

## The Fight for Equality: The Role of Latino Stereotypes in *Jane the Virgin*

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### Abstract

*After premiering on The CW in 2014, Jane the Virgin has gained significant media attention as the network's first show to feature a predominantly Latino cast. This paper investigated to what extent Latino stereotypes were present in the series, and in what functions the program producers used them while weaving in cultural issues and concepts, such as immigration, religion, and class differences. Based on a qualitative content analysis of 10 episodes from a two-year period, stereotypes were present at times, but they were minimal in comparison to the progressive ideas and positive representations illustrated, and were predominantly presented to be questioned and challenged.*

### I. Introduction

Of the characters on primetime television, only 3-4% are Latino; however, Latinos make up about 16% of the population of the United States, the largest minority in the country (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Of the minute percentage of Latino characters that are depicted on television, only 11% are shown having high-status jobs (Mastro, 2008). When Latino characters are present, they have historically been in stereotypical roles, such as the Latin lover, buffoon or comic, or criminal (Mastro, 2007). The depictions shown on television are not accurate and can provide viewers a false impression or understanding of Latinos and Latino culture. Since the United States is home to a variety of peoples and cultures, it is crucial that the media accurately portrays this diversity.

One show, in particular, is aiming to expand the view of Latinos on television. *Jane the Virgin* follows the story of Jane Villanueva, a hyper-organized, plan-oriented, extremely motivated graduate student, who happened to get accidentally artificially inseminated with her boss' baby at a routine checkup. The show was adapted from a Venezuelan *telenovela*, soap opera, *Juana la Virgen*; however, it has proven to appeal to a wide audience. The show, which draws in about one million viewers per week according to CW Television Network ratings, uses over-the-top telenovela-esque storylines and love triangles to create an innovative show. These often outlandish issues and complications are presented to add to the richness of the show. After premiering on The CW in 2014, the show has gained significant media attention as the first CW series to feature a predominantly Latino cast, as well as being the first CW show to be nominated for and win a Golden Globe Award (Ryan, 2015). This paper chronicled the Latino issues in *Jane the Virgin* and analyzed the show's characters to see if they were actually breaking stereotypes and, if so, in what way.

This topic is relevant today because it showcases "a larger cultural process where Latinos and non-Latinos intersect" (Avila- Saavedra, 2010, p. 146). There has been much discussion of Latinos in the media

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recently in regard to the 2016 presidential election. Media often portrays Latinos as one people, a people of non-English speaking, undocumented immigrants. It is a crucial time to portray immigrants, and Latinos in general, as a people who have various skills, economic statuses, and immigrant statuses. By portraying Latinos positively, the minority group is able to have a more positive self-identity, while giving non-Latinos, “a newfound source of information about U.S. Latinos at a time when immigration from Latin America is a prominent and complex social issue” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, pg. 146).

## II. Literature Review

As a background for this study, the author researched two relevant theories, television shows with Latino casts, and traditional Latino stereotypes; the results are described in the following literature review.

### ***Cultivation theory***

Cultivation theory postulates that “long-term exposure to television’s stable set of selective messages ultimately shifts a viewers’ (sic) social perceptions toward the television version of reality, regardless of its accuracy (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p.111). This is significant when looking at how people of different races are portrayed because the way a certain group of people is depicted can affect how others think about that group. With regard to Latinos specifically, viewers might take negative characteristics shown on television and apply them in real-life situations whether or not they are true (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Furthermore, “viewing the limited and often stereotypical characterizations of race and ethnicity offered in the media influences the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of audience members, Whites in particular, as well as the self-concept of ethnic minority group viewers” (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015, p. 18). The power of cultivation theory can also be employed to change attitudes or viewpoints in a positive way. If portrayals begin to shed light in a new and positive way, the audience may begin to question traditional stereotypes, which could lead to the cultivation of new viewpoints. Positive portrayals of minority groups on television shows may change people’s perceptions of them if they are more frequently exposed to positive portrayals (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007, p. 352).

### ***Latinidad and Social Identity Theory***

Latinidad, the concept of Latino cultural identity (Rojas, 2004), encompasses Latinos’ desire for a collective identification (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). When shown on Hispanic television shows or networks, Latinidad often has ties to Latinos’ roots as well as their class within U.S. society (Rojas, 2004). Latinidad is essential when showing Latinos on television because it allows for Latinos to be portrayed accurately, and not as an Americanized version of themselves. There are two interpretations of U.S. Latino identity currently being shown—Latino identity that focuses on otherness and another that promotes cultural integration (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Social identity theory, as applied in this research, encompasses “the processes through which exposure to both the quantity and quality of television messages impact real-world interracial interactions” (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p. 112). The theory helps to explain the role media can play in the development of how individuals see themselves and how they view others, based on such practices as group affiliations. Groups can be based on gender, age, and ethnicity. According to social identity theory, a person’s group provides “characteristics that define a member’s self-concept by furnishing the normative attitudes and behaviors associated with membership . . . crucial to the maintenance of self-concept and self-esteem (Mastro, 2003, p. 99).

In a *Huffington Post* interview, Gina Rodriguez, the actress who portrays the main character on *Jane the Virgin*, stated, “I didn’t often see Latinos portrayed in a positive light, but I saw them in my household. I knew it was possible, and I knew how I was affected by not seeing positive role models with my skin color. So, I thought I would use my art to change that and play positive roles that would let people see themselves differently” (Duca, 2015). Entertainment programming can influence interpersonal interactions, and social identity theory underscores the importance and the need for healthy and positive images of Latinos.

### ***Telenovelas and Latino Stereotypes in Primetime Television***

Considered a form originated in Latino popular culture, a telenovela is “a serialized form of television melodrama, usually centered on the romantic misfortunes of a heterosexual couple, which always comes to a narrative conclusion” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 134). There are two categories of the telenovela: *rosa*, which

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focuses on romance and problems of a heterosexual couple, and *de ruptura*, which generally explores social issues that are perceived as problematic (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). Telenovelas allow Latinos to reconnect to their cultures as well as gain inspiration and self-affirmation from the characters on the shows, many of whom overcome obstacles and achieve successes (Rios, 2003). Latino-themed programming can be viewed on three different types of networks: Spanish language networks, Latino-themed English language and/or bilingual networks, and Latino-themed programming distributed by English language networks (Moran, 2015).

Television viewing is a prominent source of popular entertainment in most of today's society, and therefore the portrayals of dramatic characters can have important effects (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Previous content analyses have formed that when Latinos are shown on television, they are generally pigeonholed into a small set of negative depictions (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Racial stereotypes typically include Latinos as comics/comedians, criminals, lovers/sex symbols, lower class, very religious, or unintelligent (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008; Markert, 2007). As previously mentioned, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority in the United States (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Not all Latinos fall into the usually narrow and derogatory set of depictions, and thus scholars have argued that the continuance of unjustified assumptions about an entire group of people is unfair and incorrect. By continuing to show Latinos in this hegemonic light, producers lead viewers to assume these stereotypes are true, rather than to question their validity (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

In a 2004 study by Rojas in which Latinas were interviewed about how Latinos were portrayed on television, participants voiced concerns about the absence of U.S.-born, college-educated Hispanics. The researcher found that TV characters do not reflect the population of smart, wealthy, competent Latinos in the United States (Rojas, 2004).

### ***Previous shows with predominantly Latino casts***

Many shows paved the way for Latinos to have roles on television. One of the first shows to feature a predominantly Latino cast was *The George Lopez Show*, which premiered in 2002 on ABC. The fictional show featured real-life comedian, George Lopez, and his fictional family. In true Lopez fashion, humor is a huge component of the series. A content analysis of the show revealed that while the show challenged stereotypes, it also perpetuated them (Markert, 2007), even though stereotypes presented were often shown in humorous ways. For example, George lived with his immigrant mother, Benny, and his family and provided raunchy, sarcastic humor. Many mentions of stereotypes and Latino identity within the show used irony, which helped to diffuse the stereotypes.

In one striking scenario, Lopez was shown at work as manager of an aviation factory. He typically wore a collared shirt and tie, but in this scene he was not in his usual attire. When a new, white female co-manager started work at the factory, she mistook him for a lowly worker and talked down to him. While this type of situation is not acceptable, showing it brought to light issues with inferences based on race (Markert, 2007).

*Ugly Betty* also brought Latino issues and stereotypes to the surface. The show's protagonist, Betty, a working-class Latina girl who lacked physical attractiveness and was driven to work diligently for a fashion magazine, was depicted as a fish out of water (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). The fashionistas at the office were open in their disgust of her. A relevant point to consider about *Ugly Betty* was that it was based on a Colombian telenovela, *Yo Soy Betty la Fea* (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). U.S. networks have often adapted European shows; however, they rarely adapt Latin American television series, especially telenovelas (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). This adaptation of *Ugly Betty* allowed for the possibility of intercultural content. Betty was a young woman living in New York with her family. This type of portrayal of Latinos in the United States functioned as "a source of identity cues for U.S.-Latinos and as a source of information for the Anglo majority—the show relies on common cultural and ethnic stereotypes" (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 138). The show was not without stereotypical assumptions. Similar to Lopez in *The George Lopez Show*, Betty's co-worker, Daniel, a White man, first mistook her for a maid (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Betty was depicted as being outside ethnic social norms because "her Latino background makes her an outsider in mainstream Anglo society, and because she is too "Americanized" to function properly in her traditional world" (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 143). Betty was Latina, but she neither spoke nor understood Spanish. She was romantically interested in her co-worker, a white accountant. Betty was thus a different and more complex Latina character because she portrayed a more culturally assimilated character when it came to her U.S. Latino identity (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Both *Ugly Betty* and *The George Lopez Show* introduce Latino portrayals outside of the negative

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stereotypic norm; however, there is neither a real challenge to stereotypic portrayals, nor mention of social issues or challenges facing Latinos.

Based on the literature review, the author came up with two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are stereotypes present in *Jane the Virgin*?

RQ2: What are the identified functions of the stereotypes?

### III. Method

This paper used content analysis, which is “a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 42). Content analysis allowed the author to categorize messages based on a set of established criteria. This research specifically used a qualitative content analysis, relying on “descriptions of situations, behaviors, or texts” and sought “detailed knowledge of those specific cases, focused on how and why things happen” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 54-55). The benefit of a content analysis is its data reduction capacity.

#### **Sample**

This qualitative content analysis was used to identify and explore instances that reveal Latino themes in 10 episodes of *Jane the Virgin*. This included five episodes from season one and another five from season two. These ten episodes equal almost one-fourth of each season between 2014 and 2016. This purposive sampling yielded the ability to choose episodes in a deliberate way for specific reasons (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009).

This study was modeled after what Avila-Saavedra (2010) utilized in “A fish out of water: New articulations of U.S.-Latino identity on *Ugly Betty*.” That study shed light on the social construction and meaning of both the dialogue and text by analyzing all 23 episodes of the first season of the show (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

#### **Procedure**

For this content analysis, the author used a coding sheet for each episode, which also served as a unit of observation. This coding protocol allowed for a consistent vehicle by which to examine each episode individually. This then allowed the episodes to be analyzed comparatively and as a whole. The 10 episodes were chosen specifically because of the richness of the content discussed, as well as mentions of a Latino theme. The author also intentionally chose episodes so that they were well spaced between season one and season two.

A coding sheet was created with an objective to retain both reliability and validity. The author coded the episodes for the following themes: (1) class differences/money, (2) family, (3) religion, (4) cultural references, (5) immigrant status, (6) crime, and (7) overly sexualized women/Latin lover. These themes were chosen because of racial stereotypes that typically include Latinos being portrayed as comics/comedians, criminals, lovers/sex symbols, lower class, immigrants, very religious, or being shown as unintelligent (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008; Markert, 2007).

#### **Analysis**

Content analysis of these 10 episodes allowed the researcher to weigh the extent that this show’s portrayal of Latinos was different from previously established stereotypical images. She sought to qualitatively analyze the dramatic treatment of selected scenes to identify the uses and manipulations of stereotypical situations. This was carried out to understand the need to entertain the audience while perhaps including social messages via Latino stereotypes. Ultimately, the author set out to examine the extent that Latino stereotypes were present and to identify how program producers used those stereotypical scenes to serve a function.

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## IV. Findings

This section begins with a summary of the program, which helps provide sufficient context for readers to understand the following analyses.

### **Summary of Jane the Virgin**

*Jane the Virgin* follows the life of Jane Villanueva, who gets accidentally artificially inseminated with Rafael Solano's baby, Mateo. Her mother, Xiomara, and her grandmother, Alba, support Jane through this incident. She also leans on her best friend, Lina. Jane grew up not knowing her father, but finds out in the first season that her father is telenovela star, Rogelio de la Vega. Jane's on-again-off-again boyfriend turned fiancé, Michael Cordero, is a police officer; his partner's name is Nadine. Rafael's half-sister, Luisa, is responsible for inadvertently artificially inseminating Jane. After realizing what she's done, Luisa turns to Rose, also known as Sin Rostro, a famous crime lord. Rose also happens to be Luisa's lover-turned-stepmother; Rose is married to Luisa and Rafael's father, Emilio. Emilio was previously married to Mia, Luisa's mom, as well as to Elena, Rafael's mother, who disappeared when he was a child. Elena is revealed to be the crime lord, Mutter.

### **Class Differences/Money**

Within the first minute of the *Jane the Virgin* pilot, viewers are introduced to Jane, a working-class college graduate who takes nothing for granted. This is juxtaposed with an introduction to Rafael Solano, a wealthy Latino hotel owner and former playboy. Jane works as a waitress at the hotel Rafael owns, and the difference in class between them is extreme. In addition to waitress roles, other Latinos are depicted in the show as wealthy hotel owners, singers, healthcare workers, professors, scientists, attorneys, telenovela stars, or doctors; this helps break the illusion that Latinos are only capable of obtaining low status jobs.

Since Jane and her mother don't own a car, they are frequently shown riding the bus. Unlike Rafael, who drives a sports car, the Villanueva women spend their hard-earned money on other items. After Jane becomes pregnant with Rafael's baby by his sister, Luisa, Rafael suggests that Jane come up with an amount of money she wants to present to his lawyer. She's taken aback and asks why he thinks she wants money. Rafael explains, "I just assumed because . . .," to which Jane responds, "Because I'm a waitress?" Rafael defends himself, saying, "I know you're not just a waitress." Irate, Jane quips, "Just a waitress." Rafael responds, "That's not what I meant. Look you're in college." Jane snaps, "So if I wasn't in college, I'd be just a waitress."

This situation explores the stereotype of Latinas as working-class waitresses; however, this scenario is unusual because it also depicts Latinos, such as Rafael, as a wealthy hotel owner. Jane describes Rafael as "a rich playboy with an entitled attitude missing a basic sensitivity chip." While Jane is portrayed as having a stereotypically Latino job, she is also finishing college, and then goes on to graduate school, while simultaneously writing a novel and raising a baby. By presenting both Jane and Rafael, among other Latino characters with varying jobs, the program allows viewers to form their own opinions about positions Latinos might hold, consciously or subconsciously using cultivation theory.

After Jane finds out about her wealthy telenovela star father, Rogelio, he buys her a car because he's uncomfortable with her riding the bus during her pregnancy. This frustrates Jane's mother, Xiomara. She raised Jane in a household with three strong women and doesn't want Rogelio's gifts. Jane later helps put her father on a limited budget after his telenovela is cancelled.

Additionally, as Jane progresses in her pregnancy, Rafael insinuates that he's going to take care of all of the baby's costs. Xiomara says, "I don't like the idea that he thinks you'll take hand outs. We work hard, all of us." Xiomara then approaches Rafael about this concern and meets him at his luxurious penthouse. She tells him, "You see the world differently." He snaps, "You have no idea how I see the world." Xiomara then responds, "Maybe not, but I know you see it from up here with this incredible view."

In the second season, Rafael hires an estate planner to talk about baby Mateo's future. Jane finds out that Mateo is set to inherit \$40 million from Rafael and becomes uncomfortable because she wants Mateo to stay grounded. She says, "I'm raising a rich kid and that's just not the way I grew up." She has never had that kind of money and argues with Rafael about the inheritance. They end up compromising and decide that for every dollar he gets, he must give a dollar to the charity of his choice. This incorporates Jane's values and

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working-class background, as well as allowing Mateo to gather his hefty inheritance from his wealthy father and live comfortably. While the class differences here are obvious, they are still both Latinos. One person is not shown as superior due to race, but simply due to circumstance and luck.

### ***Family Ties***

It is common for Latinos to be depicted with strong family relations, and this proves true for the characters on *Jane the Virgin*. “Luisa is family and family is everything.” “Of course I’m here. We’re family and nothing is more important.” These are just two of the quotes regarding family that verbalize just how important family is on the show. Jane is protective of her family and will do anything for them. Similarly, Rafael is close to his father and sister; his mother left when he was a child, but later resurfaces. While Rafael’s family may be close, it is not without drama. Rafael commits Luisa to a mental institution after she says she’s been having an affair with Rose, her stepmother, which is actually true. After this incident, Rose kills Luisa’s father, who is Rose’s husband, by drowning him in cement. Needless to say, the Solano family is not your average family. Once Rafael realizes that Luisa was telling the truth, he immediately removes Luisa from the mental institution.

When Alba, Jane’s grandmother, is first described, Jane is listed as one of her “passions.” Alba has always tried to be a positive influence for Jane. Jane’s mom, Xiomara, while not similar to Jane, is always supportive. When Jane realizes she is pregnant with Mateo, the doctor gives her the option to terminate the pregnancy. Even though Jane doesn’t want to end the pregnancy, Xiomara tells her, “I want you to know that you have a choice, whatever you decide.” Xiomara became pregnant with Jane at 16, and she perhaps sees a cycle on the verge of reoccurring, so she wants Jane to feel in control and supported. Family support is the top priority for the Villanueva women. That is why after Jane delivers baby Mateo she decides to reject her acceptance to graduate school. Xiomara tells her not to let being a mom get in the way of her dreams and offers to help, allowing Jane to feel more secure and ultimately accept her graduate school offer. This resolution veers away from the family-only focus stereotype, but still allows Jane to be a caring and dedicated mother while simultaneously pursuing her academic dreams. Here there is a variation on the family stereotype.

### ***Religion***

Latinos are strongly associated with Roman Catholicism (Markert, 2007). Generally, if religion is shown, it is an important aspect of Latino life. That being said, religion is a divisive topic in the Villanueva household. Within the first minute of the pilot, God is named as one of both Alba’s and Jane’s passions. Xiomara, however, is not interested in the religious realm. Because of this, Alba is intent on sharing her beliefs with Jane, including abstaining from sex until marriage. Alba regularly attends church and is seen taking Jane, and occasionally Xiomara. In a flashback scene, pre-teen Jane asked Alba, “Can you teach me how to pray the right way. Like with the rosary?” Alba teaches her how to hold the rosary and afterward that Jane often used her rosary when she is especially in need of help.

In a flashback in a different episode, Xiomara is shown not taking religion seriously. She tells Alba she doesn’t know if she wants baby Jane to be baptized because she doesn’t know if she believes in God. Alba is strong in her faith, but that does not mean she does not sometimes go against her religion. It is revealed that back when Xiomara tells Alba about her pregnancy, Alba tells Xiomara to have an abortion. This demonstrates that Alba doesn’t follow her faith blindly. Additionally, Xiomara and Jane discover that Alba has been lying to them and was not a virgin at marriage, as she had previously said.

The aspect of religion is present in varying degrees among the three Villanueva women, but it is absent in Rafael. The wavering levels of commitment to religion support that not all Latinos are committed to Catholicism.

### ***Cultural References/ Outsider or Foreigner***

Alba understands English and can speak the language, but chooses to communicate only in Spanish. Xiomara and Jane speak only English to Alba. In addition to closeness to the language itself, the Villanueva women bond by watching telenovelas together. Jane says, “Of course I’m gonna watch. You guys got me hooked on these things.”

There are numerous references to Latino stars that occur within the show, including David Bisbal,

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international singer, Charo, actress and guitarist, and Diego Boneta, a well-known singer who comically plays a computer help technician. The reference to, or appearance of, these stars allows the show to link to Latin roots, while also remaining relatable to a wider audience. Aside from class differences, Jane and Rafael have differences in terms of their closeness to Latino culture. Rafael lives in the plush and elegant Marbella Hotel filled with glossy white and turquoise decor. Jane lives in a cozy, darker-toned, ranch style house with her family. Their homes represent a lot about them as people, as well as their closeness to their culture.

In a flashback to Jane's childhood, she asks Alba to cook a Venezuelan dish for heritage day at her school because Xiomara is a terrible cook. After Xiomara finds out about Jane's request, she asks Alba to help her make a traditional Venezuelan dish for Jane. There is also a flashback to 11-year-old Jane, describing the moment when she fell in love with salsa dancing. Jane has always wanted to be close to her culture, even though she is Americanized.

Alba is depicted most stereotypically as the "outsider." She is a first-generation immigrant, who only speaks Spanish. Her daughter and granddaughter are both American-born and speak English. There's a progression between the generations of the Villanueva women and the "foreignness" of them. Alba is shown getting her green card and this shift in Alba is significant as she was an illegal immigrant for many years.

The depiction of "otherness" through language is culturally significant and relevant to many Latinos. By also presenting Spanish-speaking celebrities who are well known in the non-Spanish speaking community, aspects of culture and cultural ties are integrated without being overbearing. When Gina Rodriguez was asked about her family experience and closeness to her culture in comparison to Jane, she said, "I grew up very similar to Jane. My grandmother spoke Spanish to me. And I responded in English. I was very much the two identities of both cultures that were very much important in my life" (Miller, 2014).

### **Immigrant Status**

One of the basic stereotypes held about Latinos is the "rural 'primitiveness' of immigrants" (Markert, 2007, p. 153). Immigrants are usually thought of as lazy, non-English speaking, and unproductive members of society. In fact, television networks often "contribute to the perpetuation of immigrants' status quo, keeping them from questioning their own situation" (Rojas, 2004, p. 133).

In a flashback, young Alba and Mateo have a conversation about Alba's job. She is a home healthcare worker and young Alba breaks down in tears saying that her boss asked, "What grade I got to in school" and that she "fell over when I said I was a nurse back in Venezuela." The prejudice is evident and Mateo tries to calm her down using the word "*calma*," getting her to think of some of her favorite things that begin with the letters c, a, l, m, and a. Alba later passes this trick on to Jane.

During a hurricane, Alba was hospitalized after falling down the stairs. A doctor uncomfortably explains to Xiomara that the hospital cannot afford to pay her costs since Alba is an illegal immigrant and has no insurance. Once the hurricane lifts, the hospital staff says they will have to notify Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and Alba will be deported back to Venezuela. A note on the screen flashed, "Yes this really happens #immigrationreform" (Martinez, 2015). Rogelio sets out to make things right explaining, "If my fame and money can't keep your mother in this country, then what's it all for." He later says, "I left word with the UN ambassador and Gloria Estefan. One of them will stop the deportation." Once Alba wakes up, the doctor informs Xiomara that the deportation is no longer an issue. "You must have friends in high places," he says. Xiomara finds out that Michael, Jane's fiancé, stopped the deportation. In an episode during the next season, Alba finally gets her green card on Christmas day. She proudly places it in the hands of an angel sitting atop the Christmas tree.

The progression of Alba's immigrant status is symbolic and important. Because the stereotype of illegal immigrants is widely negative, Alba is shown in an especially positive light. Her determination and hard-working attitude also help dispel the stereotype. The references to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and immigration reform educate the audience and prompt them to feel a sense of urgency and anger regarding Alba's situation. This humanizes immigrants who are, or may be, deported, and shows them as hard-working, valuable members of U.S. society.

### **Crime**

When Latinos are seen on screen, they are limited to a narrow set of roles, including that of criminal (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008). A common plotline

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throughout the show is that of two competing crime lords nicknamed Sin Rostro and Mutter. Michael thinks Rafael is Sin Rostro because he has access to all parts of the hotel. "Something bad's happening here and it has to be connected to Rafael," he says. Rose, Rafael's stepmother, accuses Rafael's father, Emilio, of being involved in criminal activities after overhearing him say, "We have to get out of here before the storm hits. I need \$5 million for Alegria." Nadine, Michael's partner, also thinks Sin Rostro is Emilio because he owns the hotel. In a twist on what seems a reality, Sin Rostro is actually Rose. When Emilio becomes suspicious of her, she kills him by drowning him in cement.

In a further shift of events, Rafael's absent mother, Elena, returns after leaving when he was just a child. Rafael discovers that his father paid her \$10 million to leave and never come back. He also discovers that she is the infamous drug dealer, Mutter, and that she and Sin Rostro were rival crime lords. Yes, a lot of crime occurs, but it is not related to race. The worse of the two criminals, Rose, aka Sin Rostro, is a white woman who is married to Rafael's wealthy Latino father. Here, crime plays a role as a nod to the show's telenovela style and roots of dramatization, but another twist plays with a more standard expectation. The crime boss is not the Latino.

### **Latin Lover/ Overly Sexualized Women (or Men)**

The overly sexualized Latin lover stereotype is one that has been prevalent among Latino roles for decades. Latinos are often shown in the Latin lover role, reinforcing this falsity to viewers (Markert, 2007). Throughout the show, a narrator's voice constantly chimes in as he works to make light of the Latin lover stereotype.

In *Jane the Virgin*, three characters have a tendency to fall into this category, Xiomara, Lina, and Rafael. The first time Xiomara is introduced, she is shown painting her nails and wearing a low-cut denim romper. She is always shown wearing something short, low cut, or tight, and uses that to her advantage. While riding the bus with Jane, Xiomara eyes an attractive man and tells him, "Come to my gig tonight, boo," and gives him a flyer. In a different scene, her advice to Jane is that "the best way to get over a man is to get under a new man." Jane and Alba do not agree with Xiomara's ideals, but love her for who she is. Xiomara and Alba are examples of two opposing versions of Latina femininity. "Latin American telenovelas often rely on problematic portrayals of women that fall into two types: sexy, fiery, and brazen, or cloyingly sweet, naïve, and submissive" (Martinez, 2015).

Additionally, Jane's friend and Mateo's godmother, Lina, is also portrayed in this stereotype. Jane worries that she will come inappropriately dressed to Mateo's baptism. "She promised she would wear something appropriate, but that probably means the black dress from Madonna's 'Like a Prayer' video," Jane says.

Rafael has quite the playboy past. When Jane learns she is pregnant with Rafael's baby, she "googles" him and finds articles with photos of him with countless women, dancing, drinking, as well as being arrested for indecent exposure. Rafael explains that he has changed since his partying past after battling cancer, but toward the end of the second season Rafael is shown parading women in and out of his room. He is also found hungover, but does not continue this behavior.

The characters are so multidimensional that the emergence of this stereotype is only one comedic aspect of the show; the stereotype is presented primarily for comedic effect, and as a way to present change within a character, for example, with Rafael.

## **V. Conclusions**

This paper sought to identify to what extent Latino stereotypes were present in *Jane the Virgin*, and what the function of the stereotypes were. Results indicate that while some stereotypes do exist within the show, twists abound. Any negative stereotypes presented are predominantly presented to be questioned and challenged. They are framed in a thought-provoking light and are minimal in comparison to the progressive ideas and positive representations that are shown. "Jane is culturally significant since she is one of the few Latina protagonists we've seen on television," says Gina Rodriguez (Miller, 2014).

This show explores Latino issues and stereotypes in a straightforward manner, but focuses on directing the narrative away from stereotypes by providing relatable characters. *The George Lopez Show* and *Ugly Betty* present Latinos characters, but in these shows the Latinidad, or lack thereof, is a focus of

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the show. Humor is used in *The George Lopez Show* to poke fun at the presented stereotypes, and Betty is depicted as an outsider from her own culture. “Her Latino background makes her an outsider in mainstream Anglo society but also because she is too ‘Americanized’ to function properly in her traditional world” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 143). In *The George Lopez Show*, nothing is done to push past these stereotypes.

*Jane the Virgin* weaves in cultural issues and concepts, such as immigration, religion, and class differences, without taking away or distracting from the other elements of the show. Ivonne Coll, the actress who portrays Alba Villanueva, explains, “We are not a Hispanic show, but it is a show about a Hispanic family” (Ryan, 2015). “Despite its *telenovela* heart, *Jane the Virgin* is an unmistakably modern show. It’s shot in HD, dialogue happens between characters via text bubble a la *House of Cards*, and there are plenty of pop culture references” (Yarchi, 2014).

These findings work well with the social identity theory and cultivation theory. The show questions and challenges stereotypes by presenting characters who are well-educated, of a high socio-economic status, and those who are not, informing Latinos that they are not limited to the narrow set of stereotypical jobs Latinos are typically shown as having on television. Additionally, on a smaller scale, the show works against the negative impact of cultivation theory here to allow the opposite effect to occur. By watching multiple episodes of *Jane the Virgin*, the viewer continues to see positive portrayals and becomes more accustomed to, and informed about, the culture and Latinos as a whole.

The program’s rather extreme storylines are seen to be playing with—rather than reinforcing—existing stereotypes. In a sense, the stories set up the possibilities of predictable expectations, which are not actually realized. The cases that do exist, such as Jane becoming pregnant as a single young woman, turn out to be almost comically not what they seem. Jane, in fact, is a woman with integrity and energy. This study showed that producers of popular media can build representations of Latinos that are not historically negative or stereotypical. *Jane the Virgin* is aiding in paving a new path for Latino characters on television.

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