Investigating Latino stereotypes and identification in *One Day at a Time*: A rhetorical criticism of Latino representations in entertainment media

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Abstract

Since television has had the ability to entertain, it has also had the ability to persuade us about how we ought to perceive the world. To do so, television has long relied on stereotypes, whether they are of gender, race, or class, and research across media and communication disciplines have identified that representations of these marginalized groups reinforce stereotypes' existence in and out of television. The purposes of this analysis are to examine stereotypical narratives surrounding Latinos and the Latino experience in America, as well as to understand how these stereotypes are challenged. Using a combination of narrative and ideological rhetorical analysis, this thesis investigates the recently cancelled Netflix reboot of *One Day at a Time* (*ODaaT*) in order to see how this program serves as a critique of dominant narratives of minorities. *ODaaT* recognizes stereotypical representations of these communities in order to comment on them and then challenge them. Through the use of identification and analysis of the politics of representation, I explore how *ODaaT* uses rhetorical devices to subvert previously abundant representations of Latinos in order to give a more authentic representation. Former representations that rely on stereotypes run the risk of affecting Latino viewers' self-esteem while also reinforcing these negative stereotypes for all audiences. But *ODaaT* seeks to challenge these narratives by politicizing characters and the narratives within which they exist while also identifying with the audience.

Chapter One:

Introduction

In 1975, television creator Norman Lear and his team wrote the first season of *One Day at a Time (ODaaT)*. It focused on the lives of a family headed by a divorced mother of two in Indianapolis (One Day at a Time Television series 1975-1984). Much of the show's plots revolved around the mother Ann's divorce and the raising of her two children, while also addressing some relevant social issues for the time. This was particularly notable for 1970s television as it is often considered the first successful sitcom to feature a divorced woman as the lead (Dow, 1996). While there were a few other programs that explored the character of a divorced woman, the other two shows (*Diana,* 1973 and *Fay,* 1975) did not last a whole year, likely because these programs showed extremely independent women who did not have as many responsibilities as Ann, given that she has children. Since the show was on the air and even after it was cancelled, television and academic critics have recognized the program for its feminist undertones. By the 1980s, the original *ODaaT* was the only "single woman on her own" show that lasted through the 1970s, but it was not without its conflicts. Initially, CBS was hesitant to air it because of allusions to sex and mild swearing like "damn," but more importantly, the fact that the show pushed boundaries of what womanhood should look like both made the program controversial and revolutionary (Dow, 1996).

Thirty-three years later, Norman Lear approached Netflix to revive the show. Although the new version still focuses on a family headed by a divorced mother of two, the family is Cuban-American and incorporates the children's grandmother in a central role (One Day at a Time Television series 2017-current). In the remake, the show deals with problems such as

PTSD and mental health, LGBTQ issues, micro-aggressions, and perhaps most notably, the Latino[1] experience in America as it relates to these problems.

Throughout the series, each character of the Alvarez family faces hardships related to various aspects of their identity. Penelope is the mother and an army veteran turned nurse—her character is often used to explore concepts of feminism and mental health, specifically with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Lydia, the grandmother, escaped from Castro's regime in Cuba and is very proud of her heritage, so much so that it is a point of contention in episodes about immigration. Elena is a high school student, and, during the first season, is faced with her

[1] It is important to note the use of the terms "Latinidad," "Hispanic," and "Latino/a/x." Each of the terms have different implications for one's identity, as such, it is valuable to understand nuances between them. In the past, scholars have used the term "Hispania," now, many use the term "Latinidad" to address to "Latinness" or qualities of being Hispanic or Latino. "Hispanic," coined under the Nixon administration in the 1970s, is often used in government or other documents regarding race and/or ethnicity. Typically, it refers to people who are connected to the Spanish language and to Spain (Anwar, 2014). "Latino/a," takes this concept further and acknowledges how Latin Americans are connected through colonization (Anwar, 2014). Some scholars like Charles Ramirez Berg (2007) calls it "the umbrella term for people of Latin American descent that in recent years has supplanted the more imprecise and bureaucratic designation 'Hispanic'" (p. 5). This means that not only are Central/South American citizens and/or recent migrants Latino, but so is anyone who can trace their roots back to those places. "Latinx," is a relatively new phrase that, for all intents and purposes, is equal to "Latino/a;" however, it is gender neutral. Given that Spanish is a gendered language and its grammatical rules favor the masculine form of "Latino," gender non-conforming and some feminists have found identification with this new term. For the purposes of this piece, I will mostly be using the terms "Latino" or "Hispanic." Some of the impetus for this is my own identification with "Latino" versus other terms. However, some of this is also because it seems timelier in terms of who uses the term *today*. I will generally use "Hispanic" if a source does as well in their own research.

developing sexual identity. This was particularly difficult for her when her father left her *quinceañera* (*quinces*) because he felt embarrassed to have an LGBTQ daughter. Alex is Penelope's youngest child, and he functions often for comedic relief, offering snide remarks. However, he has his more serious moments too, for example when he got in a fight with some kids because of racial slurs. Finally, in addition to the actual family members, there is Schneider, their Canadian landlord who desperately wishes to be part of the family. While he is not Latino, his character often aids in plot development throughout the series.

This remake has been welcomed by many, especially in the Latino community, given the increased visibility of Latinos in entertainment media. For example, the Latino-oriented media site Latino Rebels published pieces about the show. An article by *Latino Rebels* from March of 2018 described how fans and cast alike were excited that the show was renewed for a third season after a long period of limbo. In an open letter to Netflix, numerous Hispanic and Latino organizations showed their support for the show saying, "Netflix is not only proactively shifting the public narrative of Latino Americans, but simultaneously setting the standard for positive and equitable representation of Latinos in television" (Latino Rebels, 2018). The show's cast has appeared in numerous podcast episodes promoting their show like when Justina Machado talked to Maria Hinojosa about *ODaaT* on NPR's *Latino USA*. But so have other Latino media creators as well. Tanya Saracho, the showrunner for Star's new drama *Vida*, gave a shout out to *ODaaT*'s staff for its authenticity: "They deal with queerness, they deal with class and it's woman-centric…when we don't get to handle our own narratives, it's a version of us, but not our version of us, and there's a danger to that." She also went into detail describing why shows like her own and *ODaaT* are so important—they show Latino Americans in realistic settings and give the characters voice. She also addressed the historical lack of these shows, citing that, out of 520

television shows today, only five are from a Latino perspective (Quevedo, 2018). For example, in 2015, there were 33 regularly appearing Latino characters on television shows, and in 2017, only 5.8 percent of speaking roles went to Latino characters. So, when it was reported that for the 2018-19 season there would be 40 Latino regulars across television shows and networks, viewers responded positively (Esparza, 2018). But that is only an increase of seven characters, thus demonstrating that while entertainment has evolved, it has a long way to becoming more diverse and inclusive.

While acclaim for the show was expected from Latino-perspective publications, more mainstream media outlets praised the show as well. *One Day at a Time'*s success is indicative of acceptance and identification with the modern American-Latino. Not only does it teach lessons about mental health, class, etc., it also normalizes the family for both Latino and the majority-White audiences across the country. For example, in March of 2018, *The Huffington Post* published an opinion piece called "'*One Day at a Time'* is the sitcom America needs right now." In it, author Raul Reyes (2018) wrote about how critics from most major newspapers have been giving the show glowing reviews. He says, "The show offers a positive depiction of a Latino family at a time when Latinos are still barely visible in the entertainment industry" (Reyes, 2018). Although this show provides an opportunity for Latino representation in the entertainment industry, it is still a difficult time to be Latino in America. Latinos are still nearly invisible in entertainment, and the current anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. under the Trump administration only highlights the lack of representation. That is precisely why minority-perspective television is important—it shows the diversity in America and gives viewers the opportunity to learn.

Recently, the news media has depicted Latinos, specifically Latino immigrants, as victims of both their own countries' problems and America's anti-immigration legislation as seen by the constant coverage (and government shutdown) about the border wall (Werner, Sullivan, Paletta, & Wagner, 2019) and immigrant detention. In fact, as reported in the *New York Times*, the average daily population of detained immigrants (for the 2019 fiscal rear) has reached 45,890 people; that's 5,000 more people than ICE currently has funding to house (Dickerson, 2019). Anti-immigrant sentiment started long before these two incidents. However, it has become more clearly visible especially with President Trump's derogatory comments. "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us," said Trump in a 2015 campaign speech (qtd. in Simon, 2018). These examples alone rhetorically demonstrate that Latinos, and more specifically undocumented Latinos, are seen as less than human—walls and cages aren't typically used to deter humans, but rather pests—or at least of a lower status that might somehow warrant this type of security measures. However, even extending past issues around immigration, even Latino citizens have historically, and to this day been shown to generally be of lower status—in education, socioeconomics, and more (Markert, 2007). As a result, a narrative of needy, underprivileged and disadvantaged individuals who are unwilling to assimilate to American culture has been created about Latinos as a whole. "Since its formation in the 1920s, the idea that Mexican undocumented immigrants are 'criminals' has continued in public discourse, but in the 1970s a new trope was added: Mexican immigration as an invasion of the United States" (Chavez, 2013, p. 28). This Latino threat narrative is as pervasive in news media as it is in entertainment media—the narrative being Latinos (and more specifically Mexicans) trying to sneak into the United States to take back land lost in the Spanish American war, whether that's

by tainting good All-American society with drugs or hurting the nation with violence. Rarely do we hear and listen to the narratives of immigrants *needing* to come to the United States to escape the hardships from their own countries—just like *ODaaT*'s Lydia Riera escaped the cruel dictatorship of Castro in Cuba during the 1950s.

This show is both significant and interesting because of the way it changes the narratives about Latinos in the United States while also challenging norms around television show production. Additionally, while this program is Latino-oriented, it is primarily in English and is thus more inclusive—non-Spanish speaking Latinos can relate as well as White audiences. So, while there are Latino-oriented programs in Spanish, *ODaaT* is significant because of its use (or lack thereof) of Spanish. One way the show changes narratives is by complicating the storylines that the characters are in; rather than being in stereotypical roles, each of the characters have moments where they are individual and break free from those stereotypes because of the way they are written. The second way that the show challenges norms is subtler: while the producer Lear is not Latino, much of the writing and production staff is, which has helped bring a sense of authenticity to *ODaaT.* In fact, many of the writers have discussed how they pulled discussions and events from their own lives in order to write plots for the shows. For example, Elena and Alex are based on two of the showrunner's own children (Castillo, 2018).

This thesis considers past and present stereotypes of the Latino community to see how they are used within the context of the 2017 remake of *ODaaT*. From there, I will consider how the narratives are either supporting or challenging dominant narratives of Latinos living in the United States. This program was chosen in part because of its novelty, but also to perform an analysis of representation within television. Research regarding representation largely focuses on film, so this piece will provide a new perspective on representation within entertainment as a

whole. Furthermore, many previous analyses have come from a media studies perspective, such as those of Markert (2007) or even Clark (1969), but few have used a rhetorical lens for analysis. Rhetorical analysis can provide insight into the subtle messages and symbols within the show, thusly giving new insight into the overt and covert ways the entertainment media can create authentic representations of minority characters. Viewers and scholars alike ought to have an understanding of historic Latino portrayals and stereotypes so that they may be able to recognize the program's implications. In order to break down these narratives, rhetorical criticism will be used to analyze this artifact. With these concepts in mind, I argue that this show is a step in the right direction for Latino representation in entertainment.

Literature Rationale

Latinos in Historical Entertainment Media

Research indicates that for the past ten years, Latinos have consistently consumed and engaged more entertainment media than other minorities, or even in some cases, White Americans (Markert, 2007). However, despite their consumption, we consistently do not see ourselves reflected on the screen in relatable ways. Although the 1980s included the "Hispanic Hollywood phenomenon" where there were four acclaimed and successful films depicting a more realistic Chicano experience, the same has not happened for television (Markert, 2007). In fact, in the television world, Latino perspective programs are difficult to come by, and it is even more difficult for them to succeed. Some of this is due to the nature of English-Language Latino-oriented programming (ELLTP), such as *The George Lopez Show* in 2002 or later *Ugly Betty* in 2006. Interestingly, *The George Lopez Show* was among three Latino-oriented shows that premiered in 2002; however, the other two shows from 2002 (*Luis,* with Luis Guzman, and *The Ortegas,* with Cheech Marín) only lasted a few weeks in comparison to Lopez's six seasons (Markert, 2007) and *Ugly Betty*'s four seasons later on. In fact, *Ugly Betty* was somewhat revolutionary in the fact that it was an iteration of a previous Colombian *telenovela*, *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea* (I'm Betty, the Ugly). Furthermore, this program was interesting for the ways that US *Latinidad* was depicted as well as showing the ways that Latinos are portrayed in the media—it provided an early social commentary on how Latinos social positions affect their experiences in life. (Sowards & Pineda, 2011). However, despite the show's relatively high positive reception in 2006, it was cancelled four years later in 2010.

These shows short runs are due, in part, to the nature of the show, but also its reception by its numerically larger audience: White Americans. Although ELLTP shows are presented in

English, it is clear that they are targeting a Latino audience rather than the largely White audience of the United States. This can prove to be a difficult endeavor—to balance the interests of a show seeking both affirmation from the minority group it targets, while also seeking affirmation for the largely White, English-speaking population who may also see and/or watch the show. As such, television writers, directors, and producers must find a balance between white-washing the ethnic characters and caricaturing them. If characters are too White-presenting, that may alienate the minority viewers just as much as stereotypical representations might. However, both of those techniques have proven to make minority characters more appealing to White audiences.

According to Markert, (2007), what *The George Lopez Show* "got right" was that it made the Latino characters more relatable and appealing to White audiences. By having characters largely without accents, an overall lack of "Hispania" or Hispanic artifacts in the house, and even a lack of Hispanic food, *The George Lopez Show* Americanized and normalized its Latino family, thus making them more acceptable to white viewers. George and his family overall did seem like the average blue-collar American sit-com families before them. They consisted of a nuclear family with both parents, and at least one grandparent who would engage in family affairs as well. However, other than a few episodes dealing with specific, Latino-oriented issues (such as immigration), most of the plot revolved around other more general problems. In essence, they were a family who happened to be Latino, but had assimilated so much into White-American culture, they were not portrayed as being very ethnic at all.

Before this show, the only other Latino-perspective show that experienced a similar amount of success was *Chico and the Man*. Like *The George Lopez Show*, it was a comedy, but only had four seasons on NBC throughout the 1970s. In addition to these two shows, the

Nickelodeon network had three shows from a Latino perspective that aired between 2000 and 2004: *Dora the Explorer, Taina,* and *The Brothers Garcia.* Both sitcoms focused on the coming of age of young Latinos; in *Taina,* a Puerto Rican girl of that name growing up in New York; *The Brothers Garcia,* in contrast, focused on three Mexican-American brothers growing up in Texas. It is important to note two things about these programs: they were targeted at a younger audience, and they were short lived (with the exception of *Dora,* who was on the air until 2014 and has had a number of spin-offs). With these two limitations, while they were progressive for a time in which there was little television representation, they were not popular enough to continue their runs. In fact, in *Taina*'s case, the network decided to shut it down right before they started preparation for season three. Now, television has entered what some call the "post-network era," and while inclusion is clear as seen by the roles of Sofia Vergara in *Modern Family* and Gina Rodriguez in *Jane the Virgin,* diversity is still lacking (Molina-Guzman, 2018). This is due largely in part to television's continued color-blindness when it comes to characters of color—their ethnic identities are irrelevant in the fact that it shouldn't mean they are seen differently than other characters while their ethnicities are still stereotyped on the screen. In her recent book, Molina-Guzman (2018) explains that sitcoms have traditionally focused on the importance of relationships, rarely commenting on the "underlying white privilege that informs the genre's characters and narrative conventions" (p. 4). In essence, by only focusing on familial relationships and not acknowledging race, sitcom writers have systematically ignored how these concepts interact. Even contemporary "progressive" sitcoms have had difficulty challenging this ideology of the genre, which only results in limited representations of people of color on television, and especially limited Latino representation.

This historic lack of Latino representation on television is important. While one could argue, perhaps, that Latino characters are simply not as successful or funny, it can quickly be argued that in stereotypical roles, Latinos have often been relegated to bit-parts for comedic relief. Historical examples of this trope are, of course, Ricky Ricardo from *I Love Lucy* and Speedy Gonzalez from *Looney Tunes*. Ricardo is often a point of comparison for subsequent Latino male characters who get overwhelmed and undermined by forces outside of their control. Gonzalez and the other mice are so clearly stereotypes of Latinos—lazy, constantly drunk, dancing around sombrero hats, and in some episodes are even pictured behind a border fence. More modern examples include *That 70's Show*'s Fez, who is a constant victim of unrequited love and whose Latin Lover characteristics are a primary part of his humor; or *The Flash*'s Cisco Ramon, a lovable nerd who makes many pop-culture references and whose Latinidad is somewhat obscured until the audience meets his family.

Television is not just used for entertainment, it is a source of information about how society functions and what it favors and/or deems appropriate. According to Clark (1969), television has an element of control over the public, reflecting society's structure through characters' selection and presentation. For example, we are more likely to see an Anglo protagonist than one who is ethnic. Television functions as a way to spread messages en masse about what and who is favorable or not. Essentially, television programs lead us to believe who belongs and who does not—who is in, and who is out. Clark (1969) goes on to argue that as long as White Americans want control of entertainment media, they will have it because Whites have a higher social standing than other ethnic groups in the United States. Therefore, although the television industry ought to break out of these stereotypical cycles, it is difficult because of the stereotypes' power over viewers. While it entertains us, it also shapes our opinions and views of

the characters and the real-life people those characters represent (*The Electronic Storyteller*, 1997).

Representation, Stereotypes, and Self-Esteem

Television content primes people about in and out-groups. In the case of American media, the in-group is most often made up of White protagonists like John Wayne. The out-group, on the other hand, generally consists of non-White secondary characters and antagonist. As a result, prototypes (premature representations of those people being viewed) of either or both groups affect how group membership (or lack thereof) may be seen. Prototypes are generally more negative of out-groups, maintaining a separation between the two, while prototypes of in-groups typically encourage a sense of superiority and thus exclusivity of that group (Mora, 2016). More specifically, television is also influential because of what it does not show. So, a lack of authentic representation generally affects viewers' perspectives of self and others (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007).

Lack of authentic representation is evident for Latinos because of the fact that we are largely portrayed as stereotypes: the *bandido*, the harlot, the Latin lover, the dark lady, the buffoon and the female clown (Berg, 2003). These stereotypes function as foils between the two genders. Both the *bandido* and harlot tend to be antagonists who fail by the end of the story. The Latin lover and dark lady are often used (to some degree) for comedic affect; in some narratives they may be the protagonists' helpers, but, because they are not White, they rarely end up with the usually White protagonist. The buffoon and female clown are similarly used for comedic affect, but rarely are they actually of help or interest of the protagonist; instead, they often blunder about, potentially interfering with the plot (Berg, 2003). These stereotypes have a variety of effects on audiences of various ethnicities. For those in the in-group, their expectations of

reality are generally reinforced and thus they often experience a boost to self-esteem. In contrast, out-group members generally feel invalidated because of a lack of identification with the stereotypes, thus negatively affecting their own self-esteem.

Since television teaches us how we ought to perceive the world and can affect viewers' self-esteem, it makes sense that stereotypical representations affect White audiences' perceptions and interactions with Latinos in real life as well. Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, and Ortiz (2007) found that the "more television White viewers consumed, the more their evaluations of Latinos reflected their TV characterization" (p. 362). That is to say, White viewers' perspectives of Latinos in the real world may change over time with exposure to Latino stereotypes. Therefore, for White Americans, it is less likely that Latinos will be seen as potential new members for their in-group. The process of othering distances Latinos from White Americans, thus providing a self-esteem boost because they (Whites) will likely maintain the feeling of superiority. For Latinos, seeing Latinos only as stereotypes is likely to decrease self-esteem within the Latino population. This is especially true for young Latinos, who, according to Rivadeneyra, Ward, and Gordon (2007), consume more entertainment media than any other group. However, Mora and Kang (2016) found that self-esteem is affected for all groups, regardless of age. Since television content may prime individuals about in and out-groups, it often creates prototypes. This, by extension, affects one's collective membership in either the in or out group because "self-esteem is dependent on the perceived worth placed [by] individual's self-categorizations to social groups" (Mora & Kang, 2016, p. 18).

Seeing, or not seeing, characters with whom one can identify is closely linked with self-esteem because seeing oneself on television is a modern and widespread way of demonstrating membership to a group. In other words, when one sees people with whom they can relate to on

television, they are more likely to feel like they (and their smaller social group) belong within society. Part of this identification process is authentic identification. When Latinos are relegated to these types of roles, not only is it detrimental to Latino audiences, it is detrimental to all audiences. It alienates Latinos because we cannot relate to characters on the screen, but it also alienates Latinos to White audiences because it makes them seem more different than themselves. Repeated exposure to these stereotypes only strengthens their power—both on the screen and in the real world. In fact, these stereotypes have a strong impact on White audiences (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2007; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz & Kopacz, 2008). Not only did their evaluations reflect televised characterization, but they consistently favored Latinos in stereotypical roles such as those of maid, maintenance worker, and drug dealer. Markert (2007) found results that reinforced these findings in his own study. For example, when asked to look at scenes and jokes from *The George Lopez Show*, non-Latino focus groups talked about the jokes related to stereotypes. Latino focus groups, on the other hand, talked more about the family or situation *in* the scene, emphasizing aspects of the family and show that did not necessarily align with stereotypes.

Challenging Stereotypes

Because these stereotypes are so widespread and ever evolving, they are often difficult to challenge. Therefore, understanding the evolution of these stereotypes is crucial. For example, although western depictions of *bandidos* with black hats and scowls are not as evident in film as they once were, we still see *bandidos* in the forms of Latino gangsters and thugs (Berg, 2003) like the drug dealers in the *Narcos* series or 1983's *Scarface* and 2008's *Mexican Gangster*. As such, it is crucial to find ways to overcome these stereotypes. One key way to do so would be to increase exposure of Latino characters on television. Exposure comes from two places; scholars

argue that in order for there to be more Latinos seen on the screen, more must work behind it as well. However, this is easier said than done, because television shows, perhaps more so than other genre, rely on wide viewership.

Networks must seek approval from mainstream audiences in order to stay on the air (Dow, 2001). Since networks, even those like Netflix, are appealing to broad audiences, they often employ writers who are most experienced with the broad audience, i.e. straight White males. So, when White writers try to write Latino stories, they are often writing from *their* field of experience—sometimes they have the time to do in-depth research, but many times, they do not. When they do not have this time, they generally resort to stereotypes or characters that are heavily assimilated into the general culture because assimilation is seen as the primary way to legitimize a minority (Shugart, 2003). So, what the entertainment industry needs is more minority writers working behind the scenes to share their own stories. "There's been an erasure of our narratives for so long," according to Tanya Saracho (Quevedo, 2018). She, along with other scholars, call for a diversification of writing and production staff so as to avoid this assimilation.

Additionally, it is important to have actual Latinos play Latino parts. There are two debates around this issue. The first being the debate around brownface. Hollywood has a history of miscasting characters of color with white actors. Famously in *West Side Story,* all the Puerto Rican actors were White, save Rita Moreno, but even she was in brownface to make her seem "more Puerto Rican." In an interview on the NPR podcast "Alt Latino," Moreno reflected on this experience saying, "I remember, very specifically, a time when I was sitting in the make-up chair and the make-up man was putting very, very dark make-up on me. Well I'm not dark, I'm one of those light Puerto Ricans because my grandma was a Spaniard. And I remember saying to the

make-up man, ‘I am so tired of this bloody dark make-up; I’m not that color, make-up is supposed to match your color.’ And he literally turned to me—he was white—he literally turned to me and he said, ‘What, are you racist?’” (qtd. in Contreras, 2019). The other part of this debate takes place more within the Latino community as a whole—does the specific ethnicity of an actor matter as long as it is still a Latino playing a Latino part? That is to say, does it matter that a Puerto Rican is playing the part of a Cuban, as is the case with *ODaaT*? A potential reason for this might be as simple as there being a potential lack of Cuban actors. But another possibility for this casting choice could be related to the fact that given Puerto Rico’s territory status and Cuba’s communist history, the family’s heritage is more dramatic and less all-American if they are presented as Cuban, despite having two Puerto Rican women leading the cast. A more debated example of inter-ethnic miscasting is with Steven Soderbergh’s film *Traffic*. He said he was striving for integrity with his film, and in some cases, he achieved just that. For example, in scenes where the cast was supposed to be in Mexico, Spanish was spoken, in fact he said “If these people don’t speak Spanish, the film has no integrity. You just can’t expect anyone to take it seriously” (Lemons, 2000). However, while there were Mexican actors, none were cast in the primary Mexican roles, in fact, the protagonist was portrayed by a Puerto Rican (Shaw, 2005). Some critics speculated whether or not this was done on purpose, that there was an element of bias against Mexicans and that the production staff didn’t want a Mexican actor to be the protagonist of the film. It is unknown if there was any implicit bias in the casting choices; but whether or not certain Latino characters should be played by actors of the same heritage has long been contested. However, the fact that there are more actors shown on popular television and film has been welcomed by much of the Latino community.

Out of the 900 popular films between 2007 and 2016, Latinos with speaking roles have been consistently absent. In fact, Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper (2017) found that only 3.1 percent of characters are Hispanic in movies—the lowest percentage of any minority group analyzed in the study. Furthermore, that number has not changed since 2007. Some of this could be attributed to writers and producers. Typically, writers and directors create roles that they have some familiarity with or with whom they may be able to relate to. While the statistic for Hispanic directors was not explicitly listed in their report, Smith Choueiti, and Pieper (2017) found that out of 1,006 directors only 5.6 and 3 percent of directors were Black or Asian respectively. From those statistics, it is reasonable to conclude that the percentage of Hispanic directors is around those same marks.

Hispanic/Latino writers and directors are important because they are the ones most likely to create authentic shows for the Latino population, especially in the United States. Given that they have inherent connections to the community, they have a greater capacity to write characters and situations with verisimilitude to the Latino experience in the United States today. In essence, representation extends beyond what is seen on the screen to what is behind it as well. More diverse content creators typically lead to more diverse content. With a diversification of content, it is possible to make Latinos (or other minority groups for that matter) more of a dominant group in our society. This would then affect Latinos in the real world because belonging to a dominant group or seeing people like you as part of a dominant group, helps with self-esteem (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017). Having writers telling stories of groups they are familiar with is beneficial for all viewers because it creates a more authentic story which has the possibility of informing viewers as well as entertaining them. As NPR television critic Eric Deggans said, “The value of having a showrunner who is Latino, or Latinx, and having an all

Latinx writing staff is that you have people of color telling their own stories in a way that's very authentic… If you're from that community, or you're from that culture, if you're familiar with it, it feels very comfortable. For people who are not from it, you learn a lot and you get to experience something that you would likely never get to experience it in quite the same way in a different way," (qtd. in Contreras, 2018). So, while having characters in less stereotypical roles is important, it is also important to have diversity behind the scenes as well. By diversifying the writing and production staff, fewer stereotypes will be written, thus having more authentic characters will start to become more commonplace.

As viewers, we tend to gravitate toward shows with which we can identify. For many, especially young Latinos, *ODaaT* has been a show that accomplishes that need. Not only is it relatable for Latino audiences, but it is relatable for other audiences due to its complex storylines that are inclusive of many, various identity groups. Furthermore, given the fact that most of the cast is Latino, Latino audiences can see people like ourselves on the screen, thus boosting our self-esteem. At the same time, seeing Latinos in relatable situations helps normalize them to White audiences, potentially decreasing the frequency of Latinos being othered on individual and institutional levels. But it is not enough to just *see* Latino actors in television; it is important for them to be shown in stories that make sense. Having a primarily Latino writing and production staff creates the opportunity to show audiences authentic Latino-American stories rather than more cliched ones.

The Role of One Day at a Time

ELLTP audiences and producers have not only been asking for more shows, but more relatable shows for young viewers. That is why Netflix's remake of the 1970s popular show *ODaaT* is revolutionary for the Latino community. Not only does the show employ a primarily

Latino writing staff and cast, it does not rely solely on stereotypes to reach White audiences. Stereotypes are certainly present in the show, but they are not the defining characteristics for the family, and they are generally used to make a point that the stereotype exists before being challenged. Challenging sometimes comes by calling out another character for being stereotypical, or the scene becomes a teaching moment about stereotypes and prejudice. The use and then recognition of stereotypes accomplishes three things: it provides for some comedy, but more importantly, it challenges those stereotypes, and it lessens alienation. As discussed above, seeing people like oneself on television helps with self-esteem and by extension provides a sense of validation of identity. Today, since there is a lack of diversity in the entertainment industry, people of color often feel left out or even alienated, like in 2016 when the #OscarsSoWhite hashtag called out the film industry for its lack of diversity, and it's been argued to still be a relevant issue (Reign, 2018). Which is why *ODaaT* is important—it uses comedy and authentic storylines for an Latino-American family, and is therefore inclusive. Comedy is important because it helps audiences process difficult moments more easily; and recognition of the stereotypes is like self-reflexivity. By being aware of the problem (stereotypes) one might be able to find ways to challenge them. Furthermore, unlike Lopez's show, there are numerous examples of Hispania in the show for Latino audiences to relate to. They also use more Spanish in the show; however, it is notable that the Spanish used is not in excess, nor is it too difficult to understand based on other context clues. Therefore, audiences with little to no Spanish language experience can still feel included while watching.

One Day at a Time is trying to do what other ELLTP has done before—provide Latino audiences with characters and entertainment relatable to us while also appealing to the larger, White audience. However, unlike previous shows, its target audience is the Latinos living in the

U.S., not White Americans, so while normalization is sought, it does not appear to be the priority. It achieves this goal by having Latino writers and producers, a largely Latino cast, and by not making Latinidad the central part to its storyline. However, due to the platform of Netflix, the show's producers and writing staff recognize the need to be accessible to all audiences. Therefore, for all the episodes that more specifically deal with Latino related concepts, there are episodes that other audiences can relate to. Some examples include mental health, coming out, and simply fitting in while going through school or work. While each character (except for Schneider) faces micro-aggressions within the context of the Latino experience in America, they also find themselves facing issues that most Americans face in life regardless of race. Penelope, for example, has to deal with mental health often, but her character also has an episode dedicated to women's rights issues such as the pay gap. Lydia often considers issues related to growing old, such as the grief of losing her husband, making relationships later in life, and finding purpose. Elena and Alex both have narratives where they need to find ways to fit in—Elena when she discovers her sexuality and Alex when he wants to fit in with the proverbial cool kids at school and baseball, but literally can't afford it. So, while the family's being Cuban is central to the story, the family is presented as an American family facing current issues, which also include racial issues. While seeing these characters handling issues like fitting in or discovering oneself is entertaining, showing these types of stories complicates the "sitcom ideology" of merely focusing on relationships (Molina-Guzman, 2018). Since *ODaaT* complicates these narratives, it is therefore important to understand what these narrative complications imply, therefore deeper analysis of the show is necessary.

Other scholars have analyzed similar shows (like *The George Lopez Show*) and their impact by doing media analysis and by conducting Latino and White focus groups to assess

audience reactions (Markert, 2007). But there is little rhetorical work looking into the symbols and messages sent about Latinos within the television programs themselves (Holling, 2006). Rather than focusing on impact, I am interested in the messages and meanings present in the show and how they are addressed. Rhetoricians posit that the messages in media are able to give insight into society and its functions. Therefore, rhetorical criticism seems to be the most useful method for analysis because of the nature of the artifact, *One Day at a Time*.

Methodology: Rhetorical Criticism to Analyze

As explained by Foss (1989), rhetorical criticism looks for the ways in which particular symbols are presented and how they operate—in this case, primarily within the show itself. However, it is possible to draw conclusions about how those same symbols might correlate to real-world events. Furthermore, given that rhetorical criticism often investigates power (Brummett, 2015), it is relevant given the relatively limited research on the social standing of Latinos in America, and especially within the context of American entertainment media.

Rather than simply looking at content patterns, I want to investigate and analyze patterns in regard to how the characters are (or are not) empowered and represented. For example, in Enck and Morrissey's (2015) analysis of *Orange is the New Black,* they were able to look at the ways in which characters were represented, and what those representations could mean for the program's audience. They found that by making the protagonist, Piper, a White, upper-class woman who was also remorseful for her crime, audiences are able to identify with her. Thus, viewers might be able to learn alongside Piper as she is exposed to alternate racial realities. Furthermore, by seeing her interactions with other female inmates, many of whom are women of color, the audience may reflect Piper's sympathy themselves, thus questioning racialized realities. Similarly, in an analysis of *The Big Bang Theory*, researchers found that comedic

discussion of religion amongst scientists and their friends is a way to show the relationship between religion and science. However, it the fact that these characters are the ones discussing religion (and making jokes about it) suggests that supposedly oppositional fields may coexist (Lewis & Molloy, 2015).

In analyzing the artifact of *ODaaT*, it seems useful to consider it from two related rhetorical perspectives: narrative and ideological. I believe it is useful to consider both of these perspectives because of the way they build on each other. U.S. ideologies are present in the stories we tell about Americans. As a country, we generally characterize what an American is by way of the American dream. For many populations of color, it is more difficult for them to fit within that narrative—as such, the general American public has developed other narratives for communities of color. These narratives are often based in stereotypes, exposing our country's race-related ideologies. So, by analyzing the stories told about the Latino population, viewers might better understand Latinos' social location in American society today.

Simply put, narrative criticism presents a view of the world similar to how one might approach understanding a play (Foss, 1989). Both broad as well as more individual narratives may be considered. Humans tend to make sense of life in terms of narrative—we tell stories about our days and other events. In fact, this is the basis of the narrative paradigm, which provides a philosophical framework for human communication (Fisher, 1985). If the basis for human communication is narrative, then it implies that we are constantly telling stories about *who* we are and *what* we do. That being said, we do not just tell stories about ourselves, but other individuals as well. As discussed above, longstanding, broader narratives around Latinos are very limited and essentialized. Individual narratives, in contrast, are generally more specific and show nuances among cultures and even characters. In regard to this analysis, an example of

broader narratives will come from the use (or lack thereof) of both (non)stereotypical race/ethnic storylines in the show as well as storylines related to larger familial, social, and political issues.

Narrative criticism allows readers and viewers alike to understand the complexities of plotlines within the show. By breaking down an artifact into basic story components, critics can understand what the television producers want to emphasize for the viewers. Narrative criticism asks rhetoricians to consider an artifact or text as though breaking down elements of a play: where is this television show taking place, how does that place effect the characters and who are they, what are their traits? If a narrator is used, are they credible, intrusive, do they adequately and accurately describe events of the piece? Other elements, like events, cause-and-effect relationships, and temporal relationships are all relatively straightforward—it is important to understand what is happening and when (Foss, 1989). However, narrative criticism also asks rhetoricians to consider audience, theme, and any limitations the artifact may have. By looking individually at these elements, rhetoricians may be able to draw conclusions about the meanings the stories hold and how the viewers make sense of these meanings. For example, Rockler (2006) did an analysis looking at the identity politics in the *Friends* episode "The One with the Holiday Armadillo." In it, while she looked at the therapeutic rhetoric (which essentially asks individuals to cope with any problems as an individual, whose issue does not exist within a larger societal context), narrative criticism became apparent. She looked at the one episode: its characters, plot and sub-plot, etc. to see how Jewish identity is represented in the show. While Rockler (2006) focused primarily on the one episode, she did make reference to other examples of Jewish identity (or lack thereof) in the program as a whole. For example, a lack of explanation around the Hanukkah story in the episode, and dismissal of Ross making meaningful

comments/observations about the holiday were indicative of Jewish stories not having much meaning or emphasis in popular American culture at that time (Rockler, 2006).

Of course, it is easier to make sense when a viewer can relate to the story. According to Foss, (1989) it is important to consider if and how the stories presented in the artifact have fidelity, or hold true to a viewer's own experiences. Narrative fidelity is important because it is by which audiences judge the quality of truth in the story and determine if it is logical (Fisher, 1985). When audiences watch *ODaaT*, they must compare the characters' stories with one's own understanding of the Latino experience and if the narrative rings true with viewers' perceptions, they are more likely to accept it. Narrative criticism allows for relatively deep analysis of these stories. For example, Deggans said, "We rarely see Latino characters given the chance to see these complex stories…television has been so under-representative of Hispanic characters that we don't often get to see these complex stories told where these kinds of characters are at the center of it" (qtd. in Contreras, 2018).

Because plotlines in *ODaaT* are generally more complex than previous stories, it makes sense to use a narrative approach. The show is undoubtedly about a Latino family living in the current day of the country. However, while the Latinidad is important to all characters of the family, it is not explicitly the main focus of the storylines. Instead, it could be considered a show about a family, who happens to be Latino going through daily American life. So, instead of following traditional narratives Hollywood has for Latino characters, the show's writing team complicates storylines in an effort to make a point. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what narratives are shown and which are ignored in terms of the Latino experience.

Additionally, I will employ ideological criticism. At its most basic, ideological criticism is used to determine if concepts challenge or maintain existing/dominant ideas (Brummett,

2015). In this case, it will be used to determine how *ODaaT*'s narratives challenge and/or maintain existing narratives about Latinos. It is important to understand stereotypes and their use in Hollywood—which are, for the most part, the existing narratives of Latinos. They are seductive, dangerous, submissive, servantly, etc. Ideology looks at power dynamics, thus existing within society and politics, especially in relation to gender, class, and race. This is especially evident in Holland's (2009) analysis of the ways in which Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's Super Bowl half-time show was discussed. At the performance, a wardrobe malfunction occurred: Timberlake tugged too hard on Jackson's costume, exposing her breast. In an analysis of numerous news reports, Holland found that most articles painted Timberlake as the victim and Jackson as a Jezebel, thus supporting the ideology that Black women are sexually assertive. Similarly, in Prody's (2015) analysis of Audioslave's song/music video "Doesn't Remind Me," she determined that through juxtaposition of war and boxing narratives, the artifact served as a critique of masculine ideologies. Rather than the music video celebrating the beliefs that to be masculine is to be aggressive and emotionally stable (and also pro-war), the band offers an alternative—that dominant masculinity is destructive, especially toward families. By critiquing dominant ideologies around a subject, one is also critiquing the narratives about that same subject. Rather than supporting, and therefore perpetuating, stories that Black women are aggressive sexual beings or that to be masculine is to constantly fight and compete to be the best male, Holland and Prody respectively challenge readers to think about these narratives differently. If audiences and scholars alike are able to step back and see alternative ideologies, it is possible to modify the discourse around it and create new artifacts that support more inclusive and useful ones.

It is worth noting, however, that in order for an artifact to be useful for a community, it does not have to strictly maintain or challenge the dominant narrative. In many cases, there is a mixture of both. Even on a precursory viewing of the program, a viewer can see that some stereotypes are present in the show—for example, that all/most Latinos love dancing. However, at the same time, this stereotype is challenged when a character calls out her family for being "a walking stereotype" (Lear, 2017). So, while it would be efficient to do a media, or even visual analysis of this television program, the narratives and their functions are more interesting and impactful—they are what (arguably) ultimately make the show engaging and successful with Latino audiences. Which is why *Resurrection Blvd.*, while it had a short run, received some limited praise in the early 2000s for being a "step in the right direction" (Acosta, 2007). The amount of representation of Latinos behind and in front of the camera, discussion of masculinity and machismo among Latinos, the fact that the females in the show had opinions and expressed them, and the performances were all seen as positives. However, the lack in story development and even the lack in average looking cast members sought some criticism; the boxing narrative was seen by some as the "most culturally cliched programs on television" (Speier, 2000). That being said, while the Santiago family doesn't necessarily follow the conventions of a typical television family—not only are they a family of color, but it is a single parent household with the father in charge—it focuses on the importance of family and support from one's family. Holling (2006) found too, that there were some archetypal characters such as the stoic, brooding, or sensitive brothers, but by combining these characters and the emphasis on family, Latino audiences were able to identify with the fictional family. Her analysis shows that Latino audiences look for culturally based representations of ourselves, and while some stereotypes are

present, they may not always be entirely problematic. Regardless, it is important to both see and understand the representations of minorities that television shows.

Using rhetorical criticism to study Latino representation in entertainment media through the remake of the television show *ODaaT,* I intend to investigate how stereotypical ethnic narratives are challenged and/or maintained. As a result of these narrative ideological analyses, I may be able to determine how communication of this fictional family may normalize the Latino experience. Understanding the use of stereotypical narratives is important because they have been historically problematic—not only for the minority groups shown, but also for the majority group seeing them. By obscuring authentic Latino characters and replacing them with stereotypical ones, we are unable to identify and legitimize the experience of the real minority individuals the characters represent. In essence, television programs with more diverse representation have the possibility of positively impacting all viewers.

Given that this is a relatively new show, and it builds upon the success of its original run, a critique of the rebooted *ODaaT* will be a unique addition to the repertoire of television analysis. However, given that I am seeking to do a rhetorical criticism, combining the methods of narrative and ideological analysis, it will also be an expansion of that same repertoire. To do this analysis, I will be commenting on the show as a whole and five episodes more deeply to look for examples of Latino stereotypes being both challenged and maintained. In order to determine what is worth further analysis, I watched the first two seasons of *ODaaT* twice. The first time, to get a sense of the show and its themes; the second time, I took audio notes pointing out specific and more significant/obvious examples of Latinidad and/or the characters' portrayals. From these notes, I chose five episodes for more in-depth analysis, watched these episodes for a third time, and took more notes regarding narrative criticism's features. These episode notes, combined with

notes on characters, plot points, and reoccurring themes were then used to determine where and how stereotypes were used to progress the narrative. During my analysis, I found that identification and the politics of representation were two rhetorical tools that repeatedly emerged. Using these two concepts as more specific frameworks, I was able to determine where and how *ODaaT* used stereotypes and challenged them.

Chapter Two: Identification

Season two's episode "Roots," shows the Alvarez family discussing their Latinidad—Lydia is emotional because she fears that to become an American citizen is to deny her Cuban heritage, but the rest of the family assures her that that isn't the case:

> Penelope: You brought Cuba here and you gave it to us.
>
> Alex: It's true. Whenever someone asks me what I am, I always say I'm Cuban. I don't even think about it.
>
> Elena: Yeah. When people ask me what I am, I say, "I'm a human being…not defined by labels or the artificial construct of borders…" But I also say I'm Cuban. (Signer & Lewis, 2018)

This scene does a few things—first, it asks the audience to empathize with Lydia and her fear of ignoring her Cuban identity; second, it demonstrates pride in family history; third, it shows how identity can be complicated, but that it is important to people. Now while this identity struggle may not be a present issue for every viewer, audience members are able to identify with these characters in this scene—some of the identification comes from watching the family for a whole season and growing to like them, but the identification also comes from the fact that national identity is something most people can relate to, and the same goes for balancing identities. For Lydia, she is asked to balance her Cuban identity with a potential new American identity, and for Elena, she demonstrates that she balances her identity as a person with her ethnic identity. Defining oneself is a natural part of human development and this scene asks audiences to consider how they balance their own identities while also asking audiences to consider those that the Alvarez family must balance.

Identity and identification are important to rhetoric because they help in creating a connection between rhetor and audience, when that happens, a mutual understanding occurs and the rhetor's message is more likely to be received. As Burke (1969) explained, "Two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an 'identification' that does not deny their distinctness," (p. 1020). This indicates that identification does not have to be so strong that the rhetor and audience will see themselves as the same, but that they are similar enough to have interest in the message being conveyed. In the case of *ODaaT*, the cast and crew are the rhetors and they send messages about the Latino experience in the US among other messages regarding social rights and social justice. This identification is important because it gives the show the opportunity to address both social issues ad stereotypes, at the same time, these are critiqued and therefore challenged. Like with the quote from Elena above, she challenges what it means to ask someone "what they are," she also challenges what it means to be from any particular place. However, given the context—that they're trying to make Lydia feel better about applying for citizenship and showing their family pride, Elena also acknowledges the importance of family and personal history. This acknowledgement, in conjunction with her critique ultimately challenges the script associated with asking people where they are from; identification in *ODaaT* works much the same way. The writers create stories that allow stereotypes to be acknowledged, and from there, they critique them, asking the audience to think differently about these narratives by presenting their own, more complex ones.

In this chapter, I argue that in order to challenge established and stereotypical narratives, *ODaaT* encourages identification between characters and audiences. First, the show's writing team creates developed characters who seem relatively realistic and worthy of audience's sympathy and empathy. This development means that *ODaaT* characters are able to appeal to a

number of different audiences because, rather than being defined in narrow, stereotypical ways, the characters themselves are able to challenge narratives. Much of this is accomplished by juxtaposing certain characters and their experiences against others. By doing so, the audience is challenged to think of what it means to be mentally healthy, a woman/man, LGBTQ, etc. in different ways. This juxtaposition is strengthened through the roundness of the characters and audience's abilities to identify with them. For this argument, I turn to rhetorical literature on identification. In my analysis, I look at how round characters aid in establishing identification, and then discuss the relatability of each Alvarez family member and how gender representation may affect identification.

Rhetorical Theories of Identification

One Day at a Time undoubtedly increases Latino inclusion in the entertainment industry by having a majority-Latino cast and crew. That in and of itself breaks with traditions within television and film, challenging stereotypical roles by empowering Latino writers to tell *our* stories and by having Latino actors present them. As a result, *ODaaT* also creates a sense of identification with the audience, whether they are Latino or not.

Identification is a crucial tool to rhetoricians; when approaching rhetoric as gathering all the available means of persuasion, it is helpful to think of Burke and his argument that identification is related to but separate from persuasion. When one can identify with the rhetor, one is more likely to be persuaded by them. So too is identification important in television: when an audience connects with a text (i.e. a program), they are more likely to stay engaged and watch the show. While it may not seem to be the case, those who make television are, in a sense, rhetors—if it primes us as the audience what to think about the world around us (Mora & Kang, 2016), then it is a conduit for persuasion. However, as audiences, we are tuned into how the

characters on television are portrayed and will often depend on whether or not we like the character in order to determine if we will continue watching it. This is where identification comes in: liking the characters on the small screen is not enough to grab and maintain our attention, but identification with those characters is often enough to keep audiences engaged. Whether it is through empathy or a sense of community, identification can be accomplished in many ways, but when identification is achieved, as Burke proposes, the two parties involved into identification are "substantially one" (Burke, 1969). This means that they are more likely to relate to each other and care about similar things—in television, this is important because if the television writers can persuade audiences to care about the characters they've written, they are more likely to maintain an audience (and thus a presence on the air), but they are also more likely to be able to make appeals to the audience that extend past the content of their programs. Through identification, television casts and crews are able to make social commentary and provide a sense of community, *ODaaT* does both of these things for the American-Latino population, and by doing so, challenges stereotypical narratives for our community.

Identification is important for audiences because it affects perceptions of the characters and of themselves. As Joseph Bates (2014) said about creating characters, "how readers connect with, and relate to, your characters is the test of effective fiction" (p. 12). In other words, fiction is more impactful and memorable when readers or viewers can connect with the characters. Connection with, or liking a character is often the first step toward relating to them, and once a character is seen as relatable, it is possible to identify with that same character. While they are similar, relating to the character is the first step to identifying with them. To relate to a character is to see similarities between them and oneself or other people. However, identification extends past simply seeing oneself being like a character. Instead, a viewer is more likely to see

themselves reflected in a character—in a sense, identification with a character is being persuaded to see and potentially value what they do. For instance, when a woman sees Lydia insisting that Penelope put on blush before leaving the house, it is likely to remind them of either their own mothers or society in general emphasizing the importance of appearance ("Bobos and Mamitas"). When this is accomplished, rhetorical messages—whether they are overt or not—are more likely to resonate with the audience. For example, as Carter (1972) discussed in his piece assessing Burkeian identification, he stressed the importance of differentiating what Burke called idiomatic syntax (having to do with colloquialisms of an audience) versus stylistic syntax (having to do with how those colloquialisms are actually said). Both types of syntax are important in their own right, but Carter argues that Burke's stylistic syntax leads to more identification because the message is communicated in a way that is familiar to the audience—therefore, they are more likely to relate to it. For example, in "Viva Cuba," Schneider comes in the family's apartment wearing a Che Guevara shirt, offending everyone. When he does not understand why, Penelope says it'd be like going into a Jewish home wearing a Hitler shirt. Alex then clarifies, "Or into Taylor Swift's home wearing a Kanye shirt!" At this point, the meaning—the fact that Guevara was instrumental in helping Castro lead the revolution which forced Lydia and millions other to escape—is clear to Schneider. This is an example of Alex not only speaking the language of Schneider, but also to viewers who may not understand the cultural significance. Scenes like this give the opportunity for humor while also informing viewers about the American-Latino experience.

Furthermore, two important parts to the argument of stylistic syntax have to do with redundancy and "speaking his [the reader/viewer's] language." As seen above, speaking the reader/viewer's language may be in a more metaphorical sense, but it can also be taken literally.

In the case of *ODaaT*, this literal speaking viewer's language comes in the form of the cast switching between English and Spanish throughout the series. Unlike in other television programs such as *Jane the Virgin*, *ODaaT* does not make use of subtitles. However, their use of Spanish rarely lasts more than a few sentences and general meaning can usually be inferred through nonverbal communication accompanying the Spanish and the context around it. By using both languages, the show is able to appeal to a wider range of people. As ELLTP, it appeals to non-Spanish speaking audiences, but the mere presence of Spanish also allows for identification and representation.

As for the first point, redundancy may be linked with the way a message is told—are there elements of repetition, alliteration, parallelism, etc.—formal patterns created by elements like that lead to collective expectations for those types of stories and is therefore related to narrative fidelity and probability. As an audience, we believe that the message conveyed to us is possible because it rings true to previous, similar experiences. So, as communicators, if our messages about characters repeat others' similar messages heard before, it is likely that we may establish a sense of identification between characters and audience members (Carpenter, 1972). For example, in "Viva Cuba," the audience sees a clip of Alex's project and after Lydia tells her story, Penelope, as a character in his film says, "Increíble, but that is only one story, there are many rich stories from Cuba that must be told." This scene does two things—given that it happens right after Lydia's in-depth telling of her own story, it establishes the fact that immigration is a common narrative associated with Latinos, so there is a sense of narrative probability present. However, it also indicates that there are more stories possible, inviting the viewer to investigate them more. Furthermore, once redundancy is established in what is being said, if the message is being communicated in the audience member's language, identification

with the speaker is likely to occur. Here, it is important to remember that this concept is not unique to persuasive speech, but it may be applied to other forms of communication as well. In other words, if *ODaaT* characters experience things and talk about them in similar ways to how viewers experience and talk about them, it is possible for the audience to identify with them.

Identification is something that has been explored by many rhetoricians throughout the years, but I argue that identification must be expanded to include discussions of authenticity. Authenticity in the case of television should be seen as having some resemblance to what is being represented, so in terms of having authentic characters, those characters should seem like people who one might actually meet. This is important because as a minority group, Latinos rarely see characters on television who remind us of ourselves or others within our community, which can be problematic and affect one's view of their environment or oneself. As mentioned in chapter one, seeing oneself on television (or not) has an effect on self-esteem (Mora & Kang, 2016). But, the authenticity of that representation can also affect self-esteem. So, while a viewer may see a character that looks like them, if that character is just a stereotype, there is likely to still be a drop in self-esteem (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 20017). That is what makes *ODaaT* so unique—through its relatively diverse cast of characters, it is able to identify with a variety of groups. At the same time, it also makes Latinos, members of the LGBTQ community, older generations, seem like they belong to "the dominant group" (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017). This sense of belonging is important because identification with the dominant group boosts self-esteem given that the dominant group will generally have more social standing in the broader community. Identification with the minority group often hurts it because minority groups are typically seen as having less power and are generally portrayed via stereotypes. This dominant group isn't necessarily that of the US today, but the US portrayed in *ODaaT*—thus

improving their sense of self-esteem and creating a sense of identification with the characters. So, not only does the show portray the Latino characters in non-stereotypical roles, overall, it shows non-traditional characters inhabiting roles typically filled by others. For instance, military veterans are often portrayed in television and film as strong, tall, white men of the likes of Captain Miller in *Saving Private Ryan* or Chris Kyle in *American Sniper*. *ODaaT* also has a veteran, but she is portrayed as petite, loud, Cuban Penelope Alvarez, self-proclaimed "badass." In other words, she does not fit the usual description of entertainment-veteran, even though as of 2018, Hispanic women made up nearly 20 percent of the United States Army (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). However, in order to more fully understand these non-traditional roles, it is important to see how these characters were created because by understanding that, we as an audience may be able to better understand how and why we are able to identify with the characters.

First, it is notable how the writing staff relied on their own families for inspiration to develop the Alvarez family. For example, both Michelle Badillo and Debby Wolfe talked about how Lydia is similar to their grandmother and mother respectively (Castillo, 2018). The fact that the writers relied on real life inspiration rather than recycled stereotypes to develop the characters, automatically this is a way for the show to challenge dominant narratives. As Marcel Ruiz, who plays Alex Alvarez said, "this is one of the first shows that represents the day to day family, like a Latino family." (American Latino, 2018). With the ideas of identification and authenticity in mind, we need to understand how these concepts relate to the characters and how that affects whether or not the characters challenge or maintain dominant narratives.

Cultivating Identification in *ODaaT: Character & Gender*

This "day to day family" that Ruiz mentions is important because we have so few representations like this—that show the complexity of a multi-generational, bi-cultural family in this modern era. However, in order to effectively portray a family like the Alvarezes, the characters must be multi-dimensional and seem like real people with whom the audience can both sympathize and empathize. Audiences need to feel for them because when characters seem more authentic, it is more likely for viewers are able to have an emotional connection with them (and therefore identification), these characters then almost seem more worthy of our sympathy and/or empathy. According to Clair et al. (2014), "extended narrative empathy requires a continual sense of reflexivity for a fuller understanding to be achieved" (p. 11). So, in regard to *ODaaT,* empathy is needed to fully understand the character, but in order to empathize, viewers must first be reflexive and aware of their own feelings and experiences that can apply to the characters and/or their situation at a given time. When reflexivity is needed, it is helpful to have thinner ego boundaries—in other words, to be reflexive is to have a greater capacity to interact (on an emotional level) with the outside world (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2019). Empathy is similar to sympathy, but different because with sympathy, one can be more emotionally invulnerable—knowing first-hand how any given emotion feels is not necessary for sympathy. Sympathy just asks that a person be aware of the other person's (or characters') feelings; that being said, sympathy has been found to influence perception of both individuals and events (Peifer, 2016). This is in-part accomplished by using real-life people for the characters' inspiration, but also by having the characters evolve over time with nuanced storylines.

The Characters as Round

In most writing or literature analysis classes, there is a discussion of characters and character development. Beginning writers are taught that the more developed and complex a

character, the more "round" they are; as in their personalities, appearance, and more has been rounded out and readers (or viewers) are more likely to connect with those characters. Flat characters, in contrast, are those who are very basic, but readers/viewers don't necessarily get a sense of *who* the character is or *why* they do and act as they do. "All good fiction, regardless of the genre is ultimately character-based. And what makes a character real and relatable to us is complexity" (Bates, 2014, p. 12). In literature and film, these flat characters are often the side-kicks or simply secondary characters who do not necessarily contribute to the overall narrative of the piece they exist within. For example, in the Batman franchise, the hero has many sidekicks throughout the comic series, from Robin to Batgirl to Alfred, these characters help Batman, but there is implication that he does not really *need* them. In fact, these characters are so arguably unnecessary that few have backstories that are thoroughly developed (unless in spin-offs) and the only consistent sidekick in the film versions is Alfred the butler. If and when these characters are in danger, audiences worry for them because of constant exposure and the fact that we don't want evil to prevail, but rarely do we as an audience actually worry for these characters because we connect with them.

As viewers, we do not generally feel as strongly for those characters as we do for the round ones. So, in order to make audiences feel for their characters and relate to them, it is important for writers to develop their characters' personalities by giving them complex storylines and the opportunity for growth. However, sometimes it is not enough to simply be able to relate to that character, audience members often also need to like the character in order to identify with them. As Robert Cialdini (2001) wrote in his piece about persuasion, a primary tenant is that of liking—when we like the person who is persuading us, we are more likely to listen. The *ODaaT* writers are persuading us to like their characters, but also to grow with them; however, they can't

simply write a letter to the audience saying that they hope we grow with their characters, instead, they persuade us through their characters by making them dynamic and interesting so that we stay engaged. This engagement, which is developed through liking the characters and relating to them because of their roundness is ultimately what leads audience members to identify with the Alvarez family and their friends.

The *ODaaT* writers do just that with the Alvarez family ad their friends. These characters grow as individuals and as a group throughout the series. As a result, since all the characters are fairly round, they are able to exist and further develop outside of Berg's six stereotypes, even if some characters might be loose allusions to them. This is important because the more real and likable a character is, the more likely audiences will identify with them, even if there are stereotypical elements to the characters themselves. As long as the characters are complex and have room for development, there is a possibility for relatability and thus, for identification. For example, while Lydia might represent a mix of a dark lady and a female clown because of her flirtatious yet witty/sarcastic nature, she has moments where she expresses vulnerability: like when she tries to accept Elena's coming out or when she expresses her conflicting feelings of regret and relief in regard to her coming to the US. For example, in "Pride and Prejudice," when Elena comes out to Lydia, she at first pretends to be accepting to Elena and then when she is alone with Penelope, she expresses her being upset at the situation: "I am very upset…I know you don't agree with them [her feelings] because you are so liberal and I'm just a narrow-minded homofallopian" (Jones, Roth, & Mendoza 2017). This line in particular is unique because it identifies two aspects of her identity: her age/generation (which influences her perceptions) and her first-generation immigrant status. Lydia recognizes her reaction as being bigoted, even if she's being sarcastic about it, and her confusion of the English language is indicative of English

being her second language. While the latter implies some degree of stereotypes: that immigrants don't and/or can't learn English, her self-awareness breaks through that stereotype because that is ultimately the main purpose of this scene. Her awareness continues as she works through Elena's coming out in terms of religion, saying to Penelope,

> "You have to understand, I'm a religious woman…and I'm sorry, but I have a problem with Elena being gay. It goes against God; although, God did make us in his image and God doesn't make mistakes…And when it comes to the gays, the pope did say, 'Who am I to judge?' And the pope represents God. So, what, am I going to go against the pope and God? Who the hell do I think I am? Okay. Okay, I'm good…. She is my granddaughter and I love her no matter what, *ya*" (Jones, Roth, & Mendoza, 2017)

This excerpt is important because in this moment, Lydia is relatable—there are numerous stories of how families have trouble accepting their LGBTQ members. The fact that the writers had her go through this whole process and not just ignoring it contradicts her semi-stereotypical characterization by making her seem like almost any grandmother who just had their granddaughter come out to her. That being said, it is also notable how even Lydia's family acknowledges her stereotypical moments. In the episode "Viva Cuba," for example, Alex says that he will just film his grandmother "blabbing," saying, "You know her, 'Cuba, Cuba, Cuba. Ay. *Azúcar!*'" (Badillo, Levich, Calderón Kellett & Hahn, 2017). But later in that same episode, Lydia expresses a lot of sorrow and vulnerability as she tells her immigration story. Oftentimes when hearing stories of why people left their countries, it is a story of hardship sometimes told to gain sympathy. Even though her immigration story is sad—she had to leave her parents and beloved older sister behind—it holds a place of pride for her because she is both proud to be

Cuban, but she is also proud to be in America. This is an opportunity for Lydia to "speak the language" of audiences—both immigrant and native-born Americans can, to some extent, connect with her appreciation and pride for the country. This is a theme present for Lydia's character throughout both seasons, because while she often makes references to missing Cuba, she speaks the "American stylistic syntax" of having pride in one's country. "Leaving was the hardest thig I have ever had to do. And I am happy that I did it, because look what I made" (Badillo, Levich, Calderón Kellett & Hahn, 2017). After developing a sense of a relationship with her, it is possible to feel a sense of sympathy if not empathy for her. So, while Lydia at surface level may appear to be a stereotype, upon deeper analysis, one can begin to see how her character is fairly relatable to viewers—whether she is telling the "back in my day," kinds of stories that grandparents often share, or she is simply showing her deep love for her family. Lydia is like most television grandmothers: very caring, even if she is a little snarky and dramatic. Her overall complexity as a character is what makes her relatable: audiences can see how she interacts with the world and the people in her life; so even if viewers do not see themselves reflected in her, she seems like a real person. Furthermore, by switching between Spanish and English (i.e. idiomatic syntax with which bilingual audiences can identify) and the ways she talks about pride in her family and her country (i.e. stylistic syntax with which a diverse number of audiences can identify), Lydia is an accessible character for a number of audiences, despite her vague allusions to Latina stereotypes.

Like his grandmother, Alex is a mixture of stereotype and relatable teenage boy. On one hand, he is vaguely reminiscent of the Latin lover trope: "eroticism, exoticism, tenderness" (Berg, 2007). That is not to say that all the girls are falling for him; as a matter of fact, we see very few of Alex's friends. Instead, he is comparable to the "Latin lover" more for his

confidence and charisma than anything, which is the essential underlying trait of this stereotype. For example, in "Bobos and Mamitas," he and Elena are arguing about his water usage and he says, "I have to use water to get ready. Every time I show up at school, there are all these eyes expecting perfection" (Mann, Sielaff, & Fryman, 2017). Another example is when he is trying to sell chocolate for a baseball fundraiser and Penelope tries to get him to go out and sell them himself; he retorts, "Aren't you worried about predators? I'm very cute" (Murrieta & Lewis 2017). These two quotes are clear demonstrations of his confidence, which lends itself to the Latin lover trope rather than his interacting with girls. That being said, his relationship with his grandmother is almost a nod to the trope as well given that they are very close—they are often the first to compliment the other, for example. In fact, it is possible that since he is, as Lydia says, her "other half" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018), he is the foil to her dark lady/female clown combination.

Alex experiences his own vulnerability and development too, albeit to a lesser degree. In the pilot episode, he must balance responsibility and popularity. When we are first introduced to him, he seems like almost any pre-teen boy just trying to be cool, and then the audience can see him grow a little bit, which is important because it develops his character, making him more appealing to the audience. Another example of Alex's character challenging the "ladies' man" aspect of the Latin lover is in "A Snowman's Tale," where he tells Penelope, "My dumb friends have been trying to get me and this girl, Anna, together…I mean, I like Anna, but I don't really want a girlfriend" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Lewis, 2017). Later, in season one, episode nine, he learns about and develops pride in family history; at first, he is somewhat bummed out because he couldn't take the easy way out and do his report on the US. Even when he first decides to do a report on Cuba, he doesn't think he has to do any work—but throughout the

episode, he develops a sense of pride in family history. His journey of learning about his family is heartwarming, and he becomes more likable and developed through this storyline. Finally, between season two episodes seven and eight, we find out that Alex was secretly meeting his father to try to mend the relationship between him and Elena after his homophobic abandonment of her quinces. Up until this point, while Alex is definitely portrayed as someone who cares, his caring and compassionate side rarely gets to be really displayed. But it is endearing to see that he cares enough for his sister that he would stand up to their father on her behalf, thus creating a sense of identification, especially for viewers who may be close to their siblings.

By having these characters allude to traditional Latino stereotypes, *ODaaT* is able to lessen potential racial anxieties because at a superficial level, the characters are akin to Latino characters with whom most audiences are familiar. For example, in her analysis of *Resurrection Blvd.*, Holling (2006) argues that contrasting established (often negative) assumptions of Latinos to newer, emerging stereotypes allows for more nuanced understandings of the topic in question. In her case, she was looking at masculinity and how perceptions of Chicano masculinity is perceived and changing; she then discovered that by showing this masculinity as "neither-nor and both-and" (p. 97), the liminal definition of Chicano masculinity can undo stereotypes. As a result, the decrease in stereotypes can lessen anxiety, especially if those stereotypes are perceived as being negative. Similarly, in *ODaaT*, the characters are shown as round and complex in order to make them seem more like real people, thus lessening any present anxieties. However, due to their more subtle yet nuanced expressions of more complex characters, they also begin to challenge those stereotypes. As a result, while Latino audiences may identify with them for their ethnicity and some of their behaviors, non-Latino audiences may begin to identify with them for their vulnerabilities. So even through this show relies on pseudo-stereotypical

characters, it also challenges those stereotypes with characters who more clearly contradict stereotypes.

Penelope and Elena are both characters who are more clearly in contrast to established stereotypes for Latinas: neither are overly sexual, while undoubtedly still fairly feminine; just as neither are unintelligent or manipulative (especially in a negative and/or jezebel type of way). There are times where they may push another character (often the other one) to see their point of view, but ultimately, both are strong female characters who freely voice their opinions and beliefs. In fact, they are both relatively contrary in their own ways. These are two characters who are defined by various aspects of their identity and are therefore, accessible to various audiences.

Penelope, as mentioned before and as will be further discussed later, is defined by her being a mother, a nurse, an army veteran, and Cuban-American. While being a mother and a nurse are roles often assigned to female characters, her being a veteran is not; furthermore, her being Cuban, while it's something she's proud of, does not necessarily outshine or is overshadowed by these other social identities. Elena, like her mother, identifies with her Cuban identity but also with identities of being a student, LGBTQ, and a social rights activist. These last two identities, the first of which will be discussed more in depth later, prove to be fairly central to her identity as her character develops through the first two seasons. In fact, her identity within the LGBTQ community and as a social rights activist are developed so much so that those social identities almost take precedence over her identity as a Cuban-American. She is arguably the least "Latina" of the family, especially considering that she passes as White[2] and does not speak Spanish until the second season when she asks her grandmother Lydia to teach her. So, in

[2] It is important to recognize that the actress playing Elena, Isabella Gomez, is from Colombia—even though she and her family emigrated to the US when she was ten, Gomez is first and foremost a Colombian actress.

the case of Penelope, her character can appeal to viewers identifying as women, as veterans, as Latina, as nurses, and more, all because of the ways her identities intersect. The same is true for Elena and her own identities—these characters are relatable because they are written in a way that provides the characters with a complexity that allows various viewers to like them and ultimately to identify with them.

The family's Cuban heritage is undoubtedly a primary marker of each character as well as a source of pride. However, they are also defined by other aspects of their identities, as briefly addressed before. Essentially, by focusing just as much, if not more, on identities related to, but outside of their being Cuban-American (i.e. LGBTQ, a grandmother, a veteran, a student, etc.) the Alvarez family as a whole challenges stereotypes because they are so relatable and accessible for various audiences. They are non-traditional characters—by their ethnicity or gender—inhabiting roles typically filled by other types of characters, and more importantly, they are the stars of the show rather than humorous and/or dramatic side characters like are often seen in television and film. As previewed above, gender plays into whether or not characters may be seen as stereotypical. However, for the Alvarez family, gender is something that while obvious, shapes their world view and how others perceive them. It is therefore important to take a closer look into the ways gender affects their interactions in their lives.

Gender Identification

Gender and sexuality have already been demonstrated to be a fairly important to each of the characters of Elena, Penelope, and Lydia. However, it is necessary to examine how gender may play a role in the characters' development and interactions with each other more specifically. Each of the women unquestionably have agency, regardless of gendered stereotypes—they are not nags or seductresses who manipulate, nor are they damsels in distress

who cause problems for themselves and the men around them. Instead, they are all strong women who through their intelligence or experience establish themselves as independent, but who are open to support and input from others.

In many dramas or even comedies, gender seems to hold women characters back. For example, in *That 70's Show,* Mila Kunis's character Jackie is often portrayed as the stereotypical "dumb girl" who cares more about social status than anything else. In one episode where the gang is going to a Ted Rundgren concert, they try to exclude Jackie because she's a girly girl; but Donna can go because she's seen as "one of the guys." Similarly, Bella from the *Twilight Saga* is also held back by her gender—even though she is the protagonist, she is very dependent on her vampire boyfriend and his family—rarely does she make a decision for *her* benefit, instead, she tries to make decisions that "benefit" her relationship.

Unlike in those two examples, the women of *ODaaT* are developed characters who do not let their gender negatively affect their decision making or their futures. Instead, the Alvarez women seem to embody the idea of a strong female character—they are independent, but recognize when others' opinions might be helpful; they are determined, they set goals and try to achieve them; and their goals aren't superficial like being rich like Jackie from *That 70's Show*, or male dependent like Bella basically only wanting Edward throughout the whole *Twilight Saga*. Furthermore, what makes the Alvarez women seem so strong is that they are more representative of the modern American woman—they are not supermodel beautiful, but attractive; they are not brainiacs, but still smart—as such, female viewers can almost see themselves in these characters. This identification is important too because it shows women, and especially young girls, that there are different types of femininity—from Lydia's very overt

brand to Elena's more subdued—and that femininity and femaleness does not have to stand in one's way, just as it does not stand in the way of these characters.

When gender seems like it could hold them back, for example in season one, episode two, where the issue of sexism and the gender gap is explicitly discussed, it is clear that Penelope is a stronger character than her male boss, Dr. Berkowitz. Typically, whether in real life society or in television, there is an assumption that the company boss is the strongest character—even if they are a bad boss, they are generally shown as confident, clearly in charge, and are rarely challenged. However, in this episode "Bobos and Mamitas," Penelope very clearly challenges Dr. Berkowitz by demanding to be paid more than her misogynistic coworker Scott and Dr. Berkowitz is not shown to be very confident. Even though he agrees with Penelope that she deserves more, he qualifies his initial action of paying Scott more by saying that he (Dr. Berkowitz) has a hard time saying no and that Penelope didn't ask for more. Penelope, on the other hand, is determined to stick to her principles of being paid fairly for the work she does, and even though she is excited by the fact that she is able to persuade Dr. Berkowitz to pay her more, she does not back down from her goal:

Penelope: Five bucks more an hour, that guy?

Berkowitz: Well he's a good nurse, but it wasn't right, it wasn't right… But in my defense, he did ask for more than you did and I have a lot of trouble saying no...

P: To be honest, I don't know if it's a woman thing or what. I didn't even think about negotiating. I was newly separated, I really needed a job. You said, "Do you want one?" and I said, "yes."

B: And you see, he made me feel that somehow I was lucky to have him, I even gave him my parking spot…but I'm sorry and it was nothing personal, and you deserve more. How about this? What if I give you a raise, and you make the same amount as Scott?

P: Plus a dollar more an hour.

B: Done

P: Two dollars more an hour and Scott starts pulling his weight?

B: Done

P: Which he's never going to do, so let's make it three dollars an hour.

B: Done (Mann, Sielaff, & Fryman, 2017)

This is an interesting interaction for a number of reasons: first, Penelope calls out Dr. Berkowitz for the pay gap (which while the pay gap itself may be expected, her calling him out could be coded as masculine because of her assertiveness); then he admits to basically being manipulated into it (not a stereotypically masculine thing to have happen). Penelope then admits that it did not occur to her to negotiate (something that women are generally not encouraged to do), and she recognizes the gender stereotype; finally, they agree to the terms of a raise, and what is interesting is how Penelope pushes Berkowitz to give her a bigger raise and she experiences little to no pushback from him. Here, the audience can see a type of role reversal where the female employee (two reasons why she should not be coded as powerful) influenced her male employer (two reasons why he should be coded as powerful) to pay her more. His behavior in this episode is just one example of how his character is, to a degree, fairly feminine—he is more

passive than Penelope, especially as seen by his admission that has trouble saying no and gave his parking spot away simply because he felt pressured to do so. At the same time, this is just one example of Penelope pushing boundaries of what it means to be woman. In addition to being a single, working mother, she can be seen as powerful because of her determination and self-awareness of her position in a male dominated profession (medicine) and male dominated society (that of the US). For female viewers, especially younger ones, this can be seen as empowering: Penelope is an accessible character because of her being average, as a result, female viewers can identify with her. Additionally, this challenges the stereotypes around not only female-male relationships, but also employer-employee relationships because in both cases, she is asserting dominance (a typically masculine characteristic) rather than expressing a need to maintain the preestablished expectations for their relationship.

Penelope's character is also complex in the ways she interacts with the men who have a consistent presence in her life. In regard to her relationship with Dr. Berkowitz, it is more like that of friends than of employer-employee. Two somewhat round-about examples of this friendship are that he is in an unofficial relationship with Penelope's mother Lydia; and in one episode, it is revealed that he is teaching Alex Yiddish. Like with the character Schneider, Berkowitz's friendship with Penelope is definitely shaped by his interactions with the rest of her family, but it is also demonstrated in episodes where she seeks his advice (usually parental) or simply vents to him. One very clear example of their relationship being complicated is in "Strays." In this episode, none of the clinic's staff is prepared to celebrate Dr. Berkowitz's birthday, except Penelope, but because Scott and Lori dropped the ball, her initial plans fell through as well. To make up for this, Penelope invites the doctor over to her apartment for his birthday and tells him that he can invite his friends. But, he only invites the other coworkers

because he implies that he doesn't have any friends. In fact, to further this point, upon arrival, he says "I picked everybody up to make sure they'd come" (Murrieta & Lewis, 2017). Their relationship as friends is therefore a challenge of two stereotypes of cross-sex relationships shown in television. One, that those relationships do exist (and are *entirely* platonic) and that the friendships can exist across lines of status. First, given that it is an employer-employee friendship with relatively obvious differences in ability—he's a doctor and she is a nurse—they interact as though they are equals, and Penelope's personality is sometimes more direct than Berkowitz. But the stereotype that men and women can't be friends is even more relevant because even in shows with cross-sex relationships, innuendos are often made or suggested; however, Penelope's relationship with Berkowitz is very tame and innocent.

If with Berkowitz, we see her as more vulnerable and closer with Schneider. This is even in contrast to Penelope's relationship with Schneider. For example, when Penelope goes to buy a new car, she asks him to pretend to be her husband ("The Death of Mrs. Resnick"). In this episode, she fears that she will be overcharged when she tries to get a new car and asks him to come along to "trick" the car salesman. This is interesting because here, she is playing into gender norms of men being more aware of how cars function and uses him as a sort of crutch despite being normally very independent. Additionally, she usually goes to Schneider's apartment for relationship advice and have candid conversations about love and relationships ("Schooled," "Hello, Penelope" & Exclusive"). Now, while Penelope does go to a few characters for advice (i.e. her mother, Dr. Berkowitz, and Schneider), when it comes to relationships and her PTSD, or sometimes just a break from her apartment, she often goes over to Schneider's and they often talk through whatever is on her mind. While some of this ends comedically—as in "Schooled," where she ends ups spinning on a stationary bike rather than studying, or in

"Exclusive," where she panics about her relationship with a new man—their interactions generally have some degree of emotion to them and it is made clear that they trust each other enough to be vulnerable and open with each other. Finally, when Victor comes back for Elena's quinces, he thinks that Penelope and Schneider are a couple—much to their chagrin, and denial ("Hurricane Victor"). This scene is somewhat curious because in it, the audience sees that Victor potentially picks up on their compatibility and lack of boundaries in their friendship. Since Schneider comes in the Alvarez apartment shirtless and asking "Pen" (a nickname that hasn't been used much if at all) for her opinion about what shirt to wear for the family's going to see Alex's cello recital. Again, this scene exemplifies that the two feel comfortable enough to ask for each other's opinions and thinking about themselves as a couple—even if they think it is ridiculous. So, between her friendships with Dr. Berkowitz and Schneider, the audience can see that Penelope is a strong character who expresses vulnerability at the same time. This indicates that in the show, there is not as much of a definitive gender binary between the men and women. The lack of a hard distinction is important because it allows the characters more flexibility and arguably more opportunity to seem real, thus improving chances of identification.

Schneider's character as a whole is interesting to look at because at first glance, he seems to be the antithesis of the Alvarez family: he's well off financially while they are middle class and most noticeably, he's White and therefore is a symbol for privilege. That being said, unlike Scott, Penelope's misogynistic coworker, Schneider is well-meaning and curiously, really wants to be part of the family, going so far as to at one point, buying a fifth chair for the family dinner table so there's room for him. Furthermore, while Schneider's character is used as a way for the writers to address issues like White privilege and male privilege, he has also been feminized to a degree. Even though he is definitely masculine in some respects—throughout the first two

seasons the audience learns about a number of his one-night-stands—he is also fairly feminine in the way he interacts with the family. While he is independent to a degree, he values family and finds it with the Alvarezes, whether he is the stand-in parental guardian, busting Elena when she is alone with a boy (before she comes out), or he is the supportive friend to Penelope when she has a breakdown and turns to him for help:

> [They listen to an audio recording of Penelope thinking out loud to herself]
>
> Penelope: You were right. That woman is not okay. I know what the last part sounds like, but I promise I would never do anything like that. [commit suicide]
>
> Schneider: I know. But I think you know that healthy brains don't go to that place. You need to go back on your meds.
>
> P: I don't want to be on a drug for the rest of my life! I shouldn't have to need it!
>
> S: I shouldn't have to need these either, but I do. *Gestures to glasses.* To see. And to look rugged, but also smart.
>
> P: It's not the same thing.
>
> S: Oh, no? Okay. Wanna go for a drive? *Takes glasses off.*
>
> P: There's got to be another way to feel happy.
>
> S: So, it's Fourth of July 2011. I'd been sober for a while, so I thought I'd celebrate with a beer. Woke up three days later in an alley. Then the bowling ball hit me. I was in the gutter for a long time…That was the day I truly accepted that I can't have alcohol or drugs, ever…I kinda get where

> you're coming from. There's something I want that I can't have for the rest of my life. And there's something you don't want that you have to have for the rest of yours. (Badillo, Levich, & Lewis, 2018)

This is a unique scene for a few reasons: the first and perhaps most obvious is the fact that Schneider is trying to help Penelope with her journey with mental health, but the second thing is the way in which Schneider does it. A traditionally masculine tactic for dealing with problems is to try and find a solution, and when it comes to emotional problems, men are often stereotyped as being somewhat distant. Here, Schneider is not only very much invested in helping Penelope see that she *still* needs help, but he is empathetic and provides a personal anecdote in order to help relate to her. Furthermore, because Schneider's character is often a source of comedic relief, when he tells his own story, some of it is objectively funnier than Penelope's—the double entendre of waking up in the alley and then the bowling ball hitting him is a primary example of the writers using sardonic humor to make a point. They juxtapose Penelope and Schneider's stories of needing help to sympathize with both of the characters, but to empathize with Penelope's—one, because it is presented more seriously, and two, because the audience has seen her grow with (and in spite of) her PTSD.

Schneider is not the only male character that seems to help (and adapt to) the female-dominated Alvarez family with their troubles; however, it would seem that this occurs out of genuine concern and not simply out of wanting to solve the problem, which means that this conflict-resolution often occurs in ways that seem more traditionally feminine. For example, as mentioned before, Alex tried to help reestablish the relationship between Elena and their father. Neither Schneider nor Alex went into either situation with the intention of solving the problem themselves—instead, they tried to start a conversation around the problem so that the other

characters could talk through it and resolve it. This is an interesting move on the part of *ODaaT*'s writing team because communication being used to establish and maintain relationships is generally associated with more feminine speech communities. These communities typically support closeness and connection, often establishing a sense of mutual understanding (Fixmer-Oraiz, Wood, 2019). In these scenes, the audience can see how both Schneider and Alex try to establish the connection and especially the understanding, which is uncharacteristic of male communication generally. Furthermore, by using stereotypically feminine approaches to conflict-resolution, where women typically invite participation in solving the problem and men are often seen to give orders as a way to accomplish the same goal (Tannen, 1990), they are in a way identified as feminine-light. They are undoubtedly masculine and seem fairly secure in that identity, but with the exposure to women and female behavior, it seems as though Schneider and Alex have adopted some of the behavior themselves. So, by feminizing the male characters but still allowing them to be identifiably masculine, the *ODaaT* writers have created a show where both men and women are able to identify with them. As a result, the show asks the audience to think of gender and its implications from a new perspective—perhaps even a more female-centric perspective that is exemplified by the way the male characters interact with other characters and the world around them.

In fact, each of the men—Dr. Berkowitz, Schneider, and Alex—are all interesting characters because they are operating within a fairly matriarchal world within the show. One quote that illustrates this matriarchal and feminine-empowering environment fairly well is when Lydia says "God is a man. If he were a woman, there would be less problems" (Jones & Lewis, 2017). This quote alone demonstrates how the family (or at least Lydia and the show's writing staff) seem to align with the feminist ideal that women are inherently more peaceful than men.

While it could be argued that Lydia's declaration was written more to bring comedy into a fairly serious topic like religion, the statement still brings up political implications and feminist theories. In fact, it is this same feminist theory (among others) that proposes a matriarchy as an alternative world for society.

For context, it is important to note that while the idea of a matriarchy has circulated for some time, it has often been dismissed. Greisman (1981), for example argued that it was not until the late 1970s and 1980s that the concept of a matriarchy was given much serious thought. In his article, he gives some historical background—like that matriarchies were deemed essentially a myth and that many considered them to be a failed form of government since so much of society for the previous centuries had been patriarchal. The only exceptions to this, he argues exist in the writings of some philosophers and social scientists of the nineteenth century (Greisman, 1981). Williams (2017) echoes this history in her own piece, proposing that matriarchies have been periodically conceptualized over the years—namely by those in the entertainment and pop-culture industries. She argues that since matriarchies were often discredited, especially in the beginning of the twentieth century, creatives wanting to explore the idea had to get creative and subtly use it in their work: like L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz,* and William Moulton Marston, who created *Wonder Woman* (Williams, 2017).

With this historical precedent in mind—of matriarchy being dismissed and those wanting to address it having to do so under the radar—it seems almost surprising that *ODaaT* would make such a political statement by having the Alvarez women so clearly in charge of the show. That is not to say that other television programs do not have strong female leads, but rather this show makes it a point that it is the women in charge and that the men are more in the role of support. The idea of a matriarchal household challenges established practice for media; at the

same time, it asks the audience to think bigger and imagine a more matriarchal society. However, given that the characters are likeable, relatable, and have clear vulnerabilities, it asks in such a way that makes it seem more realistic—because it doesn't portray the Alvarez home as a place of gender inequality, all characters definitely rely on each other, and by having them do so, a matriarchy appears more functional than historical perspectives might propose.

That is not to say that Los Angles in present day is somehow more progressive, but rather in the microcosm that is the Alvarez household, it is clear that women have influence and ultimately control. For example, even in the pilot, when Alex tries to buy more shoes than he is allowed, Penelope says, "Make no mistake, when it comes to money, I'm your daddy" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2017) While this line does play into some gendered stereotypes that the man of the house is in charge, there is no male father figure present (since she and Victor are getting a divorce and he is only occasionally seen) and she effectively has the power in the family. Furthermore, it establishes the importance of a familial hierarchy and respect to one's elder family members. There are often references where both Penelope and Lydia's role as a leader is established. For example, in the episode "No Mass," Penelope and Lydia actually have a bit of a power struggle when they go back and forth over who gets the final word on going to church. At one point, Penelope says, "I am the mother, I decide;" and Lydia retorts, "And I am your mother, I decide what you decide" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2017). Eventually, they come to a compromise, but this episode in particular makes it clear that they take the role as mother very seriously and that the men don't really have a say in the matter.

This rather feminine power structure automatically implies that the men's interactions with the women are all fairly contrary to established stereotypes for the genders. The closest typical masculine behavior that any of these men consistently demonstrate is their trying to help

solve the women's problems like in the above examples of Schneider helping Penelope with her mental health or Alex helping Elena reestablish a relationship with their father. However, they do not try to fix their problems by butting in and fixing it directly; instead, they often use discourse and interpersonal relationships—something that is often coded as feminine behavior. For example, in season two when Penelope thinks she is well enough to go off her anti-depressants, Schneider gives her insight into the world of mental health and helps her accept it herself. The above dialogue on pages 15-16 show that he is both very empathetic toward her by sharing his own story, and it is fairly clear that he is serving more as a sounding board for her rather than someone she needs to solve her problem.

Gender is a political element present for each and every character, even if it operates subtly. For the women, gender is perhaps the most obvious because in most cases, they challenge some stereotypes through their gender: whether they are demonstrating their assertiveness or their queerness, it is clear that the Alvarez women are in charge. Similarly, while the men in *ODaaT* are undoubtedly masculine, their communication patterns are more akin to traditionally feminine modes of communication, challenging masculinity and positioning them as marginally feminine. Furthermore, it is through this challenging of gender norms that invites audiences to identify to the characters because they are all able to appeal to a variety of groups.

Some Concluding Thoughts on Identification

Ultimately, each of these characters are relatable whether it is through their ethnic identities, or other intersecting identities. This relatability is important and challenges more stereotypical representations—of either gender, and specifically of Latinos—because *ODaaT* asks all audiences to identify with the characters and, for the most part, audience members can do just that. Clearly, seeing people like oneself on the screen is important, and those in the

entertainment industry are starting to realize that. For example, in accepting the Academy Award for best animated feature film, *Spider-Man*: *Into the Spider-Verse,* the crew said in their acceptance speech, "When we hear that somebody's kid was watching the movie and turned to them and said, 'He looks like me,' or 'They speak Spanish like us,' we feel like we already won" (ABC, 2019). So, having a primarily Latino cast, and one that shows a variety of Latino faces makes it easier for Latino audiences to identify with the family. However, since the family goes through social experiences like dealing with mental health or coming out, *ODaaT* invites people dealing with mental health or those in the LGBTQ community to identify with the family members as well. Furthermore, since the program shows the male characters displaying more flexible characters of masculinity (and even some femininity), it invites men to identify as well. Similarly, given that all the female characters (to an extent) demonstrate some traditionally masculine characteristics, namely confidence and assertiveness, it is possible for both men and women to identify with them as well. Regardless of the characters' gender representation, the writers have created complex characters who are engaging because they develop throughout the series; as a result, no one aspect of their identity—gender, ethnicity, class, etc.—defines any character so much that they are rendered inaccessible.

A large part of this identification process is achieved through the ways that the characters are written and presented, i.e. their relatability; but identification is also achieved because we see these characters' vulnerabilities ad develop relationships with them. For example, when Lydia tells more of her immigration story, it is after the audience has begun to like and relate to her; as a result, we feel more sympathy for her loss than we might have if we heard her story in one of the first episodes. Another example would be in regard to Penelope's mental health journey. Over the course of about one-and one-half seasons, we have seen how Penelope has struggled in

accepting that she needs help and actually seeking out that help. Curiously, at the same time as we as the audience—Latino or not—experience her journey with her, we hear about Schneider's own struggles with addiction—while they are not necessarily the same thing, they are comparable and we are shown as much in season two episode nine, "Hello, Penelope." In this episode, Penelope decides to stop taking her anti-depressants and has a breakdown; seeking help from Schneider, the audience can see how their two journeys with seeking help and recovery are juxtaposed. The juxtaposition makes us as the audience think differently about how women's and men's struggles are portrayed on television, but it also makes audiences think about our connections to the characters in new ways. A viewer may like Schneider more than when struggles are shown in more detail, that character's struggles and humanity is more significant to us. We feel bad for Schneider that he has his addictions, but since we never see them in action, they are not as relatable as Penelope's struggle. This is important for a number of reasons: even though as a society, there is a stereotype that women are emotional, typically, both substance abuse (like Schneider's) and PTSD (like Penelope's) are associated with men. Secondly, when these problems are addressed in society—via PSAs, the news media, or entertainment like *ODaaT*—those appeals are often made through logical appeals, i.e. substance abuse and/or PTSD lead to suicide and that's bad. Rarely are these issues shown with such emotion as they are in *ODaaT*, particularly since it is very individualized and essentially putting a face to the issue. That being said, since we have seen Penelope's ups and downs and only heard about Schneider's, we are more empathetic toward her and she is therefore seen as more relatable. Schneider, on the other hand, really only gains sympathy, which does not call for as much vulnerability on the part of the viewer, which in turn, implies decreased identification with him as a character, but more identification with Penelope.

The relatability of characters and subsequent identification process is crucial for drawing viewers in and keeping them engaged. When we feel for the characters and see ourselves reflected in them, we as an audience are better able to understand the lessons we are taught, however subtly through them. Once we have an understanding of the characters on a more personal level, we might then be able to understand what they represent in a broader sense. The characters in *ODaaT* are fictionalized but still politicized representations of real people. So, if we understand how politics around representation function in a relatively low-stakes context like a television show, we may begin to understand the politics of representation with which we interact daily.

Chapter Three: Politics of Representation

While there are a number of episodes that mention Penelope's being a veteran, few discuss it as in depth as "Hold, Please," when Penelope is trying to contact the Office of Veterans Affairs to set up an appointment to help with her shoulder injury. After being on hold for the majority of the episode, she finally is able to speak with the appropriate person at the VA, only to find out that the woman has to go in order to catch her bus. Frustrated, Penelope asks the woman to explain the situation:

> What I do understand is, I went to war, I got hurt. And when I came back, there was supposed to be an organization set up to help me and other veterans get the help we need. So, I don't get why it's so hard to make a simple appointment. And I'm one of the lucky ones. My husband has bad knees, a bad back, and traumatic brain injury. He's not getting help; partly because he's a stubborn ass, but mostly because of this insane process. And because he's not getting help, he almost did something stupid. I lost someone in my unit because she *did* do something stupid. (Hernandez, Samit, & Gonzalez, 2017)

This episode and scene in particular are interesting for a number of reasons, for one, rarely on television do audiences see female veterans and rarely do civilians understand what it is like to go through the red tape associated with government services like those provided by the VA. It asks the audience to think about what it means to be a veteran, but it also encourages the audience to think about other depictions of veterans—for one, they are usually men, and often times, they are not shown experiencing the mundane parts of veteran life like being on hold in order to get a medical appointment. By asking audiences to think differently about how veterans

are represented in the media, it complicates the image of veterans and also addresses the politics associated with those images.

Considering the politics of representations is important for both television writers and scholars. For scholars, considering the politics of representation means that they must consider the ways in which a representation (like that of a character) is complicated past stereotypes associated with that archetype and then considering how that representation fits into the contemporary conversation about it and what that means. In the example above, scholars would likely analyze the ways in which Penelope is portrayed as a veteran other than just being called one, they would then likely also consider if that portrayal seems like it fits in with perceptions of veterans in 2017 (when the episode aired) and what those perceptions mean about how Penelope as a veteran is received. For example, in her analysis of the politics of representation in regard to gay men on television, Shugart (2003) found that in many cases, the politics were ignored, thus "skirt[ing] the realities and implications of homosexuality by desexualizing the characters" (p. 69). By ignoring relevant aspects of characters' identities, and the implications of those identities, television writers fail in achieving true inclusion of marginalized voices. This is important because by not showing these characters and their struggles/successes/etc. on television, it essentially denies their existence and/or validity given that television provides people with a framework through which to interpret the world.

In fact, television and film are often criticized for their portrayals of characters and events, but these criticisms often focus on the quality of representation and do not typically consider the political implications of it. An example of this exists within Shugart's (2003) research mentioned above, but an internet search of "worst representations on television" provide numerous listicles about the worst depictions of Muslims (like Haissam Haqqani on *Homeland*),

women (Barney's one-night-stands in *How I Met Your Mother*), people with autism (like Shaun Murphy in *The Good Doctor*), gamers (like Eric Cartman on *South Park*), and other identity groups. Similarly, in regard to representations of Latinos, Berg (2007) said, "the case of Latino stereotyping in mass media involves a discursive system that might be called 'Latinism…:' the construction of Latin America and its inhabitants and of Latinos in this country [the US] to justify the United States' imperialistic goals" (p. 4). Here, Berg is trying to impress upon readers that stereotypes of Latinos created and perpetuated by the media aren't merely a way to cut corners in character development while also having automatically amusing material. Rather, Latino stereotypes exist as a way to perpetuate the inequality of representation between White and Latino characters.

However, *ODaaT,* has been praised by critics for tackling political topics and recognizing the identity politics associated with race (Leeds, 2018), gender, and sexuality (Lawler, 2017). The show is a cultural artifact that is meant to both entertain and critique, even though being political may not be the show's primary goal. "We don't set out to do political stories, we set out to tell stories about this family. But this family was very affected by some of the things that happened in the election," said *ODaaT,* writer Mike Royce. Here is an excellent example about how when representing characters, especially minorities, there is inherent politicization because of who they are and the world around them. While political commentary may not be the goal, it is unavoidable because in order to give audiences a more authentic portrayal of Latinos, stereotypes cannot be used and social/political positioning must be considered. Because of this, show writers must be careful and thoughtful about how they tell the stories to make sure they address the topics relevant to that population and do not hide them simply because it does not fit within the show's genre. However, over-politicization can potentially be just as problematic as

not being politicized enough, so it is important to find balance in order to still appeal to as many audiences as possible.

In this chapter, I argue that by politicizing the representations of the Alvarez family, *ODaaT* creates more realistic characters and storylines, which ultimately leads the program to challenge dominant narratives for Latinos. By recognizing their social positions and the implications for them, the program asks the audience to think differently about what the characters represent as well as how the characters are represented. The politics of representation are important for the individual characters, but also extend past them, making a commentary about American life today, but using a politicized, Latino perspective.

Politicizing Representation

Engaging stories are often identified by their characters or their plot, but these two essential elements can hardly exist without the other. Whether the character is reacting to plot events or causing them, these two elements must coexist, but they must also seem reasonable. So, while both must be engaging when one is reading a story or watching a television program/movie, when analyzing that same artifact, it is necessary to consider the motivations behind matching a character with a plotline and what that might imply later. When a television show has a minority character—be it an ethnic or other social minority like those in the LGBTQ community—that program risks letting the character succumb to stereotypes. However, when a television show is centered around a minority character (or characters), that risk grows—as an audience, we tend to identify most with the primary characters, so if that primary individual is a minority, it makes the identification process more difficult. Communication scholar Bonnie Dow investigates this phenomenon in relation to Ellen DeGeneres and her 1990s sitcom *Ellen.* Dow (2001) argues that, "homosexual characters are rarely shown in their own communities, homes,

or same-sex romantic relationships but are depicted in terms of their place in the lives of heterosexuals" (p. 129). So too is the case with characters of color—they rarely are seen as existing in their own spaces, instead, as a public, we see them as guests in a predominantly White world.

When discussing identity, representations of that identity are sure to follow as well as the politics surrounding the identity and representations in question. As such, politics of representation can be interpreted to mean that the implications of representation are under scrutiny, or that any representation is subject to more analysis if there is an increased sense of that representation being politicized in some way. For example, in her analysis of Ellen, Skerski (2007) connects this idea of representation politics to tokenism. But argues that, in DeGeneres's case, her being a lesbian on television is not classic tokenism because of the audience engagement and fact that at the time, DeGeneres's coming out was in direct opposition to then-contemporary cultural attitudes. Given that, one can see that representations of minority characters, especially newer representations of them, are likely to be more politicized because of the attitudes toward what those characters represent. Similarly, Holling (2006) proposes that Latino representations in entertainment media is limited because of our generally negative (or absent) portrayals in the media in general. This absence, especially of Latino families is significant because by not representing the population, it denies the American-Latino population the opportunity to establish an American identity. Between token characters and non-existent characters, one can see that in either case, by situating a character within one of those two camps automatically implies some degree of politicization of their representations. Representation, it should be noted, is important at both the individual and group level. In the case of *ODaaT*, the family is somewhat a representation of Latinos as a whole, but the writing team is careful to

remind the audience that Latinos are as diverse as any other group However, individual characters may represent individual things as well—whether one character is representing a group (like Elena being somewhat a representation of LGBTQ youth) or an idea (like any of the Alvarez women representing the issue of sexism), including these complex characters with political identities is important. Inclusion of these characters means that *ODaaT* and its cast and crew have the opportunity to challenge social issues and to challenge stereotypical representations of Latinos that have been pervasive throughout entertainment history.

The inclusion of Latino characters on television is important; however, it is not enough. If the new characters are operating in similar ways as other, more stereotypical characters, or even more flat characters, there is a lack of authenticity and legitimacy. Television executives should not see inclusion of minority characters as simply fulfilling some arbitrary quota, instead, inclusion should be interpreted as introducing diverse characters in order to open up perspectives and challenge established narratives of minority characters. Just as in Skerski (2005) argues that simply increasing the number of female sports correspondents does not truly diversify the reporters' room when those female correspondents aren't doing the play-by-play reporting, increasing the number of non-White characters on television does not diversify the industry when those minority characters aren't seen doing the same things other characters are doing. Inclusion is the first step, but it is a weak one—politicized inclusion, where social issues are addressed, characters are developed is the type of representation that television as a whole needs and what *ODaaT* does. The show did not simply take the 1970s version of the program and replace old characters for new ones, instead, the re-casting of characters allowed *ODaaT* writers to intervene in social and political conversation while simultaneously critiquing it. While the

original program also made commentary, the 2017 reboot addresses new issues and further explores minority individuals' places in American society today.

Politics of Representation in *ODaaT*: From Personal to Public

Politicized Identities

Rather than have their characters as guests trying to find their place, *ODaaT* makes their social position clear, thus politicizing their characters, and by default their representation within the show. Social positioning is important because it establishes what is important to the characters based off their identities. Their identities are also important because depending on how they intersect, the *ODaaT* writers are tasked with adapting scenes and plots for each character so that they make sense and are also represented authentically. This representation may be as individual as figuring out how to represent individual characters—like Elena being LGBTQ, or Penelope being a veteran—however, the task of authentic representation extends past the individual characters and to the larger social movements/issues/conversations that these characters represent, including the American-Latino population as a whole. The authenticity of representation comes in part through identification with the characters, as mentioned before. However, authenticity also comes from how the characters and their identities are politicized, which then affects the politics of representation within the show overall.

One of the ways that *ODaaT* clearly addresses contemporary political issues is through its depictions of sexuality. In many shows, and comedies in particular, sometimes introduce queer characters in an attempt at inclusion, but separate them from queer politics. One example is in *Modern Family* with Cam, Mitchell, and their other seemingly queer friends. Rarely, if ever, do any of those characters face obvious prejudice and all of them seem to be confident in their identities within the LGBTQ community. However, *ODaaT*'s Elena clearly demonstrates this

idea of characters' representations being affected by their political positioning, especially throughout her coming out narrative. When the audience is first introduced to Elena, she does not seem interested in romance at all; in fact, it isn't until she has to pick an escort for her quinces that she seems even remotely interested. Her lack of interest is intriguing for a number or reasons—first, it establishes Elena as independent because she is more focused on bettering herself academically and with her passions, most of which have some relation to social justice, rather than being desperate for a partnership, in essence, she seems comfortable on her own. However, not being interested in boys specifically is also vaguely reminiscent of when young children don't play with the opposite sex for fear of catching cooties. In fact, both Penelope and Lydia make comments about her apparent lack of interest. For example, in "One lie at a Time," Penelope asks Elena if anything happened when she and Josh were alone together, "You've never shown an interest in a boy before, and it's exciting. It's terrifying, but it's mostly exciting" (Wolfe & Lewis, 2017). Furthermore, her lack of interest in dating is in sharp contrast to overly-flirtatious Lydia, or even sentimental Penelope, both of whom, at times, embody that stereotypical, romantic Latina character. As a result, in addition to showing Elena as a teenage girl who is trying to figure herself out, her approach to relationships challenges stereotypes of Latinas, and of women, showing that a relationship is not the end-all-be-all for female characters.

Elena's shift toward being more open to the idea of a relationship is what leads her to her self-exploration of her sexual identity, which is important because it situates her as a round, politicized character within *ODaaT*. So, the audience is first introduced to the idea of Elena in a relationship when she asks Josh Flores to be her escort—she asked him because she didn't think he would agree since he is very popular at school and she is not. When Josh does agree, she is conflicted, namely because she is confused about her feelings toward him and boys in general.

As she explains to her brother Alex, "All I said is I might be into girls. But I probably like boys too, I don't know" (Wolf & Lewis, 2017). This line alone indicates that she is both unsure but open to the idea of dating, something that most teenagers can, to some degree, relate to. However, after briefly dating/kissing him, she began to question her sexuality and her attraction (which is in stark contrast to the LGBTQ characters in *Modern Family* mentioned above), eventually realizing that she is not heterosexual. Soon, however, she realizes that she is more into girls than into boys, although it is never made explicit where exactly she identifies in terms of sexual orientation. This lack of specificity is a unique technique because it clearly situates her as not heterosexual, but open to interpretation. In season two, when she develops a crush on a female classmate and then begins a relationship with another female character, Syd. However, by never having Elena explicitly identify as a lesbian or bi-sexual, it allows viewers within the LGBTQ community identify more with her regardless of their explicit orientation. Regardless of how she specifically identifies, when Elena actually comes out to her family, both Penelope and Lydia need time to truly understand. However, both women love her and realize that their love is stronger than any uncertainty or bias they may have and ultimately accept her identity. Her brother Alex and Schneider, however, seem to accept her immediately. The difference and even juxtaposition of these reactions are interesting and make the audience think more deeply about what it means to outwardly evolve one's identity in such a way. Elena's coming out changes her social position and her mother and grandmother's reactions are not simply the product of fiction. In showing Penelope and Lydia's confusion and eventual acceptance, *ODaaT* directly confronts homophobia and questions it. However, the reactions also ask the audience to think about gender. Like in the discussion of Schneider and Alex using traditionally feminine conflict-resolution techniques, they also seem slightly more feminine in their blatant acceptance of her

new identity. That is not to say that to be feminine is accepting and to be masculine is to be more prejudiced, but the men's acceptance compared to the women's hesitation challenges the argument made by some feminist scholars that to perform masculinity is to participate in homophobic culture (Kimmel, 1994). So, here again, *ODaaT* challenges narratives of sexuality and gender through the politics associated with these topics through the identification with characters working in concert with politicized storylines.

In subsequent episodes, *ODaaT* further explores the politics of sexuality by showing Elena to more fully develops her identity as a person in the LGBTQ community—whether that is figuring out her relationship with another girl Syd (who uses they/them/theirs pronouns), establishing a Gay-Straight-Alliance at school, or organizing protests against prejudice. By doing so, it reminds the audience that queer people have different approaches to some social interactions purely because when their identity is known, it can affect others' perceptions and attitudes toward them. Thankfully for Elena, she must face relatively little prejudice, but the prejudice she does experience comes from her father and it ultimately leads to a deterioration in their relationship. As a result, her story as a whole allows the audience to sympathize with her and invites other non-ethnic minorities (i.e. LGBTQ, mental health, women, etc.) to relate with the characters in *ODaaT*. "These portrayals both help real LGBTQ youth to recognize they aren't alone, (and) also foster understanding and accelerate acceptance in their peer groups," said Megan Townsend, an entertainment strategist at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD (Lawler, 2017). In an interview with *USA Today*, she commended Elena's story as a positive and realistic representation—something that needs to happen more on television. Her story, however, is just one way that television programs address identity and sexuality politics. Some shows rely on stereotypes and others either downplay or ignore the

characters' queerness, however, by directly confronting these sexuality politics, *ODaaT* is able to make those politics seem less intimidating and more understandable (by showing them through a character with whom the audience can already identify) while challenge dominant narratives surrounding queerness.

Elena's political narrative is almost comparable to that which culminated in the infamous "Puppy Episode" on Ellen's sitcom in the 1990s. After her own coming out, even though Ellen claimed that there were not political motivations behind it, the move was ultimately politicized. As her family more fully accepts Ellen, the show writers were more able of making political commentary. At the same time, however, it more or less positioned Ellen as a poster-child for the LGBTQ community, something that *ODaaT* as a program may be seen as for the Latino community. Dow (2001), suggests that "poster child politics" is when "the attractiveness of an issue is directly related to who represents it" (p. 137). That does not mean that these politics are inherently good or bad, but simply that there is a strong relationship between a person/artifact and the larger topic(s) with which it represents. This is not unlike the concept of stereotypes—the dominant narrative surrounding a group is usually only based off a smaller subset of the larger population; i.e. a (negative) generalization of a group made by another (Berg, 2007).

In the case of Latinos, and more specifically in the media—entertainment or news—one could argue that there are a variety of poster children representing various aspects of the Latino experience in America, some of which are more positive and others negative. Political rhetoric, specifically in regard to immigration is often dehumanizing such as President Trump's comment made in May 2018, "These aren't people. These are animals" (Davis, 2018). This comment suggests that Latino immigrants are worth less than average American citizens, so with rhetoric like that—with individuals othering entire groups and invalidating both their experience and

existence—it is important to let marginalized groups tell their own stories. That is what *ODaaT* tries to do with both its writing staff and its cast.

Politicized Narratives

All the storylines of *ODaaT* are to some degree political, even if not explicitly so. This is important because the show then becomes a platform to talk about complicated topics that often cause division. Whether the Alvarez family is talking about sexist and/or racist micro-aggressions, immigration, or even personal family dynamics, the show provides commentary on modern American life, but through the perspective of a Latino family. This added perspective accomplishes a few things, namely, it provides a new insight into American society as we are living in it, which is and of itself a very politically charged time right now. That being said, since the *ODaaT* cast and crew seem to be trying to make a broader social commentary, they are tasked with being relevant and appealing to a variety of audiences.

I have already argued that this appeal process happens in part due to identification with characters and, to some degree, characters' individual stories; however, it is equally important for viewers to have a sense of identification with the narratives they are presented while watching *ODaaT.* I have also already spoken to narrative fidelity and probability, which have to do with whether or not a story seems familiar and also probable; in addition, I have argued that the characters in *ODaaT* are non-traditional characters inhabiting roles typically filled by others. Here, I seek to combine these two arguments to further prove how *ODaaT* seeks to challenge stereotypical narratives of Latinos. In order to do this, it is necessary to look at the types of narratives told in the program and how they relate to politicized representations of the characters.

As mentioned above, when analyzing a media artifact, it is important to think about how characters are being represented in relation to the storylines they are active in. Furthermore, when that same artifact has a minority character, not only is it possible (and/or likely) to write the character as stereotypical, it is also possible to write the character's primary storylines as stereotypical as well. That is to say, it is easy to write story lines that seem typical to those types of characters rather than letting the characters explore other issues as well. For example, both the storylines of Elena's quinces and of her friend Carmen's parents being deported are storylines often associated with Latinos—the former because it is a cultural tradition specific to much of Latin America, and the latter because under the current political climate, the immigration stories told most seem to come from Latin America as well. Of course, a Latino perspective program cannot simply ignore storylines like that, and *ODaaT* doesn't try to. Instead, like with the characters, the *ODaaT* writing staff has focused just as much, if not more, on events and narratives related to the Alvarezes being Cuban-American and the intersections of those narratives as well.

Narratives that *are* more Latino-specific seems like a natural place to start—it is important for the family to be shown as caring about issues that do more directly and more frequently affect Latino lives. Given that Elena's quinces is introduced in the pilot, it is established early on that the family is Latino and that there is a disconnect between the generations within the Alvarez household.

Lydia: Your daughter does not want to have a *quinces.*

Penelope: What? Why? We already booked the room, and I found a great band!

> Okay, it's a deejay. Okay, it's your brother with an iPod and a playlist, but it's a very good playlist!

> Elena: I researched the history of *quinceañeras* and found out they're totally misogynistic! (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman 2017)

Immediately, the fact that she is having a quinces identifies the family as Latino and it also introduces a narrative specific to (and more likely to appeal to) Latinos. However, at the same time, the pilot challenges the idea of quinceañeras entirely by having Elena refuse to have one. By the end of the episode, after many arguments between the Alvarez women, Elena realizes that while Penelope wants her to have the quinces because of tradition, she also wants to have the quinces to show their family and community that she is successful as a single mother in providing for her children. Like in the original *ODaaT,* the reboot deals with ever-evolving perceptions of women and more specifically, single-parent families headed by women. "Moms are special, because we have to work twice as hard," proclaims Penelope in "Bobos and Mamitas" (Mann, Sielaff, & Fryman, 2017). Here, she identifies how even today, women are expected to be superwoman—able to take care of family and work. However, while American society has made progress in terms of inclusion, politicized inclusion of women, especially in entertainment media is still lacking. In other sit-coms, audiences still see women as either needy or nagging, or maybe somewhere in between; if a woman is seen as strong, she is then usually depicted as bossy. It is almost as though television writers only consider women by outdated stereotypes. So, it is refreshing to see a new perspective of strong women, one where strength is shown both through accountability, but also through expressing that vulnerability and using it as a source of inspiration to improve and move forward. Meanwhile, Elena is developing her own strength in that spends nearly the entire first season discovering herself, establishing a new identity and confidence, and eventually comes out. Her evolution culminates in the final episode of season one, where she finally has her quinces and after Lydia hand-makes numerous dresses,

Elena finally realizes that she feels most comfortable in a suit, thus challenging tradition. While this act in and of itself may not seem very revolutionary, the quinces episode serves more of a lesson about homophobia (given that her estranged father leaves the quinces) rather than a lesson on the cultural tradition itself. So, Elena's entire coming out story both maintains typical narratives of/associated with Latinos by existing but challenges that narrative by having her quinces further represent her newly minted identity within the LGBTQ community.

Elena's comment in the pilot identifies her as being potentially a feminist, which is interesting considering that as a young teenager, her age group is not typically associated with being feminists (yet, although that is shifting) and neither is her being Latina. In fact, her being Latina is sometimes seen as being more submissive based off stereotypical roles. For example, even though there is the "spicy/fiery Latina" stereotype, these types of characters are often put in their place or dismissed, sort of like how Rosie Perez has been type casted as the loud Latina. However, rather than being submissive, the audience sees how Elena constantly pushes against her family (like when she said that she didn't want the quinces) and other issues she finds problematic (like when she recognizes Penelope's treatment at work as being sexist). In fact, in addition to her coming out story and quinces story, she is often shown to be and described as a social justice warrior. In the first season, she pushes for her school to be more environmentally friendly, but more noticeably and more consistently, she is shown to be involved in social movements helping raise awareness for equality and LGBTQ and/or women's rights later in season two. For example, she is part of an advocacy group and during a spat with Alex, she says, "each one of these [mustache] hairs is a blow to the patriarchy" (Signer & Lewis, 2018). This quote is a clear reference to her being a feminist which again challenges established narratives of

Latinas in particular, and simultaneously establishes Elena as a socially conscious individual who must be aware of her identity and its implications for her interactions with others.

This identity, exemplified by her coming out story and her quinces story, situate Elena within two marginalized communities: the LGBTQ and Latino communities. For all intents and purposes, that should put her at a disadvantage to the story, especially considering how both types of characters are often reduced to stereotypes and many LGBTQ characters are written off in television programs (Hulan, 2017). However, the *ODaaT* writing team made Elena a strong character—mostly seen through her passions for social justice and equality—and that is maintained through the second season. The only times where she might even be considered "weak" is when she goes through average teenager doubts, like how to tell when a crush is reciprocated. So even though Elena is undoubtedly politicized, especially due to her social positioning as LGBTQ, she still maintains a degree of relatability because she is portrayed as being a slightly awkward teenager. In essence, her vulnerabilities humanize her, thus maintaining her relatability and the audience's ability to identify with her, but her strength and LGBTQ status creates a space for political commentary in *ODaaT*. Elena's character is political because she often serves as the source for social lessons (like immigration, micro-aggressions, and passing) but she is also political because of the identities ascribed to her. For example, in "The Turn," as discussed later, Elena's character is a platform on which to discuss race and passing' and early on, her character is used to discuss issues like sexuality, sexism, and homophobia. However, with time, as her character develops, so too does the conversation around these issues that *ODaaT* tries to facilitate. In "What Happened," Elena confronts her father about his homophobia and abandoning her at her quinces, "You taught me a really valuable lesson. Just because I'm gay, people will hate me without knowing anything else about me. I always knew that was part

of the deal. I just…I never expected it from my own father. But now I know not to expect the best from anyone" (Jones, S., & Roth, A. & Lewis, 2018). In this moment, it is really clear that Elena is beginning to understand the implications of her coming out. However, this scene also asks the audience to question what they know about coming out and to be more reflexive and thoughtful about how someone's identity, especially when it's politicized.

So, not only does *ODaaT* portray politicized characters and their stories in terms of sexuality, but given the family's Latinidad, narratives related to race and immigration are directly discussed and seen as political too, especially in the current political climate. The show addresses the current climate whether it is through discussions of immigration or indirect references to the administration, there are "jokes" about the wall in "Strays," references to Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric in "The Turn," and indirect references to Trump himself in "Citizen Lydia." When Schneider points out that you only need to get 60 per cent correct to pass the citizenship exam, Elena says, "So basically, to become an America, you have to prove you're a D- student." To which Schneider replies, "Yep, it's the same requirement as it is to become president" (Hernandez, Samit, Signer, & Calderón Kellett, 2018). This is a direct critique of the current president and political climate, indicating that discussing immigration is a tricky subject to navigate. Immigration is a very politicizes subject, and one that is often associated with Latinos, however, when the news media only reports on it in general, the human aspect of immigration is lost. That is why *ODaaT*'s portrayal and discussion is so important: the show makes immigration seem more understandable and challenges some of the narratives surrounding it. Lydia's immigration story from Cuba to the United States also maintains and challenges narratives associated with Latinos while politicizing her character. The audience first

learns details about her immigration in “Strays” (Murrieta & Lewis, 2017) and then gains more in “Viva Cuba” (Badillo, Levich, Calderón Kellett & Hahn, 2017).

Between the two episodes, it is established that she came to the US with her sisters via the Pedro Plan Program, an initiative by the US government to bring young children to the country until Castro was defeated in Cuba. Since that never happened, Lydia never returned to Cuba and was essentially a refugee. This narrative of needing to escape oppressive regimes is somewhat typical of Cubans in particular, but also of other Latinos. However, what is interesting about the way Lydia’s story unfolds is that even though it was extremely difficult, she is proud of her strength and what she was able to accomplish in the US—when she tells her story, it is not out of pity, but rather out of pride, which is not something often seen in immigration narratives. Furthermore, after a whole season of learning to like and relate to Lydia, the audience then learns that she never actually became an American citizen. “When Berto and I learned that in order to be sworn in as Americans, we would have to renounce our Cuban citizenship, we could not bring ourselves to do it. Cuba is home. Home-home…I’m sorry, being *cubana*, it’s who I am” (Signer & Lewis, 2018). This is the side of immigration that is rarely seen in the news media. Lydia is situated as a permanent resident and not a citizen, and her immigration story becomes that much more politicized as a result. While pride in one’s country is definitely associated with Lydia being proud of being Cuban, it is also associated with the American dream narrative. As such, *ODaaT* allows Lydia’s immigration narrative to both maintain immigration narratives—escaping a dictatorship to come to American democracy and then resisting assimilation in favor of her own national identity (Chavez, 2013)—but challenges that narrative because when this narrative is addressed because it is after the audience has already been asked to identify with Lydia and she therefore asks audiences to question how they define “good” versus “bad” immigrants given

that we like her, but because of her immigration status and the emotional impact of her story, we must think more deeply about implications relating to immigrating and becoming a citizen of a new country.

This whole politicization of Lydia's character and subsequent naturalization process is further complicated by being juxtaposed against Schneider's own naturalization experience. The juxtaposition of Schneider and Lydia's immigration stories demonstrates that paths to immigration (and citizenship) look different to various individuals—Lydia was forced to seek asylum and as far as the audience is aware, Schneider just liked being in California and stayed there. As a result, the juxtaposition also highlights a sense of privilege. This is important because while other shows may try to propose that inclusion is a path toward equality, *ODaaT* shows that even with inclusion, there is still inequality present. The sense of inequality makes an emotional-based appeal to viewers to sympathize more with Lydia rather than Schneider. However, the direct juxtaposition of the two stories is the reason *why* the audience should experience inequal levels of sympathy for the characters. Similar to the juxtaposition Schneider experiences against Penelope, his own story is used in a way that almost boosts the importance and sympathy shown toward Lydia's. "We live in very anti-immigrant times! ... They're deporting Cubans now, too," explains Elena (Signer & Lewis, 2018). So, while it isn't until later in season two that Lydia and Schneider go together to be naturalized, this quote begins to demonstrate racial tensions and fears around immigration exist. When they actually do go to the citizenship office to complete the final steps to be naturalized, despite Lydia's confidence that she will pass the test and Schneider is nervous that he will fail, it is Lydia who is told to wait while Schneider is immediately granted citizenship. The family fears that she will not become a citizen due to racial bias—which harkens back to the earlier quote from Elena—but the issue is chalked up to some

typo and is therefore resolved. These two events in Lydia's immigration narrative are notable because *ODaaT*, is making direct commentary on the current political climate and how that effects immigrants. It automatically politicizes Lydia as a character and shows how one's political and social positioning, even not intentionally exercised can have an affect on one's life and what they can or cannot do.

Given that the family is Cuban-American, it would be difficult and irresponsible for *ODaaT* to not discuss race, however, the way the show approaches the topic is unique. The writers do not shy away from creating storylines where race and/or racism is the focus of the episode, which is not something commonly seen on television. This is important and notable that this race discussion occurs because it is often seen as a taboo subject for discussion, despite race having very real implications for real people across America. Seeing a family negotiate racist instances shows Latino audiences that they are not alone in their struggles and may even give real families tools for discussing race and prejudice among themselves. That is not to say that race is the focal point of the family and the entire program. The whole family's social position as Cuban-Americans is undoubtedly clear, but not over-emphasized so as to leave room to develop other political storylines and identities. Finding a balance between obvious and more subtle discussions of race allows *ODaaT* to introduce non-stereotypical and semi-stereotypical narratives into the program. The most obvious semi-stereotypical narratives in *ODaaT* revolve around race and racism, i.e. other characters in the show, seen or unseen, who make commentary on the Alvarez's ethnic identity, indicating to the audience that other people within the world of *ODaaT* are aware of the family's Latinidad and have opinions about it.

Identifying Micro-Aggressions and Racism

From the beginning, the cast addresses micro-aggressions. In "Bobos and Mamitas," the concept of micro-aggressions is explicitly explored because Penelope complains that she is not given enough credit at work while her co-worker Scott receives more than his share. To further her frustration, Scott often mansplains to her or ignores her entirely. At the beginning of the episode, she does not consider it sexist behavior, but after Elena explains these concepts, Penelope is able to identify those micro-aggressions targeted at her. Similarly, in "The Turn," the family discusses a number of micro-aggressions related to race. Now while some of the aggressions are obvious, like slurs, *ODaaT* takes the time to discuss how while some are more impactful than others, it is usually the continual use of them that makes the slurs hurtful over all. Even though the topic is brought up by a kid telling Alex to go back to Mexico, Alex is visibly absent from the discussion, instead, Penelope, Lydia, Elena, and Schneider, discuss the aggressions and their impact. Penelope arguably does the most of the talking in this scene saying, "I get how this stuff builds up. Finally, you say, 'Not today!' But nobody saw the other hundred times this crap happened" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). This comment changes the discussion around racial slurs because while it identifies them as hurtful and direct, Penelope's comment describes them more as smaller parts of the bigger problem that is racism.

While micro-aggressions often focus on gender (which will be discussed later), *ODaaT* also turn to talk about race-related micro-aggressions as well. For example, in the very first episode, Penelope says, "If that *vieja* (old lady) [Mrs. Doyle, a patient at Dr. Berkowitz's office] calls me Maria one more time…" to which her employer, Dr. Berkowitz responds, "She's just racist" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2017). This quote is indicative of the frustrations many Latinos face of being seen as one homogenous population and identifies the frustration that comes with that generalization. This is perhaps one of the most obvious and straightforward

references to race being a potential obstacle in the Alvarez family's being seen as equal in their community. However, in later episodes, *ODaaT* address other more nuanced (but still obvious) examples of prejudice toward the Latino community, "Maybe just a dirty look, or someone saying, 'Keep your voice down,' which we all know is code for 'Latinos are too loud,'" explains Penelope briefly (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). In the episode "Strays," (Murrieta & Lewis, 2017) the family explores nuanced racism by discussing illegal immigration versus legal immigration at length. To do so, *ODaaT* directly addresses the deportation narrative as seen through Elena's friend Carmen's parents being deported, but also when the topic comes up at a dinner party where Penelope's coworker Scott talks about immigrating the "right way." The family must address how the immigration system isn't the fairest and how it directly impacts the Latino community, even if it's not the family specifically. This discussion of immigration and even current immigration policy is artfully continued in season two when they covertly mention the Trump Administration's no-tolerance policy by saying, "ever since somebody decided to call an entire group of Latinos rapists and criminals, everyone thinks they can say any racist thing that occurs to them" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). While the president is not explicitly mentioned, his rhetoric is unmistakable and it is clear that the program's cast/crew are making a commentary on the current political climate. This is important because it is a direct discussion and critique of what is happening in America *as* it is happening, or at least in terms of problems that are often in the news. Given the limitation of the show being written, taped, and aired in a relatively short amount of time, *ODaaT* does not have the ability to make commentary on day-to-day events. But the direct discussion of big picture issues like equality, immigration, sexism, racism, is refreshing and new because rarely do we see comedy programs directs tackle

these types of issues. Some programs might attempt to do so, but *ODaaT*'s direct approach clearly asks the audience to think about these big picture problems in new ways.

The program furthers the societal critique in the season two premier "The Turn," (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). Here, micro-aggressions are more direct (and even escalate) and are curiously focused toward Alex, who, for the most part, does not make too much social commentary in the series. However, in this episode, he told to "go back to his country" by some kids after they heard him speaking Spanish to a friend. But what is unique about this incident is that as a result of this racist behavior, a discussion of racism, passing, and micro-aggressions ensues. During this conversation, Lydia, as the first-generation immigrant, describes her own experience with slurs and racism saying, "When it is being yelled at you as you are walking home from school, a teenage girl who can barely speak the language, you are thinking first, 'It is a cat call. Because of my perfect legs.' But then, your friend Valentina tells you, 'no, no. In fact, it is a hate word.' And then suddenly, you feel very alone. And it stays here" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). Lydia's explanation of the impact of slurs is important because it identifies how those slurs operate. Not only do they put an individual down in an act of oppression, but it also alienates those same people and furthers the cycle of racism and racial hierarchy. As *ODaaT* writer Dan Hernandez explained, the writing staff "wanted to see that [how the family faces open racism] through the viewpoint of our characters and our family" (Castillo, 2018). Showing open racism and its impact on a family is important because it humanizes the act. Instead of racism, which is something generally conceived as negative, happening to random people, it happens to the Alvarezes, a family that has gained audience's appreciation and sympathy. This episode is also important because it shows that racism is not always big acts of hate like burning crosses in the lawn but can be something as simple as "'go

back to Mexico…build the wall," (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). This episode asks audiences to think about race and racism operate daily at a personal level and how it can be hurtful. By this point, audiences should have formed some degree of affinity for and identification with each of the characters, and especially since Alex is seen as the baby of the family who is mostly there for snide side commentary, his being pushed forcefully into a politicized position makes the audience feel more sympathetic toward him. He does not seem used to be in such a politically charged position—he usually experiences praise from others rather than bigoted comments—so his representation in the show shifts from a younger teen shielded from racism to one who must learn how to deal with it.

At the same time, his sister Elena, who, as already discussed is at a tricky positioning being female, LGBTQ, and Cuban, is almost relieved of some of the prejudice that her brother is now experiencing. As a White-appearing Latina, she effectively passes for White and as such, is not the recipient of immediate prejudice like Alex, who looks visibly more (stereotypically) Latino.

Elena: I feel really bad for Alex. It's amazing how lucky I've been. Even these days, in this openly racist world, I've managed to never have an incident. [*Penelope gives her a funny look*]…What?

Penelope: No, and hopefully you never will.

E: Yeah, but why are you being weird?

P: I'm not being weird. All right look…Um, you and your brother are of different…shades.

Lydia: Yes. *Papito* is a beautiful caramel…and you are Wonder Bread.

E: Am I passing?!

P: No!

L: Well…

Schneider: What do you mean 'passing'?

E: It's when people of color pass as Caucasian and benefit from white privilege even though they're a minority.

S: Well, that's a big old *sí* then, *señorita.*

P: Huh?

S: Let me explain. *Ayer en el juego, el chico de* snack bar *preguntó si ella era mi hija. ¡¿Puedes creerlo?!* [Yesterday at the game, the snack bar guy asked if she was my daughter. Can you believe that?!]

[Penelope and Lydia shift focus to their disbelief of Schneider's growing Spanish speaking abilities]

E: Stop it! This is terrible, I can't be passing! I am a proud Latinx!

L: What the hell is a Latinx? Is it a Cuban Kleenex? If so, then it is the best Kleenex!

E: I mean, who even decides what Latinx looks like? I look Latinx! (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018)

This scene goes on to discuss colorism within the Latino community, with Lydia saying that Cubans are White because of Spanish heritage and Penelope calls her out on that inaccuracy.

Elena, meanwhile, is strangely upset that she won't experience prejudice until Schneider points out, "Hey, you're still gay." To which Elena responds, "Yes, you're right, and a woman…I'm back in!" (Calderón Kellett, Royce, & Fryman, 2018). Penelope is clearly confused by her daughter's reaction saying that oppression isn't the goal but equality and inclusion is. However, even if that is the case, American society is far from achieving that goal. This episode shows that even if someone could be discriminated against because of who they are, it is more likely to be those ascribed identities that get targeted first. So, it comes as a bit of a surprise that Elena resolves to regain her Spanish skills, asking Lydia to help teach her. Which is curious because for one, she suffered from language erosion (i.e., she had Spanish language skills and then lost them) but also because Spanish was one of the reasons that Alex suffered discrimination in the first place. At this point, Elena's character (and this open discussion of racism) is challenging narratives not only because of the identities being discussed, but because even though this is a political conversation, it is happening in such a way that invites audience members to take part and to think more deeply about what is actually being brought up here. That identity, as evident by something as simple as skin tone or language ability can be a source of ridicule. While this is not a novel concept, it is something that is not often seen on television programs. By discussing it as openly as *ODaaT* does and by using a platform such as Netflix, the show is able to challenge more people to reconsider prejudice, especially when it comes to identity politics like those associated with race and/or sexuality.

Some Concluding Thoughts on the Politics of Representation

The *ODaaT* cast and crew clearly do not shy away from tackling controversial issues on their program, which is important because these are the same issues that can bring us together or divide us as a nation. So, when it comes to television, there must be a way for writers to appeal

to a diverse audience. “We’re telling stories that anyone can relate to, just through the specific lens of these characters, said Gloria Calderón Kellett (Davis, 2019). It is this specific lens that is important and makes *ODaaT* unique to television today: the program handles political topics and shows how these topics relate to characters with inherently politicized social positions in American society today.

The politics of representation are addressed both through the characters in *ODaaT* as well as the stories that the program tells, by doing so, it invites the audience to consider new perspectives about what it means to be a minority—whether it is ethnic or otherwise—living in the US today. For example, Alex’s experience of being told to “go back to Mexico,” puts a likeable face to the narrative of bigotry toward immigrants and their families. Likewise, Elena’s coming out narrative and abandonment by her father shows the reality of homophobia and its effects. Once we as the audience identify with these characters, we are more likely to understand how the characters react to political situations such as the effects of bigotry. Furthermore, when the audience starts to understand the politics of representation, they will likely also be more open to the commentary *ODaaT* starts in regard to political identities and narratives.

By being direct about the politics around minority characters and their stories and by having these same characters relatable for audiences, *ODaaT* is able to keep audiences engaged in the program. Engagement is important because it is maintained by having realistic characters who are made authentic by acknowledging their political status in society. Furthermore, by acknowledging how politics affect characters’ abilities to move about the world, *ODaaT* is able to challenge stereotypical narratives of the Latino community. Without identification or the politicized representations, *ODaaT* would not be able to entertain audiences while re-educating them on what it means to be a minority in the United States.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Using *One Day at a Time* as analysis material, I sought to investigate Latino representation and stereotypes using rhetorical analysis. Previous research mostly focused around media analyses and looked to ways the film industry represented the Latino population and Latino experience in the United States, with limited research focused on Latino representation in television. For example, while in my research I found an analysis of *The George Lopez Show* (Markert, 2007), I primarily found broad analyses of ethnic representations across television rather than studies with specific programs(Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017), (Clark, 1969), and (Mora & Kang, 2016).With this research in mind, I wanted to understand if and how *ODaaT* challenges Latino stereotypes, and by extension, dominant narratives around the community. Through this study, patterns of identification and considering politics of representation lead me to discover that presenting stereotypes is necessary to challenge them. Using narrative and ideological criticism as a guide, I had the framework through which to understand these representations. Ideological criticism led me to consider how marginalized identities, like people of color and those in the LGBTQ community, are perceived, and narrative criticism helped me to determine how these perceptions are portrayed in television. Ultimately, through analysis of identification between characters and audience and by considering the politics of representation, I gained insight into the ways that *ODaaT* challenges stereotypical narratives of Latinos.

Like its original counterpart, the reboot of *ODaaT* considers contemporary social issues, but in the 2017 version, the show addresses these issues through the lens of the American-Latino experience, thus opening up the opportunity for more conversations to occur, such as those regarding race politics. Historically, television programs from a minority-perspective have often

been considered minority-television, i.e. *Blackish* is sometimes seen as "Black comedy," *Fresh off the Boat* as "Asian comedy," etc., however *ODaaT* is unique in that even though it is told from the perspective of a Latino family, it appeals to a diverse range of audiences. Some of this is accomplished through identification, a rhetorical tool that focuses on the relationship between the rhetor (*ODaaT* and its writers) and the audience. When identification is achieved, there is a mutual understanding between both parties and they are more likely to understand the characters, and therefore understand the implicit messages and topics the characters represent.

Furthermore, by writing each of the characters into politicized roles, *ODaaT* ensured that their program did more than just include more actors of color on television. By complicating the characters via storylines that explored mental health, coming out, citizenship, and more, the characters seem not only more real, but the characters and the show ask the audience to think about the real-life implications of dealing with these types of topics. Rather than simply making the Alvarez family what Dow calls poster-children of what Latino families "should be," and ignoring what it means to be Latino and gay or Latino and a veteran, *ODaaT* is showing the day-to-day experience of balancing one's identities and managing how they intersect and effect daily life, thus "reflecting the world" (Leeds, 2018) The cast and crew do not shy away from having these difficult conversations. Instead, many episodes are opportunities for teaching moments, or opportunities to challenge the audience to think differently about stereotypes. By complicating the representation of the characters and storylines to go beyond a "loud" Latino family, the writers identify what it means to go through life in America as a minority.

By writing developed characters with whom the audience can identify and recognizing that representing identities is multi-faceted, *ODaaT* confronts stereotypes. Each character has their own story to tell—Lydia is a first-generation immigrant who must balance love for her birth

country and new country while also facing frustrations that come with growing older; Penelope is a single mother and veteran who has to accept her children growing up and her PTSD. Elena is a teenager who is developing her identity, and in doing so, comes out to her family and needs to figure out what that means for her; and Alex is a young teenager who, for most of the first two seasons, just has to figure out how to balance teenage responsibilities, but eventually must confront direct racism. By having each character represent different struggles, *ODaaT* is able to make commentary on all of them and also appeal to a variety of audiences. None of these characters experience quite the same thing, which allows the show to tell a variety of stories as well.

These stories, of course, come from the writers, who are diverse in and of themselves, but many of whom are Latino, and are embodied through a primarily Latino cast—this is important because it gives Latinos the opportunity to tell their *own* stories which means that these stories are more likely to be authentic. However, that is not to say that the stories told in *ODaaT* are perfectly representative of the entire American-Latino population. "I don't feel a pressure to represent for *all* Latinos, because we're telling very specific stories, so we can't speak for everyone. But we *know* these stories, so we do feel a responsibility to get it right," said Justina Machado, a lead on *ODaaT* (Davis, 2019). Her point about representing all Latinos is important because her quote identifies how many times in entertainment media, Latino characters are not necessarily specific, and even if they are, they are often all stereotyped to be similar. In turn, her quote also recognizes the importance of *ODaaT*: to show that the American-Latino experience is not all the same, but it isn't as different from other Americans' experiences either. This show provides a commentary for how Latino characters have been seen before—as a group other than the majority-White population in the united states—and it challenges that commentary by

complicating the politics around those representations by creating characters and even narratives that allow the audience to identify with them.

Even though the politics of representation and identification allow for more realistic storylines and portrayals of Latinos, *ODaaT* is not without its limitations. Even though thirty-minute television programs have a reputation for being able to foster an environment for these political conversations, at the same time, these conversations have to be relatively short due to the time constraint. Additionally, since it is a television program, some scenes, plotlines, or topics may not necessarily be a major event in the episode in which they appear but are instead the foundation for future plotlines and/or episodes. Since not everything can be addressed in a single episode, sometimes multiple episodes are needed in order to tell one story; conversely, when the show does do a "deep dive" on a topic, like deportation and immigration, sometimes those topics only get a few dedicated episodes, and since those are seen as more political topics, that does not necessarily mean that the audience will get immediate closure with those topics. For example, even though immigration is first brought up in season one, another immigration-heavy episode does not occur until later in season two. Furthermore, given that *ODaaT* is filmed in front of a live-audience, the ability to have multiple locations is limited—while not necessarily a bad thing, it does mean that we as an audience can only see the characters interact on a relatively small scale. Interactions with social topics are also somewhat limited, because while *ODaaT* addresses and critiques current events, since all of the filming is done over a somewhat brief period of time, it is difficult to address current events as they occur. Instead, they can only address ever-present political and social topics, like immigration or mental health, while the rest of the season deals with slightly less politicized storylines that exist primarily as a way to develop the family's overall story and make them seem likable and relatable.

I argue that it is through this sense of relatability with characters and storylines that allows for identification, which, according to research, helps shape the way audiences both see the characters on television as well as themselves. Seeing people like oneself is important because it then contributes to shaping one's sense of the world—and if stereotypical representations are all that are available, this limit's audience's opportunities, and thus abilities, to understand what is happening around us (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007). By analyzing *ODaaT* from a rhetorical perspective rather than a media one, it is possible to assess the show not only for quality of performance, but also for the messages about Latinos and other social topics. Using narrative criticism helps reveal the types of stories being told, and whether or not *ODaaT* maintains these stories or challenges them—this is important because these narratives are methods to convey ideologies about race, gender, and sexuality. These dominant narratives in the media construct limited portrayals of Latino characters, which *ODaaT* use and then challenge in an attempt to include other perspectives that are not often seen on television. Critics have noted ad applauded *ODaaT* for its inclusion of these other perspectives—as mentioned in regard to Elena's coming out narrative being a more realistic depiction as well as how the show addresses the ways in which the Trump administration's policies affect American-Latino families. This show does not necessarily revolutionize how Latinos are shown in entertainment media, but what it does do is start a new conversation about it and set new standards for how Latinos ought to be authentically portrayed.

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