

JANE'S NO VIRGIN TO GENDER EQUALITY: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF JANE THE
VIRGIN

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Ballard-Reisch, I couldn't image going through this process without you, and I will
forever be grateful for your patience, knowledge and ongoing guidance

Mom and Dad, thank you for raising me to believe I can achieve anything. I hope I can
forever continue to make you proud

Brett and Sophie, without you, life wouldn't be near as fun. Thank you for reminding me
to take a break and not work so hard all of the time

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ABSTRACT

Jane the Virgin, a television show airing on *The CW*, tells the story of a devout, Catholic virgin who finds out she is pregnant after being accidentally artificially inseminated during a routine gynecologist checkup. While the plot may be absurd, it has caught the attention of many female viewers while tackling issues of feminism and intersectionality. This study encompasses a Feminist Critique of the show by combining a textual analysis of five random episodes from Season #1 with focus group data that was collected from real *Jane the Virgin* viewers. From this data, it can be seen that *Jane the Virgin* addresses feminist issues within themes of female characters being in control of their bodies, female characters being independent of men, female characters having a strong sense of camaraderie, and female characters being shown with competence in the workplace. Support was also found for *Jane the Virgin* addressing intersectionality, through the two themes of struggle due to intersections and characters who succeed regardless of their intersecting identities. Feminist Criticism revolves around the belief that men and women should have equal opportunity for self-expression. Through the textual analysis and focus groups, it was determined that *Jane the Virgin* not only helps to show the views and opinions of the female characters in the show, but it also helps empower them — regardless of their ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation. Lastly, the focus group discussion supported the belief that television can have a powerful effect on viewers, as the *Jane the Virgin* viewers in the focus groups expressed that they are able to relate to the plot and characters and that they have been inspired by the show.

Keywords: *Jane the Virgin*, Feminist Critique, Third Wave Feminism, Intersectionality, textual analysis, focus groups

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A devout, young, Catholic virgin finds out she is pregnant after being accidentally artificially inseminated during a routine gynecologist checkup. It may sound like an absurd premise, but this is the storyline of a hit comedy-drama airing on *The CW*. Having been described as “laugh-out-loud funny” and a show unlike any “you’ve ever seen on television,” *Jane the Virgin* has been winning over the hearts of viewers since its debut in October of 2014 (Bastelaer, 2016). It even has the honors to prove it, having received a Peabody Award for entertainment, a People’s Choice Award, an AFI Award, and a Golden Globe Award for its lead actress, Gina Rodriguez (Tribbey, 2015). But the success does not stop there. The satirical show owns an astounding 100% rating on *Rotten Tomatoes* (Bastelaer, 2015), and networks in 170 markets have bought the series thus far — making *Jane the Virgin* one of the most talked about shows internationally (Stilson, 2015). So what is all of the hype about? Some accredit the strong writing and great acting; others claim it is the fresh take on the themes of friends, family, and love (Stilson, 2015; Bastelaer, 2015).

Based around a Hispanic family, *Jane the Virgin* does not fit the normal format of most primetime television shows. The show entails an absurd storyline, is scripted as a *telenovela* (Latin America’s term for a television soap opera), and intertwines both English and Spanish speakers, helping the series to attract English-speaking Hispanic viewers and a wider audience (Steel, 2015). With 17.1% of the American population (more than 540 million people) identifying as Hispanic, Latina, or Latino, more television networks are starting to tailor their programming to this population (Steel, 2015).

Because television can have powerful effects on viewers, it is important to evaluate the content within a television series, as well as the possible effects that it has on audience members (Gitlin, 1983). This study examines *Jane the Virgin* using a feminist criticism approach. Known as a central theory for the analysis of rhetoric, feminist criticism stems from the feminist belief that “men and women should have equal opportunities for self-expression” (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985, pp. 160-161), and its primary research question asks how gender has been communicated through various rhetorical artifacts (Foss, 1989).

Because *Jane the Virgin* focuses on the experiences of a Hispanic family, this feminist critique also discusses the presence and fundamentals of intersectionality — the study of intersecting social identities and their relation to oppression, domination, and discrimination. Intersectionality has recently been studied in conjunction with feminism and allows for a deeper analysis of feminism that can address the oppression that women of color often face (Marecek, 2016).

The combination of a feminist critique with an analysis of intersectionality allows for answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways does *Jane the Virgin* address feminist issues?

RQ2: In what ways does *Jane the Virgin* address intersectional issues?

RQ3: What effects does *Jane the Virgin* have on viewers?

These questions are answered through two methods. First, a textual analysis evaluates the presence of feminist issues and intersectional issues in episodes within Season #1 of the television show. Second, focus group conversation allows for interaction with real women who have watched Season #1 of *Jane the Virgin* in its

entirety. This engagement with real viewers addresses the second goal of feminist criticism, which seeks to discover the effects that the selected artifact has on the audience (Foss, 1989). These women comprised focus groups and were asked questions related to feminism and intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin* and were also asked to comment on how they believe *Jane the Virgin* has personally affected them.

The combination of results from RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 indicate whether or not *Jane the Virgin* addresses feminism and intersectionality and the effects that this has on viewers. The intersectionality emphasis, in particular, enriches this study and deepens the understanding of feminism at a co-cultural level.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminist Criticism Theory

In United States culture, gender has not been constructed equally. In specific, “the feminine gender tends to be devalued and denigrated” (Foss, 1989, p. 151). When this unfair construction of gender began to be portrayed in popular forms of media with the views and opinions of women either left out or silenced (Ferrucci, Shoenberger, & Schauster, 2014), Feminist Criticism Theory arose (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007). An encounter was taking place in the 1970s and 1980s between women who were drawn to Second Wave feminism and their destiny of becoming a housewife (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007). This encounter is ultimately what catapulted Feminist Criticism — a theory that “fueled the early repudiation, investigation, and defense of the defining women’s genre of twentieth-century television, the soap opera, as well as the investigation of the performance of the housewife and her liberated ‘other,’ the new woman/working girl in sitcoms and dramas set in domestic and/or workplace locales” (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007, p. 1). From its beginnings to now, feminist critics have repeatedly questioned television narratives both portraying women and aimed at women. With continuities and discontinuities over time, Feminist Criticism scholars attempt to make sense of “why media matters and what women want the media to do” (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007, p. 4).

This theory states two assumptions: the first being that women have different experiences than men and the second being that women’s voices are not often heard in language (Foss, 1989). Feminist criticism takes these assumptions and evaluates the

definitions of genders that can already be found in rhetoric. Then, it works to change and maintain particular gender definitions for both females and males (Foss, 1989; Foss, 2006).

As stated, the first presumption of feminist criticism is that that men and women have different experiences. This is not solely a result of society's influence, but also a result of biological makeup. These differences include the fact that women menstruate, have the ability to bear children, and express themselves sexually in particular ways (Foss, 1989). While these factors play an important role in how women and others see them, they are not, however, the only characteristics that shape the perception of women. Society has also played a pertinent role in the opinions and expectations that have been placed on women, stemming all the way back to the 1960s political movement when "feminists took the media to task for their demeaning and stereotypical images of women" (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007). As Sonja Foss points out in her work *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, these societal expectations that have often been stereotyped include, but are not limited to, "the certain household chores that are deemed appropriate for women, the expectation of women to show a wider range of emotions, the role that women are expected to play as 'helpers' who provide service to others, and the expectation of females to fulfill the sexual needs of men" (1989, p. 152).

Secondly, feminist criticism presumes that women's perspectives (perceptions, values, experiences, etc.) are not incorporated into language. Instead, it is typical to see instances where men's perspectives are shown, and women's perspectives are silenced (Foss, 1989). The result of this becomes a patriarchal ideology that is "so embedded in everyday discourse that it becomes normal to general audiences, and its presence

easily goes unnoticed” (Walsh, Fursich, & Jefferson, 2008, p.126). It is for this reason that Feminist Criticism finds importance. It is the feminist critic’s role to examine “how masculinity and femininity have been created and [ask] that these fundamental constructions of gender be changed” (Foss, 1989, p. 154). This often starts with identifying the subtleties and the patriarchal ideology found on television (Down, 1990).

By identifying the different experiences that women and men have and looking at how these experiences are incorporated into rhetorical artifacts, such as the media, a feminist criticism approach can be made. According to Foss, this type of rhetorical criticism encompasses three steps: (1) Selecting an Artifact, (2) Analyzing an Artifact, and (3) Sharing Criticism (2006). These three steps outline this feminist critique of *Jane the Virgin*.

Selecting an artifact. The initial step of rhetorical criticism is selecting a text or artifact to analyze (Foss, 2006). According to Foss, rhetorical critics “cannot attend to and engage with everything in the world” (Foss, 2006, p. 376). Therefore, we must choose what it is that we want to study. This forms the building blocks of the critic’s world (Foss, 2006).

Analyzing an artifact. The second step of rhetorical criticism addresses how the selected artifact will be critiqued (Foss, 2006). This step allows for freedom, as the researcher has unlimited choices of methodology for how to evaluate the artifact (Foss, 2006). Once the methodology for analysis is selected, it is at this time that critics are encouraged to question the rhetorical artifact at hand. For feminist scholars, this means discovering whether or not the artifact allows for women’s perspectives to be voiced, since a feminist stance requires that both “women and men should have equal

opportunities for self-expression and that women's perspectives should be an integral part of rhetorical practice and theory" (Foss, 1989, p. 155). Depending on the artifact at hand, different components will need to be analyzed during this time. For example, when viewing a television show, a feminist critic would take note of things such as dialogue, characterization, and staging. It becomes a major focus of the media researcher to identify "the reinstatement of gender in dichotomous and [hierarchical] setups that may normalize discrimination [...] against women" (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006, p. 78). Once the researcher pulls content from the selected artifact that supports how gender is being portrayed, the researcher is then ready for the final stage of rhetorical criticism.

Sharing criticism. This last step of rhetorical criticism requires the researcher to share the findings with other scholars. According to Foss, "This interaction takes the form of sharing my analyses with others and inviting them to consider my interpretations of the artifact" (2006, p. 377-378). During this stage, it becomes evident that different scholars will interpret artifacts differently. According to Foss, no interpretation of an artifact is wrong. It is just that some interpretations are more useful than others (Foss, 2006). As the rhetor uses "symbols to construct the world," the findings during rhetorical criticism can then impact the rhetor and those who come across their work (Foss, 2006, p. 378).

While these three steps outline the basis of rhetorical criticism that Feminist Criticism fits into, Foss also outlines some additional guidelines for feminist critics in some of her earlier work. First and foremost, she states that the primary concern when looking through feminist eyes is to address how the definition of women associated with

the selected text affects the audience. Especially relevant is whether the text affects a woman's behavior or her view of herself or others (Foss, 1989). Essentially, the feminist critic should "discover how the analysis of the artifact can be used to alter the denigrating gender role assigned to women and to help them live in new ways" (Foss, 1989, p. 157). It is at this time that feminist rhetorical criticism becomes *activism* that is designed to improve women's lives. Instead of just being *about* women, it is also *for* women (Foss, 1989). For example, if a feminist critic sees that a text silences or denigrates women's perspectives, the critic will seek to change that. If a text, on the other hand, is respectful and fair in its portrayal of women, then it will likely be classified as an appropriate piece of rhetoric for the construction of fair definitions of women. It is not enough for feminist critics to examine how femininity and masculinity have been created. They should also ask that these constructions of gender be changed as appropriate (Foss, 1989). This is what constitutes Feminist Criticism as being a rhetorical theory.

While these steps and general assumptions of feminist criticism have remained relevant for a long period of time, it is important to note that the construction and definition of feminist criticism are part of a pattern that is constantly changing and being reformed (Eagleton, 1996). In Maggie Humm's 1994 book, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism*, nine different modes of feminist criticism are discussed — ranging from topics such as French Feminist Criticism to Lesbian Feminist Criticism (Eagleton, 1996). Mary Eagleton even claims that a singular use of *feminist criticism* is not fair because "there is no single feminist criticism, rather an ever-growing

practice of plural, though frequently interrelating, feminist criticisms” (Eagleton, 1996, p. 135).

Third Wave Feminism

This study will be grounded in Third Wave Feminism. While each wave of feminism has had the goal of achieving equality for women and men, the Third Wave of feminism strives to address the standards put on women and their sexuality (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015). The dominant theme of this wave “has been to argue that young women should be — and increasingly are — free to experiment sexually without repercussions” (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015, p. 158). Along with this, Third Wave feminists argue that “young women face a social context that inhibits their ability to seek sexual agency, as their sexuality continues to be repressed and silenced in a variety of ways” (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015, p. 158). Rather than judging sexual females or referring to them with demeaning labels (slut, whore, etc.), Third Wave feminists champion and normalize the sexual desire of women, stating that “women have a sexuality and can be as lustful as men” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010, p.166). Therefore, feminists who support Third Wave ideals encourage women to express their sexual desire and show sexual assertiveness — defined as “the ability to refuse unwanted sex and communicate one’s sexual needs (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015, p. 159). Through control of their sexual desire, women become free and empowered. In the article, *Of the flesh fancy: Spanking and the single girl*, Chris Daley refers to this liberation by stating, “We have the ability to transform practices developed in patriarchal cultures into turn-ons, sexing up what would have tied us down” (Daley, 2002, p. 128).

Secondly, the Third Wave of feminism is notable for its inclusiveness. While Second Wave Feminism tended to only represent educated, white, middle class, and heterosexual women, Third Wave Feminism expands to “give voice to all women” — expanding issues to include race and class (Zimmerman, McDermott, & Gould, 2009, p. 77). Prior to this Third Wave, feminism tended to keep minorities silenced, with rich, white women speaking for all women (Zimmerman, McDermott, & Gould, 2009). In her 2010 book, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, Hooks describes this Second Wave dilemma by saying: “Privileged-class white women swiftly declared their ‘ownership’ of the movement, placing working class white women, poor white women and all women of color in the position of followers” (p. 44). Third Wave Feminism, however, seeks to end this oppression of race and class (Zimmerman, McDermott, & Gould, 2009).

Third Wave feminists see themselves as critical consumers of popular culture (Walters, 2011). Therefore, studying television shows and their impact on viewers is of great interest. With the sexuality focus and attention to minorities, this Third Wave of feminism is especially relevant to a feminist critique of *Jane the Virgin* — a show with Latina and Latino characters and strong themes of sexuality.

Minorities, Feminism, and Intersectionality

Just as the context and time period must be considered by feminist scholars, it is also important to take note of additional factors, such as cultural and ethnical themes in the selected artifact.

As noted in the discussion of Third Wave Feminism, any scholars studying feminism criticize that Second Wave Feminism did not pay attention to race or class

(Glucksmann, 2008). During this time, feminists tended to concentrate on how women were different from men but not on how they were different from each other. Race and ethnicity issues were extant, but contemporary texts were not acknowledging them (Glucksmann, 2008). This has begun to change as the theory of intersectionality becomes more prominent.

Intersectionality was founded around the same time as feminism, but did not grow as a basis in feminist studies for a few years. Developed by black feminists, Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989) and Patricia Hill Collins (Collins, 1990), intersectionality is the study of intersecting social identities and their relation to oppression, domination, and discrimination (Marecek, 2016). Originally formed around the misrepresentation of black women (Crenshaw, 2015), the theory provided “an analytical lens for theorizing the oppressions faced by women of color in the United States” (Marecek, 2016, p. 177).

The term “intersectionality” is not an attribute that an individual person has, but rather, a way of classifying social stratification systems. As Jeanne Marecek notes in her article *Intersectionality and Feminist Psychology*, “people are not intersectional, social categorizations are” (Marecek, 2016, p. 177). While the theory started on behalf of black women, it now reflects a larger number of groups, including intersections of racism, sexism, class oppression, and more (Crenshaw, 2015).

As feminism has evolved over the years and expanded beyond just “white women,” intersectionality is now a fundamental component of feminist studies, even becoming a “buzzword” among feminists in the United States (Marecek, 2016, p. 177). The combination of intersectionality and feminism may best be described through the term “intersectional feminism.” While a woman may be discriminated against because

she is female, she may face even further discrimination or oppression if she is female *and* black. Thus, an intersection is born. According to Heather Hillsburg, “social inequality increases with each additional layer of marginalization” (2013, p. 5). Therefore, the larger the number of marginalized social identities (i.e. Black, lesbian, single mother, etc.) that an individual identifies with, the more likely they are to experience a greater amount of discrimination or oppression. The use of intersectionality to illuminate the effects of multiple overlapping social identities may be best understood through the following quotation: “Rather than isolate one identity category and privilege it over other points of marginalization, intersectional theory sheds light on the ways various vectors of identity, such as race and gender, impact one another to form unique subjectivities and experiences” (Hillsburg, 2013, p. 5).

In her 1995 article, titled “Sapphire Bound!,” scholar Regina Austin acted as one of the many feminists who included intersectional thinking in their analyses of feminism. While examining feminism in various contexts, she advocated for minority women, stating: “The intellectual product of the minority feminist scholar should incorporate in a formal fashion the ethical and moral consciousness of minority women, their aspirations, and their quest for liberation” (Austin, 1995, p. 426). Scholars Venus E. Evans-Winters and Jennifer Esposito agreed with her claim, stating that female epistemologies seem to strictly be concerned with white girls and women (2010). Together, Evans-Winters and Esposito worked to confront the needs of minority women of color (specifically black women). Like the founders of intersectionality theory, they acknowledged the oppression these women of color were facing, and advocated that more focus be put on those women who are in a minority.

This idea of intersectional feminism is both beneficial and necessary when looking at texts that include Hispanics, especially because the Hispanic culture is very patriarchal (Martinez & Mejia, 2015). For example, Claudia, a Latina woman, struggled with calling herself a feminist because of her Hispanic upbringing. According to her, Latinas were born into certain roles and were told not to question them. These roles included things like staying at home, caring for the family, and sacrificing her needs for others' (Martinez & Mejia, 2015). After watching her mother and grandmother fulfill these roles, it was clear that feminist ideals did not resonate with her upbringing. She stated, "mi cultura and a Latina voice was still missing [from feminism]" (Martinez & Mejia, 2015, p. 26). She is not the only Hispanic to feel this way. Susana, a Latina feminist, defines feminism as "a song I love but am in some ways hesitant to sing" (Martinez & Mejia, 2015, p. 25). Like Claudia, she felt that she was expected to fulfill certain duties as a Hispanic woman that were misaligned with feminist concepts. Having these cultural expectations but wanting to see the world through a feminist lens was a struggle for these two women. Hispanic women are not "supposed to" have their own identity separate — making the study of feminism in a Hispanic setting a noteworthy interest for scholars and an opportunity for intersectional thinking (Martinez & Mejia, 2015).

Feminists have been called on to challenge the inequalities and power struggles that women encounter since feminism's emergence; with intersectional feminism, these challenges place more emphasis on women of color and women of other oppressed groups, insisting that "feminist scholars think about inequality and oppression in more complex ways" (Marecek, 2016, p. 180). Intersectionality, when coupled with feminism,

provides a foundation for deep analysis into how intersections oppress women.

According to Alison Winch, in her article *Feminism, Generation, and Intersectionality*, “it is critical [for feminists] to create a more robust infrastructure to help ensure that activists and thinkers do not suffer from fatigue, and that feminism does not become a politics for the privileged” (Winch, 2014, p. 9).

Feminism in Television

History of Feminist Television Criticism. While feminism began as early as the 1800s, Feminist Television Criticism would not emerge until around the 1970s. Patricia Erens, in her introduction to *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, claims that “the rise of feminist film criticism is an outgrowth of the women’s movement, which began in the United States in the late 1960s, of feminist scholarship in a variety of disciplines, and of women’s filmmaking” (Cobb & Tasker, 2016, p. 1). Prior to this time, television had been something that limited female roles (Brunsdon, D’Acci, & Spigel, 1997). Not only was television male-dominated, but it also portrayed women in the same stereotypes. This was unsatisfying to American and European women who were interested in second wave feminism and were determined to avoid their destiny as a “housewife” (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2008, p. 2). Fortunately for them, as time went on, themes of feminism started to show in TV. For instance, the idea of a “career woman” became a new, desirable demographic in the 1970s, and American television shows were quick to pick up on this. Shows like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Maude*, and *Rhoda* gained attention as they fed into this new area of interest (MaCabe & Akass, 2006, p. 109).

The transformation of television. Like nearly all forms of technology, television transformed as years passed, altering its content and capabilities. The introduction of

cable, satellite, and digital technologies not only opened up possibilities for television audiences, but it also opened up new research opportunities and questions for feminists studying television (McCabe & Akass, 2006). An expansive variety of channels allowed for more “niche” markets (rather than broadcasting the same few programs to national audiences), and television audiences had more options for their viewing selections. Eventually, DVR services and the option to stream television programs online would broaden television viewing opportunities even further, and television would become less of a “family activity” where everyone gathered at the same time to watch the same show (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2008, p.2).

As years passed by, some scholars believed that film and television criticism were becoming an “outdated form of scholarship,” but by using a feminist perspective and noticing the marginalization of women taking place, it would continue to remain relevant (Cobb & Tasker, 2016, p. 2). Feminist television scholars, Brunsdon and Spigel, not only showed support for this approach but also claimed that Feminist Television Criticism would continually change as “what’s on TV changes, ideas of what TV is changes, and how it is watched changes” (2008, p. 1).

Viewers did continue to see more changes in the content on the television screen, as society evolved past the 1970s. Not only were strong women, single mothers, and female friends and lovers being depicted, but the introduction of “post-feminist” females in the 1990s, such as the “out” lesbian and the female entrepreneur, also took place — giving feminists new types of women to study (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2008, p. 2).

Agendas of Feminist Television Criticism. According to Brunsdon and Spigel, Feminist Television Criticism has had two different agendas. The first consists of feminists blaming the media for its “demeaning and stereotypical images of women” (1997, p. 4). Within this agenda, many women in the 1970s and 1980s demanded the media to make an urgent change (1997). They wished to see empowered women, playing in prominent roles.

The second agenda, according to Brunsdon and Spigel (1997), involved feminists taking issue with the existing critical work on television that disregarded femininity, gender, and sexual studies (p. 5). As long as issues of stereotyping and marginalization exist in the media, feminists want it to be critiqued by scholars.

While these are the agendas of Feminist Television Criticism as defined by Brunsdon and Spigel, some feminist scholars divide the theory’s agendas differently. For example, Bonnie Dow, in her article *Hegemony, Feminist Criticism, and the Mary Tyler Moore Show*, offered a slightly different view of the two agendas. Her definition of the first agenda was similar to that of Brunsdon and Spigel’s, claiming that feminists look at how television undervalues and underrepresents women. Dow states, “This approach argues that the dominant ideology in television is male-centric, with women included to support a male-dominated storyline” (1990, p. 263). Research here tends to look at how women are portrayed in the media and the effect that it has on society’s view of women (Dow, 1990). But it is the second agenda of Feminist Television Criticism that Dow differs on. According to her, the second approach analyzes the role of women as actors, producers, and audiences (1990). For these feminists, the goal is “to achieve not only equality of representation *on* screen but equality of participation in

the creative and production process *behind* the screen” (McCabe & Akass, 2006, p. 109). According to Shelley Cobb and Yvonne Tasker, professors of Film Studies, there is a problem of gender inequality in Hollywood. Recent, ground-breaking work in feminist film studies has been analyzing women’s film history in regards to women working behind the scenes in key areas of Hollywood (directing, writing, producing, etc.) (2016). While this is an issue in film, and not solely within television, it is of interest to many feminist scholars who are concerned with is a lack of progress toward raising women’s numbers in key production roles (Cobb & Tasker, 2016).

Research approaches for Feminist Television Criticism. Feminist film and television criticism is usually seen as a textual reading practice and can be found wherever “feminism and culture meet” (Cobb & Tasker, 2016, p. 1). This method of analyzing movies, television episodes, and entire series started during the 1970s when feminist critics were studying at universities, using content analysis and image criticism (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2008). As more and more feminists started paying attention to what was in the media, textual analysis became a replicable model of feminist engagement with television (Brunsdon, A’Acci, & Spigel, 1997)

Concern within Feminist Television Criticism. One critique of Feminist Television Criticism has been that it has not constructed its own meaning of feminism; rather, it mirrors the “common sense” meanings that circulate in academic and popular feminism. This is a problem to some feminists and scholars because feminism originally started in the U.S. as something centered around “white, middle-class, heterosexual, western women” (Brunsdon, D’Acci, & Spigel, 1997, p. 13). According to *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, “The whole field of feminist television criticism has been

preoccupied with notions of 'women' that are decidedly white and middle class, and has marginalized issues of civil rights and public life that centrally touch the lives of women of color" (Brunsdon, D'Acci, & Spigel, 1997, p. 13). While this was written by Brunsdon, D'Acci, & Spigel in the late 1990s, it still remains a relevant concern today. While the goal of feminism is to achieve the same equality for women as men have, it is crucial that feminist scholars give attention to minority women populations as well. Grouping all women together as one can be misleading, as women differ from one another. A different cultural background and color of skin can ultimately make achieving equality an even harder thing for women to accomplish. In her article *Professional Women Silenced by Men-Made Norms*, Maritza I. Reyes states that, "The end goal is for women (with all of their complexities and intersectionalities) to achieve the *same rights and results* as men (with all of their complexities and intersectionalities) and to be free from all forms of discrimination" (2015, p. 898). This is why combining Feminist Criticism with an intersectionality perspective can yield further understanding of the issues and situations at hand.

Cobb and Tasker, in their 2016 work *Feminist Film Criticism in the 21st Century*, state, "Motivated by an understanding of inequality and an interest in cinema, feminist film criticism offers a political as well as aesthetic response to visual culture" (p. 2). They emphasize that feminist scholars today must consider the key components of representations of gender, intersectional identities of class, race, and sexuality when looking at media forms such as film or television.

Recent studies in the field of Feminist Television Criticism

Analyzing previous studies in Feminist Television Criticism informs scholars of themes of feminism that exist in television. These themes, along with any other emerging feminist themes, can and should be analyzed when performing studies with Feminist Television Criticism. Some of the most prominent themes are outlined below.

Sexuality. From a person's sexual orientation and preference to an individual's feelings toward sex and sexual behaviors, there are many different aspects to sexuality, both in society and in the media. Women, often times, are scrutinized for their sexual decisions more so than men, with the stigma that men are "supposed to be" the more sexual of the two (Clark, 2015). While feminism seeks equality, there does not always seem to be a presence of equality for women when approaching sex. Because of this, sexuality is a hot topic for feminist scholars. The best way to understand the themes of sexuality that are found in the media is to divide the idea into subthemes, such as objectification, pleasure/enjoyment, the power of choice, reproduction, and sexual orientation (Clark, 2015; Ferrucci, P., Shoenberger, H., & Schauster, E; Phillips & Cree, 2014).

Objectification is a concept that is central to feminist theory. When women are treated as objects, especially sexual objects, there is a clear inequality in the treatment of women compared to men. In the study, *The Walking (Gendered) Dead: A Feminist Rhetorical Critique of Zombie Apocalypse Television Narrative*, scholars John Greene and Michaela Meyer found that objectification in the media often goes hand-in-hand with sexist rhetoric (2014). In their evaluation of *The Walking Dead*, Greene and Meyers found that sexual rhetoric made it appear as though women were nothing but

unintelligent objects of sex. In Season #1, a male character, Merle, refers to a female character, Andrea, with names such as “sugar tits” and “honey bun” and suggests to her that they should go somewhere to “bump uglies.” When she declines, he calls her another offensive name and assumes that because she showed no interest in having sex with him “she must be a lesbian.” Greene and Meyers not only claimed that the show portrayed this verbal assault and objectification of women as “harmless” but also claimed that the show utilized it as a form of humor (2014, p. 68).

Another feminist study that saw a strong theme of sexual objectification was one completed on the television show *Mad Men*. In this show, scholars Patrick Ferrucci, Heather Shoneberger, and Erin Shauster discussed how the female characters in *Mad Men* are expected to dress a certain way at work, with the purpose of showing off for the men. For example, one woman is advised to show off her “cute ankles” for her boss to enjoy looking at (2014, pp. 96-97).

These examples, as well as others found in forms of media clearly demonstrate that the sexual objectification of women goes against the goals and ideals of feminism. Feminists who come across this theme not only make it known that this objectification is occurring but also work to eradicate it.

Another theme of sexuality that is often seen in the media is the idea that women can be pro-sex and find pleasure in taking part in sexual activities. This concept can be related back to the pro-sex and anti-sex feminist debates, now known as the Sex Wars, which took place in the 1980s (Clark, 2015). During this time, “pro-sex feminists fought for the fluidity of female sexuality, claiming that one’s sexual identity should remain unregulated because of the impact it had on one’s ability to feel empowered.” Anti-sex

feminists, on the other hand, were in favor of keeping sex out of the media, especially because of the porn industry. They tried to eliminate pornography as they held a strong belief that it was created *by men for men* (Clark, 2015, p. 18). When studying the strong theme of sexuality in HBO's television show *Girls*, Madison Clark found that the show ultimately addressed both pro-sex and anti-sex sides of the "Sex Wars" issue.

According to Clark, "The series bridges the dichotomy between sexual pleasure and sexual danger, representing ways in which sex can explicitly encompass both, sometimes at the same time" (2015, p. 18). In the show, a scene with a prominent female character shows that women, just as men, can enjoy sexual activities (Clark, 2015). Clark claimed that "the sex scenes within the series are neither constructed in ways that support a male-centric society, nor are the conversations about sex that follow fixated on male pleasure" (2015, p. 27). These portrayals on television essentially help to promote the ideals of pro-sex feminists, showing that it is okay for women to take an interest in their sexual bodies and feel empowerment and pleasure through sexual behaviors. The show even portrays the group of female characters to have a curiosity about sex and a willingness to discuss it with each other — helping to move forward the idea that it is acceptable for women to be sexual beings (Clark, 2015).

While some television shows portray women enjoying sex (such as on *Girls*), another important, feminist theme to watch for is the concept of choosing whether or not to partake in sexual activities. Ultimately, feminist rhetoric should give female characters a voice in the bedroom that dictates that females have control of the decisions they are making. Rather than being dominated by a male character, or expected to have sex just because a character is a woman, female characters should be empowered in their

sexual experiences. Clark found a pro-feminist example of this in *Girls*, stating, “The empowerment that stems from Hannah’s freedom of choice in the bedroom and exploration of sexual acts is something that pro-sex feminists would embrace” (p. 21). Viewers not only see that the female character of Hannah enjoys sex but also see that she is the one who makes the choices regarding her body and sex (2015). The previous scene discussed from *The Walking Dead* showed the female character of Andrea turning down sex from the male character, Merle. Here, Andrea was also making a choice about sex, choosing not to participate. While this demonstrated empowerment to Andrea, the male character taunted her for this — making it appear that she was not doing as she was expected to. This can be an example of how media can portray a woman making her own sexual decisions in the face of patriarchal pressure, while still going against the aspirations of feminism. Women should not only have control over her sexual decisions but should also not be judged when deciding not to have sex.

This notion of decision-making and sexual choices can also be related to the next subtheme of sexuality: reproduction. Abortion is very controversial in television (Clark, 2015), and feminism tends to put forth a fight for reproductive justice (Clark, 2015). As Clark evaluated *Girls*’s themes of sexuality, she discovered pro-feminism views of reproductive rights, stating that the show “offers a refreshing view on a woman’s right to control her reproduction” (2015, p. 36). The invention of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s catapulted the movement toward reproductive rights for women (Phillips & Cree, 2014), and as casual sex and a “hook-up culture” exists among today’s millennial generation, the media is likely to show characters that take measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies (Clark, 2015, p. 36). With strong themes of reproductive rights in

the media, female leads are given the ability to communicate the positive and negative consequences that come with avoiding reproduction. Feminist scholars observing this occurrence in the media are finding that “the feminist movement, and the expectation that abortion should be legal, safe, and available, has opened up space for abortion to become a normalized subject in popular culture” (Clark, 2015).

Lastly, feminist scholars also analyze subthemes of sexual orientation.

Showtime’s series *The L Word* was one of television’s first shows to include diverse sexual orientations with its storyline of lesbians befriending each other while living in Los Angeles (Clark, 2015). As the show demonstrated the effect that one’s sexual orientation has on a female’s life, it most importantly, brought the portrayal of gay women to the forefront of television. As discussed in the history of feminism, feminism once lumped all women together, assuming that all women were essentially the same (Zimmerman, McDermott, & Gould, 2009). This hindered a sufficient understanding of the feminist struggle for equality, because it left out the differences that minority women were facing. With the creation of shows like *The L Word*, audiences become more familiar with female populations that are not heterosexual — giving them a better understanding of lesbian identities (Johnson, 2007; Clark, 2015). Feminists who come across themes of diverse sexual orientation, such as lesbian characters, can examine how the characters are portrayed and how these portrayals impact the audience viewing the show. Feminist scholar, Madison Clark, believes that these kinds of shows are “vital to our understanding of the progress of prime-time feminism because they diversify the types of women that [are] depicted on screen” (2015, p. 13). As gay and lesbian sexual orientations become more acceptable in society, audiences are more likely to see

lesbian characters on screen. Shows like *Orange is the New Black*, *The Good Wife*, *Rules of Engagement*, and *The Walking Dead* all currently portray lesbian or bisexual characters, giving feminists new rhetorical artifacts to evaluate.

Women's work roles and division of labor. Since the beginnings of feminism, women have been striving for equality in the workplace and equal division of labor (Phillips & Cree, 2014). As this became an important issue in society, it also became a theme in media. For example, one of the earliest shows to advocate for equal opportunity between women and men in the work environment was *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. While it was not the first working-woman sitcom, "it is regarded as the first to frame working women in a way that emphasized their ability and willingness to find fulfillment in a work-centered life in the same fashion that men could" (Clark, 2015, p. 24). Since *The Mary Tyler Moore Show's* debut in the 1970s, feminists have evaluated other television shows to look for instances of equality in the workplace. However, it seems that many recent shows are taking a step backward from equality and are giving in to the stereotyped gender roles that exist in society. For example, female characters in *The Walking Dead* are marginalized to the least-important roles. Greene and Meyer, after having evaluated Season #1 in its entirety, made a bold claim that women are "depicted doing the one activity *The Walking Dead* allows them to do: laundry" and that "it is rare to see a woman *not* washing clothes" (2014, p. 68). These stereotypical depictions of the division of labor are of particular interest to feminist scholars who are looking to change what is shown in the media. Greene and Meyer took note that one of the female characters in *The Walking Dead* questioned the division of labor that was taking place, wanting to know why the women were being pushed away to the sidelines

while the men did the important work of saving humanity. When asked for an explanation, another female character responded, “It’s just the way it is” (Greene & Meyer, 2014, p. 68).

Ferrucci, Shoneberger, and Shauster (2014) also observed sexist portrayals of women in the work environment in *Mad Men*. They discussed that the male characters in the show have an overarching goal of achieving success and doing well while at work, while the female characters work to please their male supervisors (p. 96). The men are placed in the important, inner areas of the office, and the women are placed outside the office doors where less-important work is completed. In the feminist critique of this storyline, it is observed that for the women in the workplace, “pleasing the men through work and sex is the key to their advancement and employment,” rather than hard work and a job well done (Ferruci, Shoneberger, & Shauster, 2014, p. 99).

These stereotypical definitions of masculinity and femininity are prime examples of what feminists seek to change. As television continues to impact audiences, feminists are encouraged to advocate that these constructions of gender be changed (Foss, 1989).

Independence from men. The next theme that feminists tend to look for in television is a portrayal of women being independent of men. This can range from instances where women as individuals are financially stable to examples of their finding happiness without having to have a male counterpart. In a study called *I’ll Be There for You If You Are Just Like Me: An Analysis of Hegemonic Social Structures in “Friends,”* Lisa Marie Marshall noticed progress toward empowered female characters. She stated, “While all of the characters yearned for marriage throughout the series, they learned to

individually financially support themselves in the process. The women in the series provided for themselves.” Even Rachel, who was considered the “most feminine” character, is shown living on her own, without a man (Marshall, 2007, p. 102).

Portrayals such as these, not only reflect empowerment of the female characters shown in the media but also take the focus away from the patriarchal structure. When women are shown to be dependent on men, feminists often strive to change the stigma that women need a man in their life to achieve success and happiness.

Feminist media scholar, Danielle Stern, claimed in her auto-ethnography, *My So-Called Felicity and the City: Coming of Age with and through Feminist Media Studies*, that “women of the third wave, raised on television, have come to define [their] identities by the presence of a man” (2013, p. 417). This conclusion was drawn by Stern after watching and analyzing countless television shows about women “risking their individuality for the sake of a male romantic companion” (p. 417-418). In television shows such as *Sex and the City*, the female character’s economic independence helps them to avoid the need to rely on males (Arthurs, 2003), but in other shows, female characters are shown to be consumed in a “male-centered” world, where they are constantly trying to please a man or achieve his attention (Stern, 2013). Stern believed that when characters are shown with lives that revolve around men, the media is going against feminist ideals (2013). For this reason, feminists such as Stern, advocate for the elimination of these plots and storylines.

Similar anti-feminist scenes can also be found in *The Walking Dead* (where women are incapable of surviving the zombie apocalypse without men) and *Mad Men* (where women rely on a man to financially provide for the family while they are required

to care for their children) (Greene & Meyer, 2014; Ferrucci, Shoneberger, & Shauster, 2014). While men in *The Walking Dead* are defined by their occupation, the women appear to be defined by their relationships, and women are portrayed as the “property and responsibility of men” (Greene & Meyer, 2014, p. 70). For example, the protagonist, Rick, is known as the leader and a police officer, while his wife, Lori, is defined as a wife and mother (Greene & Meyer, 2014). In *Mad Men*, one female character expresses to another that her goal in life should be to “make the right moves” and find a mate. Instead of working to make a living, the females in this show are “supposed to” work as a way of meeting a man to marry and have children with, so that they can then quit their job and just care for the husband and children (Ferrucci, Shoneberger, & Shauster, 2014, p. 97).

Rather than coming across scenes like those described from *The Walking Dead* and *Mad Men*, feminists ultimately hope to see characters such as Mary Richards in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Richards influenced women on and off screen by presenting a new attitude for the 1970s that women can be single and still be a whole person (Jule, 2010). Not only could she drive herself around, but she could also support herself and live on her own.

Camaraderie. Camaraderie, or a mutual sense of friendship and unity, is the last prominent theme that recent feminist scholars have found in television texts. This can be a powerful tool for women as it unites them and empowers them through support and confidence.

The *Mary Tyler Moore Show* was one of the first series to show this type of feminist support, but it is seen in television media from the 2000s as well (Clark, 2015).

For example, *Sex in the City* shows four female lead characters acting as “each other’s significant other” (Jermyn, 2009, p. 56), offering support for one another on a number of topics, ranging from work to love and sex. Viewers can also feel a sense of female camaraderie in HBO’s *Girls* between the three female leads, Mary, Rhoda, and Phyllis. According to Clark, these media portrayals help to reinforce “the necessity of platonic female friendships void of petty competition or patriarchal influences” (Clark, 2015, p. 5). Empowerment for women can ultimately come from the support that they have from one another. When women are there for one another, it can be seen as meaningful and inherently feminist (Clark, 2015).

While the themes mentioned above encapsulate a majority of the feminist themes identified in previous research on television shows, it is important for scholars to remember that feminism is altogether about equality for women and men. Any time this equality is in question, a feminist scholar has an opportunity to evaluate and draw conclusions.

Examinations of *Jane the Virgin*

Because *Jane the Virgin* is a fairly new television show, critics will currently not find many scholarly articles analyzing the show. As of July of 2016, only one scholarly study related to *Jane the Virgin* exists. This study titled, *Hispanic Representations on Media Platforms: Perspectives and Stereotypes in the Meme, Television, Film and on YouTube*, analyzes a number of different films and television shows and therefore only briefly discusses *Jane the Virgin*. While the study is not a feminist critique, it does evaluate Hispanic representations found in television media (Akines, 2015). Akines states that *Jane the Virgin* “complicated stereotypes placed upon Hispanics,” because it

shows Hispanics as equal to their white American counterparts (Akines, 2015, p. 28).

Ultimately, this study classifies *Jane the Virgin* as a television show that is starting to break traditional molds (Akines, 2015).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Textual Analysis

First developed by Stewart Hall as an alternative to content analysis, textual analysis is a way for researchers to understand how human beings make sense of the world (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999; McKee, 2003). While *content* analysis is “a quantitative, systematic, and objective technique for describing the manifest content of communications” (Treadwell, 2011, p.178), *textual* analysis allows for description and interpretation of the content, structure, and function of messages within a text (Fairclough, 2003). Rather than simply counting the number of times an idea or theme appears in a text, textual analysis allows the researcher to explore both the admitted and omitted aspects of the content to determine the likely interpretations that can be made from the text at hand, including things such as facial expressions, gestures, and tones of voice (McKee, 2003). This is especially important in identifying patterns of feminist criticism, such as the presence of patriarchy, dominance of male representation, and the suppression of females’ perspectives (Zoonen, 1994).

While researchers in the fields of cultural studies, media studies, mass communication, and even sociology and philosophy have benefitted from textual analysis (McKee, 2003), critical textual analyses currently constitute “the largest body of research analyzing the communication of gender ideology” — making it relevant for a study with a feminist criticism theoretical approach (Dow and Conduit, 2005, p. 464). The combination of textual analysis and feminist criticism in this study, allowed for a thorough identification and interpretation of both feminist and intersectional themes.

Defining the text is the first stage of textual analysis (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999). Comprised of anything from a television show to street graffiti, a *text* is “something that we make meaning from” (McKee, 2003, p. 4). Season #1 of *Jane the Virgin* was chosen as the primary season for analysis in this study. While *Jane the Virgin* has aired for three complete seasons, episodes from Season #1 were examined as this is the time when many television shows introduce themes that will be carried out through the lifespan of the show (Brunsdon, Spigel, & D’Acci, 2008; Ferrucci, Shoenberger, & Schauster, 2004).

Within the 22 episodes of Season #1, five episodes were analyzed — a large enough quantity to detect themes that can be considered prevalent in the show. Rather than choosing the episodes based on content, the first, fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth episodes were used for analysis. By choosing every fifth episode, this allowed for randomization in the content that was analyzed.

Both audio and visual elements were analyzed in all episodes, and the analysis focused primarily on three female characters: Jane Villanueva (played by Gina Rodriguez), Xiomara Villanueva (Jane’s mother, played by Andrea Navedo) and Alba Villanueva (Jane’s grandmother, played by Ivonne Coll). The selection of three different generations of female characters, provided a perspective into how age affects feminist and intersectional themes as well. While the textual analyses primarily looked at these three characters, some examinations of other female characters were also made.

Because “textual analysis proceeds from a long initial soak in the material to an extremely close reading” of the text (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999, p. 703), the researcher initially watched the entire first season of *Jane the Virgin* without taking

detailed notes or observations. Instead, during this initial viewing, the researcher simply watched with the intent of understanding the plot of the show. After viewing the entire first season, the researcher then re-watched the five episodes that were randomly selected. This time, the researcher took notes of any implicit or explicit content in the television shows that was in some way related to feminism or intersectionality. After notes were taken for all five of the episodes, the researcher then sifted through the data to see if there were any consistent themes within the content. After having identified themes of both feminism and intersectionality (many of which were similar to the previously discussed themes in the literature), the researcher then proceeded with a third viewing of these five episodes to ensure that sufficient notes had been taken and that the data was classified into the proper themes. During this third viewing, the researcher took more detailed notes of the content. This included dialing down into individual scenes and dialogues in specific episodes to find precise exemplars. Each example was categorized according to the prominent themes selected from the second viewing. While Mary Eagleton, in her book *Working with Feminist Criticism*, states that categorization is not a perfect method, she does state that “categorization is extremely useful as a way of rendering more approachable and intelligible large amounts of varied and/or complex ideas” (1996, p. 137). Therefore, categorizing the observations into themes was the most effective way of coming to a conclusion on how *Jane the Virgin* addresses feminism and intersectionality.

It is important to acknowledge that textual analysis does not deny that multiple readings are possible (Lester-Roushanzamir and Raman, 1999). Rather than coming to one, distinct conclusion, the goal of textual analysis is to “bring out the whole range of

possible meanings” (Larsen, 1991, p. 122). Therefore, each observation drawn from *Jane the Virgin* had the potential of being interpreted in a number of ways.

Focus Groups

Focus groups, usually comprised of 5 to 10 people, are used to “better understand how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product or service” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2). In this study, following IRB approval (#3855) (Appendix B), two focus groups were conducted to further analyze the promotion of feminism and intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin* and to help discover the potential impact of these themes on women who watch the show. There were a total of 13 females who took part in the focus groups, with ages ranging from 18 to 30. Among participants, a broad demographic of ethnicities was represented. Six participants were Latina/Hispanic; three participants were Asian/Pacific Islanders; two participants were white, and two participants were African.

According to Deborah Jermyn, a researcher in film and television, a television show can be more than just something that viewers watch (2004). She says television shows often become “part of the cultural fabric of everyday life” (2004, p. 202). Viewers start to participate in the “brand” that the television show creates by doing things such as: changing which magazines they buy, wearing different clothes, and ordering different drinks when going out (Jermyn, 2004). One way to learn more about these lifestyle changes, as well as other television show effects and resulting opinions, is the use of focus groups that allow the scholar to directly interact with the audience. In recent decades, there has been a growth in the number of scholars who are seeking to understand female audiences’ engagement with female texts (such as female centric

television shows), and Jermyn believes that feminist audience studies should do more than simply make meaning from the text or artifact at hand (2004). Instead, feminist critics should try to engage with the audiences of artifacts. This allows scholars to discover “how women may find empowerment and pleasure in texts” (Jermyn, 2004, p. 207).

While the focus groups helped to answer the research questions in this study, they also helped to expand the overall research that has been done by Third Wave feminists. According to Walters in his study *Everyday life, everyday death: Race, gender, and third-wave cultural activism on Six Feet Under's online fansite*, “fans of television shows have long been a useful source for cultural studies, but have not yet been comprehensively explored by third-wave feminists” (2011, p. 366). Therefore, by involving conversation with *Jane the Virgin* fans, this methodology helped to expand the types of research being conducted by feminist scholars.

To obtain participants, the researchers asked professors, lecturers, and graduate teaching assistants in the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University to encourage their students in Comm 111 Public Speaking and other basic-level communication classes to participate in the focus groups. Comm 111 students are required to participate in a research study each semester, so this focus group helped students to meet that requirement. Flyers (Appendix C) were also placed throughout the Elliott School of Communication to recruit participants, and the Elliott School email newsletter helped to recruit participants.

The focus group invited conversation with a pre-determined list of questions (Appendix A), that were asked by the focus group facilitator. Thirteen total individuals

participated in the focus groups, with one group of six participants and one group of seven. While asking the predetermined questions, the facilitators also promoted participant interaction by encouraging participants to comment on each other's responses and by asking follow-up questions. With the consent of all focus group participants, the focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently coded according to emergent themes.

These themes were evaluated using applied thematic analysis. Known as the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research, “a thematic analysis is the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 11). Rather than counting the presence of words or phrases, such as in a content analysis, a thematic analysis involves interpretation from the researcher — allowing for the description of both implicit and explicit concepts in the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Because thematic analysis has a primary goal of “presenting the stories and experiences voiced by study participants as accurately and comprehensively as possible” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012), this methodology allowed the researchers to see how *Jane the Virgin* viewers interpreted feminism and intersectionality in the show.

Once the focus group data was collected, the researcher started by transcribing all of the audio. Next, the researcher sifted through the focus group data to identify themes of feminism, intersectionality, or impact. Each theme was highlighted with a different color, and it became apparent that many of the focus group themes correlated with the themes that emerged during the textual analysis. After these themes were

established, the researcher went back through the data to ensure that nothing was left out of any of the themes. Then, the researcher created an outline, which grouped all of the data for each emergent theme together. From here, the researcher was able to divide the themes into subthemes. This process was similar to the process for identifying themes, as the researcher again sifted through the data with a highlighter. Once the themes and subthemes were established, the researcher constructed an outline of the focus group data that was used to write the results.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

During the analysis of the five episodes from Season #1, a number of themes emerged supporting the claim that *Jane the Virgin* addresses feminist issues. First, female characters were shown to be in control of their bodies. Second, female characters were shown to embrace their sexuality. Third, female characters were shown to have a strong sense of camaraderie with one another. Fourth, female characters were shown to be independent of men. And lastly, female characters were shown to be competent in work settings. These themes were consistent throughout the episodes analyzed and shed light on many of the issues often associated with feminism.

Season #1 of *Jane the Virgin* kept viewers engaged with many characters and plot twists, and while the storyline is easy to follow for faithful viewers, it can be hard to keep up with for those individuals who are not very familiar with the show. Therefore, it may be helpful to read the following storyline guide before delving into the findings of each of the five emergent themes.

***Jane the Virgin* Character and Episode Guide**

The following guide helps to illustrate the relationships among the main characters in Season #1 and also provides a brief description of each of the five episodes that were analyzed during the textual analysis.

Character	Description
"Latin Lover Narrator" (name given by show)	Male, sultry "soap opera" voice
Jane Villanueva	Female, Latina, pretty, hardworking, waitress at Rafael's hotel, 23 years old
Alba Villanueva (Jane's grandmother)	Female, Latina, traditional
Xiomara Villanueva (Jane's mother)	Female, attractive, Latina, 39 years old, thin, dresses in skimpy clothes, very active sex life
Michael (Jane's boyfriend/fiancé)	Male, white, attractive
Rafael Solano (baby's father; Jane's boss)	Male, Latino, hotel owner, attractive, wealthy
Petra Solano (Rafael's wife)	Female, white, attractive
Rogelio (Jane's father)	Male, Latino, attractive, telenovela star, wealthy, cocky
Dr. Luisa Alver (gynecologist who accidentally inseminates Jane; Rafael's sister)	Female, white, attractive, lesbian
Nadine (detective; works with Michael)	Female, African American, attractive
Rose (Rafael & Luisa's stepmom/Luisa's lover)	Female, white, attractive, bisexual
Roman Zazo (Rafael's best friend, the man Petra cheats with)	Male, black, attractive
Juicy Jordan (Luisa's new girlfriend)	Female, white, professional wrestler
Lina (Jane's friend and co-worker)	Female, Latina

Season #1, Episode #1. Season #1 opens with what is quite possibly the most memorable scene from all of *Jane the Virgin*. Taking place 13 years in the past, this first scene begins with 10-year-old Jane Gloriana Villanueva who is shown to be holding a beautiful white flower in her hand. It is at this time, that Jane's grandmother, Alba Villanueva, is introduced. "Look at that flower in your hand, Jane. Notice how perfect it is. How pure. Now, Mija, crumple it up. Crumple the flower, Jane. Bien. Now try to make it look new again. Go on." When young Jane responds that she can't make it look new

again, Alba responds, “That’s right. You can never go back. And that’s what happens when you lose your virginity. You can never go back. Never forget that, Jane.”

It is from this opening scene that Alba’s traditional, Catholic views are introduced to the audience. Meanwhile, Jane’s mother, Xiomara Villanueva, watches the interaction take place and chimes in, “Really, Mom? But this is so lame.” While Alba is the traditional grandmother wanting to protect her granddaughter’s purity, it quickly becomes clear that Xiomara is much different from her mother. Xiomara is a young, attractive mother who the audience quickly learns is in touch with her sexuality and chooses to embrace it.

Season #1 then continues in present-day times, with now 23-year-old Jane passionately making out on her bed with her boyfriend, Michael. This passionate activity is kept from proceeding any further, as Jane looks over and sees the flower from the opening scene hanging on her wall. All of these years, Jane has held on to both the flower and the promise she made to her grandmother — a promise that now means more to Jane than just religious obligation. Jane has decided to wait until marriage to have sex, so that she can avoid being an unprepared, young, single mother, like her mother, Xiomara, was with her.

As Episode #1 progresses, the characters of Rafael Solano and Petra Solano are introduced. Rafael is the wealthy owner of the *Marbella*, a hotel where he and Petra reside and where Jane currently works as a waitress. The two (Petra and Rafael) are married, but experiencing difficulty with their relationship. In an effort to try to save them, Petra decides to take Rafael’s frozen sperm sample to try to become pregnant with his

child. Rafael is unaware of Petra's decision, and everything gets interesting the day that Petra shows up at the gynecologist for the insemination.

Jane happens to be at the same gynecologist office, at the same time, for a routine pap smear. Unfortunately, the rooms that Petra and Jane are waiting in get mixed up, and the very distraught (she just caught her wife cheating on her) Dr. Luisa Alver accidentally inseminates Jane with Rafael's sperm — leaving Petra with a pap smear and no baby.

Sure enough, Jane becomes pregnant from the insemination — a reality that is hard for both Jane and her mother, Xiomara, to grasp. Being a virgin, Jane first refuses to believe her doctor who tells her of the pregnancy. Later, after she has come to terms with what has happened, she learns that she is pregnant with the baby of Rafael Solano and that he had frozen his sperm as a result of going through cancer and losing his ability to reproduce. As if this doesn't make matters complicated enough, it is soon revealed that Jane and Rafael had a previous encounter a few years before where they shared a deep conversation about Jane's aspirations and, of course, an unforgettable kiss.

As Jane goes to tell her boyfriend, Michael, what has happened with the insemination, Michael has already prepared to propose to Jane. After discussing what has happened, Michael sticks by Jane — clearly in love with her — but expresses to her that he doesn't think she should have the baby.

The episode ends with Jane confiding in her mother, Xiomara, and discussing with her what she should do. Jane decides to accept Michael's proposal and tells him that she plans to have the baby and give it Petra and Rafael.

Season #1, Episode #5. By the time Episode #5 begins, a lot has happened to complicate the plot further. Petra Solano has been shown to be cheating on her husband, Rafael, with Rafael's best friend Roman Zazo. As a detective at Rafael's hotel, Michael (Jane's now-fiancé), became aware of the affair and threatened Petra that he was going to tell Rafael of the affair if she did not end it. (Michael wants them to stay together as a married couple so that Jane will give them the baby.) Rafael found out about the affair anyway, after Roman Zazo was mysteriously murdered in the hotel. Rafael then decided to tell Petra that he wants to end their relationship, and Michael got on board with Jane having the baby. Jane has also learned that her dad is telenovela star, Rogelio de La Vega, and Jane has become very upset with her mother, Xiomara, because Xiomara knew all along who Jane's father was but never told her. This is where Episode #5 picks up.

This episode focuses a great deal on the relationships between Jane and her mother and Jane and her father, as Jane has decided to meet her father for the first time. She meets him at the studio where he films his telenovela, and throughout this time, Jane is refusing to talk to mom, Xiomara, because she is still upset with her. Xiomara worries about Jane and how her meeting with her father is going. Jane and Xiomara eventually make up during the episode.

As all of this is taking place, Rafael has started to becoming romantically interested in Jane. While he is not open to Jane about these feelings, he does open up to her about wanting to raise the baby on his own. Jane feels confusion as she does not know what to do about the pregnancy situation. Michael tells her that he will support whichever decision she makes.

As for the murder of Roman Zazo, Michael, and his detective partner, Nadine, begin to investigate the case together.

At the end of the episode, Petra tries to win back Rafael (with no success) and Jane becomes upset with Michael, as she learns that he knew about Petra's affair and did not tell her.

Season #1, Episode #10. Episode #10 begins with a recap that shows that Petra has had a mysterious past and is not who she says she is. Meanwhile, Jane's boyfriend, Michael, and the baby's father, Rafael, are not getting along, as Jane has left her relationship with Michael and has decided to pursue a relationship with Rafael. Michael and Nadine have continued to investigate the murder at the hotel, and Michael believes that Rafael has something to do with it. Michael has yet to find evidence to support this theory. Lastly, Jane's grandmother has been pushed down a flight of stairs by Petra's mother and remains in the hospital in a coma. Episode #10 starts with a flashback of young Jane asking her grandmother to show her how to pray. The episode then continues in present time where Jane and her mother are with Alba, Jane's grandmother, in the hospital, and a hurricane is about to hit. When Jane realizes that her grandmother's rosary is back at the hotel, Jane leaves in the midst of the storm to go get it.

Of course, Jane ends up having to stay at the hotel as the hurricane begins to really hit. It is at this time that Jane learns that the hotel is going to have to lay off employees — many of which are good friends of Jane. (Remember, Jane is a waitress at the hotel.) While this is very upsetting to Jane, it is a much smaller problem than the issue that Alba and Xiomara are encountering at the hospital. While receiving treatment,

Alba is discovered to be an undocumented immigrant by the hospital staff. The doctor talks to Xiomara and tells her that Alba is going to have to be deported back to her home country of Venezuela and receive medical care there. Xiomara is in disbelief and becomes incredibly frustrated and worried.

Throughout this, Nadine and Michael, the detectives on the murder case, are continuing to investigate and also begin to become romantically involved with each other. They make an important discovery during this episode — finding that a powerful drug lord, known as Sin Rostro, has been using a hidden area of the hotel to perform plastic surgery to change the faces of criminals.

That's not the only crazy thing taking place. The gynecologist, Dr. Luisa Alver, who accidentally inseminated Jane is now in a mental hospital. In this episode, she is visited by the character of Rose. Rose is Rafael and Luisa's stepmother, and also someone who Luisa has been romantically involved with. Rose wants to be with Luisa and talks to her in the mental hospital, where they eventually begin to passionately make out.

Towards the end of the episode we learn that the immigration issues at the hospital have all been resolved. This is thanks to Michael, Jane's ex-fiancé, who still greatly cares about Jane.

Season #1, Episode #15. By the beginning of episode #15, Jane has fallen in love with the baby's father, Rafael. As Jane and Rafael continue a relationship together, Michael is still fighting to win Jane back. Jane's mother also has a new love interest, as she has once again become romantically involved with Jane's father and telenovela

star, Rogelio de La Vega. Petra still longs to be with her ex-husband Rafael, but has been keeping herself busy by gaining control of the *Marbella* hotel.

Among the many conflicts leading up to Episode #15 are Jane's father, Rogelio, losing his job at his telenovela and having to go work under his rival. Jane and Rafael have also had a scare, as they discover that there may be abnormalities with the fetus. Fortunately, the beginning of Episode #15 shows Jane and Rafael learning that their baby is fine. It is in this episode that Rafael really tries to convince Jane to move in with him. Jane is hesitant though, as she wants to do things in the right order (getting married first). Rafael interprets this as Jane wanting him to propose and so that's what he does — with a very extravagant proposal that even involves Jane's favorite author.

While the proposal is perfect, Jane awkwardly does not say yes, as she is unsure if she is ready to fully commit to Rafael. She spends much of this episode seeking advice from both her mother and grandmother. Ultimately, she decides to tell Rafael that while she wants to be in a relationship with him, she's not ready to commit to moving in or marriage.

The main conflicts of this episode are Petra and Rafael fighting over ownership of the hotel, and Jane's mother becoming worried that she may be pregnant with Rogelio's baby. Jane is not amused by this possibility. By the end of the episode, however, it is discovered that Jane's mother, Xiomara, is not pregnant.

Season #1, Episode #20. Episode #20 is the last episode examined during this analysis. Since Episode #15, it has been discovered that Rose is actually the criminal (Sin Rostro) that Michael and Nadine were after, and this isn't the only bad thing to have

happened. Rafael has broken up with Jane, and Rogelio has ended his relationship with Xiomara after discovering that she has kissed another man.

After this recap, the episode begins with Alba remembering who it was that pushed her down the stairs. She tells Jane that it was Magda, Petra's mother. Instantly, Jane and her mother want Alba to turn Magda in to the police, but Alba refuses to do so as it could result in her deportation if the police discover that she is not a legal U.S. citizen.

As for Rafael and Jane, they have been having more difficulty in handling the pregnancy, now that they are not romantically involved. Upon receiving news that the baby is breech (upside down), Jane and Rafael start to worry about the health of their child. Rafael offers to try to help Jane more with the pregnancy, but she declines his offer. From there, much of the episode involves Jane trying different tactics to get the baby to turn. At one point, she even accidentally starts a fire when burning a special wax to try to turn the baby. It is in this episode that Jane really starts to break down from the pressures of being pregnant and without a partner.

Prior to this episode, Luisa had been missing and Petra and Rafael worried that she was with Rose (now Sin Rostro), but in the episode, Luisa reappears at the *Marbella* — stating that she has been in Peru, getting over Luisa. She now has a new girlfriend, Juicy Jordan (a professional wrestler), who Luisa introduces to Petra and Rafael.

The episode ends with Jane deciding to quit her job at the *Marbella* so she can get away from the drama of Petra, Magda and Rafael. Xiomara and Alba promise to

help support Jane through this transition, and the episode ends with Jane declaring she wants full custody of the child.

With brief descriptions of each of the five episodes now provided, discussion of each of the five, emergent, feminist themes will follow. These themes specifically address the women empowerment aspects of feminism.

Textual Analysis Results — RQ1 (Feminism)

Female Characters in Control of Their Bodies

This first theme supports women making decisions about their bodies and whether or not to engage in sexual activity. The two subthemes within this theme are female characters dictating participation in sexual activity and female characters making choices about reproduction.

Female characters dictate participation in sexual activity. Throughout the episodes analyzed from Season #1, there are multiple instances where the lead character, Jane, is in control of what she is willing to do in regards to sexual activity. Jane's strong voice in the bedroom can be seen and heard as early as the second scene of Episode #1 when Jane and her then-boyfriend Michael are passionately making out in her bedroom. While Jane seems to be enjoying the intimacy she shares with Michael, she is quick to keep the intimacy from progressing when she looks up and sees the white flower from the opening scene hanging on her wall. "Stop, we should stop!" exclaims Jane. This flower, representing Jane's virginity, has been an ongoing reminder of the promise she made to her grandmother, and more importantly, the promise she made to herself. This flower is likely one of the most important visual aspects of the show, as it becomes a symbol of Jane's virginity and a reminder to Jane

of her promise to her grandmother and her life plan. Michael clearly wants to pursue Jane further, but as she puts a stop to their make-out session, he respects her decision and refrains from pressuring her.

A similar instance occurs later in Episode #1 when Jane is texting Michael and declines phone sex with him. The text messages are visually portrayed for viewers to read:

MICHAEL: Phone sex?

JANE: Mom's sleeping in here tonight.

MICHAEL: Soundly?

JANE: Ew.

At this point in the conversation, Jane changes the subject and Michael does not bring up phone sex again.

The important thing in both of these scenes is that Jane remains in control of her decision not to have sex, and she's never dominated by a male character's desire to have sex. Just as Jane does not pressure Michael to do things he is uncomfortable with, Michael does not pressure her either.

As Season #1 progresses, viewers learn more about Jane's choice to remain a virgin. While the opening scene may indicate that Jane's choice stems from the desires of her grandmother, Alba, her decision goes much deeper than this. A heartfelt conversation between Jane and her mother, Xiomara, indicates that Jane is waiting for marriage to have sex in hopes of avoiding becoming a young, unprepared, single mother like her mother was with her.

XIOMARA: Baby, I know how you feel. I was 16 when I got pregnant with you, and I was so scared.

JANE: You were irresponsible. You got pregnant because you were irresponsible. I don't even have a dad. And I've done everything right — my whole life, I've tried to do everything right so that I'd...

XIOMARA: So you won't turn out like me.

Jane nods and refrains from responding to this statement from her mother. It is implied that Xiomara is correct. The two of them then change the subject of conversation.

Female characters making choices about reproduction. Just as the show gives examples of female characters having control over how far they progress sexually, the show also portrays female characters making their own decisions regarding reproduction.

While this second subtheme revolves mostly around the lead character, Jane, Petra, Rafael's wife, also takes control of her body and her ability to have a child. Petra decides to impregnate herself without the knowledge of her husband, making her own reproduction decision.

When Jane becomes pregnant rather than Petra, she has many decisions to make — the most significant being what she is going to do with the pregnancy.

After learning about the insemination in Episode #1, Jane engages in deep conversation with her mother to discuss the confusion she is feeling about the pregnancy. Should she keep it? Abort it? Give birth and give the child to Petra and Rafael? Attempt to share custody? While Jane tells her mother that she doesn't know what to do, Xiomara, tells her that it is ultimately up to her to decide. She can keep it,

give it up to the father, or get an abortion. This scene empowers Jane's choice, as Xiomara encourages her, "I just wanted you to know that you had a choice, because having one, it helps, I think. Whatever you decide." As Episode #1 progresses, it becomes known that when Xiomara was pregnant with Jane, her mother, Alba recommended that she have an abortion. Instead of following the recommendation of her mother, Xiomara chose to give birth to and keep Jane. As Jane makes her decision of what to do with her pregnancy, it is now her turn to consider each available option — abortion, giving up custody, and keeping custody.

While Jane feels a desire to have and keep the baby, she also feels guilty keeping the child from Petra and Rafael who want the baby so badly for themselves. In Episode #1, viewers learn that Rafael can no longer have children because of his cancer treatment, and this pregnancy resulted from his only sperm sample.

In the end of Episode #1, Jane decides that she wants to keep the baby. Jane's boyfriend, Michael, has made it known at this point that he would prefer for her to give the child to Rafael, the baby's father, but Jane recognizes that this is her decision to make and stands up for her choice. As Jane makes this empowered decision, it replicates the same type of empowered decision that Xiomara took when she decided to go through with her pregnancy and keep Jane.

Jane's decision becomes more complicated when Rafael approaches Jane in Episode #5 and tells her that he wants custody of the baby and to raise it on his own. (Petra and Rafael are no longer in a relationship at this point as Rafael caught her cheating on him with his best friend.) When Jane tells her now-fiancé Michael about the conversation, it is clear that she is still conflicted about what to do. At this point, Michael

has become supportive of the idea of Jane making this decision and doing what she feels is best.

MICHAEL: Whatever you want to do. If you want to keep the baby, we will.

JANE: No, but really? What are my options? I can let him raise it alone or the three of us share custody? Which is just...hard and complicated.

MICHAEL: Yeah, it would be. I'll support whatever you decide. Just let me know what you're leaning towards — baby, no baby.

Through this scene, Jane not only portrays an empowered female character in control of her body and reproduction, but she's also supported by her male counterpart in this decision.

By the end of this episode, Jane has come to terms with her decision and approaches Rafael, telling him, "I can't walk away from this baby. And I know that's not what you want to hear, but that's where I'm at." Jane is very confident and assertive at this point. Just as she rejected the initial wishes of Michael, she also rejects the wishes of Rafael as she actively pursues what she wants. This situation can be seen as a difficult one, as both Jane and Rafael technically conceived the child. As the show progresses, we see Jane and Rafael plan to share custody of the child, so they can both be involved in her or his life.

As the plot continues to take its many twists and turns, however, Jane declares that she wants full custody of the child at the end of Episode #20.

Overall, this theme communicates Jane and Petra's empowerment to control their own reproductive choices. Both women have control over their bodies and control over their decisions, rather than allowing the men in their lives to make decisions for

them. This is illustrated in how Jane holds on to her virginity, how Petra decides to impregnate herself, how Xiomara presents multiple options to Jane, and how Jane rejects the desires of Rafael and Michael and makes the decision herself to give birth and keep the baby.

Female Characters Embrace Their Sexuality

The second emergent theme from the textual analysis also surrounds sexuality. This theme discusses the presence of female characters who embrace their sexuality. This theme includes three subthemes. First, female characters initiate sexual activity. Second, female characters embrace a lesbian sexual orientation. Third, female characters express enjoyment from sexual activity.

Female characters initiate sexual activity. The subthemes for this second theme of female characters embracing their sexuality involve a number of female characters — the first of which is Petra.

In Episode #1, Petra approaches Rafael as he is worrying over the state of the *Marbella* hotel. Petra comes to check on him, and as she begins to comfort him, she tells him, “You just need to relax.” As she states this, she begins to lower herself down in front of him, implying visually to the viewer that she is going to give him oral sex. Petra initiates this sexual activity.

A second scene, again involving Petra occurs in Episode #5, when she dresses seductively to seduce Rafael. Their relationship is in question at this point, as Rafael has found out that Petra cheated on him, and she attempts to initiate sexual activity with him as a way to get what she wants (to win him back and share custody of the baby). There are many visual elements in this scene, as Petra begins to make out with Rafael,

she rubs her hands on his bare chest before dropping her robe. The scene ends with a close-up view of the robe falling to the floor.

In Episode #10 another female character initiates sexual activity, this time with another woman. Rose approaches Luisa with the intent to have sex with her while Luisa is housed in a mental hospital. Visual elements again communicate the initiation of sex as Luisa is shown tying Rose to the bed and they begin passionately making out.

While there are no examples of Jane's mother, Xiomara, initiating sexual activity in the episodes that were analyzed for this textual analysis, there is one instance in which Xiomara approaches a man. This scene takes place in Episode #1 when Jane and Xiomara are riding the bus together. Xiomara checks out a man on the bus, then hands him a piece of paper, and tells him, "Come to my gig tomorrow night, Boo." While this scene does not directly relate to sexual activity, viewers of the show do know that Xiomara is a very sexual person and is likely to engage in sexual activity with someone to whom she is attracted. While Xiomara does not initiate sex here, this scene may be interpreted by some viewers as breaking traditional gendered stereotypes because the female character is the one initiating contact.

Female characters embrace a lesbian sexual orientation. From the first episode of the series, it is evident that there are lesbian characters in the show — the three main being Luisa, Rose, and Juicy Jordan.

The audience is first introduced to the presence of lesbian relationships in Episode #1 when Luisa walks in on her wife cheating on her. (This takes place right before the unintended insemination, and Luisa's resulting distraction can be blamed for the insemination error.)

Later in the show, Luisa moves on from her wife and becomes sexually active with the female character, Rose, Luisa's stepmother. Their romantic relationship continues through the beginning of Season #1, and as discussed in the last subtheme, they engage in sexual activity while Luisa is in the mental hospital. Shortly before the intimacy begins, Rose approaches Luisa and tells her she wants to be with her: "I need to see you. I feel so terrible about what happened. What I did... I feel so ashamed. I mean, I'm an adult, and it's 2015 and I'm not ready to admit that I want to be with a woman, that I want to be with you."

When this relationship between Rose and Luisa ends, Luisa pursues a new relationship. Viewers become aware of this relationship in Episode #20, when Luisa introduces her new girlfriend, Juicy Jordan, to Petra and Rafael.

Through these scenes, the show normalizes lesbian relationships. There are never any instances in these episodes of the show criticizing or judging these characters for their sexual orientation.

Female characters express enjoyment from sexual activity. Jane's mother, Xiomara, plays a key role in the third subtheme of female characters expressing enjoyment from sexual activity. While Jane is a virgin, her mother is not. Xiomara is shown to enjoy sex and engages in it frequently. After asking out the man on the bus in Episode #1, Xiomara turns to Jane and tells her, "The best way to get over a man is to get under a new man." This contributes to the portrayal that Xiomara is a sexual woman and that it is a large part of how she operates in the world.

In Episode #15, viewers see Xiomara and Rogelio in bed apparently immediately following some sort of sexual activity. Both characters are gasping heavily, looking as though they both enjoyed the intimacy. Xiomara exclaims, “Wow. That was incredible.”

In summary, this second theme communicates that female characters in *Jane the Virgin* embrace their sexuality, rather than treating it as a taboo subject that only men should enjoy or initiate. Female characters initiate sexual activity — Petra through oral sex and intimacy with Rafael, Luisa and Rose with one another, and Xiomara approaching the man on the bus. Through the presence of lesbian characters and the normalization of their relationships, it is clear that female characters in the show embrace their lesbian sexual orientation. Finally, Xiomara’s active sex life and obvious portrayals of enjoyment after intimacy show that females find enjoyment from sex.

Female Characters Have a Strong Sense of Camaraderie

The third emergent theme identifies the presence of female camaraderie. This idea of female camaraderie was discussed in the previous literature review and essentially supports the notion that for feminism to work, women should support one another. Within the episodes analyzed from Season #1, two subthemes of camaraderie emerged. First, female family members provide support for one another. Second, female friends provide support for one another.

Female family members provide support for one another. As viewers of *Jane the Virgin* watch Season #1, it is clear that Jane is very close with both her mother, Xiomara, and her grandmother, Alba. She has lived in the same house with the two of them all her life. They appear to have been her lifelong support system as they are

shown together both in present time and through various flashbacks, and their support is especially needed now with the unexpected pregnancy.

By the conclusion of Episode #1, it becomes clear that Xiomara is Jane's biggest support. Xiomara seems to have great trust in Jane and is willing to do everything she can to help her succeed. After the doctor insists that Jane must not be a virgin (she's pregnant so she can't be a virgin, right?), Jane's mother becomes visibly upset and stands up for her daughter. She exclaims to the doctor, "Where did you get your degree from, the University of Dumb-ass? My daughter said that she is a freakin' virgin so do another damn test!" Asking for another test implies that Xiomara questions the pregnancy test, not that Jane is a virgin.

Xiomara's support for Jane continues throughout Episode #1, as Xiomara comforts Jane in her feelings of fear and uncertainty about the pregnancy. Xiomara tells her that she also felt scared when she found out she was going to be a young mother, and she does what she can to help Jane realize that she has the resources and support to manage this situation.

While much of Xiomara's support for Jane is needed in Episode #1 because of the unexpected pregnancy, the support that Xiomara gives Jane in Episode #5 revolves more around the male figures that are present in Jane's life. At this point, Jane feels betrayed by Michael, because he knew about Petra's affair and did not tell her. Without having her fiancé to turn to in this time of pain, Jane turns to her mother for support and comfort. This moment brings the two of them closer together, as Jane had also been upset with her mother because her mother had not told her that Rogelio was her father.

Jane even refused to speak to Xiomara in the moments leading up to meeting her father for the first time. As Jane goes to visit Rogelio, Xiomara worries about how the conversation will go. It is at this point, that Alba provides support, telling Xiomara, “She's mad at you. She'll come back to you when she's ready.” — which Jane does.

While flashbacks occur throughout the entirety of Season #1, a flashback in Episode #10 highlights the sense of family camaraderie as it occurred in the past. Young Jane needs a food dish to take to school for “Heritage Day,” but she’s scared to ask her mother because Xiomara is not a good cook. Young Jane confides in her grandmother and asks her to teach her how to pray the rosary. Jane wants to pray in hopes that God will give her mother the ability to cook something good for Heritage Day. Xiomara overhears this conversation between Jane and Alba and later approaches Alba:

XIOMARA: So, I heard you and Jane talking about she's scared I'll mess up the food. Can you make it? I don't want to embarrass her.

ALBA: Absolutely not!

XIOMARA: But, Ma!

ALBA: I'll teach you. Just like my mother taught me.

Through this scene, viewers see the important role that Alba plays in supporting both her daughter and granddaughter. She reassures Jane that everything will be okay for Heritage Day, and then gives Xiomara the guidance she needs to prepare the food for Jane.

Another flashback that shows the family’s camaraderie in the past is when Jane goes through her school papers in Episode #15: “100 in math, 100 in social studies, 98

in spelling but that's because I used the British spelling of 'amphitheater,' so I think I can argue that tomorrow." As she does this, her mother congratulates her on her success and responds, "Great job, hon." This scene shows the type of positive reinforcement that Jane has received from her mother since a young age.

There were two more strong examples of family camaraderie identified during the analysis, both of which take place in Episode #20 as Jane is trying to be independent and handle the pregnancy on her own. Jane and Rafael learn that the baby is in the breech position (feet down rather than being head down as needed for delivery), and, upon receiving this news, Jane starts to research strategies to turn the baby. One of these ways involves burning moxa, a special herb meant to help the baby get out of the breech position. Rather than asking for help, Jane begins to burn the moxa on her own, which results in a small fire when Jane falls asleep. Alba is the one to find her (fortunately, just as the fire is beginning) and questions why she didn't ask for help. Jane then breaks down, as she struggles to handle the stress of the impending birth. Alba comforts Jane in this time of need by pulling her close, hugging her, and gently rubbing her back.

Later, in Episode #20, Jane decides to quit her job as a waitress at the *Marbella* hotel and confides in her mother and grandmother to see if they will help her out until she is able to find another job. They agree to help without question:

JANE: I have enough saved for now. I'll get a new job after the baby comes. If I have to go back to work a few weeks earlier, I will. As long as you'll help me.

ALBA: Of course we will.

Female friends provide support for one another. While there is a clear presence of support coming from Jane's family, the show also exhibits friendship camaraderie as a source of emotional and physical support.

For example, when Jane prepares to meet her father for the first time, she asks her female friend/co-worker, Lina, to cover for her at the *Marbella*. Lina offers support and grab's Jane's hand. As they hold hands, they tell each other "I love you." This is a scary time for Jane, as she does not know what to expect when meeting her father, but thanks to Lina, she has someone to not only cover for her at work, but to also offer her emotional support.

In Episode #10, the friendships that Jane has with Lina and her other co-workers at the *Marbella* are put at risk, as her friends tell her that they've heard that there are going to be layoffs at the hotel. Her work friends are worried about losing their positions. After hearing her friends' worries, Jane approaches Rafael and asks if she can see the list of employees being considered for layoffs:

RAFAEL: Is everything okay?

JANE: Yeah, it's just, uh...my friends heard that there were gonna be layoffs, and they're freaking out. And I hate to ask this, but is it true?

RAFAEL: Yes. Unfortunately. My dad wants to institute a 15% cut across the board. So I've just been up here trying to make a list.

JANE: Can I see it?

RAFAEL: You really think that's...appropriate?

JANE: Probably not, but I feel like I have to because of my friends.

Shortly after this scene, Rafael fires Jane's friend Frankie. When Jane learns of this, she confronts Rafael to see if there's anything she can do to get Frankie's job back. At this point in the season, Jane and Rafael are in a romantic relationship with one another. Jane sticks up for her friend — trying to help her to get her job back.

Through this theme, it is clear that there is strong camaraderie among the women in *Jane the Virgin*. This camaraderie occurs among family members as Alba, Xiomara, and Jane support one another with topics like the pregnancy, Jane's father, Heritage Day, school, and finances. Camaraderie among female friends exists between Jane and Lina and among Jane and her coworkers as Lina helps provide emotional support to Jane when she meets her father and as Jane tries to help her coworkers keep their jobs. In both these relationships — family and friends — the camaraderie provides a strong support system for the women involved.

Female Characters are Independent of Male Characters

The fourth emergent theme is the presence of female characters who are independent of male characters. The two subthemes for this theme include female characters succeed without the presence of a man and female characters choose themselves over a man.

Female characters succeed without the presence of a man. Within the episodes analyzed from Season #1, there are multiple instances where Jane is shown to be a strong, independent woman without the need for a man to support her. For instance, Jane works very hard to achieve her personal and career goals. Not only does she work as a waitress at the *Marbella* hotel, but she also student teaches, interns at her father's television studio, and works diligently towards her goal of becoming a writer.

Jane has achieved success in each of these roles without the assistance of a man, and the monetary compensation she gets from these roles helps her to be a financially independent woman.

There are also multiple instances in which Jane handles the pregnancy without help from Michael or Rafael. A number of examples of this happen in Episode #20 when Jane's relationship with Rafael is struggling. Rafael asks Jane if there's any way he can help her with the pregnancy. Jane declines, stating, "Oh, no. Looks like I have to do this stuff myself." This conversation takes place around the time that Jane and Rafael learn about the baby's breech position, and Jane tries to get the baby to move on her own. This is when Jane decides to burn the moxa in hopes that it will help the situation. As she tries to be independent, the narrator from the show intervenes with his commentary saying "No partner. No problem." Jane knows what she needs to do, and she doesn't let her relationship issues with Rafael interfere.

By the end of this same episode, Jane declares that she wants full custody of the child. While Jane surely knows the challenges single motherhood will present (she's learned a lot from the experience her mother had), she declares independence from the male characters who are causing her relationship frustration and proceeds with handling the pregnancy without them. Her mother and grandmother are there for emotional and physical support, as discussed in the theme of camaraderie, but Jane does not seek help from any males at this point.

Petra is another character shown to be very powerful and independent. These qualities are strongly portrayed in Episode #15 when Petra and Rafael are fighting over ownership of the *Marbella* hotel. Rafael tries to convince Petra that she cannot run the

hotel on her own, stating, “Petra, hold on, Wait, you need me. You can’t run this hotel alone.” Rather than being dominated by Rafael, Petra stands up to him, actively rejects his message, and exclaims, “Watch me.” Petra knows what she wants and she goes after it.

Female characters choose themselves over a man. This second subtheme acknowledges times in the plot when women put themselves first, rather than succumbing to the needs or desires of a male character. This was seen within the prior subtheme when Michael communicated his desire that Jane not carry the pregnancy or keep the baby, but Jane decided to anyway. The following examples show that these types of decisions were also made in regards to Jane’s relationship with Rafael.

In Episode #15 there is heavy discussion of whether or not Jane and Rafael should move in together. While it is clear that moving in together is something that Rafael wants, Jane is not ready to move in with him. At the beginning of Episode #15, she tells him, “I’ve been thinking about this a lot. And I really want to say yes, but I can’t. I just had this order, you know? How my life would lay out. Date, get engaged, get married, have a baby. And, yes, the baby thing happened first...but I don’t want to just throw out the whole order. Or rather, I want to, but I can’t.”

Jane does have strong feelings for Rafael at this point, but by declining Rafael’s offer for them to live together, she is putting her aspirations ahead of pleasing Rafael. When Jane says “I can’t,” it doesn’t literally mean that she cannot. She’s saying she can’t because it will go against the goals she has set for herself. By waiting to move in, she’s protecting herself and ensuring a better chance of succeeding at all of the things she has planned for her life.

This conversation comes up again in Episode #15 when Jane is more direct with Rafael about her decision. At this point, Rafael has proposed to Jane (in an effort to achieve the “order” she discussed in the earlier scene, but Jane has yet to accept his proposal. When Jane approaches Rafael, she tells him, “I think I was afraid of the answer I know in my gut. Which is...I can't marry you. Not yet. And that look on your face — I mean, that's why I didn't want to admit it. To myself, to you. Because I was scared that if I turned down your proposal that would mean that something would break between us. That things would change. And I don't want that, because I love you and I want to get married. I'm just not there yet.” Again, this scene illustrates that Jane is not letting a male interfere with her decisions. She knows what she is and is not ready for and she claims it. Rafael's proposal was very elaborate and even included her favorite author. Regardless, Jane does not let it change her strong stance, and instead, she is even willing to risk her relationship with Rafael if it means keeping true to herself.

In summary, this theme illustrates a sense of independence for the female characters. Jane and Petra both communicate that they do not need a man to succeed — as Jane maintains financial independence and manages her pregnancy without a male and Petra stands up for herself and works to independently run the *Marbella* hotel. Also in this theme of independence, Jane is repeatedly shown to put herself first, rather than succumbing to the wants or needs of a man. This is shown through Jane staying true to herself and declining Rafael's marriage proposal and invitation to live with him.

Female Characters are shown to be Competent in Work Settings

This last theme addresses women in the workplace — an issue that has long been associated with the struggle for equality. This theme includes three subthemes.

First, female characters are smart, hardworking and powerful. Second, female characters have professional, respectable careers. Third, female characters are encouraged to pursue professional goals.

Female characters are smart, hardworking, and powerful. Rather than portraying female characters as telenovelas often do (predictable, needy, dramatic, naïve, etc.), *Jane the Virgin* portrays its female characters to have positive qualities, such as being smart, hardworking, and powerful. Petra and Nadine are the two female characters who emerged for this subtheme.

Nadine is the female police detective who works alongside Michael. When the murder of Roman Zazo happens, the two of them work together to solve the case. In Episode #5, Nadine takes charge of the case, asking Rafael for information to help them identify who was working at the hotel the night of the murder. In Episode #10, Nadine makes a crucial discovery in the murder case, helping to identify the criminals' faces. As these scenes play out, it's important to not only note the dialogue taking place, but to also analyze the visual aspects of the show. Repeatedly, Nadine is portrayed to be equal to her male counterparts. In Episode #10, Nadine and Michael are shown side by side, both holding guns and doing equal amounts of investigation. This is further demonstrated as they share ideas back and forth and verbally collaborate with one another on the case.

Petra is another hardworking, powerful female character. In Episode #15, she attempts to win over the board of the *Marbella* hotel. Her confidence, determination, and refusal to let others manipulate her, help to portray her as a sly, clever and powerful

character. She makes her own decision in Episode #15 to fire one of the assertive male assistants in her life.

Female characters have professional, respectable careers. As mentioned, Nadine plays the role of a police detective, which is a very professional, respectable career that one has to work hard to achieve. Along with this, there are also a number of other professional careers held by females in the show. Luisa works as a gynecologist, Juicy Jordan works as a professional wrestler, Angelique Harper is a successful author, and Dina works as the head writer for *The Passions of Santos* (the telenovela that Rogelio stars in). These roles vary greatly from one another and show the female characters in a variety of professional roles.

Female characters are encouraged to pursue professional goals. Lastly, there is a strong presence of support in *Jane the Virgin* for the female characters to pursue their professional goals. While Jane is in a relationship with Michael, he repeatedly supports her aspirations to become a writer, but it is Rafael who primarily gives encouragement to Jane in the episodes that were examined for this analysis.

In Episode #1, a flashback shows the first time that Jane and Rafael met, and it is in this scene that Rafael first encourages her to follow her dreams:

JANE: Well, it depends. Am I being practical or brave?

RAFAEL: Practical.

JANE: I'm a teacher.

RAFAEL: Brave.

JANE: I'm a writer? I have never said that out loud before.

RAFAEL: Be brave.

During this scene, Jane and Rafael were not in a relationship with one another, but this support and encouragement continues as Rafael and Jane become romantically involved. In Episode #15, Jane tells Rafael that she can't move in with him because she has other aspirations and goals, such as wanting to become an author and teacher. Rafael respects this, stating, "I get it." Shortly after, the following conversation takes place when Jane and Rafael meet on the beach so Jane can try to identify if Rafael really does "know her to her core":

JANE: Thanks for meeting me. I know you're busy today.

RAFAEL: Eh, it's just all normal hotel craziness. It can wait. And you said you wanted to talk.

JANE: Yes. But not about the proposal.

RAFAEL: I know. I got your text.

JANE: Just didn't want you coming and expecting...

RAFAEL: That you made a decision about whether or not you wanted to marry me? I get it. Still thinking.

JANE: Yeah, I've been thinking about a lot of things actually. I mean, like, what's my life gonna look like after the baby? What's my plan? And I really think I need to kind of 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 and all that. What do you think?

RAFAEL: Of course, if that's what you want.

JANE: (sighs)

RAFAEL: Hold on.

JANE: What?

RAFAEL: 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?

JANE: I'm really glad you said that. You passed the test!

Rather than expecting Jane to settle or prioritize only her role as mother, Rafael wants to see Jane be happy and succeed.

Overall, this theme communicates that the female characters in *Jane the Virgin* are competent and capable within a professional work environment. The women are shown as smart, hardworking, and powerful through Nadine's role as a police detective and Petra's role as a powerful hotel owner. The wide variety of roles held by women (including gynecologist, detective, author, wrestler, etc.) communicate that the women in the show hold professional, respectable careers. Lastly, the encouragement that Michael and Rafael give to Jane shows a female character being encouraged to pursue her professional goals.

The Presence of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

This analysis of feminism in *Jane the Virgin* is not complete without also discussing the scenes that may be seen as controversial in a feminist critique. The following are situations in the plot that may come off as anti-feminist because they degrade or criticize women, portray stereotypes, or show male characters trying to dominate women's decisions.

Objectification of women. After the implied oral sex scene in Episode #1, the following scene opens with a close-up camera shot of Petra putting on her lipstick with

her mouth in a broad “O” shape. Because this scene takes place immediately after the implied oral sex, and because the shape of her mouth is similar to the shape that would be taken during oral intercourse, this scene may be seen as objectifying Petra.

The other presence of objectification takes place in the scene where Jane is preparing to meet her father for the first time and Jane’s friend offers her support. As they express their friendship for one another by grabbing hands and telling each other, “I love you,” a male co-worker standing nearby exclaims, “Sweet! Make-out time!” Jane and her friend reply with groans, and the male co-worker then refers to Jane as “hot.”

Gendered sexual stereotypes. Within the episodes that were analyzed there were several instances where the plot reinforced the sexual stereotype that men are often focused on having sex. For instance, the text conversation mentioned previously shows Michael trying to have phone sex with Jane, and in Episode #5, visual scenes in the show portray Rafael as having sexual fantasies that include Jane. When Rafael approaches Jane at work to discuss the baby. He says, “I wanted to talk to you.” To which the narrator says, “Well, that’s not all he wanted to do to her.” A flashback of Rafael dreaming of having oral sex with Jane follows.

Another scene to note here, is when Rafael runs into Jane while she is working at his hotel. He’s trying to figure out where he knows her from. She’s wearing a mermaid costume (for work) and as Rafael tries to recognize how he knows her, she replies, “I don’t normally wear clamshells,” to which Rafael responds, “Oh. The strip club on Biscayne?”

Lastly, Jane’s female co-worker/friend, Lina, may be perceived as reinforcing gendered stereotypes during the conversation that she and Jane have about the

possibility of Michael proposing. Jane claims that they have a timeline they are sticking to and therefore he's not going to propose yet — to which Lina replies, "You've been dating for two years and you haven't boned. He might move up your timeline."

Females criticizing one another. As discussed in the literature and earlier results of the textual analysis, women should support one another in order for feminism to succeed. This support and camaraderie is not extant when one female character judges another. For example, in Episode #1 Xiomara engages in name-calling of her neighbor, stating, "Oh man, you know that guy Darryl who's been dating Slutty Crystal?" In Episode 15, Xiomara again refers to "Slutty Crystal." This type of female criticism occurs three times in the episodes that were analyzed and supports the sexual double standard.

Male characters try to control reproduction. Lastly, there are some scenes where the male characters try to assert control of reproductive decisions. For instance, in Episode #1, viewers learn that Jane has never met her father because the day that Jane's mother told Jane's father that she was pregnant, he told her to "get rid of it."

Michael makes a similar gesture about Jane's pregnancy when he comes to talk to her on the front porch at the end of Episode #1. During their discussion, he tells Jane not to have the baby.

In the discussion section, these anti-feminist scenes will be further analyzed to see how the show counters these situations to address feminist ideals.

Next, the results of intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin* are presented.

Textual Analysis Results — RQ2 (Intersectionality)

Along with themes of feminism, themes of intersectionality also emerged within the five analyzed episodes. These two themes include the portrayal of struggle due to intersections and the portrayal of characters who succeed regardless of their intersecting identities.

Struggle Due to Intersecting Intersections

This first theme acknowledges the presence of struggle, discrimination or domination as a result of two or more intersecting identities. The three main subthemes within this theme include the intersection of ethnicity and legal status, the intersection of motherhood with other social identities (such as religion, age, and family role) and the intersection of class and economy.

The intersection of ethnicity and legal status. *Jane the Virgin* is one of the only shows on network television with a predominantly Latina and Latino cast, and much of the story is told through the eyes of the three Latina women, Alba, Xiomara, and Jane. Because Alba does not have citizenship, there are multiple scenes that portray an intersection between her ethnicity and legal status. Within the episodes selected for this analysis, there are two plot scenarios where this intersection is shown to bring difficulty to Alba and her family members.

The first of these scenes takes place in Episode #10 when Alba is in the hospital in a coma. The following is a conversation that takes place between Xiomara and the doctor.

DOCTOR: Ms. Villanueva, there's no easy way to say this.

XIOMARA: Oh, no. Did the test results...

DOCTOR: No, no. Her condition remains unchanged. Look, the hospital's cracking down...

XIOMARA: On what?

DOCTOR: Your mother is in this country illegally. She has no insurance. And the hospital cannot afford to absorb the cost of her care.

XIOMARA: I-I don't understand. What does that mean?

DOCTOR: That when the hurricane lifts, we will have to notify ICE, and they will deport her to Venezuela, where she can continue to receive care if she needs.

XIOMARA: What? That can't be legal.

While Xiomara is outraged, the narrator intervenes and types the following words across the screen for the audience to read:

Yes, this really happens. Look it up. #ImmigrationReform

As these words visually display, a loud pounding sound effect brings emphasis to the words and the doctor then concludes the scene by stating, "It's called medical repatriation."

A similar struggle arises with Alba's citizenship in Episode #20 when Alba is afraid to tell the police that Magda pushed her down the stairs — due to fear of being deported when the police find that she is undocumented.

ALBA: I remember what happened when I fell down the stairs. But you have to stay calm when I tell you.

XIOMARA: Okay, you're scaring me — what happened?

JANE: Petra's mom pushed her down the stairs.

XIOMARA: What?

JANE: Yeah, and now Abuela doesn't want to go to the police because she's undocumented.

These intersectional scenes highlight ethnicity, health care, and engagement with the legal system and provide an opportunity to educate viewers on immigration reform, the law, and their implications. As demonstrated by both scenes, the intersection of ethnicity and legal status has brought difficulty to Alba that is also affecting Jane and Xiomara.

The intersection of motherhood and other social identities. Other portrayals of struggle result from motherhood intersecting with religion or age and family role.

Motherhood and religion. Jane and Xiomara are the primary characters who experience some type of struggle due to the intersection of single motherhood and religion. As portrayed in Episode #1, Jane feels pressure not to have premarital sex because of her grandmother's expectations. When Alba explains these expectations in Episode #1, it is clear that Alba's traditional stance on this topic is associated with religious beliefs. Alba wears a necklace with a cross in this scene, and the characters are introduced to the viewers through this dialogue from the narrator:

NARRATOR: Our story begins 13 and a half years ago, when Jane Gloriana Villanueva was a mere ten years old. It should be noted that at a mere ten years old, Jane's passions include — in no particular order — her family, God and grilled cheese sandwiches.

ALBA: Look at the flower in your hand, Jane.

NARRATOR: This is Jane's grandmother, Alba Gloriana Villanueva. Her passions include God and Jane, in that particular order.

This dialogue causes the viewers to associate Alba's desire for Jane not to have sex with religious values. In the scene following, Jane and Michael are passionately making out on her bed, when she sees the flower hanging on the wall, she pulls away from Michael and exclaims, "Stop, we should stop!" As this takes place, Jane is wearing a necklace with a cross, symbolizing that religion is important to Jane as well and likely plays a role in why she's respected Alba's expectations not to have sex.

When Alba finds out that Jane is pregnant in Episode #1, she does not handle the information well. Instead, she makes it clear that she is disappointed in Jane.

ALBA: You've broken my heart.

JANE: Oh, Abuela, it is not what you think.

ALBA: I think you have lied to me for a very long time.

JANE: No, I didn't. I...I got accidentally...Oh, I don't even know how to say this in Spanish.

ALBA: You had sexual relations...

JANE: No, no, I didn't. The doctor made a mistake.

Even though Jane's pregnancy does not result from having premarital sex, this scene does show the type of family recriminations a Catholic woman may face for becoming pregnant outside of wedlock.

Xiomara's pregnancy with Jane is another situation that demonstrates this same struggle. As seen with Xiomara, strong Catholic faith can cause a Latina single mother to face even more difficulty and oppression than a single mother who does not have strong religious standards influencing her behavior. It is shown in Episode #1 that when Xiomara became pregnant at 16, Alba actually wanted her to get an abortion. Abortion

is in opposition to Catholic beliefs, but having a baby outside of wedlock is as well, and Alba believed that Xiomara's life would be much easier without having to raise a child.

ALBA: When your mother came home at 16 and told me she was pregnant, I told her to have an abortion.

JANE: What?!

ALBA: And she said no, thank God. But I carry that shame in my heart every day. Because now, you have become the best part of my life and this will become the best part of your life too.

Xiomara and Jane's decisions of what to do with the potential child (keep it, give it up for adoption, or abort it) is just one of the many difficulties that they face as women with unexpected pregnancies. These decisions may have been even harder for these women because of the religious expectations placed on them.

Motherhood, age and family role. As Jane is now pregnant in Season #1, her mother, Xiomara, is about to take on the role of grandmother. But in Episode #15, Xiomara has a pregnancy scare herself. When Jane learns of this, she expresses disapproval of Xiomara for her sexual behavior.

XIOMARA: Uh, quick question, do you remember when you bought those blue shorts? Was it a Tuesday or a Wednesday?

JANE: I don't remember.

XIOMARA: Think, though — you schedule everything — and I remember you brought them home around the time that I went to the movies with Slutty Crystal.

JANE: Mom, what's going on?

XIOMARA: Nothing. You have enough on your mind.

JANE: Okay, now you definitely need to tell me.

XIOMARA: I'm late.

JANE: Late. For what?

XIOMARA: My period is late.

JANE: But you're on the pill.

XIOMARA: I forgot one. Or two.

JANE: Mom...

XIOMARA: I know. I know. And I knew we should wait, but we got so caught up in the moment.

JANE: Caught up in the moment? You're not 16.

XIOMARA: It was an accident.

JANE: No. No, it wasn't. Me standing here pregnant — that's an accident. You were reckless. I mean, what's your plan? Are we gonna be pregnant together? Did you want to raise these babies like sisters?

XIOMARA: No. Look, I didn't have a plan...

JANE: Yeah, I know. Again. I'm sorry, I...I just thought...I don't know. I thought that you would be more thoughtful if you thought about having another kid.

Because of...well...me.

Motherhood on its own could be challenging for Xiomara, but her new status as an impending grandmother and older age caused the potential pregnancy to be even more of a struggle.

Overall, these scenes address intersectionality by showing that the intersection of motherhood with one's religion or age and family role may bring increased challenges.

The intersection of class and economy. The last subtheme is the intersection of class and economy, and it takes place in Episode #10 when a number of Jane's friends/employees face losing their jobs as staff at the *Marbella* hotel. Frankie, a waitress, informs the staff of what is going on, stating, "Guys, I just heard from Housekeeping Cara, who's dating that bellboy whose sister works in HR, that people are getting fired. Like, a lot of people." With this news, the employees all start to worry about the possibility of losing their jobs.

It becomes known later in Episode #10 that the hotel is making employee cuts because of the economy and the need to stay in business. While this does not directly affect the wealthy hotel owners, Rafael and Petra, this has a direct impact on the middle-class workers. One male employee states, "I just moved into a new place. If I can't pay rent, I will literally be homeless." This scene illustrates that when a middle-class worker faces the potential of losing their job due to the economy, they are faced with a difficult challenge. The wealthy, upper class character of Rafael, on the other hand, does not have to worry about the hotel employee cuts, because his job is not in jeopardy. To him, this is simply a business decision without any personal impact. This can be seen when watching how Rafael handles the business cuts, as opposed to how Jane handles the news.

RAFAEL: Is everything okay?

JANE: Yeah, it's just, uh...my friends heard that there were gonna be layoffs, and they're freaking out. And I hate to ask this, but is it true?

RAFAEL: Yes. Unfortunately. My dad wants to institute a 15% cut across the board. So, I've just been up here trying to made a list.

In this scene, Jane understands the importance of the hotel jobs for her middle-class friends. She takes a great interest in trying to save their jobs, but cannot prevent the consequences of the intersection between their jobs and the business cuts.

Another example of struggle coming from an intersection of class and economy can be seen with Petra in Episode #10. Prior to this episode, Petra and Rafael had decided to separate from one another and Rafael refused to honor his prenuptial agreement. This left Petra in a difficult situation, as she no longer could enjoy the luxuries of wealth that came from her life with Rafael. So, in Episode #10, Petra has to find a way to overcome the new struggle that she is facing with her changing economic status. This solution involves selling her jewelry in order to afford a one-bedroom apartment for her and her mother:

PETRA: Look, we have to move on. And I have a plan. I'll sell my wedding ring, the rest of my jewelry. I'll be able to afford a little place, a one-bedroom.

In earlier episodes, Petra was seen to be living a luxurious, mostly carefree life without any financial struggle, but as her economic situation has changed, the contrast between her lifestyles illustrate the difficulty and sacrifices that class and economics can bring.

In summary, the three subthemes presented here help viewers of *Jane the Virgin* see how intersecting social identities have created a struggle for characters in the show. As Alba faces deportation at the hospital and is unable to turn Magda in to the police, it

becomes clear that the intersection of ethnicity and legal status presents challenges. Jane's pressure to refrain from having sex and Alba's reactions to both Jane and Xiomara's pregnancies illustrate the judgement that may result from an intersection of motherhood and religion. Jane's reaction to Xiomara's pregnancy scare illustrates how an intersection of motherhood, age and family role can also cause disapproval. Lastly, the intersection of class and economy illustrates the financial struggle that middle-class workers may face when the economy causes them to lose their job.

Characters Who Succeed Regardless of Their Intersecting Identities

This second theme addresses the many female characters who are shown to succeed, regardless of their multiple intersecting identities. While there may be multiple instances of this in the complete first season of *Jane the Virgin*, three portrayals were observed within the episodes selected for analysis. These portrayals involve Nadine, Luisa, and Jane.

As mentioned in the analysis of feminism, Nadine is the police detective who works alongside Michael. Her intersecting social identities include being female and African American. Rather than treating this character differently because of her race or gender, she is shown to interact with all of the other police detectives, who are white and male. In Episode #5 she takes charge of the murder case, asking for information from Rafael to help them identify who was working the night of the murder, and in Episode #10, Nadine explores the hotel with other police detectives and then makes a critical discovery in the case: "These were taken the same day the Serbian disappeared? Could this be patient 320?"

Another character with multiple intersecting identities is Luisa who is female, Latina, and a lesbian. Just as Nadine holds a professional position, so does Luisa despite her intersecting identities. Luisa is shown in her role as a gynecologist in Episode #1, and while she makes the error with the artificial insemination, hers is a respectable career. Other lesbian characters who are shown to have career success include Juicy Jordan who is a famous, professional wrestler and Rose who is a genius criminal mastermind. While Juicy Jordan and Rose are Caucasian and do not have the intersection of being Latina like Luisa does, they both represent characters who are not limited to stereotypical roles based on their social identities.

Of these female characters, Jane has the most intersecting social identities as she is a female, Latina, middle-class, and now an unmarried pregnant woman. Despite these intersections, Jane is still shown to be pursuing her dreams. She may have had her world turned upside down with the unexpected pregnancy, but she does not let this stop her goal of becoming a writer or plans of continuing college. This desire to become a writer is emphasized in Episode #15 when Jane is seated at her computer, vigorously typing her novel. Later in Episode #15, she attempts to further her writing career by leaving the first chapter of her novel with a professional author, Angelique Harper. This scene takes place as one of Jane's co-workers spots Angelique in the *Marbella* hotel. He cues Jane to see her and then hands Jane her novel. Jane is seen taking it from him and approaching Angelique. This shows that despite her pregnancy, Jane is still determined to accomplish the goals she has set for herself.

In summary, these characters each clearly have multiple intersecting social identities, and while intersectionality can cause oppression, domination, and

discrimination, these characters are shown to succeed and carry on despite being female and African American; female, Latina and Lesbian; or female, Latina, middle-class, and a single mother.

This subtheme of characters succeeding despite their intersections combines with the first subtheme of characters struggling due to their intersections to show that *Jane the Virgin* does address intersectionality within the five episodes that were analyzed. This concludes the results found for intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*. Next, the focus group results show how female viewers responded to these themes of feminism and intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*.

Focus Group Results

Through the dialogue of the two focus groups, it became obvious that the participants recognized feminist themes in *Jane the Virgin*. However, some participants also saw the opposite, that feminist themes were not portrayed throughout the plot. The conversation also indicated that the focus group participants were able to notice themes of intersectionality in the television show. This analysis will first address RQ1 in regards to feminism and will then consider RQ2 in regards to intersectionality. Lastly, these results will address RQ3 and explore the possible effects that this television show has had on these viewers.

Focus Group Results — RQ1 (Feminism)

Feminism Addressed in *Jane the Virgin*

As the participants in both focus groups discussed *Jane the Virgin*, they were able to identify multiple feminist issues addressed in the show. These issues fit into three overall themes — all of which were themes that also emerged during the textual

analysis. First, female characters were shown to be independent of men, as they didn't need a male character to be happy or successful. Second, female characters were shown to be in control of their bodies, as they could dictate whether or not to have sex and what they were going to do with their pregnancies. And third, female characters were shown to have a strong sense of camaraderie — in the forms of both family support and friendship support.

Female characters are independent of male characters. Independence was a common theme of feminism within the focus group conversation, particularly in regards to how the female characters were portrayed as successful without the presence of a male. According to them, the three Villanueva women do not need support from men — financially, mentally or physically — because they are capable of managing life events without male partners: “If you see her family, even her grandma, her mom, and even herself [Jane], they take care of each other without like needing someone else, like a guy role model.”

The participants discussed how Jane works hard as a waitress, writer, and teacher so that she can be financially independent, and they specifically referenced a time when Michael told Jane that she wouldn't have to work after they marry: “What I kind of remember is something like Michael saying, ‘Yeah, when you're married, you won't have to work,’ and she's like, ‘No, I actually want to work. That's why I'm still in school.’” When talking about this scene, the women in the focus groups appreciated Jane's independence and her desire to stay true to her goals. As one participant stated, “It means you can be beautiful, sexy, smart, and not be dependent on a man. I just, I really like that too.”

According to participants, Jane is capable of caring for herself, and she even rebuffs the men when they try to help her: “Even when [Rogelio] buys her a car, she’s like, ‘I don’t want this. You can’t buy me.’” They also discussed the role that Xiomara and Alba play in this, with one participant stating, “Xiomara and Alba are like, ‘We don’t need your money. We can do our part to support her, and she can do her part to support herself.’”

Xiomara was also mentioned in relation to independence, as multiple participants seemed to respect her in her role as a single mother. “Her mom was like the strongest one to me out of all of them.” They discussed the difficulty that Xiomara must have faced in her decision to hide Jane’s father from her, and one participant, in particular, referred to Xiomara as “hardworking” and “independent,” because she had to fulfill the role of two parents for Jane.

Alba clearly played a role in helping Xiomara raise Jane and the focus group participants acknowledged this support and the close relationship between Jane and her grandmother. One participant felt that it was important not to disregard Alba’s independent nature and the fact that she too seemed to be perfectly fine without a man. “I think she’s sometimes overlooked, but the fact that she lost her husband and still kept going...she kept moving on. She did not need another man’s help. She didn’t find a second husband.”

Overall, the focus group participants seemed to believe that there was a strong sense of independence with each of these female characters. They did not need a man’s support or assistance, but instead, were comfortable making their own decisions and relied on one another. One participant stated that the message this show

communicated was, “Be independent. But it’s okay to be dependent on others.” Jane, Xiomara, and Alba are all independent characters, but they are not hesitant to turn to each other in a time of need.

Female characters in control of their bodies. While sex plays a large role in the overall plot of *Jane the Virgin*, the focus group participants believed it also played an important role in addressing feminism. The discussion of this theme primarily revolved around how decisions about sex and reproduction were handled. For this reason, the subthemes for this theme were female characters dictating participation in sexual activity and female characters making choices about reproduction.

Female characters dictate participation in sexual activity. For one participant, the fact that Jane was able to be the one making decisions about her body and reproduction was enough to make this show feminist. She stated, “That’s a piece of feminism too, just like, being able to make your own decisions,” and “even though she remained a virgin, that was her choice and I feel like that was done well.” This participant then went on to discuss how she felt that it was the women who were the ones making nearly any decision that came up in regards to sex.

When discussing Jane’s virginity, the focus group participants brought up how open the characters are in discussing sex. The women saw this as a strong feminist theme as it helps keep virginity and sex from being taboo topics, and shows that talking about sex is acceptable. “It’s almost like this really sex-positive show where she’s not like ashamed — which I feel like a lot of people are. Like they’re embarrassed [to be a virgin] at a certain age.”

Female characters making choices about reproduction. Along with deciding whether or not to have sex, the focus group participants also discussed the decision making around reproduction and the choices Xiomara and Jane had to make when they encountered their unexpected pregnancies. The focus group participants brought up the fact that Jane's grandmother, Alba, had asked Xiomara to have an abortion, and instead of listening to her mother's request, Xiomara said "no" and chose to keep and raise Jane. Rather than having this decision destroy Xiomara's life, the focus group appreciated how well Xiomara's life still had turned out. "Like, she is this amazing, independent, resilient woman who defines herself within the categorization of society." Even through all of the struggles that this decision brought her, "she still has dreams, her kid, and a family, and she still juggles everything — and being a mom is just that."

While Jane is not pressured by her mother to have an abortion, she is pressured by the men in her life, in regards to what to do with the baby. This is something that the focus group participants acknowledged, stating that Jane was faced with the decision of whether she was going to keep the baby or give it up to the father. The moment when Jane decided to keep the baby seemed to be an important feminist moment for the women in the focus groups: "Jane like stood her ground. Like, 'No, this is my decision. This is this person's future. My kid's future. I'm going to make the decision.'" Rather than being influenced by either Michael or Rafael, Jane stayed true to herself, and the participants admired her for doing so.

Whether the female characters were making decisions about the extent of their sexuality or decisions about reproduction, the focus group participants seemed to

concur that the female characters were in control overall of decisions regarding sex. As a result, this became a theme to illustrate how feminism is addressed in the show.

Female characters have a strong sense of camaraderie. The final theme of feminism that emerged from the focus group data was camaraderie, or support among the female characters. While the focus group discussion had already pinpointed some of the ways that the characters supported one another, the participants emphasized the camaraderie that they saw among the Villanueva women and between Jane and Petra. For this reason, the subthemes for this theme were female family members providing support for one another and female friends providing support for one another.

Female family members provide support for one another. The camaraderie between Jane, Xiomara, and Alba was described by the group as “a nice little circle” in which they supported and encouraged one another. Alba and Xiomara were always there to offer financial or emotional assistance to Jane, and they were also very supportive in the way that they talked to her. “They don’t ever say like, ‘Don’t have the baby. Don’t go to school.’ If anything, they’re like, ‘Yes, do this.’”

This type of encouragement was discussed in relation to Xiomara as well. While she may “act like a teenager,” the group conversed about how Alba didn’t yell at her or express anger with her. Instead, they stated that, for the most part, the women are calm and supportive in tone when talking to one another. From the focus group conversation, it appeared that the camaraderie between the three Villanueva women was something that was present from the very beginning of the show.

Female friends provide support for one another. The camaraderie between Jane and Petra, on the other hand, appeared to be something that developed further

into the show and may have caught some of the viewers off guard. When talking about this camaraderie, one participant stated, “Jane is just like, ‘Okay, this is this girl [Petra] and I just need to help her out instead of bringing her down.’ But I know a lot of people who would have maybe beat her up.” From the beginning of the show, Petra and Jane didn’t seem to be likely characters to get along with one another, but as the focus group pointed out, “Jane is just very calm and collected, and whatever Petra does to her, she’s still there for moral support.”

To summarize this theme, the groups identified female camaraderie within familial ties and friendships. Whether the camaraderie was between Jane and her family or Jane and Petra, the group seemed to believe the camaraderie addressed feminism and the idea that women should come together to fight for better opportunities and equality.

This concludes the focus group discussion that took place with respect to feminist subthemes in *Jane the Virgin*. These themes will be compared to the feminist themes that emerged from the textual analysis in the discussion portion of this study.

The Presence of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

While both focus groups expressed agreement that *Jane the Virgin* does address feminist issues, there was also some discussion about *Jane the Virgin* encouraging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Specifically, some participants had concerns over certain gender portrayals and sexual expectations that were communicated in the show. This caused some controversy among the participants as some people interpreted scenes differently. This section addresses the moments in the plot that some

focus group participants felt encouraged gender roles or stereotypes, as well as presenting the counter arguments that were stated by other the participants.

Gender portrayals. First, it was stated that *Jane the Virgin* communicates gender expectations in regards to finances and work roles. One participant stated that because Jane is a waitress at Rafael's hotel, it's kind of like the show "tells you 'feminism is okay,' but it still has these underneath layers." The counter argument to this was that while, yes, Jane works as a waitress, she's also shown in multiple other roles and strives to be able to leave her job as a waitress and work as a writer.

Another scene that was brought to attention was when Rafael offered Jane financial assistance. While one participant felt that "him even offering is completely opposite of the meaning [of feminism]," another stated, "I think he's being nice. I took it that way." As this debate continued, a participant said, "It's just TV feeding us like, 'You should depend on them. Men are going to do these things for you.' They are just feeding these ideologies to us." It was clear that some women in the focus group disliked that the male characters were offering money. Other participants, however, viewed this as an opportunity to reiterate that even when the men did offer support to Jane, she chose to remain independent and did not accept their assistance.

In relation to this discussion, a few of the focus group participants also brought up Petra relying on Rafael's money. "She wanted to get pregnant because she could stay with Rafael for like 5 years and get 10 million dollars." While they felt that this was not encouraging to feminism, the conversation turned into how Petra eventually became more independent and even started to want Rafael for romantic reasons again, instead of just his money.

Sexual expectations. The focus group participants also discussed the sexual expectations around the characters. Specifically, they felt it important to discuss how both Jane's sexuality and Xiomara's sexuality were handled.

Overall, many of the participants felt that the show did not portray Jane's virginity in a good light. One person stated, "In the show, she had a flashback with Michael and with Rafael while they were dating, and I think both of the guys were kind of surprised when she said she was a virgin and wanted to stay a virgin. So, I guess like in the show, people do expect people in their twenties to not be a virgin anymore." Another participant said, "Like when she tells people she's a virgin, they're always just kind of like, really why?" The discussion then continued with talk of how Rafael responded to Jane being a virgin. Participants characterized him as being "upset" and "a jerk." One participant made the point that, "It's almost more odd for her [Jane] to be a virgin than it was for him [Rafael] to be sexually promiscuous, and I think that's really bad."

Another participant referenced a scene where Jane goes on a date with her teaching assistant and is about to "do it" but then stops to tell him she's a virgin. "She was like fighting back and forth between telling him because she was kind of embarrassed. But when she told him, he was just like, 'Oh, my gosh' and he like stopped...literally like stopped the train on the tracks, and it was like really weird." The participant felt it was important to bring up as "it addresses just how the rest of the world views virginity and that it's a big deal."

As Jane debates whether or not she wants to have sex with somebody, she is influenced by multiple factors that the focus group participants noted. For example, one of them stated that she was likely feeling pressure from the misconception that

“everyone in this world” has sex. Other participants felt that her grandmother and religion had played a big role in Jane’s decision not to have sex. Some of them perceived this as going against feminist ideals, as it seemed to “set morals on Jane.” “It’s that moral that you’re a Catholic and being Catholic says that you can’t have sex or whatever. Her grandma does push that on her.”

Because there were multiple flashbacks about the flower, the participants felt that this expectation from Alba was weighing heavy on Jane’s decision not to have sex. They stated that she likely felt a type of fear in that she didn’t want to disappoint or disrespect her grandmother, and many of the focus group participants seemed to be in agreement that this pressure did not support feminist perspectives within the plot, as this pressure interfered with Jane’s ability to make sexual decisions and have control over her body without the pressures of society.

The focus group participants also felt that the show was very disapproving of Xiomara’s sexuality. This included the way that they visually portrayed her, how Alba treated her and how Jane treated her. Overall, one of the groups seemed to agree that Xiomara is portrayed as “not okay” whereas Jane is portrayed “like a saint” because she’s still a virgin. This group mentioned that Xiomara is often dressed in a tiny skirt and shiny makeup, which give off the impression that she is “slutty.” One participant mentioned a scene that she recalled when Xiomara was getting dressed to go out and she was wearing sparkly gray heels when the woman on a poster in the bedroom came to life and said something like, “You’re not a stripper. Don’t wear those shoes. Wear different shoes.” The participant who referenced this scene felt as though the show was judging Xiomara in this instance.

Many of the focus group participants also felt that Alba's interactions with Xiomara were anti-feminist. One participant stated that it is like Alba "shuns" Xiomara and always has to create a "conflict with Jane's mom's sexual life." This participant felt that, overall, Alba's character gave off the impression that it is not okay for women to talk about sex or experience sexual pleasure. "It's just that idea that sex can't even be mentioned or whatever it is and it's just because they are women, but we hear men talk about who they are having sex with or whatever, but, Xiomara, she is just shut down." The focus group participants indicated that there was the same type of double standard between Xiomara and Rogelio as they had noticed with Jane and Rafael. With Xiomara, "they make her look kind of slutty, but then Rogelio, he says, 'I slept with so many women,' and he isn't punished for this."

They also found Jane to be judgmental and disapproving toward her mother's sexuality. One participant referenced the time when Xiomara went to move in with Rogelio, and Jane responded along the lines of, "What? Are you serious? You're really going to move in?" Another participant felt that Jane is often shown to be questioning Xiomara about why she is having sex. This participant stated that it does "kind of put judgement on Xiomara's behavior."

There were some counter arguments that were brought up in regard to Xiomara's sexuality. Some focus group participants felt that even though Xiomara was criticized for her sexual decisions, this was what gave her a chance to take a feminist stance and stand up for herself and her actions. "That's what I love about Xiomara — is that she doesn't let all of these negative comments bring her down. She's like, just push them off, and she's going to go sleep with twenty more men. And I love her for that! She

doesn't let these things bring her down, because she's self-confident in what she does." As for the double standard that is presented, one of the participants felt that Xiomara's character, herself, addresses this. They recalled her yelling at her mother in a later season that it's not fair that she gets judged for having sex with a few men, whereas, it seems to be okay if men sleep "with a million women."

Despite how the show treats Xiomara's sexuality, the overall consensus of the focus groups seemed to be that they liked Xiomara and didn't look down on her. One participant, in particular, stood up for her, stating, "She's still a good person, and she's still a good mother, and she's really protective of her daughter, so really her being sexually active really means nothing."

Through these examples, it is clear that some participants felt *Jane the Virgin* has encouraged traditional gendered roles and sexual stereotypes. Other participants seemed to disagree with these statements and used counterarguments to explain why they didn't think these scenes promoted stereotypes or gender roles. Depending on how the scenes are interpreted by viewers, they may communicate different messages in regards to equality and stereotypes.

Focus Group Results — RQ2 (Intersectionality)

After being given the definition of intersectionality and discussing what it means within the group, focus group participants were asked to identify whether they saw themes of intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*. Much like the textual analysis, the focus group participants discussed intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin* as portrayed in two different ways. First, there was a portrayal of struggle due to intersections. Second,

there was a portrayal of characters who succeed regardless of their intersecting identities.

Struggle Due to Intersecting Identities

Within the discussion of intersectionality, the focus group participants were able to identify when intersecting social identities led to struggle for the characters. They acknowledged this within the intersections of ethnicity and legal status and ethnicity and class.

Ethnicity and legal status. Ethnicity played a large role in the focus group conversation, as the participants discussed the challenges that come from an intersection of one's ethnicity and legal status and an intersection of one's ethnicity and class.

The main struggles that the participants saw the women face, within the intersection of ethnicity and legal status, revolved around immigration issues. The obvious scene that came to their minds was when Jane's grandmother was pushed down the flight of stairs and was threatened with deportation at the hospital. "There's that play of like people who are illegally here that plays with the intersection."

They also noticed this fear of deportation at other moments in the plot. For example, by suing Luisa for the accidental artificial insemination, Jane could have risked getting her grandmother into trouble. In response to this scene, one participant stated, "Jane didn't sue Rafael's sister because she was terrified and that also got to me because it shined a light on how immigrants feel here. They're happy to be here, but they fear for their lives every day." They also stated that Jane's grandmother didn't turn Magda into the police for the very same reason, and that "Jane's grandmother was

afraid to even talk to Michael because Michael's a police officer." It was through discussing each of these scenes, that the focus group participants came to the conclusion that the show illustrates the oppression and discrimination that these characters faced because of their ethnicity and legal status.

Ethnicity and class. The focus group participants also identified a sense of struggle for Jane because of her intersection of ethnicity and class. In the conversation, they compared her to Petra who is also a woman but who is white and very wealthy. Jane, on the other hand, is a Latina woman and middle class. They felt that Jane's intersections contributed to more struggle and oppression for her than Petra had to encounter. For example, they talked about how Jane had to work multiple jobs, rely on help from family members, and utilize public transportation.

Characters Who Succeed Regardless of Their Intersecting Identities

Along with discussing struggle from intersecting identities, the focus groups also talked about characters succeeding despite their intersections. These characters included Rafael, Rogelio, Nadine, Luisa, Jane, and Xiomara.

They pointed out that both the characters of Rafael and Rogelio are clearly very wealthy, as Rafael is the owner of the *Marbella* hotel and Rogelio is a famous telenovela star. Many of the focus group participants liked that these men were wealthy *and* Latino as it showed that "what you dream, you can strive for. It doesn't matter where you come from." One participant even related this to her own family's immigration story, stating, that seeing Rafael being successful and his whole family owning a hotel reminded her of why her parents were immigrants and came to America — "the land of opportunities."

While Rafael appeared to have grown up with wealth, the focus groups still made sure to talk about the financial success of Rafael as a Latino. Rogelio's character was even more important to them on the topic of intersectionality because he was someone who was not always wealthy. He overcame his middle class, Latino intersection and achieved both wealth and fame.

Moving on to the female characters, the focus group participants stated that Nadine represented intersectionality well, as she was a woman, middle class, African American, and still shown in a successful career as a police detective where she worked equally alongside the men in her profession.

Luisa was an important character for them too because of her sexual orientation that intertwined with both gender and class. The focus group participants felt that the show not only gave a fair portrayal of lesbian characters, but that it's "all for it."

Compared to most shows that have lesbian or gay characters, the focus group participants felt that *Jane the Virgin* stands out in a good way: "I think also, like in most shows, people aren't...like if they're gay, it's very obvious that they're gay. It's just like there's always these caricatures. I don't feel like you get a lot of that in *Jane the Virgin*, which to me, is steering in the right direction." Many of the focus group participants seemed to be in agreement that they appreciated how the show treats the lesbian characters "like they treat everyone else" instead of making a big deal out of it. Along with this, they liked that Luisa's character wasn't the "stereotypical butch lesbian" character that many people often associate with being lesbian.

Before ending the conversation on sexual orientation and intersectionality, they particularly noted Luisa's career success. Despite being a woman, Latina, and a lesbian

(all of which may cause discrimination and oppression), *Jane the Virgin* shows Luisa in a role where she has a “very good career,” and this was something that the focus group participants noticed and felt was important to mention.

Lastly, the focus group felt that Jane and Xiomara overcame their intersections of being female, Latina and single mothers. Again, they compared *Jane the Virgin* to other television shows, stating, “Most shows...they’ll like bash single moms and this one, it’s like everyone’s a single mom.” In response, another participant stated, “But in *Jane the Virgin*, they kind of empower you — not necessarily to be a single mom, but that it’s okay.”

Overall, the groups seemed to agree that the show illustrates that the Villanueva women have to face extra difficulties and struggles because of their intersections of being female, Latina, and single mothers. Regardless, the focus group participants stated that Jane’s pregnancy did not deter her from following her dream to be a writer. Instead, the show used the motivation and successes of Jane and Xiomara to help break the “stigma” that goes with being a single mom. One participant stated that she believes the show works hard to communicate, “You can be a successful single mother.” Another participant stated, “Even Jane wanted to get into grad school. I think that was very encouraging to see that life doesn’t stop when you have kids.” The focus group participants did not discuss in detail how being Latina influenced these characters as single mothers.

Concern within Intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*

While the focus group conversation indicated that *Jane the Virgin* does incorporate intersectionality into its plot, there was a reoccurring concern among the focus group participants around the show's portrayal of immigration issues.

Essentially, some of the Hispanic focus group participants felt like the portrayal of immigration issues in the show was not 100% realistic. For example, one Hispanic participant stated, "My parents are trying to get their papers fixed or whatever and it's not as positive. It wasn't as easy as Jane's grandmother's was. I do like that they brought attention to it, but it also isn't a common case." One participant referred to it as "a very happy immigration reform," and another participant said, "it was just kind of an idealistic, instead of realistic, viewpoint."

The focus group participants did specifically discuss the hospital scene in Season #1, in which Alba faces possible deportation. It was evident that many of the focus group participants felt affected by this scene, but one Hispanic participant stated, "Seeing it on the screen will never ever do justice for what a person feels when it's their mom or their dad or their grandma or grandpa going through it in real life." This participant did not feel like the scene caused any harm, but she did say that her mom became offended when watching it. "She thought it was pointless the way that it happened because most people, are just in the 'in the wrong place at the wrong time.' It doesn't have to be like you're at a hospital or you're here or there. When it happens, it happens. If it's your family member, you're not able to do much." She then went on to discuss that while it may not be an ideal portrayal, she did think that it was better than nothing and could bring more awareness to immigration issues.

From this discussion on intersectionality, it can be inferred that the focus group participants identified a number of intersecting identities in *Jane the Virgin*. Through these intersections, some characters faced certain struggles and others prevailed despite the struggles of their intersections. On the topic of ethnicity and legal status, many focus group participants related the scenes to their own personal or family experiences finding the scenes either positive or unrealistic. This leads into the focus group data that relates to RQ3: What effects does *Jane the Virgin* have on viewers?

Focus Group Results — RQ3 (Effects)

The women who participated in the focus groups for this study had all previously watched at least the first season of *Jane the Virgin* in its entirety. This criterion made it appropriate for the researchers to ask them about the impact and effects that *Jane the Virgin* has had on them. While there was some conversation within the groups that indicated that *Jane the Virgin* may not change anything in real life, there was also discussion that indicated that viewers are able to relate to the plot of *Jane the Virgin* and that some of the viewers felt inspired by the show.

***Jane the Virgin* Won't Change Anything**

When asked if they felt that *Jane the Virgin* had the potential to have any impact in real life, some participants responded that "it's just a TV show." Specifically, one participant stated, "Although, I agree and I related to it, I don't see it changing anything dramatically."

Another participant stated that because some people are not affected by the issues presented in the show (immigration reform, unplanned pregnancy, etc.), they may just be like, "Oh, this doesn't affect me. I don't have to worry about it."

Lastly, one person argued that *Jane the Virgin* wouldn't have any real-world impacts because the people who watch the show are young and already agree with many of the themes presented in the show. The counter argument to this was that young people can still be encouraged to make an impact themselves in the real world, and that the older generation "is dying out," so it's better for television shows to connect with younger audiences anyway.

These were the only comments made by the focus group participants that indicated that they felt *Jane the Virgin* won't have any real impacts in society. Regardless of these comments, the focus group participants did make it very clear that they have related to characters and situations in *Jane the Virgin* and that *Jane the Virgin* has played a role in re-affirming their thoughts and feelings.

Viewers Related to *Jane the Virgin*

The main components that the focus group participants seemed to relate to were Jane's age, the different types of women portrayed in the show, the sexual/religious expectations, and the struggle over immigration issues such as fear, deportation, and being away from loved ones.

Related to Jane's age. The majority of the women who participated in the focus group study were in their early twenties, making them approximately the same age as 23-year-old Jane. Along with being the same age, many of them seemed to be at the same stage of life as Jane too — pursuing a college degree to better their future. As the focus group participants carried conversation, it seemed as though many of them appreciated that they could relate to Jane in this way. For example, one participant stated, "I like what it shows and what it does to teach girls because, you know, when it

first came out, I was graduating high school so everything in my life was changing so I kind of related to her.” Another participant voiced the same type of relation to Jane and said that she could relate because they both “have so much on their plate” in terms of school and relationships.

Related to the multiple different types of women. Along with relating to Jane’s age and point in life, many of the participants mentioned that different female characters on the show allow for everyone to find someone that they can relate to.

They discussed the presence of characters from different generations and described how each character offers a unique personality to relate to. There’s the obvious traditional personality of Alba, party girl personality of Xiomara, and in-between personality of Jane, but the participants also discussed the roles of Petra’s family too. For example, Petra’s mother is in a wheelchair for the majority of Season #1, and they voiced that the show could potentially connect with other people who are in wheelchairs too and show them that they can still be active and capable, regardless of the “negative connotations” and “stereotypes” that society often places on these people.

After discussing each of the main female characters in the show (Jane, Xiomara, Alba, and Petra), one participant stated “I love all of the different dynamics that all of the characters brought in.” This allowed viewers to see that multiple types of women can all be powerful and independent. “Everyone in this show is just empowering. It doesn’t matter where you come from. It’s your personality, your perseverance, and you can do whatever you set your mind to,” said one participant.

This participant was not the only person to feel impacted based on the characters that they related to. Another participant believed that her connection to the characters

caused *Jane the Virgin* to have a strong effect on her. “It impacted me more than I ever thought it would just because I can see myself in a lot of different characters and I can relate to a lot of the situations.” While this participant didn’t have a child or all of the same challenges as Jane, she stated, “I was kind of shocked because I’ve never really seen a show where I could actually relate to a character like, ‘Oh my gosh, I’ve been in that situation.’”

Related to sexual expectations. Other participants in the focus groups discussed how they related to the show because of experiencing the same type of sexual and religious expectations either within their families or society. For example, one participant said that she had a conversation with her mother that reminded her of the conversation Jane had with her grandmother. “My mom sat me down and said the same thing. Like, ‘In-between your legs, this is gold. Like, don’t give it to anyone.’”

Another participant discussed what it was like to attend a Catholic high school where people were judgmental about sexual decisions. She stated, “Some people thought it was normal [to have sex] but then like the super religious kids looked at them like, ‘Oh, you might go to hell unless you go to confession.’” It was very clear that some of the focus group participants had experienced the expectations that go along with sex and religion. And, for some of them, they didn’t have the opportunity to converse with their mothers or grandmothers about these topics. One of the women in the focus groups stated that she wished the show would have been around when she was younger, saying, “I couldn’t really talk to my mom about like sex or anything like that. The show would have really helped me out and given me something to think about.”

Related to the immigration issues. Finally, there was significant discussion indicating participants related to the immigration scenes in *Jane the Virgin*. Some of the participants empathized with the characters, stating that they cried watching scenes like the one that took place in the hospital with Jane's grandmother. Even though one participant didn't personally know an illegal immigrant, she stated that it was "really upsetting" and "very eye opening for her."

But even more powerful than the focus group participants who felt sad for Jane and Alba, were the participants who were able to relate these fictional situations in the show to real situations in their lives.

One participant discussed how her cousin's husband had to be away from his little girl for two years because he wasn't a legal citizen and multiple participants felt that the fear felt in the show was very similar to the fear that immigrants in America are feeling with President Donald Trump's immigration ban. One participant in particular stated, "With the presidential election and all of that happening, that was actually really real for everybody."

Jane and Xiomara feared losing Alba in *Jane the Virgin*, and many of the women in the focus groups seemed to have either felt this same fear themselves or knew someone who had. For example, one participant stated that she remembered driving around with her mother as a young girl, and when a police officer began to drive behind them, her mother would pull into a random, nearby store without intent of actually getting out of the car and going inside. "Even as a little girl, I remember being like, 'Why are you pulling over?' But now, being older, I do understand. She just had this fear of the cop being after her."

Another participant referred to an experience that she saw with her best friend from high school. This friend wanted to go to college, but his parents were illegal immigrants and couldn't afford it. She said, "He was scared to apply for financial aid because you have to put in your parent's social and all of that and he didn't have that."

Lastly, a participant in the focus group talked about the various scenarios that she encounters in her job at a local emergency care clinic. "A lot of immigrants come, mostly Latinos, and the first thing they ask is 'Do I need to show proof of residency or something?' It's so sad because it's like they don't feel comfortable even going to the hospital." She recalled these situations as being "extremely sad," and went on to discuss how she believes that immigrants play an important role in helping to better the United States: "I will have a hard time trying to picture the U.S. without immigrants, because they are very valuable to our country."

In talking about how they could relate to the storyline and the characters, the focus group participants indicated that *Jane the Virgin* does impact their lives as they are not only watching this television show and seeing how the fictional characters are affected, but they have also compared their own lives to the show.

***Jane the Virgin* Inspires Viewers**

As the women in the focus groups drew on comparisons between their lives and the content of the television show, they also communicated that *Jane the Virgin* has inspired them in some aspect of their lives.

One woman stated, "I like Rafael's sister because I want to go into the medical field, and it just showed me that even if like something happened, like something that I'm not prepared for, I can still have a life after that." Other participants also felt inspired

by the female characters' strong personalities and perseverance. One participant stated, "Her [Jane] always fighting regardless of what it was, was like the strongest message I saw because it told me to not let it stop you, I guess," and another stated, "It just helps women to see that you really need to think things through instead of agreeing to whatever pressure you feel at that time. So no, compromise, just do whatever you want to do or your heart tells you to do. And I like that."

Other participants talked about how the show boosted their confidence "as a woman" and helped them in making decisions about both their family and their body. "It reminded me of a lot of things like struggles and pressures of life that I might have been forgetting, like fading from my mind, but when I saw Jane, I said to myself 'I can do this!' You know? I can be strong!" This same participant also said that the show inspired her to stand up to people in her life when she feels that she doesn't want to do something: "I can look someone in the eye and say, 'No, I don't want to do this.' And in my relationship, I can make the decision and be comfortable and not, you know, be afraid if he's happy or not."

To summarize, some of the women in the focus groups did not believe that *Jane the Virgin* has or will have any impact on them or society. But regardless of this, it was clear that many of the focus group participants had been influenced in some way. The women found characters and plotlines they could relate to, and some of them even went so far as stating exactly how *Jane the Virgin* has motivated them or made them more confident as women. None of the participants indicated that *Jane the Virgin* had negative effects on them. Instead, it appears that *Jane the Virgin* has only had positive effects on these viewers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Feminism in *Jane the Virgin*

Feminist Criticism arose as a theory when popular forms of media left out the views and opinions of women (Ferrucci, Shoenberger, & Shauster, 2014; Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007). If one thing can be determined from this feminist critique of *Jane the Virgin*, it is that *Jane the Virgin* does anything but silence its female characters. The results of the textual analysis, combined with the results from the focus group, indicate that *Jane the Virgin* addresses feminist issues in multiple ways. This not only helps to show the views and opinions of the female characters in the show, but it also helps empower them.

While both the textual analysis and focus groups presented themes of feminism in *Jane the Virgin*, what makes these themes strong is that the themes presented by the focus group participants were very consistent with the themes that emerged during the textual analysis. Both the textual analysis and focus group participants addressed themes of female characters being in control of their bodies, female characters being independent of men, and female characters having a strong sense of camaraderie. While the theme of competence in the workplace was not a theme within the focus groups, it was something that emerged in the textual analysis and something that the focus group participants did mention within the other themes. Therefore, it will also be included in this discussion of feminism in *Jane the Virgin*.

Because the focus group participants interpreted the scenes in the same way as the researcher, this helps to add validity to the textual analysis results. Also, the themes

of feminism from the focus groups and textual analysis, align with what was previously discovered in the literature on this topic, as the literature included themes of control over one's body (Clark, 2015; Greene & Meyer, 2014), embracing sexuality (Clark, 2015; Johnson, 2007), women's work roles (Ferruci, Shoenberger, & Shauster, 2014; Greene & Meyer, 2014; Phillips & Cree, 2014), independence from men (Arthurs, 2003; Ferruci, Shoenberger, & Shauster, 2014; Greene & Meyer, 2014; Jule, 2010; Marshall, 2007; Stern, 2013), and camaraderie (Clark, 2015; Jermyn, 2009).

This study was grounded in Third Wave Feminism which strives to address the standards put on women and their sexuality (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015). The themes of female characters being in control of decisions regarding sex and female characters embracing their sexuality show that *Jane the Virgin* addresses Third Wave Feminist issues directly. Third Wave feminists champion and normalize the sexual desire of women (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010). Louisa and Rose's sexual behaviors, Petra's initiation with sex, and Xiomara's frequent sex life and obvious portrayals of enjoyment after intimacy help to support this feminist ideal. Xiomara's exclamation of, "Wow. That was incredible." after having sex with Rogelio in Episode #15, may be implying that males are not the only gender who can find enjoyment from sexual activity. This supports Baumgardner and Richard's feminist belief that women "can be as lustful as men" (2010, p. 166), and also aligns with Clark's previous research that analyzed scenes where women were shown to be able to enjoy sex just as men do (2015). Scenes such as these help to show that it is okay for women to take an interest in sex and find pleasure through these behaviors.

Feminists who support Third Wave ideals also encourage women to express their sexual desire and show sexual assertiveness (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015). This is something that once again, *Jane the Virgin* addresses as Xiomara's active sex life and open communication about sex show that she's not hesitant to express her sexual desires. Petra also repeatedly was shown to initiate sexual activity. Jane, on the other hand, shows sexual assertiveness by dictating how far she is willing to go sexually. One of the participants in the focus groups stated that Jane's ability to choose whether or not to have sex felt like feminism to her. This feeling felt by the viewer makes sense as it aligns with Williams and Jovanovic's view that "the ability to refuse unwanted sex" is a form of sexual assertiveness that goes along with Third Wave Feminism (2015, p. 159). Through Xiomara, Petra, and Jane, both sides of sexual assertiveness are being addressed. They, ultimately, are both empowered to engage (or not engage) in sexual activity.

On the topic of Jane's decision not to have sex, it's also important to note the male character's reactions when she won't have sex with them. While they may be surprised that she is a virgin, the men never pressure her, dominate her, or force her to have sex with them. This can help to communicate that a woman's decision not to have sex should be respected. Whereas, when a woman is taunted or dominated for not having sex — like in Green and Meyer's (2014) analysis of *The Walking Dead* — it may send messages that this is acceptable behavior.

While the women characters are empowered through their sexual decisions, they are also empowered through their independence. Television in the past has often undervalued and underrepresented women (Brunsdon & Spigel, 2007), but in *Jane the*

Virgin the women play such a central role that the male characters almost seem to be pushed to the side. This helps *Jane the Virgin* to avoid a male-dominated storyline.

As the textual analysis and focus groups both pointed out, the women in the plot don't need men in order to achieve happiness or success. Xiomara has raised Jane without a male. Alba finds happiness without a spouse. Petra takes over the *Marbella* hotel. Jane declines Rafael's proposal and handles the pregnancy on her own. She also works to maintain financial independence. Each of these components in the plot help to diminish the belief that women need a man to define themselves or succeed. In her research on Feminist Television Criticism, Stern (2013) found that many television shows don't promote equality or feminist ideals because they resort to showing female characters in "male-centered" worlds. *Jane the Virgin* counters this by having a plot that, instead, revolves around female characters who are comfortable on their own and who drive much of the plot.

While independence emerged as a theme in the literature, textual analysis, and focus groups, so did the theme of camaraderie. As one focus group participant put it, *Jane the Virgin* communicates, "Be independent. But it's okay to be dependent on others." This phrase seems to define the show well, as each of the female characters in the show are very independent but also know that sometimes they have to rely on support from others.

In one of the focus groups, a participant was describing the type of support shown in *Jane the Virgin* and was trying to come up with a word to characterize it. Another participant instantly suggested the word camaraderie — without knowing that it had already emerged as a theme within the literature review and textual analysis.

The literature found camaraderie to be a powerful tool for women, and that seems to be the case in *Jane the Virgin* as well. If it weren't for the support of her mother and grandmother, Jane may have had a harder time deciding what to do with the pregnancy, her career, and relationships. She may have even burnt the house down while burning the moxa! Camaraderie was also found to exist between other female characters, such as Jane and Petra, and overall it seemed to communicate that empowerment can come from support. As Clark stated in her research, camaraderie is meaningful and inherently feminist (20015).

Another inherently feminist ideal is representation of women in the workforce. In many of the previous feminist critiques of television shows, it seemed that they were taking a step back regarding feminism in the workplace (Ferruci, Shoenberger, & Shauster, 2014; Greene & Meyer, 2014; Phillips & Cree, 2014). But after analyzing the career roles held by women in *Jane the Virgin* and the competence that they portrayed, it seems as though *Jane the Virgin* goes against stereotypical gender roles and divisions of labor.

Women are shown in a variety of successful careers, and Jane's desire to work (despite Michael saying she doesn't have to) shows that her career is something of importance to her. According to Sonja Foss, Karen Foss, and Cindy Griffen, equality for women and men is rooted in the "development of opportunities for women's expression and self-fulfillment in all realms of life, without the constraints of gender expectations" (2006).

While *Jane the Virgin* shows female characters such as Jane, Xiomara, and Petra striving for happiness in their relationships and families, their careers are also

important “realms of life” for each of them. Jane strives to be a writer, Xiomara strives to be a performer, and Petra strives to run the *Marbella* hotel— rather than being women with a pre-determined destiny of being a housewife. Just as important as their desire to achieve their career goals, is the support that these women receive in their life. Jane, in particular, receives a lot of encouragement from her family, Michael, and Rafael. This type of encouragement, as shown in television shows, may help reinforce the idea that women can work outside of the home and may even encourage women who watch the show to follow their own dreams.

Overall, these themes of female characters being in control of decisions regarding sex, female characters being independent of men, female characters having a strong sense of camaraderie, and female characters being portrayed as competent in the work force show that feminism is addressed in *Jane the Virgin* and that the female characters are empowered through feminist themes.

As the analysis of each episode took place, though, there was the discovery of scenes that portrayed objectification or gendered and sexual stereotypes. These stereotypes were also something that the focus group participants noticed. After assessing these scenes in full detail, it is believed that most of them do not interfere with the pro-feminism messages of the show. This is because even though there are these gendered and sexual stereotypes presented, the show manages these scenes well to counter them and assert a feminist message.

For example, when the female characters are confronted with these stereotypes, they often speak up to shut them down. This is first seen in Episode #1 when Rafael tries to remember where he knows Jane from and asks her, “Oh. The strip club on

Biscayne?” After he asks this, Jane looks disgusted and calls him a “jerk.” While Rafael is associating her (a female) with the strip club, Jane’s reaction helps to shut him down — showing that women do not have to tolerate this behavior.

A similar rebuttal happens in Episode #5 when the male co-worker exclaims “Sweet! Make-Out time!” to Jane and Lina as they hold hands. While this behavior from the male co-worker involves objectification of Jane and Lina, their responding groans reject and discourage his behavior.

Other instances of sexual stereotyping take place around Jane’s virginity and Xiomara’s sexuality. For instance, in Episode #1, Lina tells Jane that Michael might propose just so that he can “bone” Jane. While this may initially give the impression that Jane should have already had sex with him or that all Michael wants is to have sex, these statements don’t seem to remain true throughout the show. Michael appears to understand and value Jane’s decision to remain a virgin, as he never pressures her to have sex and it is never again insinuated that he wants to marry Jane to have sex with her.

Another dominant belief of Third Wave Feminism is that women should be free to experiment sexually without repercussions (Williams & Jovanovic, 2015). The textual analysis showed that Xiomara’s behavior was not accepted by either Alba or Jane, and the focus group participants clearly identified this as well, as they seemed to agree that the show portrayed Xiomara’s behavior as “not okay.” This shows that Xiomara is not free to experiment sexually without repercussions and potentially hinders the show’s pro-feminist stance.

But as the focus group participants pointed out, despite how Alba and Jane treat Xiomara's sexuality, they felt that the show still portrayed her in a positive light, where she still a powerful sexual woman, and loving mother with good intentions. They also said they believe Xiomara knocks down the criticism and double standard herself by staying true to who she is and by acknowledging that it is not fair that men can have sex with multiple partners without facing criticism but women cannot. In this sense, it seems that the show purposefully puts anti-feminist messages in the show, just so they can have characters reject them.

Another instance of this would be when the men in Jane and Xiomara's lives try to dictate what they should do with their pregnancies. Michael tells Jane not to have the baby, but instead, Jane rejects his view and makes her own decision; this mirrors the same type of stance that Xiomara had taken when she was pregnant with Jane. Rogelio told her to "get rid of it," but Xiomara rejected this male-dominant voice and made her own decision.

The last main example of stereotypes being rejected surrounds the sexuality of the male characters in the show. Repeatedly, Rafael and Michael lust after Jane, and while these scenes may initially support the stereotype that males are heavily focused on sex, it can't be forgotten that women also desire and enjoy sex in the show. By showing women and men both wanting to participate in sex, it is likely better to conclude that the show helps to communicate that women and men can both be sexual beings. It's also worth mentioning that even though Rafael and Michael are shown to be sexual beings, they also illustrate that they have a much deeper connection to Jane than just sex.

From these examples, the claim can be made that while some scenes may seem to go against feminism, many of these scenes are spun in a way that puts the attention back on feminism and its ideals.

The only scenes within the five episodes that may not have been spun in that direction are when Petra is potentially objectified with her “O” face after giving oral sex to Rafael in Episode #1 and when Xiomara repeatedly refers to “Slutty Crystal.” Even though Petra initiated the oral sex with Rafael, objectification in any form does not communicate a feminist message, and when one woman criticizes another — as Xiomara does with “Slutty Crystal” — this doesn’t bring women together. Instead, it can make it more acceptable for men to use these types of names and labels when referring to women.

In conclusion, both methodologies in this study found *Jane the Virgin* to address feminist issues in a way that helps empower the female characters in the show. Feminist critics have repeatedly questioned television narratives both portraying women and aimed at women, and this research has centered around the question of how gender has been communicated through various artifacts (Foss, 1989). With this research, it is now supported that *Jane the Virgin* does not continue the past trend of portraying women and men without equal opportunities for self-expression. Rather than devaluing and denigrating the female characters, *Jane the Virgin* empowers them through their strong voices and control in each realm of their lives. Feminist critics are encouraged to question if rhetorical artifacts allow for women’s perspectives to be voiced (Foss, 1989), and *Jane the Virgin* most certainly does allow this.

Intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*

From ethnicity and class to gender and motherhood, a number of intersecting social identities were represented in *Jane the Virgin*. It is known that “social inequality increases with each additional layer of marginalization” (Hillsburg, 2013, p. 5). *Jane the Virgin* shows this to be true but also rejects this claim by showing that individuals can prevail past their intersections. Both the textual analysis and focus groups identified the struggles associated with the intersection of ethnicity and legal status and the intersection of ethnicity and class in *Jane the Virgin*. Through the textual analysis, struggles from the intersection of class and economy and the intersection of motherhood with other social identities could be identified as well.

While these struggles were present and incorporated throughout the storyline, the show also did its best to show characters who were able to rise about the oppression and not let their many layers of identities hinder them. Jane, for example, has the most intersecting identities of all of the characters, but still prevails and appears to achieve success and happiness.

Since the beginning of studying intersectionality, feminists have worked to confront the needs of minority women and have advocated for more focus on those women who are marginalized (Esposito, 2010). With the main characters Jane, Xiomara, and Alba, *Jane the Virgin* does achieve this goal of bringing attention to women within a minority. The audience gets a glimpse into their culture, religion, family and lifestyle while also seeing the oppression and difficulty of facing issues such as those with citizenship or religious expectations.

The focus groups in this study really helped to advance the understanding of intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*, because the participants talked about plot content that occurred outside of just the five episodes that were analyzed in the textual analysis. For example, the five episodes that were analyzed textually showed three characters succeeding despite their intersecting identities, but the focus group participants could call on more examples with more characters because they were discussing the entire show as a whole. This difference can also be seen in relation to the intersection of ethnicity and legal status. Within the five episodes that were analyzed, the only times the intersection of ethnicity and legal status were shown to cause conflict were when Alba was in the hospital and when Alba did not want to turn in Magda to the police. The focus group participants, on the other hand, were able to identify this same struggle in other scenes outside of the five episodes — such as when Jane decides not to sue Luisa and when Alba is afraid to talk to Michael because he is a detective.

What this indicates is that the understanding of intersectional identities and issues takes more time than just one or two episodes to develop. Without consecutively following the plot from beginning to end, it is harder to identify all that the characters are encountering. Therefore, a richer understanding of the impact of intersectional issues in *Jane the Virgin* would require a deeper analysis across the episodes.

When comparing intersectionality in the show to what was found in the literature, it is interesting to link Jane's experiences to the experiences that have been found of real Latina women. For instance, in Martinez and Mejia's 2015 study of multicultural feminisms, Claudia and Susana were two Hispanic women who were held back because of their ethnicity and gender. They were born into certain roles of staying at

home and caring for the family and told not to question them (Martinzes & Mejia, 2015). Just like Claudia and Susana, Jane, Xiomara, and Alba are Hispanic women, but *Jane the Virgin* does not limit them to cultural and stereotypical roles. Instead, the show uses their character to illustrate that women can work outside the home, can overcome oppression, and can (and should) question things in their lives that they disagree with. According to Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the key to liberation is in the oppressed individual's thinking process. By realizing one's self worth, one has the power to overcome their oppression (2011). Jane seems to undoubtedly know her self-worth and through this, she does her best to defeat marginalization. Thanks to the focus groups, it can be seen that viewers look up to Jane for this. This may be best encompassed with the following quotation from a woman in one of the focus groups: "I like Jane because she's just this independent, strong woman that like...she just shines. She just like defies categorization. She's her own person and I love that part."

With the research that was available, it is conclusive to say that intersectionality is addressed in *Jane the Virgin*. However, it is difficult to understand the entire role that intersectionality plays in the show, because the five episodes and limited time with the focus group participants did not allow for this; nevertheless, ethnicity, legal status, class, gender, sexuality, and motherhood are clearly identities that intersect with one another for the characters in the show. *Jane the Virgin* does its part to show how one's identities lead to marginalization, but it also shows that individuals can prevail despite these intersections.

Feminism and Intersectionality Combined to Create Intersectional Feminism

Because *Jane the Virgin* addresses both feminism and intersectionality, it can be assumed that the show incorporates intersectional feminism, which advocates for equality between all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, or sexual orientation (Marecek, 2016).

The most damning critique of Feminist Television Criticism has been that it mirrors early feminism and is only centered around “white, middle-class, heterosexual western women” (Winch, 2014, p. 9). By incorporating intersectionality into this feminist critique of *Jane the Virgin*, this study helps to overcome this judgment of Feminist Television Criticism, as well as expand on Third Wave Feminism which strives to “give voice to all women” (Zimmerman, McDermott & Gould, 2009). By incorporating multiple ethnicities, sexualities, classes, and ages, *Jane the Virgin* helps keep feminism from being a “politics for the privileged” (Winch, 2014, p. 9), while also helping to end the oppression of race and class (Zimmerman, McDermott & Gould, 2009).

As one participant stated, “I thought that the show was pretty good at portraying a minority. I don’t know how to say it, but she’s a girl, and she’s a minority, and she’s a pretty strong character.” It was as though the participant was dancing around the term “intersectional feminism” without even knowing that the term existed.

The Impact of *Jane the Virgin*

Knowing the content of a television show is useful to an extent, but knowing how that content affects those who watch it is even more valuable. As Foss (1989) discusses, it should be the primary concern, when looking through feminist eyes, to address how the definition of women associated with an artifact affects the audience,

and this is especially relevant when the text affects a woman's behavior or view of herself or others. Through speaking with 13 women who watched *Jane the Virgin*, it is clear that the show has affected many of them by either giving them something or someone they can relate to or by inspiring them in some way.

While many scenes in the show are fictional, they describe and bring attention to real situations that take place. For instance, immigration reform continues to be a controversial issue in the United States. By having scenes such as these and storylines that are relatable, the focus group participants were more easily impacted by the show.

"I like the fact that she constantly develops herself because that's one of the reasons that I'm here today for my master's [degree]," stated one focus group participant. "I'm trying to develop myself and not just live up to society's expectations but my own dreams for myself because I believe I can accomplish anything for myself." Previous research has stated that television shows can have a powerful effect on viewers (Gitlin, 1983), and the focus group data from this study supports that this is true for these viewers of *Jane the Virgin*.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Jane the Virgin addresses a number of feminist issues through its plot and storyline. Among these issues are control over one's body, enjoyment of sex, independence, camaraderie, and competence in the workplace. While some objectification, stereotyping, and gender roles do appear in the episodes, the plot seems to utilize these scenes as a way to confront and reject most of these negative messages and instead promote feminist ideals. The presence of intersectionality throughout *Jane the Virgin* also strengthens the storyline, as it addresses the struggles that can come from intersecting social identities and lends confidence that individuals can overcome the hindrances of intersections. The many characters and many storylines within the plot have given female viewers something to relate to and something to be inspired by.

In the past, successful television programs have been imitated (Dow, 1990; Ferrucci, Shoenberger & Schauster, 2014), and with its many prestigious awards, high Rotten Tomatoes rating, and expansion across networks, it is clear that *Jane the Virgin* can be categorized as a successful television show. Should *Jane the Virgin* become one of the successful television shows that is imitated, feminists should not worry — as *Jane the Virgin* gives off positive, feminist messages and seems to have positive effects overall.

Feminist Criticism asks that stereotypical constructions of gender be changed. In other words, if a feminist critic sees a text silencing or denigrating women's perspectives, they should seek to change that. If a text, on the other hand, is respectful and fair in its portrayal of women, then it is classified as an appropriate piece of rhetoric

for the construction of fair definitions of women (Foss, 1989). As a result of this study, *Jane the Virgin* can be classified as an appropriate piece of rhetoric for the construction of fair definitions of women.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

The greatest limitation in this study was that all of the intersections of social identity could not be observed within the limited number of episodes selected for analysis. For this reason, it would be wise to expand the textual analysis to include all 22 episodes of Season #1. The focus group participants did help to address themes of intersectionality from episodes that were not in the analysis, but a full textual analysis of all episodes would help to ensure that nothing important was unacknowledged.

The textual analysis could also be expanded in future studies to include episodes from later seasons, as this would indicate if the themes from Season #1 really are consistent throughout the show's entire lifespan — as previous theory and research has indicated that it should be (Brunsdon, Spigel, & D'Acci, 2008; Ferrucci, Shoenberger, & Schauster, 2004).

Additional focus groups with *Jane the Virgin* viewers would also provide further opportunities for additional research. There was a high percentage of Hispanic participants in each of the focus groups and they seemed to be highly opinionated and highly affected by the show. A future study could hold focus groups composed of all Latina women and compare the findings to focus groups containing only Caucasian women.

Lastly, future research could involve male focus group participants to see how they perceive the feminism and intersectionality that is addressed in *Jane the Virgin*.

Feminism strives for equality between males and females, and as this study mostly focused on the female characters and female viewers, it would be interesting to do a textual analysis of how male characters are portrayed and study how male viewers interpret the show.

To end this feminist critique of *Jane the Virgin*, it's important to remember the fight that women of all races, ethnicities, classes, ages, and sexualities have had to fight (and are still fighting) in order to work toward equality. The struggle may not be over, but in the words of Jane:

"Life is full of tough moments. You have to fight for what you want."

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

**FAIRMOUNT COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Elliott School of Communication

Co-Investigators: Dr. Deborah Ballard-Reisch & Ciera Dockter

Institutional Affiliation: Wichita State University, Elliott School of Communication

RQ1: In what ways does *Jane the Virgin* promote or discourage feminism?

RQ2: In what ways does *Jane the Virgin* promote or discourage intersectionality?

Hello, my name is Ciera Dockter and I represent Wichita State University as a graduate student in the Elliott School of Communication program. I appreciate your willingness to participate in my research. This study will examine the promotion and discouragement of feminism and intersectionality in *Jane the Virgin*. You were selected for participation in this study because you are a female, aged 18 or older, who has watched at least the first season of *Jane the Virgin* in its entirety.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversation.

First, you will complete a demographic form. This demographic form will be anonymous and will only serve the purpose of supplying me with overall demographic information of the group.

After you fill out the demographic form, with your permission, I will begin to audio record our conversation.

For our conversation, I will ask a number of questions to which any of you can respond. You can respond to as many questions or as few questions as you wish. You do not have to respond to any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering.

Upon completion of the focus group, I will transcribe our conversation to be used in writing my Master's thesis.

APPENDIX A (continued)

No names or identifying comments will be used when I report the results of this session. You can be assured of complete confidentiality.

This focus group will last less than one hour.

Have you have read and signed the consent form?

Do you have any questions about it before we begin?

Do I have your permission to audio record our interview?

1. Feminism has the goal of achieving equality for women and men. If you accept this definition of feminism, how do you feel about feminism?
Is it a positive thing? Negative thing?
2. Do you think feminism is addressed in *Jane the Virgin*? Can you think of examples in the first season that support your view?
3. What do you think *Jane the Virgin* communicates about women?
4. Do you see the women in *Jane the Virgin* as primarily strong, independent, and actively controlling their lives? Can you think of examples in the first season that support your view?
5. Do you see the women in *Jane the Virgin* being controlled by cultural or societal expectations or traditions? If so, can you think of examples in the first season that support your view?
6. How does *Jane the Virgin* portray relationships between women and men? Female dominated? Male dominated? Equal?
7. Intersectionality is defined as the study of intersecting social identities and their relation to oppression, domination and discrimination. Essentially, while feminism advocates for equality between males and females, intersectional feminism advocates for equality between all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, class, and sexual orientation. It goes a step further to recognize cultural barriers and acknowledge the challenges that are presented to individuals because of their social identities. If you accept this definition of intersectionality, how do you feel about intersectionality?
Is it a positive thing? Negative thing?
8. Do you think intersectionality is addressed in *Jane the Virgin*? Can you think of examples in the first season that support your view?

APPENDIX A (continued)

9. How do you think society views women who are virgins in their twenties? How do you think *Jane the Virgin* portrays women who are virgins in their twenties? Does society view women who are virgins in their twenties differently if they are Latina?
10. How do you think society views women who choose to have sex outside of marriage? How do you think *Jane the Virgin* portrays women who choose to have sex outside of marriage? Does society view women who choose to have sex outside of marriage differently if they are Latina?
11. How do you think society views women who are single mothers? How do you think *Jane the Virgin* portrays women who are single mothers? Does society view women who are single mothers differently if they are Latina?
12. How do you think society views women who are lesbian? How do you think *Jane the Virgin* portrays lesbians? Does society view women who are lesbian differently if they are Latina?
13. The show uses its plot and characters to address issues such as immigration reform. For example, in this scene (will show scene), we see that Jane's grandmother may be deported from the U.S. and have to seek medical care in her own home country. What do you think about this? Do you think the portrayal of situations like this in a television show can impact how viewers think about these types of situations in real life?
14. Which character from *Jane the Virgin* would you say you most identify with? Why?
15. Do you think watching *Jane the Virgin* has impacted your life in any way or led you to think about certain situations in new ways? If yes, What situations? How?
16. Can you think of a time when you have ever compared a real-life situation or person with a *Jane the Virgin* situation or character?
17. Is there anything else that comes to mind when you think about *Jane the Virgin* that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX B

IRB #38855 – APPROVAL

Date: March 6, 2017

Principal Investigator: Deborah Ballard-Reisch

Co-Investigator(s): Ciera Dockter

Department: Communication

IRB Number: 3855

Review Category: 6 and 7

The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your research project application entitled, “**Jane's No Virgin to Gender Equality: A Feminist Critique of Jane the Virgin**”. The IRB approves the project according to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. As described, the project also complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research.

This approval is for a period of one year from the date of this letter and will require continuation approval if the research project extends beyond March 5, 2018.

Please keep in mind the following:

1. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by the IRB prior to altering the project.
2. When signed consent documents are required, the principal investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least five years past completion of the research activity.
3. At the completion of the project, the principal investigator is expected to submit a **final report**.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrator at IRB@wichita.edu.

Sincerely,



Michael Rogers, Ph.D.
Chairperson, IRB

APPENDIX C

IRB RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Flyer (Posted throughout Elliott Hall)



Do YOU watch *Jane the Virgin*? We need you!

A graduate student at the Elliott School of Communication is looking for women, aged 18 and older to participate in focus group discussion about *Jane the Virgin*. The purpose of this research is to see how viewers interpret *Jane the Virgin* and to see whether the show has impacted the lives of viewers.

Participants must have watched at least the first season of *Jane the Virgin* in its entirety. The focus group will last no longer than one hour and will take place in the Elliott School of Communication on Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 2 p.m in Elliott Hall Room 234.

To RSVP for the focus group, or for more information, email Ciera Dockter at cedockter@shockers.wichita.edu.

APPENDIX C (continued)

Recruitment Email

Hello!

As a graduate student in the Elliott School of Communication, I am conducting focus groups as a part of my master's thesis. My study is titled *Jane's No Virgin to Gender Equality: A Feminist Critique of Jane the Virgin*. For my focus groups, I need female participants aged 18 and over who have watched the first season of *Jane the Virgin* in its entirety. I would greatly appreciate you taking the time in your class to help recruit any interested participants who fit this criterion. These focus groups could help to fulfill any research requirement that you have for your students or could be used as a chance to give out extra credit. The purpose of this research is to see how viewers interpret *Jane the Virgin* and to see whether the show has impacted the lives of viewers. The focus groups will last no longer than one hour and will take place in the Elliott School of Communication on Thursday, March 16 at 2 p.m. in Elliott Hall room 234. Anyone with questions can email me at cedockter@shockers.wichita.edu.

Attached you will find a flyer with all of the information, as well as a sign-up sheet. If you could take down the names and emails of anyone who can be there and send their names and emails to drdsbr@gmail.com, that would be great!

Thank you,
Ciera Dockter

Post in Elliott School of Communication Newsletter

An Elliott School graduate student is conducting focus group research on the television show, *Jane the Virgin*. The purpose of this research is to see how viewers interpret *Jane the Virgin* and to see whether the show has impacted their lives. Looking for females over 18 who have watched the entire first season of the show. The focus groups will last no longer than one hour and will take place at 2 p.m. March 16 in 234 Elliott Hall. If you would like to participate, contact ESC graduate teaching assistant Ciera Dockter, cedockter@shockers.wichita.edu.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

FAIRMOUNT COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Elliott School of Communication

CONSENT FORM

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study discussing the plot of season one of *Jane the Virgin*. We hope to learn what you have interpreted from this television show, your opinions of this television show, and how whether this television show has impacted your life.

Participant Selection: You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a female over age 18 who has watched the first season of *Jane the Virgin* in its entirety. Approximately 15 to 30 participants will be invited to join this study over the course of three separate focus group discussions. Focus groups are facilitated discussion about a topic in a group comprised of three or more people. They allow for researchers to understand how people think or feel about a particular topic.

Explanation of Procedures: If you decide to continue with the study, you will participate in a focus group that will be facilitated by Ciera Dockter, one of the co-investigators in this research study. The focus group will include questions about your experience with watching the first season of the television show *Jane the Virgin*, as well as questions related to some of the main themes existing in the plot of the television show. This focus group will last less than one hour. During the time of this focus group, the co-investigator intends to audio-record the session, should everyone give consent for it to be recorded. Prior to the beginning of this focus group, you will be asked to fill out a demographic sheet. This demographic form will ask questions regarding your age, ethnicity, year in school and views on feminism. The demographic forms will be collected upon completion and then placed in an envelope separately from the focus group data. This will be done before the actual focus group conversation begins and will help to ensure that each demographic form is not associated with the participant who filled it out.

Compensation: Monetary compensation will not be given for participation in this focus group. The only compensation available is class credit or extra credit in one of the basic-level communication courses (Comm 111, Comm 130, and Comm 190) at Wichita State University. The amount of credit received will be determined by your communication professor. While names will need to be collected for students who are receiving class credit, these names will be kept confidential with a secure sign-in sheet before the start of the focus group discussion. The sign-up sheet will be locked in an envelope following the start of the focus group, and Dr. Deborah Ballard-Reisch will open the envelope to communicate to instructors which students have participated. The names will never be used in any other context.

APPENDIX D (continued)

Discomfort/Risks: There is a risk that you might deem some of the questions asked to be sensitive. During the focus group, you will not be required to answer any question(s) that you do not wish to answer.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board

The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

The researchers will destroy the audio recordings securely after they have been transcribed by the researchers, which we anticipate will be within two weeks of recording. The transcripts of the focus group will be kept in a locked, secure file cabinet at Wichita State University.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University and/or the Elliott School of Communication. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact either of us at:

Ciera Dockter
(316) 559-4397
cedockter@shockers.wichita.edu

Dr. Deborah Ballard-Reisch
1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita KS 67260-0007
(316) 978-6066
deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu

If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above
You are aware that this is a research study
You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to your satisfaction

APPENDIX D (continued)

- You have voluntarily decided to participate.
- You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this
- consent form to keep.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

In addition to agreeing to participate, your signature below indicates that you consent to having the focus group in which you participate audio recorded.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Printed Name of Witness

Signature of Witness

Date