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"Immaculate Perception? Machismo, Marianismo, and the Politics of Gender in Jane the Virgin"?

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Abstract

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Introduction

Telenovelas (or soap operas in Spanish) are the most watched television format viewed among Latinas in the U.S., specifically those who migrated from Mexico. The reason why they are so popular is because they are the most televised and produced shows in Mexico. Moreover, the telenovelas shown in the U.S. are the same productions shown in Mexico; indeed, like other forms of media entertainment, they transcend national borders. In the telenovelas there are consistently explicit and implicit messages about identity and culture. Typically, the women are portrayed as pure and holy, almost virginal-like and in the mold of the Virgin Mary, the archetype of female identity in the context of Christianity. Men, on the other hand, are represented as strong and extremely masculine (Zinn 1982), therefore the polar opposite of women. Given how the national culture of Mexico is historically predicated upon male-dominance, women are cast in a less than affirmative—and indeed callous—light. Telenovelas use such gender ideology as a marker to create engaging storylines for their viewers given the assumed ability on the part of the spectator to identify with these characters. While scholars have investigated the ways, women resist the ideologies embedded within traditional telenovela discourses, these media forms nonetheless perpetuate a never-ending cycle of aggressive, toxic masculinity that calcify dominating expectations placed upon women in Latino/a households on both sides of the border.¹

While it adopts the telenovela format, *Jane the Virgin* simultaneously attempts to attract Latino/a viewership in the U.S. by showcasing and embracing cultural roots while contesting the sedimented ideologies planting them. Indeed, the show—premiering in 2014 on the CW television network and developed by Jennine Snyder Urman based on the Venezuelan telenovela

¹ In this essay I move between the terms “Latina,” “Latino,” “Latino/a,” and “Hispanic” depending on the context in which they’re best suited.

Juana la virgin—fights the machismo and marianismo assumed to be at the heart of Latino culture through upholding the strong stances of women protagonists struggling for independence. The show follows a line of matrilineal lineage that, at its core, demonstrates respect, love, and solidarity. Although it does embrace elements of the conventional soapy telenovela, *Jane the Virgin* consciously refuses the typical sappy telenovela formula upon which it is nonetheless based (to be sure, *Jane the Virgin* blends humor, satire, and parody to give it its distinct narrative identity). Using these elements as trope/bait to capture and attract the U.S. Latina/o audiences, *Jane the Virgin* is pitched to an intended (Latino/a) viewership invested in refashioned (that is, positive) gender roles that exceed the usual expectations men and women are assumed to want to meet.

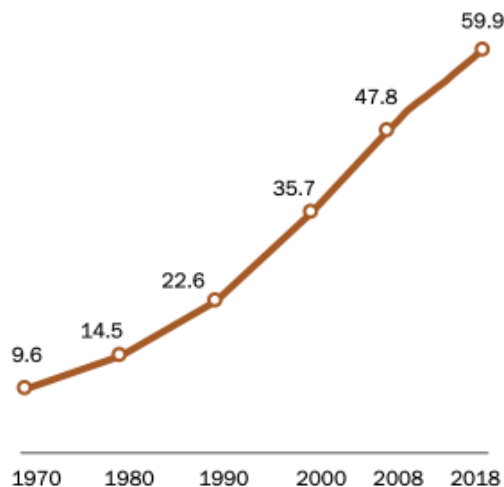
Latinos/as in the United States

To understand the operations of gender in *Jane the Virgin*, one must first grapple with the ways marianismo and machismo underpin U.S. Latino/a and Latin American cultural politics. While the cultural politics in the U.S. and Latin America overlap, it is critical to assess the distinct dynamics of the Latino/a population in the United States. The demographic of the Latino/a population in this country has been such a well discussed topic for quite some time. Yet there remains an egregious and unreliable number of recorded reports of the “Hispanic” population, specifically immigrants. This has much to do with the untrustworthy reporting from the media and specific news networks. Given that we are currently existing in a tumultuous political environment in which the media inaccurately accounts for the Latino/a population regarding the influence of and on their viewership, they often follow or concede to false narratives regarding the perceived influx of immigrants coming into this country, when, in fact,

Latinos/as have been present in the United States before it was even recognized as such. While there has been an increase of the Latino/a population in 2018, overall statistics show a steady decrease of immigrants from Latin America in the past 10 years. In figure 1, we see the huge growth of 2018 which accounted up to 1.2 million. However, compared to the previous years, a 2% increase is such a small figure when ascertaining the population on a larger scale. As a whole the total U.S. population of Latinos/Hispanics increased from 16% to 18% between 2008 and 2018 (Pew & Gallup 2019). With the large presence of Latinos/as in the U.S., the entertainment industry has made a concerted effort—albeit at times not as forceful as possible—to appeal to Latino/a audiences through television programming that attempts to speak to their culture and history. And along with such efforts, cultural workers behind and in front of the camera have aimed to challenge some of the conventional ideologies regarding their ever-changing identities.

U.S. Hispanic population reached nearly 60 million in 2018

In millions



Note: Population estimates for 1990-2018 are as of July 1 for each year. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1970-1980 estimates based on decennial censuses (see 2008 report "U.S. Population Projections: 2005-2050"), U.S. intercensal population estimates for 1990-1999 and 2000-2009, and U.S. Census Bureau Vintage 2018 estimates for 2010-2018.

Figure 1

Latinos/as in the U.S. Film and Media Industries

In order to fully analyze and understand how *marianismo* and *machismo* is intertwined with television and film, we must also compare the statistics discussed above with representations of Latinos/as in television and film in the U.S. In figure 1 (above) the population has reached roughly to 59.9 million, which is 52% of all the Hispanic/Latinos population in the U.S. This is quite compelling given that half of the viewership of media and film in the U.S. is from Hispanics/Latinos/as alone. Yet, there is a disproportionate gap existing between the visibility of Hispanic/Latino characters in films and the U.S. population. Figure 2, for example, shows a distinction between the U.S. population versus the prevalence of Latino characters in Hollywood. It is therefore clear that “the prevalence of Latino leading actors is vastly out of step with U.S. population” (USC Annenberg Inclusive Initiative 2019).

THE U.S. POPULATION OUTPACES HOLLYWOOD

Prevalence of Latino characters across 1,200 films compared to U.S. population

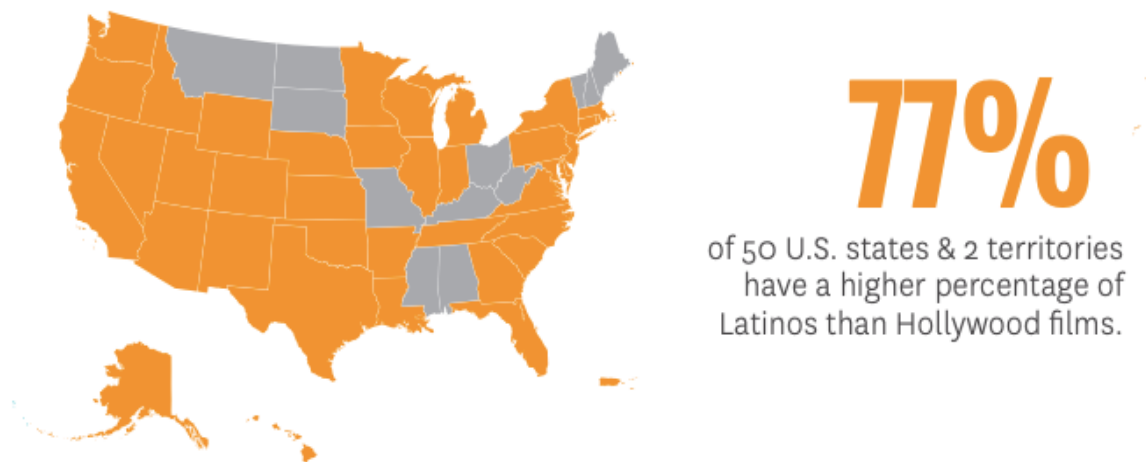


Figure 2

Whether they star in a main role or play a minor character in a series, the Latino/a community at large is being robbed of sharing their own stories, culture, and voices on a wider

scale. Moreover, it is a bit unfair that by and large Hollywood and the entertainment industry in general continually refuse to prominently showcase the largest minority group of the country. Ironically, Latinos/as are major contributors to the industry with regard to spectatorship and purchasing power. According to USC Annenberg, “Hispanics contribute 1.7 trillion dollars to the film industry yearly.” Instead of actively trying to represent Latinos/as and actively providing them with roles in the entertainment industry behind and in front of the camera, Hollywood and television continues to use Latinos/as when economically or ideologically advantageous while vilifying them with little recourse to advocacy or accurate cultural representation whatsoever.

Indeed, representation is important for every culture, particularly historically minoritized cultures. Representation enables communities and individuals feel a part of the same society in which they reside, affirming their contributions in national and cultural contexts that are deemed foreign to their identities despite having been based in that setting for generations. As the Latina media studies scholar Isabel Molina-Guzmán argues in her book *Latinas & Latinos on TV: Colorblind Comedy in the Post-racial Network Era*, “representation is important because to be culturally visible is to be socially and politically legible.” Part of the need for affirmative representation is to challenge dominant ideologies put forth both by the mainstream and the particular cultures from which their historical roots stem. For Latinos/as, this entails interrupting racist depictions of their culture and the gendered ideologies that uphold hierarchies between men and women. Enter marianismo and machismo.

What are Marianismo and Machismo?

One of the earliest definitions of the concept of “marianismo” comes from the essay titled “Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo” by political scientist Evelyn P. Stevens. Stevens defined marianismo as “the cult of female spiritual superiority which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men.” Stevens further argues that marianismo is more prevalent in Latin American countries due to its European origins. She states that the Spanish conquest had such an even greater gender and cultural impact than present in Latin America, and that created a concentrated set of gender norms for men and women. These gender norms are particularly restrictive for Latinas as they map out precisely the roles they are expected to perform. This definition has evolved due to religious and spiritual factors but nonetheless influence how we understand gender today. Marianismo is a social construct that originated from religion, specifically Christianity. It demonstrates cultural dynamics in which Latinas are presumably considered resilient enough to withstand sacrifices and suffering for the sake of her family. These dynamics also dictate her sexuality, whereby Latinas are “expected to be like the Virgin Mary who is viewed as virginally pure and non-sexual.” (Castillo & Cano 2007)

Machismo, on the other hand, is considered the counterpart of marianismo. In her essay, Stevens states that the characteristics for machismo are “exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male-to-male interpersonal relationships and arrogance and sexual aggression in male-to-female- relationships” (Stevens 1973). Machistas, the term for those men who act in accordance to machismo, are typically understood as following a set of stereotypes framed by masculinity. Usually, these characteristics entail emotionlessness, aggressivity, and hypersexuality. Even if they do not wish to adhere to these rigid stereotypes, men unwittingly do so because they find themselves molded by these ideologies embraced within familial settings

and in society at large. While these characteristics hold great consequence for men given their negative effects on them, women are also susceptible to the violence fueling these characteristics and thus have to endure the “dark side” of men in their lives (Gil & Vazquez 2014)

The twin dynamics of marianismo for women and machismo for men compels them to adhere to certain roles for the rest of their lives or be scarred by them in their failure to do so. Upholding a power dynamic in which women are instructed and restricted to household obligations while men are capable of grasping freedoms afforded to them based on their ability to fit the mold of manhood that affords numerous choices and opportunities, machismo and marianismo sets in motion a battle of the sexes in which women have little opportunity to emerge the winner. It is quite obvious that both machismo and marianismo do not have positive characteristics and are in fact quite harmful in their codependent and rigid ways. The driving forces that have prevailed for many generations—passed on from generation to generation like an unchanging lineage—this set of guidelines determining how to be a good Hispanic woman has met its match in new forms of television representation. *Jane the Virgin* is one example of how television has the ability to acknowledge gender inequality and at the same time challenge it.

Unlike a Virgin

As it demonstrates how marianismo and machismo function in Latino culture, the storyline of *Jane the Virgin* aims to redefine the expectations placed upon women and challenges perceived cultural norms informed by gender. *Jane the Virgin* tells the story of Jane Villanueva, a second-generation Venezuelan woman, who is a Catholic virgin but becomes pregnant after being accidentally artificially inseminated. The show consists of a matriarchal family consisting

of Jane; Xiomara Villanueva, Jane's mother; Alba Villanueva, Xiomara's mother; and Jane's religious grandmother. All of these women are fully independent and do not rely upon the support or presence of a male figure. The only male figures that are relevant to the narrative are Rafael Solano, the biological father of Jane's unborn baby and her boss; Michael; Jane's detective boyfriend; and Rogelio; Jane's long-lost father who happens to be a big telenovela star. This show is based off a Venezuelan telenovela, but it does not follow the conventional telenovela storyline to its entirety. Normally, telenovelas follow a type of a melodramatic love story of the naïve working-class girl (Acosta-Alzuru 2003), who gets swept off her feet by a strong rich man. This type of plotline is what binds the telenovela's arc and purpose till the end. However, Jane the Virgin only uses this storyline as its foundation. Jane, the working-class naïve girl, meets Rafael, the rich man, in an unconventional way through a medical accident that left her carrying his child; this storyline captures the spirit of a telenovela, but it does not let it dictate its character's purpose. Furthermore, this storyline takes into account the religious aspect of a telenovela show. There are elements of traditional Catholic imagery like rosaries, the Virgin Mary and a symbolism of a flower being a woman's chastity and how she must preserve it till marriage; the audience also receives the devout Catholic grandma. Despite all of this influence, Jane is not a woman who "subscribes to all of the church's teaching" (Damico & Quay 2016), but rather is a woman of faith and knows its importance it has in her life and her family's.

The television series aims to break the normalized stereotypical story of the damsel in distress or the princess that needs saving, by exemplifying their interpretation of their religion, feminism stances, and it is further enhanced, when they address their own needs and wants above the men in their lives.

Religion

As this essay has argued, *marianismo* is when a woman is expected be self-sacrificing and submissive towards her husband while restricting her actions and beliefs. An ideology that stems from the Catholic religion, *marianismo* hinges on traits embodied by the Virgin Mary who serves as the exemplary guide for women to follow (Clifford 2005). Although *Jane the Virgin* is indeed modeled after a telenovela, we must remember that it defies the conventions of the ideological telenovela formula. As previously mentioned, telenovelas intertwine religion with gender expectations; this influences Jane the protagonist's arc and her inner desires/goals. These, of course, are impacted by patriarchal notions of manhood and womanhood, machismo and marianismo. When it comes to female roles and the ideologies of women's identity in relation to religion and relationships, *Jane the Virgin* refreshingly makes a distinction between the character's purpose and their conscious approach to faith that does not rely on instant acceptance; that is, women in the show treat religion as a separate entity that does not dictate the means of how they model their lives. In the show's pilot episode, the audience is shown the moment Jane is introduced to the topic of sexuality. In this scene, Alba, her devout catholic grandmother, is seen giving Jane a white flower to symbolize her virginity. Alba says "Look at the flower in your hand Jane. Notice how perfect it is. How pure. Now, crumple it, good. Now, try to make it look new again." When Jane is unable to do so, Alba proceeds to tell her, "That's right. You can never go back and that's what happens when you lose your virginity." This moment here is what shapes many of Jane's perspectives and decisions, especially waiting to have sex until marriage. One can assume that this is the enforcement of marianismo by the older woman figure in the family to the youngest woman, instructing her from an early age what it

means to be a proper woman. Yet, the basis of the Jane's decision is not based on her faith, but more or so out of respect for her grandmother and not wanting her to become like her mother who had Jane when she was sixteen.

In episode 3 of season 1, Jane tells Michael, "My whole life, I didn't want to end up an unmarried pregnant woman like my mom. But I am an unmarried pregnant woman like my mom. The big bad thing, the thing that I was most afraid of... it happened!" In this moment, Jane reveals that the reason why she was saving herself till marriage had nothing to do with religion or a promise she made to God to be a good woman of faith but rather to steer clear of repeating her mother's story. Indeed, her independence is intimately tied to her "virginity" given the refusal of the attachments sex has with commitment. One of the many things that *Jane the Virgin* does so effectively, the narrative reveals precisely how the Villanueva women hold deeper attachments to one another, learning from both personal errors made and the constraints placed on them against their will. Defying the dictates of religion and its ability to determine male and female roles, *Jane the Virgin* undermines the classic Virgin Marry narrative by showing how the Holy Mother in no models how to shape their personas. Instead, it is their own experiences, their traditions made from scratch, and their deep relationships with one another that construct their identities as women.

Feminist Stances

Jane the Virgin upholds feminist stances and ideals into the show's narrative, accentuating the unique and empowering qualities to the series' female characters. The Villanueva women are successful and independent women, who only rely on and support each other. Support here is a combination of psychological, economic, and emotional sustenance. The

lack of male presence in their household is what makes the especially strong women, capable of doing anything while being the owners of their respective lives and destinies.

The lack of a primary male presence in this household is due to Mateo's—Alba's husband and Xiomara's father—death when Xiomara was a teenager. This event forced them to become fully independent and aware of their own needs and wants. The Villanueva women were able to succeed without a male presence and therefore consistently rely on another. It is quite admirable considering that Alba, an undocumented immigrant when her husband died, was able to raise two young women for 13 years on her own and teach them to be fiercely independent. Moreover, Xiomara did not choose to pursue her dreams as a performer but rather opted to be both a mother and a father to Jane. With her assumption of both roles, I would argue that Jane's independence and strength is the result of being exposed exclusively to women who support her dreams and aspirations. That is, Jane was never exposed to nor had someone limit her thoughts, ideas, and aspirations. Instead, she is celebrated and encouraged to continue pursuing her dreams. Perhaps that is why she expresses herself through writing because Alba and Xiomara granted Jane the freedom to do say and do whatever she wants candidly. As a result, Jane is the most powerful and strong member of the Villanueva family. She carries herself with a sense of agency that helps her set her goals and execute a plan to achieve them. She is fiercely ambitious which allows her to not limit herself to certain beliefs or imposed limitations.

At another point in the series pilot, Jane is seen having a conversation with her best friend, Lina, about her relationship with Michael. Lina theorizes that Michael might propose to Jane, to which she replies: “No way, we have a timeline. I haven't gotten my teachers degree yet, and we just merged our calendars.” In a typical telenovela move, this moment would have been one of its pivotal moments, but Jane's reaction reframes the narrative otherwise. Instead of

swooning over the possibility that her successful detective boyfriend might propose, she reacts differently by insisting that her own goals come first. By focusing on that and straying away from the idea that women ultimately and only want marriage, Jane fights against the traditional marianista view of women giving up their aspirations for a strong man who can take care of her. On the contrary, Jane takes charge of her own destiny by adhering to her convictions while defying the conventions that live little room for her and the many Latina spectators looking to her as an example to fight for increased representation and the achievement of success on their own terms.

The New Machismo

To reiterate, the definition of *machismo* is men exerting superiority and exerting a sense of authority over women. Thus, men are able to dictate and control a women's needs and life goals, often switching women's narrative according to their own desires. Not only do they impose certain standards for women to heed (for example, taking on the role of caretakers of the home and children), but that women are nothing more than weak and sensitive and, therefore, ruled by their emotions. The Villanueva women actively adopt a stance in opposition to men's expectations and assumptions. They do not let men belittle them or try to dictate their ideals, perceptions, and goals. Indeed, the men in *Jane the Virgin* are disallowed to adopt the persona of the machista man, and instead, the men support the women in the narrative wholeheartedly. It is important to highlight the men here because not only do the women in *Jane the Virgin* experience a transitional change in which they upend their traditional values organized by gender norms, but the male characters do as well. Each of the men in the series are of great importance

to Jane: her fiancé, the father of her child, and her father as well. Each have a distinct relationship to Jane that is essential for the show and its eponymous subject.

In the series, we learn that Jane is an aspiring writer and she receives quite a lot of support and understanding from the men to help her fulfill her goal. Michael—first, Jane’s fiancé but then ultimately friend—has always encouraged and supported her dreams in becoming a writer. In episode 16, Michael is seen handing Jane a flyer for a writing workshop, which Jane appreciates because of her difficult experience with writer’s block. Despite that in this time frame Jane and Michael are no longer together, he still continues to advocate for Jane’s interest. He could have acted as a spiteful ex-boyfriend and adopted the aggressive “macho” man persona, yet he does not. Michael’s behavior is completely the opposite of the prideful machista, instead demonstrating a different type of man. He is capable of supporting the woman he loves because her emotions and priorities are still as relevant and important. This new form of masculinity reverberates with the other male characters in the series.

Rafael—the father of Jane’s baby and another love interest of hers—is represented as one of the firmest believers of Jane’s talent and ability as a woman seeking to accomplish her goal in becoming a writer. He encourages Jane to go beyond her limitations, not because he does not believe in her but rather aims to persuade her that she in fact can succeed. Rafael sees the potential in Jane that no one else sees and, therefore, firmly believes in and supports Jane’s goals. In the first episode of the series, we witness the first encounter between Jane and Rafael in which he inspires Jane to be ‘brave’ and follow her dreams in becoming a writer, and not simply settle in being ‘practical’ and resolving to become a teacher. Beyond this point Rafael is out of Jane’s life given that their initial encounter was seven years earlier, when Jane was 16 (and before the show’s events unfolded). Yet, that one moment motivated her to pursue her dreams

and see herself as a serious writer. In numerous episodes we glimpse Jane as a prolific writer, and it was all because of Rafael's critical role that set-in motion her writerly ambitions. Interestingly, Jane was unknowingly following one of the ten commandments of marianismo (Gill & Vazquez 201) which is "Do not wish for more in life than being a housewife." Granted Rafael was not advocating for Jane taking on the role of a married woman, she was nonetheless setting expectations and limiting herself before she reached that point of realization in her life. On the other hand, Rafael defied conventional gender expectations and the machista mentality that women are "the weaker sex" (Mayo & Resnick 1996). His affirmation of Jane's goals rails against what one would expect a man to believe. Moreover, his active stance in giving his complete support to Jane goes against the patriarchal and heteronormative concept that women are "wives and mothers first" (Mayo & Resnick 1996). In episode 15, Jane is seen talking to Rafael about her hesitancy in accepting his marriage proposal and how she is more focused on determining what her life is going to look like after giving birth. She states, "I need to take time off from everything else. You know, and just focus on being a great mom. And after a few years, I'll get back to writing. What do you think?" the audience knows that's not what Jane wants and how she wants Rafael to tell her to also focus on her goals. However, Rafael responds at first with, "Of course, if that's what you want." only to change his mind and says instead, "Hold on. I was trying to be supportive, but that makes no sense to me. You've been dreaming of becoming a writer since the day that I met you. Why would you give that up?" Rafael does not want Jane to put her dreams aside and settle on being a mother; instead, he wants Jane to be able to achieve her life-long career goal and not limit her happiness. Rafael's character signifies a new model to which Latino men should aspire: to aid and uplift their Latina counterparts to succeed despite the

traditional and cultural expectations that they are expected to follow, especially when entering motherhood.

The only male character in Jane's life to whom she is not romantically linked is her father, Rogelio de la Vega, a telenovela star. Rogelio appears late in Jane's life, yet his presence is vital and equally important as Rafael's and Michael's. Rogelio's character is quite interesting, particularly because he is a male telenovela star from Mexico. That depiction is extremely relevant because to the viewers who have been exposed to telenovelas, one will instantly assume that he is going to act accordingly to the machista ideal. The reason for that assumption is because of the way men in conventional telenovelas more often than not epitomize the classic toxic Latino macho. However, Rogelio surprises the viewers that he is the opposite of the machista man; he is understanding, emotional, and feminine without discarding his masculinity. There are numerous episodes in which Rogelio defies normative male gender expectations and exemplifies the new Latino man. In the beginning of this series, the audience knows that Jane has an absent father, and does not know his identity because Xiomara had simply told her that it was an "army guy." It is soon revealed that when Rogelio found out about Xiomara's pregnancy, he requested she get an abortion. Xiomara refused and instead left Rogelio. Xiomara finds Rogelio after twenty-three years and decides to write him that she, in fact, never had an abortion and he has a daughter. From then on, we see his willingness to be a part of Jane's life because he knows he "missed out on too much of her life." He is also ashamed for even suggesting an abortion. The type of enthusiasm and dedication Rogelio shows in becoming a part of Jane's life goes against the machista narrative of the "absentee father" (Mayo 2008).

Another example of Rogelio's eagerness to be a father to Jane is seen in episode 6. Rogelio decides to give Jane a car after meeting her and she thinks it is too much too soon. When

confronted by this, Rogelio explains that he came to Jane too late in her life and has “missed all the big things” and wanted to do something to help her as a father, thinking a car was the least he could do. Initially, this scene may be read as adhering to a machista essence—that is, the father wanting to do everything in his power to provide for his daughter. Once the audience receives Rogelio’s reasoning, we learn that it is much deeper than that; it is his need to prove his willingness to step up as Jane’s father. Hardly about ego, Rogelio illustrates a deep commitment to supporting Jane, even showing at every turn his emotions and love for his daughter (Mirandé 1979). While he might at first appear to be a narcissist, his concern with his appearance is really a stark contrast to how men are typically cast as caring little about their image (Paredes 1971). In fact, Rogelio is quite obsessed with maintaining an impeccable appearance. This is shown early on when Rogelio goes with Michael to the spa to get a pedicure. Rogelio says to Michael, “Oh, come on. It’s 2015. Men get pedicures. Or what was all this equal rights talk about?” This is just one of many examples of Rogelio’s concern with his appearance. Just as much as this type of behavior is often portrayed in media as “men displaying ‘unmasculine’ qualities” (Calhoun 2018), Latino culture regards men who preoccupy themselves with their appearance as failed men who are either feminine, gay, or both (Dodd 2003) Yet, Rogelio is not gay but instead a “metrosexual man”; that is, heterosexual male who enjoys “enhancing his personal appearance by grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes.” (Merriam-Webster). Characters like Rogelio therefore challenge the portrayal of manhood in Latino culture and expand and create a new type of positive masculinity. Flying in the face of machista ideals, Jane the Virgin upholds qualities that are too often dismissed or degraded as feminine while contesting the normative masculinist prerogatives of what it supposedly means to be a man.

Conclusion: Toward an Immaculate Perception

The twin dynamic of machismo and marianismo is still quite prevalent in Latino culture and media representations of it. And despite the large population of Latinos/as in the United States, there still remains a low number of Latino narratives in entertainment media. Usually, the industry portrays Latino/a characters as stereotypes of maids, gang members, etc. Limiting the scope of who Latinos/as are and the many roles they play in American culture results in rehashed perceptions and sustaining traditional concepts such as marianismo and machismo. *Jane the Virgin* challenges the misrepresentations of Latinas and Latinos, tackling stereotypes that intertwine race and gender. Deriving inspiration from telenovelas, *Jane the Virgin* is able to appeal to the Latina/o community yet simultaneously promotes the abolition of gender inequality in its refusal to normalize marianismo and machismo. The way the series achieves this is by dismantling the bond between culture and religion to in turn promote a politicized feminist stance and the need to endorse the new, improved man. *Jane the Virgin* therefore is able to separate religion and culture effectively. Shifting the narrative that women only adhere to their religion as the result of being unshakable women of faith, *Jane the Virgin* instead depicts the Villanueva women as strong, resilient, and independent from men, capable of doing anything without the permission of their male counterparts. Lastly, *Jane the Virgin* sets out to not only challenge the expectations placed upon women, but also to redefine the concept of what it means to be a man. Indeed, each of the male characters are strong advocates and supporters of the Villanueva women's independence, resilience, and life aspirations. *Jane the Virgin* stunningly demonstrates that it is okay for men to be the opposite of what they're expected to be: that is, sensible, emotional, and supportive. In sum, *Jane the Virgin* ushers in a previously untouched political sensibility within the realm of mainstream media that fights to ratify and challenge

conventional perceptions of men and women in Latina/o culture in the name of egalitarianism.

To be sure, the series offers viewers an immaculate perception of how things might be if gender equality was perceived—and achieved—beyond the television screen and into everyday life.

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