to glean an understanding of how power and respect are shared and negotiated within male/female relationships, particularly marriage. Within this framework, *Isabel* explores the facets of gender mentioned

above and many others, but the research that has been conducted on them has been scarce and largely insufficient (Castillo, 2015; Hidalgo, 2017). Both in an effort to help address this deficiency and to give due attention to *Isabel*'s innovative posture with regard to its treatment of gender roles, the following research questions are posited for the present study:

RQ1: What do the conflictive and general gender content incidents in *Isabel* reveal about the gender discourse in the trajectory of the show?

RQ2: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Isabel's character, including both her professional (princess; queen) and familial (spouse) facets?

RQ3: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Fernando's character, including both his professional (prince; king) and familial (spouse) facets?

RQ4: What do these findings indicate about the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The existing studies that have examined the content of *Isabel* within a communication or mass media framework have employed purely qualitative methodologies. The study conducted by Castillo (2015) utilized critical discourse analysis, whereas the one conducted by Hidalgo (2017) utilized a socio-semiotic qualitative approach. Since these studies sought to describe the gender discourse in *Isabel* and compare it to that of other shows or political agendas, purely qualitative methodologies were adequate. These studies provide baseline indications of the way gender is represented; however, it could be helpful to utilize a more robust qualitative approach as well as a quantitative approach to help broaden our understanding of the gender representations in the show and in television fiction generally.

In fact, many of the existing studies on gender representations on television tend to be strictly quantitative, utilizing content analysis as their methodology (Fernández et al., 2009; Emons et al., 2010; García et al., 2012). Although it can be either quantitative or qualitative, or both (Priest, 1996), these studies used content analysis in a strictly quantitative manner to analyze gender depictions in television shows—a sensible choice given that they were focusing on multiple shows with the goal of identifying widespread tendencies. For such investigations, quantitative content analysis is an important tool since it enables researchers to study what is actually in the media (Priest, 1996).

Despite this utility, however, quantitative content analysis possesses inherent limitations, as do all research methodologies. For instance, while it can adequately capture and reflect what is being shown in the media, it doesn't do well capturing how things are represented. For this reason, in cases where particular aspects of the content being studied are relevant yet difficult to

capture in quantitative analyses, inductive, qualitative content analysis is preferable (Priest, 1996). Just as with quantitative methodologies, though, qualitative approaches have limitations, one of the most central being their inability to directly answer questions about cause and effect (Priest, 1996).

While one might assume that the opposing strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies may have traced an insurmountable divide between the two, it seems this is not always the case. Priest (1996) says that “the mutual influence of social scientific and humanities approaches is increasingly apparent in media studies” (p. 113) –something which seems to be confirmed by the recent publication of communication/mass media studies using mixed methodologies (Lacalle, 2016; Lacalle & Gómez, 2016; Lacalle & Castro, 2017). An understanding of this mutual influence can manifest itself in further studies that use mixed methodologies. For example, a conflict theorist might use discourse analysis to investigate how power relationships within society are reflected in the way the mass media portray specific issues (Priest, 1996). With content analysis, something similar can be accomplished if it is employed both quantitatively and qualitatively: if the content is both quantified and analyzed inductively to flesh out how a certain discourse is reflected in the former.

To achieve this kind of holistic analysis, content analysis with both quantitative and qualitative dimensions will be used in the present study to gather data concerning the gender discourse within the television series *Isabel* (TVE1, 2012-2014). The purpose of this study is to determine the number and nature of the conversations and conflicts between Isabel and Fernando regarding issues of gender, particularly as they relate to power and expectations within marriage and within work. *Isabel* was produced by Diagonal TV and funded by the Spanish public broadcaster *Radio y Televisión Española* (RTVE or Radio and Television Spain). The series

consists of three 13-episode seasons, which aired from 2012 to 2014 on RTVE's flagship channel, La1. The sample will consist of all 39 episodes of *Isabel*, spanning across all three seasons. Each episode is approximately an hour and ten minutes in length. They will be accessed through Amazon Prime Video; the show's dialogue is spoken in Castellano, the Spanish language as it is spoken in Spain, and the subtitles appear in the same language.

Content Analysis Application

Content analysis will be used to gather and analyze the data about gender discourse as it is manifested through the dialogue between Queen Isabel I of Castile and her husband, King Fernando II of Aragon and V of Castile. For the present study, two dimensions on which individuals might be categorized are identified: the biological and the sociocultural (Lips, 2014). The term sex refers to biological femaleness and maleness, whereas gender refers to culturally mediated expectations and roles linked with masculinity and femininity (Unger, 1979). It is important to note, though, that the biological and the sociocultural can be distinguished but not separated. As Lips (2014) points out, "Social expectations for femininity, for example, are shaped in some ways by the biological fact that women can become pregnant" (p. 20). The interplay of biology and social expectations holds true for men, too: "Men's biologically-based propensity to have larger, stronger bodies is enhanced by social norms that encourage men to work at becoming strong and reward them for doing so" (Lips, 2014, p. 20). Consequently, the present study will focus on gender, with the understanding that the biological (sex) and sociocultural (gender) dimensions cannot always be neatly separated since they often influence one another.

Historically speaking, the expression of gender has most often maintained a gender hierarchy in which men hold more power than women, making women subject to men (Lips,

2014). The gender dynamic visible in *Isabel*, however, does not subscribe to this model; it instead portrays gender equity, which describes a situation that entails equal opportunities and equal constraints for both genders (Bailyn, 1993; Rapoport et al., 2002). For Isabel and Fernando, this is manifested in a dynamic in which power is held and negotiated by both and in which both demand equal respect. This equitable gender dynamic is present in both their spousal relationship and their professional relationship as co-ruling heads of state. Their spousal relationship does not reflect the gender dynamic in which intimate relationships are a space governed by uneven, gender-based distribution of penalties and power (Lips, 2014). Similarly, their professional relationship avoids the gender dynamic in which formal leadership is so entwined with masculinity that female leaders face higher standards than men and tend to be viewed as either too soft or too tough -rarely just right (Lips, 2014). Moreover, Isabel is the Queen of Castile and Fernando is the King of Aragon, and each had extensive powers in the kingdom of the other (Suárez, 2004). Neither of them has the role of consort -that is, a living companion of the monarch with no governmental powers- and as such both of them have equal opportunities because both of their roles are governmental leadership roles.

Since an equitable gender dynamic is present in Isabel and Fernando's spousal and professional relationships, the content analysis will account for the gender content scenes that fall into two main and sometimes overlapping topical realms: (1) **spouse**, which encompasses their courtship, their marriage, and their perspectives about gender dynamics in and surrounding marriage, and (2) **monarch**, which encompasses their relationship as co-ruling leaders/professionals as well as their perspectives about gender dynamics in and surrounding ruling. There is often overlap between these categories since a monarch's marital and familial problems and responsibilities are considered state matters insofar as they can affect the

institution and/or the monarch's ability to rule effectively. As such, if the dialogue and context of a gender content incident indicate that it pertains to both the spouse and monarch categories, it will be counted once per category.

The study presented here utilizes content analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively to analyze the representations of gender content incidents in *Isabel*. For the present study, gender content refers to any depiction or portrayal of talk/behavior that involves gender roles, gendered expectations, gender stereotypes, and/or the affirmation, questioning, or rejection of gender norms. Incidents of gender content will be placed into two categories. The first is **general**. Incidents in this category will be those in which Isabel and/or Fernando talk about gender roles and dynamics. The second category is **conflictive**, which is a subset of the general incidents. Incidents in this category will include exchanges between Isabel and Fernando about their disagreements regarding gender roles and dynamics. In these exchanges, disagreement must be present and must be the main element of the exchange. In simpler terms, incidents in the general category will be all gender-related dialogue in the show that involves either Isabel and/or Fernando, and incidents in the conflictive category will be gender-related arguments between Isabel and Fernando. Although conflictive incidents are a subset of the general incidents, incidents will be placed in only one of those two categories (i.e., a conflictive incident will not be counted as a general incident). Placing gender content incidents into these two categories will allow for the distinction between instances in which gender is talked about and instances in which gender is fought over/acted on between Isabel and Fernando, with conflicts waged and terrain disputed, lost, won, or conceded.

It is important to note that the series is a chronological account of Isabel's life; the first episode picks up in her childhood, and the last one ends with her death and with Ferdinand

having to give up the crown to one of his kingdoms. In keeping with the biographical nature of the series, the analysis will be conducted by dividing the show into temporal phases that demarcate important seasons in Isabel and Fernando's lives. The phases will be the following: (1) *Initium*, episodes 1-9; (2) *Prima bellum*, episodes 10-15; and (3) *Post bellum*, episodes 16-39.¹⁷ *Initium* represents Isabel and Fernando's respective youths and their time as unmarried young adults, ending with their wedding ceremony. *Prima bellum* represents Isabel and Fernando's first few years of marriage and then their introduction to joint rule, both of which challenged them to find a better understanding and establish a more equitable arrangement for sharing power. Lastly, *Post bellum* represents Isabel and Fernando's lives after finding after establishing the improved arrangement for sharing power.

The gender content incidents in the show will be recorded by episode number and time (hour, minute, second), by the temporal phase to which each episode belongs, and by the realm(s) (spouse/monarch) which each represents. The dialogue representing each incident will also be recorded. The units of analysis are the characters of Isabel and Fernando. To reflect this focus, the gender content incidents will be grouped by character -those involving Isabel and those involving Fernando. It should be noted that incidents of general and conflictive interaction sometimes involve both characters; in those cases, they will be counted once per character.

¹⁷ Note: The first episode of each season begins by depicting what occurs chronologically in the last episode of each season. Therefore, any gender content incidents that may occur in those first few minutes of each first episode (1, 14, or 27) will be placed into the temporal phase that accounts for the season-end episode (13, 26, or 39) to which they are alluding.

The gender content incidents -both general and conflictive- will be identified and counted. The following will be calculated:

- (a) total of general incidents per character per temporal phase;
- (b) total of conflictive incidents per temporal phase;
- (c) total of conflictive and general incidents per character for the entire show; and
- (d) total of conflictive and general incidents per episode throughout the entire show.

Each of the above measures, with the exception of (d), will be presented by indicating the corresponding subtotals from the spousal and monarch categories, which indicate the realm - when the distinction can be made- the incident pertained to. If an incident seems to overlap and pertain to both the spouse and monarch categories, it will be counted once per category. The totals per temporal phase will indicate how the gender discourse progressed throughout the show –demonstrating if there was any notable pattern in the rate of conflictive and general gender content incidents.

Once the totals and subtotals are calculated, salient examples will be selected and analyzed for the qualitative portion of the analysis. To accomplish this, the dialogue and context of the selected general and conflictive interactions will be explained and deconstructed in an inductive fashion so as to capture the details of the gender discourse that go unobserved in the quantitative analysis. This qualitative analysis will focus on what the incidents suggest about gender dynamics between men and women within marriages characterized by equity and about how gender shapes Isabel and Fernando’s characters. In this way, the nuances in gender content that are relevant yet difficult to capture in the quantitative portion will be covered.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to determine the number and nature of the conflictive and general incidents between Isabel and Fernando regarding issues of gender,

particularly as they relate to expectations within marriage and within work. As such, this study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What do the conflictive and general gender content incidents in *Isabel* reveal about the gender discourse in the trajectory of the show?

RQ2: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Isabel's character, including both her professional (princess; queen) and familial (spouse) facets?

RQ3: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Fernando's character, including both his professional (prince; king) and familial (spouse) facets?

RQ4: What do these findings indicate about the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando?

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Quantitative Analysis

Isabel was analyzed in its entirety, meaning that a total of 39 episodes were analyzed. The conflictive and general gender content incidents Isabel and Fernando participated in were grouped according to following dimensions: topical category (spouse, monarch, or both) and temporal phase (*Initium*, *Prima bellum*, and *Post bellum*). To reiterate, the general incidents are the conversations in which Isabel or Fernando talk with someone and indicate something about their views on gender roles and dynamics. Alternately, conflictive incidents are the conflicts between Isabel and Fernando regarding gender roles and dynamics.

In the subsequent sections, the following will be discussed: general incidents; conflictive incidents; conflictive and general incidents throughout the entire show; and finally, conflictive and general incidents per episode throughout the entire show.

General Incidents

In the *Initium* phase, the sums of general incidents for Isabel are considerably higher than those for Fernando, as can be seen in Table 1. It is important to note that this numerical disparity can be partially explained by the fact that Fernando does not appear until the 6th episode whereas Isabel is present from the beginning. With that said, there is still similarity between the two: for both characters, there were more general incidents for the spouse category (Isabel = 20; Fernando = 7) than for the monarch category (Isabel = 10; Fernando = 3). This seems to suggest that for both characters the spousal dimension was more salient in the period of time leading up to and including their wedding. Nonetheless, while for both the balance weighs more heavily on

the spousal side, it is worth noting that Isabel still counted with more general incidents in the spousal category than Fernando.

Table 1
General Incidents Per Character Per Temporal Phase

Character	<i>Initium</i>		<i>Prima bellum</i>		<i>Post bellum</i>	
	Spouse	Monarch	Spouse	Monarch	Spouse	Monarch
Isabel	20	10	7	13	5	3
Fernando	7	3	5	15	3	6

Note. If an incident pertained to both the spousal and monarch categories, it was counted once per category.

In the *Prima bellum* phase, the sums balance out considerably when the number of general incidents per character per category are compared, and character-specific tendencies begin to emerge. As can be seen in Table 1, Isabel participated in 7 general incidents pertinent to the spouse category whereas Fernando participated in 5. In the monarch category, Fernando participated in 15 general incidents whereas Isabel participated in 13. It is important to note that Isabel accumulated more incidents than Fernando in the spouse category, and Fernando accumulated more incidents than Isabel in the monarch category. This tendency is one that repeats itself in the subsequent phase.

In the *Post bellum* phase, the general incidents see an overall decrease when compared to those of the *Prima bellum* phase as can be seen in Table 1. When the specific numbers are compared by topical category, we can see that Isabel participated in 5 general incidents pertinent to the spouse category whereas Fernando participated in 3. In the monarch category, Fernando participated in 6 general incidents whereas Isabel participated in 3. Once again, Isabel has more incidents than Fernando in the spouse category, and Fernando has more incidents than Isabel in

the monarch category. This trend occurs in both the *Prima bellum* and *Post bellum* phases and therefore merits particular attention.

What this trend seems to indicate is that throughout the length of the show, except for perhaps the initial phase, there were certain gender preoccupations that weighed more heavily for Isabel and Fernando, respectively. Given that Isabel had more general incidents in the spouse category, it seems that throughout most of the show she was the one who had more preoccupations about gender roles and dynamics within the spousal realm. As the qualitative analysis will demonstrate below, Isabel frequently insisted on equitable standards and often had to explain or account for discrepancies in Fernando's conduct as a spouse, and this contributed to the salience of the spousal realm. The opposite is true for Fernando. Given that he had more general incidents in the monarch category, it seems that throughout most of the show he was the one who had more preoccupations about gender roles and dynamics within the monarchical realm. As the qualitative analysis will demonstrate below, Fernando often had to explain or account for discrepancies in Isabel's performance as a monarch, and this contributed to the salience of the monarchical realm. Thus, the pattern in the general incidents exhibited in Table 1 indicates that the gender discourse in the show takes a more defined shape after Isabel and Fernando marry, which is to say after the *Initium* phase: Isabel discussed gender issues in the spousal realm more often, and Fernando discussed gender issues in the monarchical realm more often.

Conflictive Incidents

While the general incidents account for Isabel and Fernando's gender-related conversations either with each other or with other individuals, the conflictive incidents focus on the antagonistic conversations, or arguments, shared by only the two of them. In the *Initium*

phase, they did not experience any conflictive incidents, which is unsurprising considering that they only coincide during two episodes of that phase. In these, only their short courtship and their wedding festivities are portrayed, leaving little time or space for conflicts to begin to emerge between them.

Table 2
Conflictive Incidents Per Temporal Phase

Mutual	<i>Initium</i>		<i>Prima bellum</i>		<i>Post bellum</i>	
	Spouse	Monarch	Spouse	Monarch	Spouse	Monarch
Isabel & Fernando	0	0	4	7	0	2

Note. Since the conflictive incidents necessarily involve both characters, the totals of conflictive incidents are one and the same for both Isabel and Fernando. Incidents pertaining to both the spousal and monarch categories were counted once per category.

This changes immediately once the *Prima bellum* phase begins and Isabel and Fernando enter their first years of marriage and later joint rule. As can be seen in Table 2, they experienced 4 conflictive incidents pertaining to the spouse category and 7 conflictive incidents pertaining to the monarch category. These high numbers of conflictive incidents are not continued subsequently, however.

In the *Post bellum* phase, Isabel and Fernando experience considerably lower levels of conflict. Referring again to Table 2, they did not experience any conflictive incidents pertaining to the spouse category, and they experienced only 2 incidents pertaining to the monarch category. As the qualitative analysis will demonstrate below, this marked decrease in conflictive incidents from *Prima bellum* to *Post bellum* can largely be explained by two related occurrences exhibited in the dialogue: Isabel and Fernando's renegotiation and strengthening of expectations and their corresponding changes in behavior. Thus, the diminished prevalence of conflictive

incidents irrespective of category suggests that the gender discourse, at least in terms of active disagreements, diminishes throughout the show. Considering the show’s biographical nature, this is to say that the salience of conflicts related to gender decreased as Isabel and Fernando progressed through their marriage and reign.

Conflictive and General Incidents Throughout the Entire Show

To gain a broader understanding of the role of the gender discourse in the show, it is necessary to examine the overall totals of both the conflictive and general incidents. The data pertinent to the conflictive incidents will be examined first. As can be seen in Table 3, there were a total of 9 conflictive incidents that pertained to gender in the monarchical realm and 4 that pertained to gender in the spousal realm. As Hidalgo (2017) points out, the two contexts that most influence the construction of women’s social identity are the familial context and the professional context. Considering the aforementioned data, it can be said that gender shapes Isabel’s character in such a way that she and Fernando experienced more conflicts about public performance as monarchs than about private performance as spouses. Thus, the prevalence of monarchical conflictive incidents illustrates that the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando was tested more often by their status and expectations as joint heads of state, than by expectations for their private, married life.

Table 3
Conflictive and General Incidents Throughout the Entire Show

Character	Conflictive Incidents Total		General Incidents Total	
	Spouse	Monarch	Spouse	Monarch
Isabel	4	9	32	26
Fernando	4	9	15	24

Note. If an incident pertained to both the spousal and monarch categories, it was counted once per category.

When the focus is shifted to the general incidents, it is evident that there are considerable differences when the data is compared by character. Since the general incidents encompass conversations Isabel and Fernando had with each other as well as those they had with others, this category encompasses all gender-related conversations. Referring again to Table 3, Isabel participated in 32 general incidents pertaining to the spouse category and 26 pertaining to the monarch category, affirming the earlier conclusion that, for her, gender issues in the spousal realm were more prominent. Similarly, Table 3 demonstrates that Fernando participated in 24 general incidents pertaining to the monarch category and 15 pertaining to the spouse category, affirming the earlier conclusion that, for him, gender issues in the monarchical realm were more prominent.

When the data is compared by topical category, however, and not by character, another layer of complexity is added. An assessment of the totals of general incidents in the monarch category reveals that Isabel and Fernando participated in nearly the same number of conversations. As can be seen in Table 3, Isabel participated in 26 general incidents pertaining to the monarch category, and Fernando participated in 24. The meager numerical difference between these sums contrasts the larger difference evidenced when each character's data for the spouse category is compared (Isabel = 32; Fernando = 15). The fact that Isabel and Fernando participated in a similar number of general incidents regarding the gender dynamics of their monarchy suggests that the professional facet of their lives was highly important to each of them. This is significant since it breaks with the thematic limitation in which male characters are more likely to be shown in the public realm, while female characters are more likely to be shown in the private one (Fernández et al., 2009). Isabel is markedly present in the socio-political realm, and the data indicates that it held comparable importance for her and for Fernando, giving them

considerable mutual terrain to inhabit and negotiate in.

Conflictive and General Incidents Per Episode

In the above sections, it was noted that the number of conflictive and general incidents both saw overall decreases from the *Prima bellum* to *Post bellum* phases. However, to more adequately assess the distribution of conflictive and general gender content incidents, it is necessary to examine their occurrence on an episode by episode basis. In Figure 1, the overall number of conflictive and general incidents per episode throughout the duration of the show can be seen.

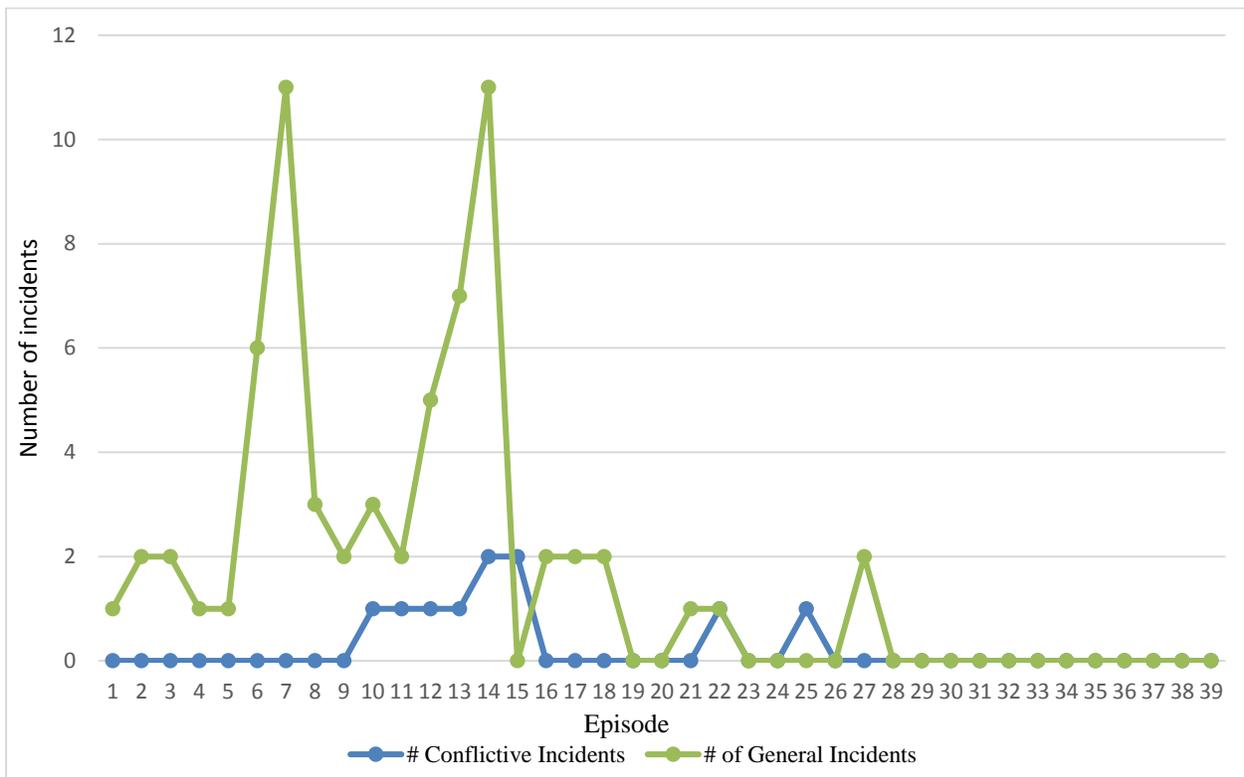


Figure 1. Conflictive and General Incidents Per Episode

As can be seen above, during the range of episodes comprising the *Initium* phase (1-9), the most notable feature is the peak reached in episode 7 with 11 general incidents. This can largely be explained by the fact that it was during this episode that Isabel and Fernando's

marriage plans were settled, making wedded life and all of its implications for gender dynamics an impending reality instead of a distant one.

When the *Prima bellum* phase begins with episode 10, the general incidents experience a resurgence, however, and the conflictive incidents begin to surge. Notably, both the conflictive and the general incidents peaked between episodes 14 and 15: there were 11 general incidents and 2 conflictive ones in episode 14, and there were 2 conflictive incidents in episode 15. This can largely be explained by the fact that Isabel and Fernando's largest conflicts about the expectations and realities of their marriage and joint rule occur during these episodes.

Once the *Post bellum* phase begins in episode 16, both the number of conflictive and general incidents decrease and eventually stop occurring as can be seen in Figure 1. From episode 16 and onward, the maximum number of conflictive incidents in a single episode is 1, and the maximum number of general incidents in a single episode is 2. Moreover, from episodes 28 to 39, there is not one conflictive or general gender content incident. Considering their prevalence in the earlier episodes, or indeed most of the show, it is telling that in the *Post bellum* phase all gender-related incidents first decrease and then stop occurring entirely. This demonstrates that as Isabel and Fernando's lives progress throughout the trajectory of the show the salience of gender becomes virtually inexistent.

Qualitative Analysis

In the previous section, all gender-related dialogue coming from Isabel and Fernando was quantified and categorized as either conflictive or general incidents. This section will focus on the qualitative analysis of incidents that best represent the evolution of Isabel and Fernando's gender perspectives and of the gender dynamic between them. The episode number of each incident will be noted in the text, and the minute in which it begins will be noted in parentheses

when the dialogue is presented. If multiple excerpts of dialogue from the same incident are included, the minute will only be indicated once, after the first excerpt. Since dialogue will be the focal point of this analysis, the excerpts in this section will be provided as English translations in the text while the original quotes will be included in the footnotes. The translations are the author's own.

In the subsequent sections, the following will be discussed: the general historical context of gender norms in *Isabel*; gender in the professional realm; and gender in the familial realm. Since the quantitative results demonstrated that the monarch category was more prominent than the spouse category, more incidents will be discussed for the professional realm than for the familial one.

Introduction: Gender in *Isabel*

Before presenting the analysis of the selected conflictive and general incidents, it is important to first contextualize the gender discourse of the show. The plot of *Isabel* spans the late 15th and early 16th centuries, or, in other words, the late middle ages and the early modern age. The show is sustained on a strong historical basis, and from the beginning, the dialogue clearly demonstrates the prevailing notions of gender of the time period. For example, in the first episode, a courtier says, “A woman the queen of Castile? I pray God doesn’t permit such a barbarity. Women aren’t made to govern kingdoms, but rather to get married and have children”¹⁸ (minute 9). With this comment, the courtier voices the thoughts of many with regard to perceptions of female ability and rule. Many kingdoms did not permit female rule, and even in

¹⁸ “¿Una mujer reina de Castilla? Ruego a Dios que no permita tal barbaridad. Las mujeres no están hechas para gobernar reinos, sino para casarse y tener hijos.” Note: this is a general quotation, not an incident from the analysis.

those that did, such as Castile, there was substantive prejudice against it. This was the historical context in which Isabel and Fernando were born and came to rule.

Gender in the Professional Realm: Monarchs

Isabel: *Initium* Phase

From the start, it is clear that Isabel is a markedly less passive and conformist woman than many of the women surrounding her. In episode 3, there is a general incident in which she finds out that her brother and members of the nobility have decided, without consulting her, that she is to marry a man who attempted to assault her mother in order to create a favorable political alliance. Isabel is anguished, and when her best friend attempts to comfort her by telling her that everything will work itself out, Isabel vehemently disagrees: “No! It’s not going to be fine! You will get married to a man you don’t love, and I will have children with the man who tried to assault my mother.”¹⁹ (minute 30). While Isabel’s best friend assumes a more optimistic and conformist outlook that reflects the submission that was expected of women, Isabel makes it clear that she is unsatisfied with the status quo.

Despite Isabel’s energetic criticisms of certain unjust conditions based on gender, she was ultimately still tentative about others -questioning them, but not extending so far as to challenge or reject them. This is exemplified in a general incident from episode 8 in which she confides to a priest that she fears the consummation of her upcoming marriage. The priest tells her that as a wife she will owe herself to her husband and must never deny him the use of

¹⁹ “¡No! ¡No se va a solucionar! Vos os casareis con alguien a que no amáis, y yo tendré hijos con el hombre que intento violentar a mi madre.”

marriage. To this, Isabel responds with a question: “Even if it disgusts me?”²⁰ (minute 26). The expectation was that women would please their husbands irrespectively of their own wishes, and this was also true for those of the royal family, who were expected to produce heirs who could forge political alliances. Isabel questions this gender norm, which suggests that she had her reservations; however, she stops short of criticizing or rejecting it. This indicates that Isabel, while much more critical than her peers, still harbored doubts about if and how to express her inconformity with certain inequitable conditions imposed on women. It can be said then that in the *Initium* phase gender shapes Isabel’s professional facet by impelling her to measure how and to what degree she will defend her interests as a woman and especially as a future queen.

Fernando: *Initium* Phase

Before meeting Isabel, Fernando’s expectations for his marriage and rule were drastically different from what they later came to be. Fernando is portrayed as expecting to have the upper hand, especially in governance, by virtue of his sex. It is unsurprising then that he became indignant when he began to see signs that Isabel had different ideas. Before their wedding, there is a general incident in episode 7 where Fernando receives her emissaries who communicate to him the conditions she had set for their union. After hearing the many and rather strict conditions, Fernando retorts, “Who does that woman think she is? How dare she demand all that?”²¹ (minute 48). He ends up accepting the conditions because the political value of their union outweighed the conditions; however, he continues adhering to the prevalent notion that a woman’s role was to accept the conditions of others, not impose or voice her own.

²⁰ “¿Aunque me repugne?”

²¹ “¿Quién se ha creído que es esa mujer? ¿Como se atreve a exigir todo eso?”

This becomes increasingly clear during a general incident in episode 8 in which Fernando has a conversation with his then lover about his expectations for Isabel in their marriage. He says he has heard that she has a strong character; when his lover points out that that distinguishes her from the women to which he is accustomed, he responds, “I don’t care how proud or determined she is. Soon she’ll be my wife, and what I say will be done...I’m a man. I’m a king and a son of kings. No woman is going to tell me what I should do”²² (minute 27). Here Fernando appeals to both his monarchical and spousal facets and makes it clear that as a man he expects submission from Isabel. This indicates that initially Fernando abides by the prevailing understanding of gender, which did not value mutual contribution, but rather expected submission and passivity from women on the basis of gender. Therefore, in the *Initium* phase gender shapes Fernando’s professional facet by impelling him to reassert his -and indeed, society’s- expectations about gender roles in his marriage to Isabel.

Isabel and Fernando: *Prima bellum* Phase

Once Isabel and Fernando get married and get to know each other, their respective postures on gender begin to adapt, and this is amplified by the conflictive incidents that surge when they begin to share governmental responsibilities. An example of this can be seen in the conflictive incident in episode 10. Isabel and Fernando argue about the fact that during a meeting about a political marriage proposal for their unborn child Isabel acted unilaterally and did not let Fernando speak. When Isabel attempts to justify her behavior, Fernando appeals to his condition

²² “Me da igual lo orgullosa o decidida que sea, pronto será mi esposa y habrá de hacerse lo que yo diga...Soy hombre. Soy rey e hijo de reyes. Ninguna mujer me va a decir lo que debo hacer.”

as a husband and father and as a king to demonstrate that the issue pertained as much to him as it did to her:

I also have something to do with it. That creature wasn't conceived by the Holy Spirit; I'm its father! I'm its father, and I'm your husband. I'm the King of Sicily and the heir of the Crown of Aragon. The proposal that Peralta brought is from my father, the king! You can't talk as if it was only your business, Isabel.²³ (minute 35)

To this, Isabel responds by focusing on how it's pertinent to her: "And I'm the Princess of Asturias, heiress of the Crown of Castile, and the mother of this child. Tell me which issue could be more mine than this one."²⁴

Since Fernando's appeal to his own relevance in the matter doesn't end the discussion, he switches tactics. He first appeals to the concept of equity, telling Isabel, "The rest of us always compromise. You should take a turn sometime."²⁵ They then argue about a strategy Fernando has for solving an issue in their city. When Isabel tries to get him to change his strategy, Fernando tells her to let him act as he sees fit since he has more experience than she does in dealing with such matters. This entire incident illustrates the beginning of a shift in which Fernando's perspective of gender begins to move away from its initial position; essentially, he no longer appeals to a sense of superiority by virtue of his sex.

²³ "Yo también tengo algo que ver, esa criatura no la ha engendrado el Espíritu Santo; ¡Soy su padre! Soy su padre y soy vuestro esposo; soy rey de Sicilia y heredero de la Corona de Aragón. La propuesta que traía Peralta es de mi padre, ¡el rey! No podéis hablar como si sólo fuera asunto vuestro, Isabel."

²⁴ "Y yo soy la Princesa de Asturias, heredera de la Corona de Castilla, y la madre de este hijo. Decidme que asunto puede ser más mío que este."

²⁵ "Los demás siempre cedemos. Alguna vez os debería tocar a vos."

Similarly, Isabel's perspective of gender also undergoes a transformation in the *Prima bellum* phase. In episode 14, there is a conflictive incident that surges when Fernando confronts Isabel over her decision to be proclaimed queen without waiting for him. Isabel defends her decision by citing her legal right to rule and reminding him of its benefits:

In Castile the queen has the right to govern. And be thankful for that because as of now we have not had a son, but a daughter. And if she didn't have that right, any foreigner who she married would leave her without a crown and without a kingdom.²⁶ (minute 55)

This reasoning doesn't placate Fernando, who then spells out the reason behind his displeasure: "You disrespected me by not waiting for me to proclaim yourself queen!"²⁷ In response, Isabel again defends her actions and explains the necessity that propelled her to act as she did, telling him, "My respect for you is and will be the greatest, but if that day I had doubted, by this time we'd now be the vassals of a girl."²⁸ This incident illustrates that Isabel's perspective of gender had experienced a shift. Whereas in the past she was sometimes hesitant to defend or voice views that brushed against gender norms, here she defends a decision -albeit moderating her assertiveness- which constituted a serious breach of societal gender expectations.

The above conflicts indicate that in the *Prima bellum* phase the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando in the professional realm was less influenced by societal gender norms and

²⁶ "En Castilla la reina tiene derecho a gobernar. Y agradeced que así sea, porque aún no hemos engendrado varón, sino hija. Y de no tener ella ese derecho, cualquier extranjero con el que casara la dejaría sin Corona y sin reino."

²⁷ "¡Me faltasteis al respeto no esperándome para proclamaros!"

²⁸ "Mi respeto por vos es y será el mayor, pero si aquel día llego a dudar, a estas horas seríamos vasallos de una niña."

consequently began to shift closer to equity for both of them. Fernando, on one hand, does not demand passivity from Isabel. Instead, he finds himself demanding his own inclusion, and he tends to do so not by appealing to his condition as a man, but rather to motives such as equity, how relevant a topic is to him, or how much experience he has with the matter at hand.

Moreover, even when it seems like he may be using his gender as a justification, such as when he said he was disrespected, he does not try to get Isabel to submit on the basis of gender. Instead, he fights it out with her as he would with any other adversary -as equals. Isabel, on the other hand, demonstrates that she is willing to respond forcefully to Fernando's critiques and defend her interests in the governmental realm with less hesitation than she had in some previous instances. It can then be said that Isabel and Fernando's professional facets were less shaped by gender, which contributed to a considerable change in the gender dynamic between them, and this trajectory continues in the *Post bellum* phase.

Isabel: *Post bellum* Phase

In the *Post bellum* phase, Isabel demonstrates continued growth in her willingness to defend her interests and authority as queen, making it clear that she no longer feels that as a woman she must endure snubs or limitations because of her gender. This is best exemplified in the conflictive incident in episode 25. Fernando and several of his soldiers are in a tent in the war camp deciding the strategy for the siege of Granada when Isabel enters. Upon hearing the strategy that Fernando had planned, Isabel rejects it wholesale, this time without moderating her assertiveness: "You plan on reducing the city to rubble? Never!"²⁹ (minute 28). Fernando and one of his soldiers explain to her that they need to attack and seize the city so that they can move

²⁹ ¿Pensáis reducir la ciudad a escombros? ¡Jamás!

to the coast, where attacks are expected. Isabel overrules them and issues the corresponding orders to besiege the city by cutting off its resources, not by attacking it: “Then we will remain here. We will besiege the city until the emir doesn’t have food to take to his mouth.”³⁰

The significance of Isabel’s response in this incident cannot be understated. A tent in a war camp was an incredibly masculine context; indeed, historians note that in that era the field of warfare was considered improper for femininity (Ortega, 2004). In spite of this and in spite of the resistance from her husband and his soldiers, Isabel contravenes their recommendation and issues a different order. This incident illustrates that she doesn’t consider that she should have to suppress her views or moderate her decisions because of, or in compensation for, her sex. Essentially, in the *Post bellum* phase gender no longer constrains Isabel’s professional facet. It becomes evident that she has the ability to defend her positions as queen without having to relegate her ideas or accept limitations on the basis of her gender.

Fernando: *Post bellum* Phase

Just as with Isabel, in the *Post bellum* phase Fernando demonstrates continued growth in his acceptance of equity. This development is best exemplified in the general incident in episode 17. Fernando tells his father, still the king of Aragon, that it may be necessary to abolish the law that prohibits female rule there since, at that point, he and Isabel only have a daughter. Fernando’s father balks at the prospect and asks him if he plans to have any more children, a son among them. In response, Fernando questions him, asking, “What do you have against my wife

³⁰ “Entonces permaneceremos aquí. Asediaremos su ciudad hasta que el emir no tenga nada que llevarse a la boca.”

and my daughter?”³¹ (minute 55). Fernando’s father replies that he will not allow a woman to inherit his kingdom and that he has enough to deal with since Isabel “uses” Fernando in Castile. This comment provokes Fernando, who responds with a threat: “In that case, you risk no longer counting on the support of Castile. And no longer counting on my support either.”³²

It is important to note that in this conversation Fernando essentially has to defend Isabel’s performance as a monarch. There was an expectation that women in positions of power would cede much or all of their power to their husbands, and Isabel breaches that expectation throughout the show. One of the consequences of this is that Fernando often has to defend or explain to others this perceived discrepancy, as he does in this conversation with his father. This tendency contributed to the salience of the monarch category for Fernando, as the quantitative analysis indicates above.

The significance of Fernando’s response in this incident cannot be downplayed. He married Isabel knowing she had ruling and proprietary rights in her kingdom, yet he still expected, at least initially, that she would do what he said because he was her husband. In this incident, he defends in the name of his wife and daughter those very rights that at one point had frustrated his expectations. His acceptance of the legitimacy of female rule was such that historians note that when one of his daughters came to inherit the throne years later, he didn’t raise any doubts as to her rightful condition as queen (Suárez, 2004). What is more, this incident indicates that Fernando values the respect for his wife and daughter and the acceptance of female

³¹ “¿Qué tenéis contra mi mujer y mi hija?”

³² “En ese caso, os arriesgáis a no contar más con el apoyo de Castilla. Ni con el mío propio.”

rule to such a degree that he is willing to withdraw his personal and political support from his father if he does not change his mind. Thus, in the *Post bellum* phase gender essentially becomes irrelevant for Fernando's professional facet. It becomes evident that he no longer implies or draws distinctions between the competence of men and the competence of women in the political sphere.

Gender in the Familial Realm: Spouses

Isabel and Fernando: *Prima bellum* Phase

Isabel and Fernando's perspectives shift further toward equity, not only in the professional realm, but also in the familial realm. In the *Prima bellum* phase, which begins just after their wedding, it becomes evident that their perspectives on gender in this realm would be strengthened and refined respectively through their conflicts regarding infidelity. In episode 12, there is a conflictive incident that exposes Isabel and Fernando's initially distinct perspectives on the subject. Isabel tells Fernando that she knows that he had affairs with other women before marrying her, and she questions how he can consider himself a good husband if he does not value fidelity. Fernando responds by using his sex as a justification for his actions: "I'm a man! And I'm a king"³³ (minute 9). Isabel rejects this justification, saying, "And you think that gives you the right to sin against God's law? He said, 'you shall not commit adultery.'"³⁴ Fernando persists in trying to justify infidelity using gender: "He said a lot of things, Isabel! But even the priests do it; look at Carrillo. And the popes have children, and they don't hide them: no, they

³³ "¡Soy un hombre! Y soy rey."

³⁴ "¿Y eso os da derecho para pecar contra la ley de Dios? Él dijo: 'no cometerás adulterio.'"

name them cardinals!”³⁵ Isabel continues to hold Fernando accountable, saying, “All I’m asking for is respect!....Respect is what I do!”³⁶ This indicates that her ultimate appeal is for mutual respect.

This incident indicates in unambiguous terms the different views that Isabel and Fernando had for gender roles and dynamics within the familial realm in the *Prima bellum* phase. Isabel’s perspective is guided by the idea that gender should not be a reason to diminish the standards in personal commitments. She holds Fernando accountable to the same standards she herself maintains –equal constraints for both genders. This reveals that gender doesn’t play a role in shaping her familial facet. Oppositely, Fernando’s perspective is guided by the widespread notion of his time -held by men and women alike- that infidelity and the breaking of vows should be ignored or excused if the guilty party was male. This indicates that in his case gender did shape his familial facet to a degree.

Isabel and Fernando: *Post bellum* Phase

In the *Post bellum* phase, Isabel and Fernando again confront the topic of infidelity, however, from a position that denotes a significant shift toward equity. This can be observed in the general incident in episode 21 in which Isabel confronts Fernando about his infidelity, just as she did in the incident above. The first indication that change has occurred is the nature of the incident; despite its thematic similarity to the one above, this one is general because they broach the topic with the same point of view. In contrast to the incident from the *Prima bellum* phase,

³⁵ “¡Él dijo muchas cosas, Isabel! Pero si hasta los curas lo hacen: mirad Carrillo. Y los papas tienen hijos, y no los ocultan: No, ¡los nombran cardenales!”

³⁶ “¡Yo sólo os pido respeto!...¡Respeto es lo que yo hago!”

Fernando does not try to use his sex as a justification, but instead he begins by noting that he feels ashamed of his behavior: “If you only knew how embarrassed I feel”³⁷ (minute 33). He then asks Isabel to tell him what he can do to redeem himself—a second indication that he no longer views infidelity as permissible because of his gender. In response, Isabel says, “It will suffice if neither I nor anyone around me learns about your escapades. If you don’t respect me as your wife, at least respect me as your queen.”³⁸ This indicates that Isabel had had to in some way explain or account Fernando’s infidelity, and this tendency, along with her insistence on equitable standards in personal commitments, contributes to the salience of the spousal realm for her, as the quantitative analysis found. More importantly, though, Isabel’s response indicates that despite Fernando’s failures and prior attempts to use gender to justify his behavior she continues demanding fidelity and respect.

This incident demonstrates that there was a considerable evolution in Isabel and Fernando’s perspectives on gender in the familial realm. The most notable change can be seen in Fernando. Whereas in the incident from the *Prima bellum* phase he relied on his gender to absolve him of responsibility, in this one he accepts responsibility and even demonstrates remorse for his actions. This change reveals that his gender no longer played a role in determining or justifying acceptable conduct within his marriage. As can be seen in this incident, Isabel maintains the same firm standards for both herself and Fernando that she expressed in the

³⁷ “Si supierais cuán avergonzado me siento.”

³⁸ “Basta con que ni yo ni nadie de mi entorno vuelva a saber de vuestras correrías. Si no me respetáis como vuestra esposa, por lo menos respetadme como vuestra reina.”

incident from the *Prima bellum* phase. This indicates that despite the earlier pressure from Fernando and the pressure from others around her she never accepted that for men infidelity was justified. She could have accepted the double standard or even decided to do away with the standard entirely, but instead she maintained it, in equitable form; that is to say, gender is irrelevant in the shaping of her familial facet. Thus, throughout the show Isabel strengthens her perspective and Fernando refines his; they become less accepting of societal gender norms regarding fidelity, and the result is a shift towards increased equity in their gender dynamic in the familial realm.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, the results for the current study were presented. The quantitative results were comprised of the following: the total of general incidents per character per temporal phase; the total of conflictive incidents per temporal phase; the total of conflictive and general incidents per character for the entire show; and finally, the total of conflictive and general incidents per episode throughout the entire show. All of these measures, save for the last one, reflected the corresponding subtotals from the spousal and monarch categories. On the other hand, the qualitative results were comprised of the analyses of representative incidents from the quantitative analysis that demonstrated the evolution of Isabel and Fernando's gender perspectives and of the gender dynamic between them. These results were presented first for the professional realm (monarchs) and then for the familial realm (spouses).

In the present chapter, the results will be discussed as they relate to the purpose of this study. Before discussing the results, however, it is necessary to briefly review the foundation on which the study has been situated. To this end, the following topics will be discussed in the subsequent sections: the principal conclusions from each of the previous chapters; the findings of this study; the implications of these findings; the limitations; and finally, potential directions for future research.

Review of Thesis Project

Isabel

The production of *Isabel* was guided by the goal of fashioning a serious, accurate retelling of the lives of the Catholic Monarchs that was inviting and accessible to a diverse 21st century audience. During the show's broadcast (2012-2014) and up to the present date, the

viewership and streaming data has indicated that *Isabel* was ultimately successful in reaching this goal. It enjoyed wide success among the Spanish audience, finishing its broadcast as one of the most successful series in Spain. It rounded up 28 million contacts, meaning that 64% of the population had seen at least one minute of the series since its broadcast began in 2012 (RTVE, 2012a). The show also fared well with the critics. It received a great many awards that recognized everything from the work of its actors to its historical rigor and use of television to diffuse culture. Moreover, the show's value has been further reinforced by the broad reception it has enjoyed internationally. *Isabel* has been broadcasted in more than eight European countries (RTVE, 2014c; Mondo TV, 2016), and its rights were sold to a host of Arabic and American countries (RTVE, 2014c). Additionally, as of 2018, all three seasons of the show became available for streaming on Amazon Prime Video, Univision NOW, and DirecTV, furthering the show's reach.

All of this information indicates that *Isabel* was successful in its quest to relate historical events and characters without compromising either historical integrity or the ability to resonate with a diverse 21st century audience. This feat makes *Isabel* an important text within communication studies, especially when its discourse on gender is compared to the trends identified in scholarly research on representations of gender issues in fiction.

Gender in Television Fiction

Television has the ability to exert a socializing role on viewers (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008; Fernández et al., 2009; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010; García et al., 2012; Hidalgo, 2017). In fiction shows, this influence takes the form of representations embedded with social roles and values. The representations that deal with gender

issues and dynamics have been marked by certain thematic norms, which have likely represented a limited set of roles and values.

Hidalgo (2017) states that the familial context and the professional context are the most influential in the construction of women's social identity (2017). However, these contexts are also useful for mapping the construction of male characters. What is more, using these contexts to assess both male and female characters means that their representations can easily be compared.

The general tendency observed in fiction shows is to portray female characters mainly in the realm of personal relationships and, oppositely, to portray the male characters mainly in the public, professional realm (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016). García et al. (2012) found that the familial/personal sphere tends to be dominated by women. Within this realm, a focus on the role of mother has been common; however, the role of wife is not frequently explored and is often subsumed by the maternal role (Sánchez et al., 2011). Moreover, when intimate relationships between men and women are portrayed, there is often an uneven, gender-based distribution of penalties and power that favors men and disadvantages women (Lips, 2014). Meanwhile, the professional/public sphere tends to be dominated by men (De Fleur, 1964; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Elasmara, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999; Emons et al., 2010; García et al., 2012).

When women are represented outside of the space of interpersonal relationships, their portrayals become somewhat complicated. In the workplace, women are portrayed with limitations in the level of their positions and in the importance their profession grants them in the narrative (García et al., 2012; Hidalgo, 2017). When these limitations are surpassed, the resulting female characters become associated with negative stigmas (Lacalle 2016). Furthermore, the findings in the literature suggest that, at least for women, there is a powerful connection between

the personal and professional realms; the successes or failures in one realm either enhance or hinder the other one. Moreover, their portrayals in both realms are often marked by limitations and brusque tradeoffs that call into question whether or not female characters can enjoy fulfillment in both the familial and professional contexts.

Within the realm of television fiction, the historical fiction genre tends to be the most innovative, privileging the stories of exceptional women and the men surrounding them. This proves true for *Isabel* because it portrays gender, in both men and women, without the limitations and tradeoffs described above. The result is a representation of a man and a woman who are greatly invested in *mutual* professional and familial spheres. This is important because in fiction men tend to be absent from relational settings and present in professional ones, and the opposite is true for women. If such constraints are present, there is little contextual overlap between men and women. The fact that *Isabel* portrays Isabel and Fernando in the same (mutual) contexts means there is an opportunity to examine a portrayal in which a man and woman inhabit and negotiate within the same spaces.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the number and nature of the conflictive and general incidents between Isabel and Fernando regarding issues of gender. To achieve this, content analysis was utilized in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The sample consisted of all 39 episodes of *Isabel*. The analysis accounted for incidents of gender content in two main and sometimes overlapping topical realms: spouse and monarch. The incidents were placed into two categories: conflictive and general. General incidents describe gender-related dialogue from either Isabel or Fernando, and conflictive incidents describe dialogue between Isabel and Fernando in which there is a disagreement. The analysis was conducted by identifying

these incidents and categorizing them according to the temporal phase of the series in which they occurred. The phases, which demarcate important stages in Isabel and Fernando's lives, were as follows: (1) *Initium*, episodes 1-9; (2) *Prima bellum*, episodes 10-15; and (3) *Post bellum*, episodes 16-39.

The data acquired through this analysis was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis yielded the following measures: the total of general incidents per character per temporal phase; the total of conflictive incidents per temporal phase; the total of conflictive and general incidents per character for the entire show; and finally, the total of conflictive and general incidents per episode throughout the entire show. The incidents identified in these measures were then examined to determine which best represented the evolution in Isabel and Fernando's perspectives about gender. The criterion for evolution was a movement toward gender equity, which describes a situation that entails equal opportunities and equal constraints for both genders (Bailyn, 1993; Rapoport et al., 2002). The incidents selected were then analyzed and deconstructed in the qualitative analysis.

Findings and Contributions

The results of the present study did provide answers for each of the determined research questions. They will be discussed according to the research question to which they correspond.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What do the conflictive and general gender content incidents in *Isabel* reveal about the gender discourse in the trajectory of the show?

The response to this question is threefold. First, the breakdown of general incidents by topical realm demonstrates that throughout most of the show Isabel discussed gender issues pertaining to the spouse category more often, while Fernando discussed gender issues pertaining

to the monarch category more often. These tendencies begin once Isabel and Fernando get married, or after the *Initium* phase, and persist until the gender-related incidents stop occurring altogether during the *Post bellum* phase. Therefore, the gender discourse throughout the show was such that Isabel was more preoccupied with gender issues in the spousal realm while Fernando was more preoccupied with gender issues in the monarchical realm.

The second response to this question is that the occurrence of conflictive incidents indicates that gender-related conflicts are not prevalent throughout the entire show. These conflictive incidents surge and rise considerably in the *Prima bellum* phase and then decrease hugely in the *Post bellum* phase. This illustrates that the conflicts regarding gender were mainly concentrated in the early years of Isabel and Fernando's marriage and decreased almost to the point of becoming inexistent thereafter, which leads to the third response to this research question.

Both the conflictive and the general incidents decrease dramatically once the *Post bellum* phase begins. Moreover, they cease entirely after episode 27 of 39. This indicates that as the show progresses the salience of the gender discourse diminishes markedly.

Research Question 2

RQ2: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Isabel's character, including both her professional (princess; queen) and familial (spouse) facets?

The analysis of the representative gender content incidents reveals that gender -which should be understood as societal expectations and perceptions in the context of the present study- exerts an influence on Isabel and that it diminishes as time progresses. In the *Initium* phase, gender's influence on Isabel was measured, but noticeable. During this phase, she voices her inconformity with some, but not all, of the gender norms with which she took issue. Thus, gender

initially serves as the catalyst that prods Isabel to determine the degree to which she will defend her views and interests, especially once she begins sharing governmental responsibilities with her husband. In the *Prima bellum* phase, gender continues to shape Isabel, but to a notably lesser degree. She defends decisions that create friction with societal expectations, albeit still taking care to moderate her assertiveness. In the *Post bellum phase*, however, gender exerts little, if any, influence over Isabel. She performs her role as a monarch and makes decisions in traditionally masculine spaces without making any discernible attempts to assuage the displeasure this may have caused the people around her. Thus, gender goes from playing a limited but noticeable role in shaping Isabel as a stateswoman to becoming an insignificant factor.

With regard to her role as a wife, the influence of gender is more static throughout the course of the show, which is to say minimal, at most. In the *Prima bellum* phase, Isabel makes it clear that she doesn't think gender should mitigate the standards in personal commitments. Her attitude remains the same in the *Post bellum* phase. Despite the external pressure to be more permissive with men, Isabel continues maintaining that fidelity in personal commitments is equally important for both men and women -the evidence: she continues demanding fidelity from Fernando despite his earlier attempts to use gender to justify his behavior. In this way, gender is ultimately irrelevant in shaping Isabel's facet as a spouse throughout the show.

Research Question 3

RQ3: What do the findings indicate about the way gender shapes Fernando's character, including both his professional (prince; king) and familial (spouse) facets?

The analysis of the representative gender content incidents reveals that gender exerts an influence on Fernando, which diminishes as time progresses. In contrast to Isabel's case, the amount of initial influence, and by extension the subsequent decrease, is significantly greater for

Fernando. In the *Initium* phase, gender's influence on him is palpable; it propels him to reassert his expectations about gender roles when he receives indications that Isabel might not be an obliging woman, as was expected of her. This influence begins to wane in the *Prima bellum* phase. Fernando does not demand submission from Isabel; instead, he demands to be included in matters that are important to both of them, and he does so by appealing to motives that do not include gender. The influence of gender, therefore, diminishes as Fernando begins to treat Isabel like an equal. This continues in the *Post bellum* phase, by which point gender exerts little, if any, influence on Fernando. He no longer implies or draws distinctions between the ability of men and the ability of women in the political sphere. Throughout the show, then, gender goes from playing a substantial role in shaping Fernando as a statesman to becoming an insignificant factor.

The same can be said as it relates to Fernando's role as a husband. In the *Prima bellum* phase, he is guided by the societal perception that the non-observance of vows in personal commitments should be ignored or condoned if the guilty party is male. Fernando essentially relies on his gender to absolve him of responsibility; however, this ceases to be the case in the *Post bellum* phase. In contrast to his previous approach, he accepts responsibility for failing to uphold his commitments and even demonstrates remorse when he falls short. This transformation indicates that throughout the show the influence of gender on Fernando's spousal facet weakens, if not ceases altogether.

Research Question 4

RQ4: What do these findings indicate about the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando?

The answers to research questions 2 and 3 indicate that the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando evolves, becoming more equitable as they progress in their marriage and reign. Isabel's perspective is that her gender should not disqualify her from participating fully in

her marriage and in the governance of her kingdom; throughout the course of the show, she strengthens this perspective. Fernando, on the other hand, begins with the perspective that his gender is an acceptable basis for certain privileges and indulgences. Throughout the show, he refines this perspective in such a way that he ceases to elevate the male gender over the female one. Thus, as they each become less influenced by societal expectations and perceptions regarding gender, they shift closer to equity as a couple in both the professional (monarchs) and familial (spouses) contexts.

The results also indicate that gender issues within the professional context were more important than those in the familial context. Within the conflictive incidents, there were more pertaining to the monarchical realm, meaning that the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando was tested more often by their status and expectations as joint heads of state, than by their private, married life. This salience of the professional context is essentially mirrored in the results regarding the general incidents. Isabel and Fernando participated in a similar number of these incidents, which indicates that the role of gender -or the lack thereof- in the context of governance was comparably important to each of them. In light of these findings, it can be said that the gender dynamic between Isabel and Fernando in the monarchical realm was a greater source of conflict and dialogue.

Implications

The results discussed above present several implications for the field of television studies and especially for those that focus on gender. Perhaps the most notable one is that women can be intimately involved in both the familial and professional realms without having to sacrifice fulfillment in one or both of these. Isabel's role as monarch is integral to the plot, which is atypical since the tendency is for female characters to be portrayed mainly in the realm of

personal relationships while the male characters are portrayed in the public realm (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016). Moreover, Isabel's role as a spouse is also well developed. This dual focus on her familial and professional facets presents an opportunity to observe how she fares in both.

The answer is that she enjoys fulfillment in both contexts. Unlike many other female characters (Lacalle, 2016), Isabel's triumphs in the professional sphere are not presented as compensation for an unsatisfying personal, family, or love life. She is also not portrayed as a woman who tries to disconnect from a maternal/familial role at the cost of both her personal and professional life, as Hidalgo observed (2017). Isabel does face numerous challenges in both the familial and professional spheres throughout the show; however, as the results of this study indicate, she is able to deal with them successfully -in a way that leads to greater equity. The implication made by *Isabel*, then, is that female characters can experience fulfillment in both the familial and professional realms without having to make those characteristic, brusque trade-offs that favor one sphere at the cost of the other.

Isabel also extends this implication to male characters, albeit without the focus on whether or not they tend to have to make tradeoffs. Fernando's facet as a monarch receives substantive attention, in keeping with the tendency to define male characters by their profession (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016; García et al., 2012). However, his character is also hugely defined by his role as a spouse, which is unusual since the relational/familial sphere tends to be dominated by female characters (Lauzen et al., 2005; Lacalle and Hidalgo, 2016; García et al., 2012). Fernando is portrayed as a strong male character who is defined both by his interpersonal roles *and* his professional one. This ultimately extends the implication made through the portrayal of Isabel: characters don't need to be defined by strictly one sphere.

What is more, the fact that *Isabel* was so widely successful despite its departures from thematic norms seems to suggest something about viewership. The show breaks with many of the limitations traditionally observed in fiction and portrays a male character and a female character whose familial and professional facets are greatly defined. The result is a scenario in which a man and a woman do not operate in mainly separate realms, but rather inhabit the same ones and share many responsibilities; this gives Isabel and Fernando mutual terrain on which they forge more equitable terms in their union. And despite -or perhaps even because of- this departure *Isabel* did remarkably well. It accrued a large audience in Spain and abroad and received much positive recognition from the critics. This implies, at least indirectly, that fiction shows that do not adhere to the thematic norms discussed above can still be hugely successful. That is to say, *Isabel*'s success demonstrates that a diverse, international 21st century audience will consume series that focus on the mutual empowerment of men and women. This is something for audiovisual production companies to consider given the recent popularity of series such as *The Crown* (Netflix, 2016-Present) and *Victoria* (ITV, 2016-Present) that focus on primordially on the empowerment of women.

Limitations

There are some limitations in the present study that should be kept in mind when considering the results. First, the quantitative data was coded by only one person, meaning that there is no measure of inter-rater reliability to indicate how reliable the coding scheme was. This limitation may have influenced the quantitative data; it also may have affected the qualitative analysis since it relied on incidents that had been coded in the quantitative section. Another limitation in this study was the fact that there was no established operational definition of the term “gender content” in the literature regarding gender representations in television programs.

Because of this, this project proposed an operational definition, using the existing literature as a guide, in order to describe television content that pertains to gender issues and dynamics. In future research projects, it would be helpful to count on an operational definition used across more studies for a term that is so vital for studies concerning representations of gender in mass media.

Directions and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several ways in which the line of research in the present study can be extended. First and foremost, additional research could be done on portrayals in which male and female characters inhabit the same realm(s); such portrayals can offer insights as to what gender dynamics look like when men and women share space and responsibilities. Moreover, the study of such portrayals can help reduce the fragmented nature of the extant findings about gender in fiction shows (e.g., male characters tend to dominate the professional sphere; female characters dominate the familial sphere). Second, research could be conducted on shows that focus on the mutual empowerment of men and women; it could provide an interesting point of comparison for research conducted on shows that focus mainly on the empowerment of one gender. This comparison would allow researchers to assess whether the representations of female characters differ depending on whether the focus of the show is mutual empowerment or the empowerment of one gender. Third, further research can be conducted by studying portrayals in which there is an equitable dynamic between the male and female characters. The respective outcomes for the men and women can be compared to determine whether the negative tradeoffs frequently observed in female characters continued to be portrayed in television fiction and, if so, to what degree. Finally, it would be worthwhile to continue conducting research that compares various genres with regard to their portrayals of gender issues and dynamics; this could help corroborate

or qualify the observation that historical fiction as a genre appears to offer the most thematically diverse and innovative portrayals of gender.

REFERENCES

- Al-Sayed, R. & Gunter, B. (2012). How much sex is there in soap operas on British TV? *Communications*, 37(4), 329-344. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2012-0019>
- Aparicio, D. G. (2014, December 1). *Isabel I de Castilla concluye su reinado televisivo tras tres temporadas de éxitos en TVE*. Retrieved from <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2310019/0/ultimo-capitulo/serie-isabel/tve/>
- Bailyn, L. (1993). *Breaking the mold: Women, men, and time in the new corporate world*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Bell, E. & Gray, A. (2007). History on television: Charisma, narrative and knowledge. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(1), 113-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407072973>
- Belmonte, J. & Guillamón, S. (2008). Coeducar la mirada contra los estereotipos de género en TV. *Revista Comunicar*, 16(31), 115-120. <http://doi.org/10.3916/c31-2008-01-014>
- Belmonte, R. (2011, December 13). «Isabel», con licencia para narrar. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.es/20111213/tvyradio/abcp-isabel-licencia-para-narrar-20111213.html>
- Castillo, L. (2015). *Isabel, la reina: una lectura desde la Comunicación para la Paz con perspectiva de Género* (Unpublished master's thesis). Universitat Jaume I, Castellón de la Plana, Spain.
- Chicharro, M. (2013). Representaciones de la mujer en la ficción postfeminista: Ally McBeal, Sex and the City y Desperate Housewives. *Papers. Revista de Sociología*, 98(1), 11-31. <http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/papers/v98n1.469>
- De Fleur, M. L. (1964). Occupational roles as portrayed on television. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28(1), 57-74. <https://doi.org/10.1086/267221>

- De Groot, J. (2008). *Consuming history: Historians and the heritage in the contemporary popular culture*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K. & Brain, M. (1999). The portrayal of women in U.S. prime time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43(19), 20-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159909364472>
- Emons, P., Wester, F., & Scheepers, P. (2010). “He works outside the home; she drinks coffee and does the dishes”: Gender roles in fiction programs on Dutch television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(1), 40-53.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550386>
- Fernández, C., Revilla, J. C., Domínguez, R., Gimeno, L., & Almagro, A. (2009). Gender differences in the representation of violence on Spanish television: Should women be more violent?. *Sex roles*, 61(1-2), 85-100. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9613-9>
- Fernández, M. (2009). Illness, genre and gender in contemporary television fiction: Representations of female cancer in *Sex in the City* and *Desperate Housewives*. *Women’s Studies*, 38(6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870903021752>
- García, N. & Fedele, M. (2011). The teen series and the young target: Gender stereotypes in television fiction targeted to teenagers. *Observatorio (OBS) Journal*, 5(18).
- García, N., Fedele, M., & Gómez, X. (2012). The occupational roles of television fiction characters in Spain: Distinguishing traits in gender representation/Los roles ocupacionales de los personajes de la ficción emitida en España: Rasgos diferenciadores en cuestiones de género. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 25(1), 349-366.
http://www.unav.es/fcom/communication-society/en/resumen.php?art_id=416

- Galán, E. (2006). Personajes, estereotipos y representaciones sociales. Una propuesta de estudio y análisis de la ficción televisiva. *Revista ECO-PÓS-*, 9(1), 58-81.
- Gerbner, G. (1969). Toward "Cultural Indicators": The analysis of mass mediated public message systems. *AV Communication Review*, 17(2), 137-148.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 173-199.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Jackson-Beeck, M., Jeffries-Fox, S., & Signorielli, N. (1978). Cultural indicators: Violence profile no. 9. *Journal of Communication*, 28(3), 178-207.
- González de Garay, B. (2009). Ficción online frente a ficción televisiva en la nueva sociedad digital: Diferencias de representación del lesbianismo entre las series españolas para televisión generalista y las series para Internet. *Actas Icono*, 14(2) 3-17.
- Greenberg, B. S. & Collette, L. (1997). The changing faces on TV: A demographic analysis of network television's new seasons, 1966-1992. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159709364386>
- Hidalgo, T. (2017). De la maternidad al empoderamiento: Una panorámica sobre la representación de la mujer en la ficción española. *Prisma Social*, (2), 291-314.
- Infante, E. & Marín, M. (2005). New groups and discourses on work-family culture shown at television. Proceeding from *The 9th European Congress of Psychology*. Granada, Spain.
- Kunkel, D., Eyal, K., Finnerty, K., Biely, E., & Donnerstein, E. (2005). *Sex on TV 4: A biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- "La nueva reina." *Isabel*. Directed by Jordi Frades. Radio y Televisión Española, 2012.
- Lacalle, C. (2011). La ficción interactiva: Televisión y web 2.0. *Revista Ámbitos*, 20, 87-113.

- Lacalle, C. (2016). The representation of working women in Spanish television fiction/La representación de las mujeres trabajadoras en la ficción televisiva española. *Comunicar (English edition)*, 24(47), 59-67. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C47-2016-06>
- Lacalle, C., & Castro, D. (2017). Representations of female sexuality in Spanish television fiction. *Convergencia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 24(75), 45-64. <https://doi.org/10.29101/crcs.v0i75.4656>
- Lacalle, C., & Gómez, B. (2016). The representation of women in the family in Spanish television fiction. *Communication & Society*, 29(3), 1-14. <http://doi.org/10.15581/003.29.3.1-14>
- Lacalle, C., & Hidalgo, T. (2016). Evolution of family representations in Spanish fiction television. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (71), 470-483. <http://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2016-1105en>
- Lacalle, C., Castro, D., & Sánchez, M. (2015). España: La internacionalización de la ficción. In G. Orozco & M. I. Vassallo de Lopes (Eds.), *Anuario Obitel 2015* (271-311). Porto Alegre, Brazil: Globo –Editora Sulina.
- Lacalle, C., Castro, D., & Sánchez, M. (2014). España: El auge de la ficción ambientada en el pasado. In G. Orozco & M. I. Vassallo de Lopes (Eds.), *Anuario Obitel 2014* (pp. 271-314). Porto Alegre, Brazil: Globo –Editora Sulina.
- Lacalle, C. (2013). España: La ficción resiste la crisis. In G. Orozco & M. I. Vassallo de Lopes (Eds.), *Anuario Obitel 2013* (pp. 279-319). Porto Alegre, Brazil: Globo –Editora Sulina.
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150801991971>

- Lips, H. M. (2014). *Gender: The basics*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Liss, P. (1998) *Isabel la Católica*. (J. S. García-Gutiérrez, Trans.) San Sebastián, Spain: Ariel.
(Original work published in 1992)
- Medina, P., Aran, S., Munté, R., Rodrigo, M. & Guillén, M. (2010). La representación de la maternidad en las series de ficción norteamericanas. Propuesta para un análisis de contenido. *Desperate Housewives y Brothers & Sisters. Proceeding from II Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Investigadores en Comunicación*.
- Mondo TV. (2016). *Press release* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.mondotv.it/download/comunicati-stampa/2016/aprile/cos-20160412-rtve-isabel.pdf>
- Montero, J. (2001). Fotogramas de papel y libros de celuloide: El cine y los historiadores. Algunas consideraciones. *Historia contemporánea*, (22).
- Olivares, J. (2014). Personal communication, October 12, 2015.
- Olivares, J. (2011). *Sobre Isabel*. (Unpublished document).
- Olympusat, Inc. (2018, January 5) *Cubaplay to premiere the third season of the Spanish period drama, Isabel*. Retrieved from <https://www.broadcastingcable.com/post-type-the-wire/cubaplay-premiere-third-season-spanish-period-drama-isabel-170926>
- Olympusat, Inc. (2017a). *Cubaplay premieres the critically-acclaimed period drama series, Isabel* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.olympusat.com/press-releases/cubaplay-premieres-drama-series-isabel/>
- Olympusat, Inc. (2017b). *The second season of the period drama Isabel on Cubaplay* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.olympusat.com/press-releases/cubaplay-isabel-season2/>

- Ortega, M. & Simelió, N. (2012). La representación de las mujeres trabajadoras en las series de máxima audiencia emitidas en España (2010). *Revista Comunicación*, 1(10), 1006-1016.
- Pacheco, M. A. (2009). La reciente historia de España en la ficción televisiva. *Mediaciones sociales*, 4(1), 225-246.
- Ponce, R. (2012a, September 4) «*Al fin, Isabel*». Retrieved from <http://www.abc.es/20120904/tv-series/abci-isabel-vitoria-estreno-201209041632.html>
- Ponce, R. (2012b, December 4) ¿*Por qué nos gusta «Isabel»?*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.es/tv/series/20121204/abci-isabel-claves-exito-201212031554.html>
- Potter, J. W. (2014). A critical analysis of Cultivation Theory. *Journal of Communication*, 64(6), 1015-1036. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12128>
- Priest, S. H. (1996). *Doing media research: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2012a). *'Isabel' bate su récord de audiencia: casi 4 millones de espectadores y un 19% de share* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/television/20121023/isabel-bate-su-record-audiencia-casi-4-millones-espectadores-19-share/571386.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2012b). *'Isabel' consolida su reinado en las audiencias con un nuevo récord: 4.626.000 espectadores* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/television/20121106/isabel-audiencias-nuevo-record-4626000-espectadores/573064.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2012c). *'Isabel' no se baja del trono* [Press release] Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/television/20121204/isabel-no-se-baja-del-trono/581583.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2013a). *El vestuario de 'Isabel' protagoniza una exposición en el Museo del Traje* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20131114/vestuario-isabel-protagoniza-exposicion-museo-del-traje/791960.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2013b). *La Alhambra de Granada abre sus puertas a 'Isabel' en el último capítulo de la temporada* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20131129/alhambra-granada-abre-puertas-isabel-ultimo-capitulo-temporada/806822.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2013c). *La primera temporada de 'Isabel' regresa a la noche de los lunes* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<http://www.rtve.es/televisión/20130717/primera-temporada-isabel-regresa-noche-lunes/716841.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2014a). *'Isabel' culmina su reinado con nuevo récord: 3.835.000 espectadores y un 19,4% de cuota* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20141202/isabel-culmina-su-reinado-nuevo-record-3835000-espectadores-194-cuota/1059621.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2014b). *'Isabel', nuevo récord en su recta final: casi 3,4 millones de espectadores y 16,8% de cuota* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20141125/isabel-nuevo-record-su-recta-final-casi-34-millones-espectadores-168-cuota/1054363.shtml>

Radio y Televisión Española. (2014c). *La serie 'Isabel' de TVE, Premio Nacional de Televisión 2014* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20141008/serie-isabel-tve-premio-nacional-televisión-2014/1025580.shtml>

- Radio y Televisión Española. (2014d). *La serie 'Isabel' de TVE, Premio Prestigio Turístico Nacional de Granada* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20140604/serie-isabel-tve-premio-prestigio-turistico-nacional-granada/948453.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2015a). *'Isabel' recibe cuatro galardones de la Asociación de Cronistas del Espectáculo de Nueva York* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20150210/isabel-recibe-cuatro-galardones-asociacion-cronistas-del-espectaculo-nueva-york/1096640.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2015b). *Michelle Jenner y Rodolfo Sancho ganan el Fotograma de plata por 'Isabel'* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/televisión/20150303/protagonistas-serie-tve-isabel-michelle-jenner-rodolfo-sancho-premios-fotogramas-plata/1107600.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2016). *'Isabel', de RTVE, premio FAPAE a la serie española de mayor repercusión internacional* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20161109/isabel-rtve-premio-fapae-serie-espanola-mayor-repercusion-internacional/1439940.shtml>
- Radio y Televisión Española. (2017). *'Isabel', 'Carlos, Rey Emperador', 'La corona partida' y el Coro RTVE, recogen los Premios ¡Bravo! 2016* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20170125/isabel-carlos-rey-emperador-corona-partida-coro-rtve-recogen-premios-bravo-2016/1479685.shtml>
- Ramírez, M. & Cobo, S. (2013). La ficción gay-friendly en las series de televisión españolas. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 19, 21-44.

- Rapoport, R., Bailyn, L., Fletcher, J. K., & Pruitt, B. H. (2002). *Beyond work–family balance: Advancing gender equity and workplace performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosenstone, R. A. (1995). *Visions of the past: The challenge of film to our idea of history*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rueda, J. C. & Coronado, C. (2009). *La mirada televisiva: Ficción y representación histórica en España*. Madrid, Spain: Fragua.
- Ruiz, M. R. (2016). Adaptaciones (in) necesarias en las series históricas españolas recientes. *index. comunicación*, 6(2), 319-336.
- Salvador, L. (2016). Historia y ficción televisiva: La representación del pasado en 'Isabel.' *index. comunicación*, 6(2), 151-171.
- Sánchez, J. J., Fernández, E., Gil, F., & Segado, F. (2011). Las mujeres en la ficción televisiva española de prime time. Proceeding from *Observatorio Audiovisual de Identidades*. Logroño, Spain: Universidad Internacional de la Rioja.
- Sorlin, Pierre. (1998). Screening the past: Film and the representation of history. In T. Barta (Ed.), *Television and our understanding of history: A distant conversation* (pp. 205-220). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Suárez, L. (2004). *Fernando el Católico*. Barcelona, Spain: Ariel.
- Televisión Española finaliza el rodaje de 'Isabel', su gran apuesta para 2012. (2011, December 9). Retrieved from <http://www.formulatv.com/noticias/22597/television-espanola-finaliza-rodaje-isabel-gran-apuesta-2012/>
- Trapero, P. (2010). Dexter y la dramaturgia televisiva contemporánea: Entre la ficción criminal y la (auto)biografía. In Trapero, P. (ed.), *Dexter. Ética y estética de un asesino en serie*. Palma de Mallorca, Spain: Laertes.

Unger, R. K. (1979). Toward a redefinition of sex and gender. *American Psychologist*, 34(11), 1085-1094. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.11.1085>

Unger, R. K. (1979). Toward a redefinition of sex and gender. *American Psychologist*, 34(11), 1085-1094. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.11.1085>

Van-de-Berg, L. R., & Streckfuss, D. (1992). Prime-time television's portrayal of women and the world of work: A demographic profile. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 36(2), 195- 208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838159209364167>

CURRICULUM VITA

Michelle Sabrina Peters is a proud native of El Paso, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English and American Literature from the University of El Paso, where she continued her studies and later obtained a Master of Arts in Communication. Prior to conducting the research for her master's thesis, she conducted research in both education and literature. She authored the proposal *How to Mediate a Good Dialogue? Strategies Identified in Cogenerative Dialogues*, and she presented it at the 12th International Sun Conference on Teaching and Learning. She also authored the paper "Female Virginity in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*" and presented it at the 6th Annual Women's History Conference. Going forward, Michelle's research interests include historical topics such as European monarchies, the reign of Queen Victoria, the formation of the Spanish state, and the lives and reigns of the Catholic Monarchs. In addition, she plans to continue researching the portrayal of gender issues and dynamics in television fiction shows.

In addition to research experience, Michelle has experience in communications in both the non-profit and municipal government sectors. She has acquired and refined this experience through her volunteer work with the 501(c)(3) non-profit Learning Enterprises and through her work at the City of El Paso. Michelle is passionate about language learning and has experience teaching English as a second language, which she also acquired through her work with Learning Enterprises.

Contact information: mstpeters94@outlook.com

This thesis was typed by Michelle Peters.