

THE SEARCH FOR “SELF”:
CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH REPRESENTATIONS OF PARENT-CHILD
RELATIONSHIPS IN *INSTRUCTIONS NOT INCLUDED* (2013) AND
UNDER THE SAME MOON (2007)

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the films *Instructions Not Included* (2013), a fish-out-of-water comedy drama about a single father from Mexico raising his daughter in the United States, and *Under the Same Moon* (2007), a melodrama which shows the quest of a young boy trying to arrive in California from Mexico in less than a week so that he can be reunited with his mother. Focusing on the representations of the parent-child relationship in the context of immigration that are presented in these films, this thesis addresses the debate between globalization and nationalism. The thesis analyses the films’ representations of globalization, using the theoretical framework of Arjun Appadurai’s “scapes” which postulates that there are five flows which enable people, ideas, and finances to cross political and ideological boundaries. Specifically, this thesis analyzes the implications of these representations for transnational communities and the development of cultural identity. Accordingly, this thesis also demonstrates how the representations of the parent-child relationship are effectively used to illuminate several aspects of immigrant and diaspora cultural identity using the theory of cultural identity of Stuart Hall to support this perspective. Finally, this thesis concludes by applying this analysis to demonstrate what role nationalist ideologies and politics play in the fracture of families, and to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of institutional attempts to curb or control forces of globalization based on the representations in the films.

This thesis is dedicated to my incredible wife, Jilian.
Thank you for always believing in me, and supporting my dreams.
I hope you know this is every bit as much your success as it is mine.

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Introduction

What is “identity”? A dictionary can only provide an arbitrary definition that does not take into account the transitional and temporary nature of it. In order to account for the social and political influences that affect the post-modern concept and development of identity, Stuart Hall offers a brief definition “Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (“Who needs Identity?” 7). In other words, identities are constructs that individuals associate themselves with, but they are not permanent. Cultural representations of the collective define the attributes of the construct, according to Hall. Cultural identity in particular is constructed through contact with popular narratives which connect individuals to a larger population with a similar history (“Who needs Identity?” 5).

The cultural identity of immigrants is something that is particularly difficult to define because of their transnational condition. Many immigrants develop their cultural identity within a diaspora that may have influences of varying degrees from the host nation as well as the local community. For example, someone from Mexico living in the United States may identify themselves culturally as a Mexican living abroad, as a Mexican-American, an American from Mexico, or none or all of the above. Hall proposes in response to this situation that in late modern times collective identities are increasingly “fragmented and fractured” and represented by ambiguity and paradox (“Who needs Identity?” 4,16). The purpose of this Master thesis is to show how the discreet representation of transnational cultural identity, including its incorporation of hybridization in the films *Under the Same Moon* and *Instructions Not Included* criticizes nationalism and hegemonic perspectives while affirming the potential of global communities; specifically, that the parent-child relationship is used to criticize political forces

and traditional nationalism that work against the union of families in the name of cultural homogeneity.

Hall writes in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” that there are two essential attributes of cultural identity in a diasporic or transnational community; that of oneness among those of a shared history and circumstance, and the other a recognition of the distinctions among members of this collective; as Hall states, “Cultural Identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 223). This means that the post-modern state of cultural identity is not a matter of concrete solid attributes that can be defined. This approach to cultural identity is one of compromise and fluidity, anxious to avoid being “tied-down” to any particular definition or construction (Bauman 18). Hall further explains that the relationship between identity in the present and in the past is similar to the relationship between a mother and a child (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 226). Parent-child relationships therefore directly relate to the paradoxical nature of the temporal continuum of cultural identity in immigrant populations; they represent the relationship between the past and present while demonstrating and implying a future as well.

The parent-child relationship permits representations of four key elements that are increasingly important to the discussion of identity and globalization. These elements are inherently present within this particular paradigm and explain the importance and the repetition of the family motif within the immigrant film genre. The parent-child paradigm presents four elements to representations of the immigrant narrative that would otherwise be invisible. First, this relationship inherently shows a temporal element to the story of immigrants – parents and children will always be of two distinct cohorts and thus will show variations on the immigrant experience relative to their particular age group. This allows for representations of distinct

challenges as well as the possibility to show that some forces are universal and affect all groups regardless of age or experience.

Parents and children are also connected genetically which means that their relationship is emblematic of the nature-nurture debate which focuses on the acquisition of traits through either DNA or outside influences. This means that the parent-child relationship can be used to show that cultural identity is something inherited from biological makeup, or constructed via experiences and upbringing. Directly associated with the genetic element of the parent-child relationship is the political implications that the relationship inherently carries. Families are the central topic on debates over immigration law and its effects. This paradigm allows for a symbolic representation of the division of the family through the separation of parent and child. In addition, the forces that cause the separation then are criticized or supported based on the effects of the separation on the child who embodies the future.

This critical relationship also inherently contains an element of gender roles in terms of responsibilities. Traditionally, fathers and mothers serve distinct and identifiable roles within the family, thus any deviation from these roles is observable and comprehensible to an audience. For this reason, the parent-child relationship naturally incorporates a representation of gender with the presence of any parent performing an action with their children – supporting or subverting tradition. The presence of these four elements in the parent-child relationship make it a powerful narrative form for criticizing or supporting positions regarding nationalism or globalization. Immigration and family melodrama are two interconnected traditional aspects that play a prominent role in modern Mexican cinema (Connelly 94). Connelly defines melodrama as a traditional drama that intends to heighten the emotions of the viewer (94). However, this general definition of melodrama as a genre ignores the specific role that melodrama plays in subversive

narratives. According to Jesús Martín-Barbero, melodrama forms a primary mode to express protest and affect other elements of popular culture citing specifically the press and politics (87-89). He further states that the melodrama first functions as a mirror of a collective conscience, and later a means for propaganda (128). The recurring role of the family in immigration cinema and the strong emotions that it invokes from viewers make it a powerful subgenre for relating the immigrant story.¹ These genres connect not only to residents of Mexico and Central America, but also with many people who currently reside in the United States as well (Connelly 96). Because of the success of films in both categories, the recurring theme of family is often woven into the nature of immigration and the two are rarely separated. The use of either or both is frequently a strategic element in seeking financial success for a film, but it also provides a narrative to analyze immigrant cultural identities due to the traditional nature of the melodrama as a voice of the marginalized and the transnational nature of the characters (Connelly 94).

To accomplish the purpose of this thesis two films centered on the immigrant narrative and family melodrama genres are analyzed that specifically include parent-child relationships in the context of (im)migration in order to show how these relationships are symbolic representations of the exchange in the development of cultural identity. The thesis focuses on those relationships in which Mexican parents play a role in the development of cultural identity in their children and postulates that the cultural exchange between parent and child is emblematic not only of the exchange between national cultures and identities, but also of the process of hybridization that Homi Bhabha says "...constructs visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority..." ("Culture's In-Between" 58).

¹ Immigration Cinema includes films such as *El Norte* (1984), *The Immigrant* (2013), *The Visitor* (2007), *Mi Familia* (1995), *María Full of Grace* (2004), *A Better Life* (2011) among many others. These films are characterized by protagonists who immigrate, or have recently immigrated as part of their storyline. Along with the recurring theme of family, family members typically are of the opposite sex and have opposing viewpoints on their new home with one struggling to let go of past traditions and the other seeking to assimilate.

The primary works selected for this analysis show symbolic representations of the immigrant experience beyond individual personification of the collective by incorporating the symbolic family. For example, they present cultural divisions and conflicts among generations in diasporic communities or issues of language and legal status that create tensions in the family. The works that will be analyzed for the purpose of this study are the popular feature films *Under the Same Moon* (2007) and *Instructions Not Included* (2013).

Under the Same Moon and *Instructions Not Included* similarly contain two of what Caryn Connelly refers to as “traditional themes” and “important genres” in Mexican cinema, specifically immigration and the family melodrama (94). Connelly later goes on to assert that the use of these two genres confirms Patricia Rikken’s use of strategy to increase appeal with audiences and achieve greater financial success (96). Logically, this same reasoning can be extended to *Instructions Not Included* since the two genres are present in it as well as the principle cinematic themes. Beyond the general similarity of genre, more common attributes are present which may help explain the large financial success of the two films. *Instructions Not Included* is the fourth largest grossing foreign language film of all-time, earning nearly \$100 million, while *Under the Same Moon* ranks 17th among foreign language films, grossing about \$23 million worldwide (*Instructions Not Included* Box Office Summary; *Under the Same Moon* Box Office Summary).

Beyond the general concept of genre, one of the main similarities in these films is the specific representation of the family melodrama. Each film shows an intimate and intense bond between a single parent and their child with the other parent having abandoned the family for individual, implied, self-serving motivations. The single-parent situation within the families adds to the effects of the melodrama by removing a safeguard from the family situation. Thus, the

consequences of what happens to the parent are intensified because they contribute directly to the child. The tradition of divided households and families in immigration cinema could have originated due to what Patricia Zavella notes with regard to the common fracturing of families that occurs due to the border and transnational politics (56). In other words, the divided families in the films fulfill a didactic purpose in the works by amplifying the emotional intensity of parental challenges within the audience, and by creating a visual landscape that reflects a true-to-life situation. The interplay between the melodrama and reality shown through the parent-child relationships in these two films in particular criticize nationalism discreetly by drawing attention to the causes of emotional distress within the films. By connecting the moments of maximum emotional tension with their representations of real world issues, it is possible to demonstrate how the films criticize nationalist ideologies.

In order to properly analyze these films the works of Stuart Hall, Arjun Appadurai, and Homi Bhabha will be drawn upon in order to demonstrate how the complexities of identity in a globalized society are represented symbolically through parent-child relationships. Recognizing that a parent and child are inseparably linked, so too posits Hall that cultural identity is linked to its historical past and its contextual present ("Ethnicity: Identity and difference." 14). The dichotomy of self is further exaggerated with the conception of the "Other", which Hall poses as necessary for the distinction of the "self"; without the "Other", the "Self" has no definition ("Who needs Identity?" 9).

Mexico's history with the United States plays a role in the representations of cultural identities in the two films, both directed by Mexican directors residing in Mexico. In 1848, the United States invaded Mexico as part of the Mexican-American War. As a result of this conflict, the United States seized control of a large portion of land and established itself as the imperial

power in North America. In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said declares that “no one today is purely one thing” even though “imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale.” (334). Remnants of an imperialist past resonate in the various representations of singular identities that form tropes and stereotypes within popular culture. However, immigrant film and the parent-child relationship represent transnational identity and cultural hybridization from a perspective that strays from stereotypical narratives and legitimizes perspectives of globalization. The parent-child immigrant narrative balances respect for tradition and history with progress and an acknowledgement of globalization and the flows of people, ideas, and media that characterizes the present state of the world. However, the competing values and priorities of nationalism and globalization often lead to a self-paradox directly contributing to hegemonic dominance where minority groups alter their narrative in order to blend into the larger population.

This internal conflict born of modernity from the imperial past, filled with apparent contradictions is what Said calls the “paradoxical gift” of identity and it leads us to many questions (336). If identity is fluid, held both by the past and the present and not committed to either of them in the future, then how can it be observed in works such as cinema? How can a representation of identity capture the intricacies of globalization and the swift addition of variables that Hall calls “rapidly shifting”? How do representations of transnational identities such as those in *Instructions Not Included* and *Under the Same Moon* accomplish the task of destigmatizing fringe and non-traditional identities? A feat that Said calls “most rewarding” which necessitates “not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how ‘our’ culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter)” (337).

This thesis shows how the dichotomies of past and present aspects of cultural identity are represented in the context of immigration; it shows how the image of the child, an embodiment of the future “self” develops characteristics of the “Other”, and the parent, the personification of the past “self” are estranged literally or symbolically due to forces present in globalization. These forces will be analyzed critically primarily through the theoretical framework of Arjun Appadurai, particularly using his framework of “scapes” as a source to explain how the relationship between globalization and identity is fostered and how these “scapes” are represented through parent and child immigrants and their narratives. This concept is applied to the context of cultural identity in order to observe how these coincide. This analysis demonstrates how the parent-child relationship in (im)migrant narratives is used as a representation of the effects of globalization on identity and connect with the works of Hall, Appadurai, and Bhabha.

First, *Instructions Not Included* is analyzed with particular attention paid to the use of immigrant narratives to represent the development of cultural identity in role of the child. These stories and their content serve as a foundation for the development of identity and are part of a larger pattern of identity development that is common in diasporic communities worldwide (See Huisman; Safron; and Rios and Adiv). Furthermore, the nature of the film’s plot allows for analysis of its representation of the role genetics play in cultural identity and the implications that this representation has on the future of cultural identity that Bhabha views as potentially fragile. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the film’s ending which contains an implicit message regarding the nature of political influence on identity and its potentially negative effects on prescriptive identities. This connects with the postulations of Hall and Bhabha who argue for an open and free construction of identity, not restricted by traditional or nationalist narratives.

The second chapter analyses *Under the Same Moon* from a similar perspective as *Instructions Not Included*, however it considers distinguishing factors such as the distance between parent and child and the genre of the films in order to provide compare them. This film's chapter includes an extensive analysis of the representation of motherhood and the expanded expectations of single mothers within the context of globalization and how this new perspective compares with that placed on fathers. As part of this analysis, the chapter examines the film's use of Rosario, the female protagonist, as an example of marianismo. Marianismo is a part of Mexican and Chicano culture which establishes a dichotomy between the virtuous Virgin Mary figure, and the treacherous Malinche. This particular cultural element is observed within the context of the film's intended audience to show how hybridization contrasts with assimilation in a subtle message that undermines nationalist themes and connects them with the icon of the Malinche, a figure associated with betrayal within the Chicano community. Appadurai's theoretical framework of "scapes" demonstrate how the movements of characters, ideas, media, and money within the film support the idealization of global communities and criticizes the political forces which create an imbalance of power between undocumented immigrants and their surroundings. It further shows how the forces of globalization are able to handle difficult problems effectively while the political pressures and policies that restrain or limit them are ineffective and damaging to the main characters. The chapter concludes with a summary of the effective bounds and power of the parent-child relationship within the immigrant narrative and the specific uses of its inherent attributes to discreetly promote anti-hegemonic sentiments.

The role of immigrant children in contemporary Mexican cinema may be to attract more viewers as Connelly proposes, but their development in the film is indicative of salient attributes of real society. Their relationships with their parents and the acquisition of cultural attributes that

they demonstrate independently or directly from their family allow the films to be understood in a context that could easily go unnoticed. The interpretation of the film that includes this analysis of cultural identity does in part explain why these two films in particular have enjoyed financial success, aside from other variables. Thus, the merit of this work is in understanding not only the films, but also their relationship to globalization.

Individually considered, these films each deliver clear lessons about the pitfalls of oversimplifying the complex issues interrelated with immigration and identity, but together, they form a harmonious message about the necessity to embrace globalization and the benefits of doing so. The diverse natures of the characters' cultural identities bluntly reject the notion of any necessary cultural hegemony and the endearing attributes of the most diverse characters reinforce this idea. The relationship between parent and child in both films plays an important role in developing an emotional attachment to these discourses while also indirectly incorporating political narratives. The children themselves and their uncertain future represent an uncertainty filled with both hope, as is clearly shown in *Under the Same Moon*, but also tragedy, as is the case in *Instructions Not Included*. As Maggie falls victim to traditional politics and representations of hegemony in *Instructions Not Included*, an especially unusual ending for a comedy, Carlitos overcomes all of the obstacles in his way to achieve his final goal. The parents in both films are reminders of the past and the world's current situation; caught between a world where connections, mixtures, and flows grow at a rapid pace, and a past of strict control and singular identities. Their children have broken from this past and their transnational identities endear them to audiences and mark them as an example for a better future.

The representation of cultural identity in the father-daughter dynamics in *Instructions Not Included* (2013)

This chapter analyzes the feature film *Instructions Not Included* specifically with regard to the relationship between parent and child. This analysis shows how the parent-child relationship is symbolically applied to represent and personify the processes of cultural identity in a transnational/diasporic population. This chapter pays special attention to the protagonist Valentín. The chapter demonstrates how elements of Valentín's Mexican identity are passed on to his daughter Maggie through several means while living away from Mexico. In order to connect the parent-child relationship and cultural identity to the context of globalization and ultimately to demonstrate how the film uses these elements to criticize nationalist and hegemonic migration policies, the chapter includes a comprehensive analysis of the cultural identities of both Valentín and Maggie, including references to legal status, language, gender, and genetics, which all contribute to the construction of their identities.

Instructions Not Included is a fish-out-of-water comedy about a Mexican playboy, Valentín, who is surprised one morning with a baby on his doorstep by a past conquest, Julie, a woman from the United States. He gives her money to pay the taxi driver, but she never returns, leaving the baby in his arms. Valentín realizes that if he is to return to his playboy lifestyle, he must first return the baby girl to the mother. Valentín brings Maggie, his daughter, to the United States, but his lack of knowledge of English makes him unable to locate Julie. Tired of searching, and realizing that he has come to love his daughter, Valentín takes Maggie to his care and raises her. When Maggie turns seven, she expresses a firm desire to meet her mother. Coincidentally, Julie also gets in contact with Valentín and a reunion is coordinated. Things are not perfect though; a custody battle ensues and Valentín winds up with custody for

only a short period before the results of a paternity test show he is really not Maggie's biological father. The court rules in favor of Julie due to this new development which devastates Valentín. To prevent the loss of his daughter, Valentín takes Maggie to Mexico, back to his home where the US police won't be able to find him. Julie follows him shortly after however, when she learns from Valentín's best friend their whereabouts. Shortly after her arrival, the narration in off reveals that Maggie has a brain condition and she passes away just days later in Valentín's arms.

Instructions Not Included as a comedy presents an unrealistic and optimistic view of immigration, labor and life for undocumented residents, using the lack of realism as a way of uplifting the more somber message that it ultimately carries. Its role as a comedy enables it to do so without sacrificing integrity in its representation of immigrant cultural identity or disconnecting with an audience whose experiences may differ greatly from those shown on screen. For example, in the film Valentín finds work early on as a stunt double and earns lots of money and lives comfortably. Nevertheless, the enormous economic success of *Instructions Not Included* shows that through the use of comedy and fictional representation of the migration experience, it still was able to reach its intended audiences.

The box office success of *Instructions Not Included* on an international scale implies that it found a way to reach viewers in a unique way. The film is not the most critically acclaimed movie to ever come out of Mexico, yet it grossed more than any other Mexican film ever, earning \$99 million worldwide (“Instructions Not Included Box Office Summary”). It is the fourth largest grossing foreign language film of all time and its earnings were virtually evenly split between the United States and Mexico. Part of the purpose of this chapter is to show in what ways the film connects with audiences in both countries, and how the aspects of

identity that are represented in Valentín and Maggie connect with the audience in the homeland as well as the diaspora.

The relationships between Valentín, Julie, and Maggie personify the competing sets of values among three distinct cultures struggling for acknowledgement in the construction of cultural identity. The relationship between Maggie and her father represents the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between the past and present in a transnational community. Maggie's desire to meet her mother personifies the search for "self" which plays a critical role in the development of her identity ("Ethnicity: Identity and difference" 14).

Instructions Not Included begins with a short introduction to the character of Valentín, connecting his lifestyle to pressures and trauma suffered at the hand of his father, Johnny Bravo, who wanted Valentín to be fearless. This image montage shows the origin of Valentín's fears and is used as a motif throughout the rest of the film, symbolized by the image of wolves whenever he is afraid. The origin story shows a connection between Valentín and his father through this confrontation of fear, which is then passed on to Maggie because of Valentín's story-telling abilities, a major element in the plot of the film. Through story-telling, *Instructions Not Included* connects the past, present, and future; something that is symbolic of the nature of transnational communities and their cultural identity.

Stories allow for events from the past to be relived and expressed in the present. The critical roles of both the past and present in the development cultural identity is mentioned by Stuart Hall when he explains that cultural identity is a matter both of "'becoming' as well as of 'being'" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 225). He further explained that it is a product of the past that is not exclusive or stagnant ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 226). Hall's words identify the temporal nature of cultural identity in a diasporic or transnational population as

something that is constantly evolving that includes the past identity inherited from the homeland, and also the influence of the new country and its dominant culture.

The relationship that is fostered within transnational communities between the new and the old creates varying levels of assimilation and, as a result, a wide range of variation in attachment to traditional and novel cultural traditions. The ambivalence that exists in this sphere between past and present as well as between dominant and minority cultures is what Bhabha claims allows the hybridization of identity among individuals of the minority, or less dominant group, with the culture of the dominant (*The Location of Culture* 193). This hybridization is seen as both an act of survival and camouflage (*The Location of Culture* 193) and an act of production: the way newness enters the world (*The Location of Culture* 212). In these regards the acts of hybridization and reproduction are similar in that reproduction also exists for the purpose of survival, and inherently is the effective entryway for “newness” into the world. It is also the human embodiment of hybridization because all humans come from two distinct genetic backgrounds. In the film, Maggie’s parents’ different genetic and cultural backgrounds are used to illustrate the validity of a hybrid identity, and also later, through a plot twist, the greater importance of cultural inheritance over genetic. For this reason, the child and parent are crucial starting points when identifying the development of cultural identity among dominated or diasporic populations where hybridization is necessarily represented.

Part of the necessity to depend on the past for oppressed cultures is due to the restructuring and destruction of past that occurred through colonization (“Ethnicity: Identity and difference” 224-5). Franz Fanon claims that colonial attitudes play a role in refiguring the past, and thus the present identity of members of a diasporic community, that dominating cultures are not satisfied until they have distorted, disfigured and destroyed their collective past

– both literally and figuratively (Fanon 36). As a response to this practice, Hall identifies that members of the diaspora have adopted “a quite different practice, one based on 'not the rediscovery but the production of identity'. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past" (“Ethnicity: Identity and difference” 226). Hall remarks that the past’s relationship to present in a multicultural identity is not a simple cause-effect exchange between factual past and actual present, but instead is evoked and recast through storytelling. As Hall explains the past is “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (“Ethnicity: Identity and difference” 226). Such a viewpoint entails acknowledging that this is an “act of imaginative rediscovery,” as Hall puts it; the term “imaginative rediscovery” is understood to mean a new articulation of past events such that the new narrative becomes historic and of meaning to the present. The value of understanding imaginative rediscovery is clear when analyzing *Instructions Not Included* due to the nature of the protagonist and his prolific storytelling. Valentín tells his stories through fabricated letters to Maggie from her “mother,” reflections on his childhood, and tales of his father. It uses Valentín’s effectiveness with his stories to transmit its message of the importance of recognizing cultural history, the power of cultural inheritance, and the value of cultural diversity and open mindedness.

Traditionally, the role of storytelling within a transnational and/or diasporic community is three-fold. First it presents an origin for those who do not personally know their past or the land where they came from. Second, it establishes ideals that contribute to the goals of the community and its individual members. Third, it fosters the notion of a “homeland,” an idealized location that they or their descendents “should return” to (Safran 1991). This fosters what Rios and Adiv call a “longing for homeland,” which is “one of the central aspects of diaspora” (2010). In the film, just as in the traditional role cited before, Valentín’s storytelling

fosters and produces this desire to return in Maggie. It also contributes to the development of her individual values and priorities which are embodied in her ultimate decision to flee to Mexico with her father rather than stay in the United States with her mother.

The role of stories in the identities of Maggie and Valentín is apparently a necessary construct to both create and instill upon Maggie, a non-genetic Mexican American, her “mexicanness” while simultaneously allowing Valentín to maintain his cultural identity while living in an isolated state for more than half of a decade. Though the use of stories by Valentín is not always explicitly present on screen, the effects of the stories and the large number of them is apparent from the consistent references to his “stories” by secondary characters as well as Maggie.

These stories include tales of Johnny Bravo and his incredible lack of fear, global journeys of Maggie’s fictitious mother, and nostalgic descriptions of Acapulco. Valentín contributes to Maggie’s multicultural identity through these tales, each one contributing a facet later represented in the film. For example, she buys into the value of fearlessness when she renegotiates Valentín’s contract to impress her biological mother and her spouse. This contractual change results in Valentín jumping from a much higher place than previously agreed upon and Maggie hopes that this will be more impressive to her mother. Later on the film reveals the source of Maggie’s interest in fear-defying acts. Julie confronts Valentín and criticizes him for filling her head with tales of Johnny Bravo.

A second instance of this reflects the particular utility of stories within a diaspora cited previously by Rios and Adiv. This is shown by the explicit declaration of Maggie to Julie and her spouse that Maggie wants to go back to Acapulco and jump off one of the tallest cliffs. This

death-defying desire is attributed to the stories of her grandfather and is a literal reflection of the “longing for the homeland” previously mentioned.

These two examples of the effects that the stories of Johnny Bravo have on Maggie in her development demonstrate the greater implication that story-telling in general plays a role in her identification of “self.” Their influence on her goes beyond their role in her self-identification and their influence on her however. They emblemize cultural heritage and replicate the past through multiple generations. They show how traditions stay alive within a group that is separated from their roots. She adopts this attribute from her father. In fact, Maggie functions not just as a second generation story-teller; she becomes part of a bigger pattern of storytelling shown in her family.

The passing on of stories motif repeats itself through three generations in the film. A number of the stories that Valentín passes on to his daughter apparently came from his father originally, who most likely received them from his parents. This genealogical association with storytelling infers that traditional, or in other words, familial values can be connected with family stories passed from generation to generation.

Dena Huisman examined this idea in her article “Telling a Family Culture: Storytelling, Family Identity, and Cultural Membership”. Huisman concludes that stories told within the family generally emphasize positive histories, and those that do not, highlight perseverance and the ability to overcome. These stories also serve a function of identifying the family as a unique individual entity, while simultaneously connecting it to the collective society; they are an allegory of immigration.

Instructions Not Included represents this nature by tying the collective history of cliff diving to Valentín’s family. Maggie insists that someday she will participate in the family

legacy. The cultural significance of cliff diving to Acapulco goes beyond just their family; it comprises a significant element of the identity of the location of Acapulco and to all the people there and the fame of divers is world-renowned. Thus in desiring to dive from the cliffs in Acapulco, Maggie expresses not only a union of values congruent with her family history, but also exemplifies the nature of the homeland itself, placing her among the collective whole of Acapulco.

In contrast to Maggie, and ironically similar to Valentín's nature, the outsider to the family, Julie, is terrified at the thought of her daughter participating in the act. This reaction highlights the elemental success of the stories, as Huisman concludes. Maggie, first, identifies herself as the daughter of a stuntman, and granddaughter of the fearless Johnny Bravo, incorporating family values into her own identity. In addition, she desires to return "home," a secondary attribute also associated with storytelling. At the same time, her mother who has no cultural or familial identification with either of these aspects finds Maggie's desire to cliff dive entirely dangerous and off-putting.

Similarly to how Maggie acquires a desire to cliff dive and the value of thrill seeking from Valentín's stories about Johnny Bravo and the family tradition of fearlessness, the film depicts the inheritance of other values such as gender roles from parent to child. This first happens with Valentín through his father's extreme parenting techniques. Johnny Bravo insists on expunging young Valentín's fears by putting him through various excessive fear-inducing rites; these actions apparently instilled a set of hyper-masculine expectations in him, generally associated with bravery. This explains why the young boy considered himself a failure as a man when unable to overcome his fears.

In response to this, he discards the corresponding set of values associated with the stories of bravery his father had told him, opting instead for a life of promiscuity as a local womanizer and playboy, an alternative version of hyper-masculinity to compensate for the feeling of failure. As part of this transition, Valentín isolates himself from his father, avoiding speaking of him or having any kind of personal contact.

Valentín finds use for his father's stories when he begins working as a stuntman which necessitates confronting his fears to provide for Maggie. This is when he decides to tell the tales of his father to his daughter. It is at this same time that he assumes responsibilities in his life that were previously detached from him. The masculine roles that Valentín exhibits in the film vary between a hyper-masculine daredevil and hyper-masculine womanizer, but never simultaneously because, ironically, Valentín's nature varies greatly from traditional hyper-masculinity. For example, early in the film when unable to face his fears, Valentín completely ignores his personal responsibilities. Once he becomes a responsible father later on however, he accepts and demonstrates the norms and values which he associated with his father and his father's narrative such as fearlessness. When these traits which he associates with his father develop, there is a clear cutoff of the playboy lifestyle. Valentín even goes so far as to tell Maggie that he never understood his father before, but since he became a father he realized how naïve he had been. These two mutually exclusive states show the power of the accepted narrative at influencing the priorities and value system of an individual.

Valentín performs the same gender-defining role that his father played for him while raising Maggie. In turn, he instills a set of distinct values associated with gender in her, not only of masculine roles through his tales of Johnny Bravo and his own dive experience being thrown from the cliff known as "La Quebrada," but also through stories he invents which take

the form of letters from Maggie's mother. Maggie has never had the immediate presence of a mother in her life, or any consistent feminine figure, and so she depends on the letters for a framework of acceptable gender behavior and attitudes. While the letters are not recognized by Maggie as "stories," the same can be said about the tales that Valentín tells of Acapulco and his family and friends there that, while taking place off camera, are certainly exaggerated as well. However, Maggie takes them at face value just like she does the letters from her mother. The relationship between accepted gender roles and family storytelling is another connection that Huisman views as fundamental while discussing the role of stories in family and cultural identity. These roles are established through the telling of cultural norms via stories and also defining, specifically, which ones will, and will not, be followed based on the context of the story. For this reason Huisman views the family story as central to the development of gender identity.

Instructions Not Included uses the relationship between Valentín and his father, as well as between Valentín and Maggie to symbolize the process of cultural heritage. As part of this process, children learn behavior norms and gender roles from their parents. This theme's constant presence in the film emphasizes the importance of the parent-child relationship to the representation of cultural identity in the film. Thus, since gender is an important part of the identity of any individual, the family story represents the larger cultural context, filtered by the beliefs of the individual family (Huisman). This means that without the presence of the family, specifically the parent and child, certain elements of this process where individuals inherit values would otherwise be impossible to represent.

The letters to Maggie from "Julie" encompass all of the elements of traditional gender roles, but also expand on them. In the same way that the stories of Johnny Bravo's death-

defying acts are hyper-masculine and highlight traditionally masculine roles, the stories of Maggie's mother fill a hyper-feminine purpose, also providing a modern portrayal of feminine potential: the fictitious "Julie" hatches baby platypuses from their eggs when they lose their mother, frees Willey, finds Nemo, resuscitates the Dead Sea, and many other exaggerated acts that emphasize traditionally feminine traits such as charity, compassion, and motherhood. She also maintains a certain status, meeting famous individuals from around the world which also elevates hers. These stories show the details of femininity that Valentín wishes to instill on Maggie indirectly.

The fabricated "Julie" letters always include at least one of two characteristics; either visits with iconographic individuals, usually celebrities who have a culturally significant element to their fame, such as Mexican cinema stars or soccer players, and/or compassionate service. The two categories reflect on one hand the hyper-feminine ideals present in all of the unbelievable charitable acts she had done, and on the other, it shows a cultural continuity in Maggie, supported by Valentín with the inclusion of two culturally significant individuals among the list of famous people, specifically Lionel Messi, the world famous soccer player who is commonly regarded as the best player on the planet, and the India María, a famous character in Mexican cinema. While soccer is not exclusively a Mexican cultural trait, the cultural importance of soccer in Mexico compared to in the United States is apparent, and the decision to include a visit of Maggie's mom to Messi is a message of approval in maintaining that cultural heritage. The same can be said of the India María, a famous indigenous character from a series of films made in the 70's and 80's who is specifically famous in Mexico and among Mexican-American families.²

² The India María character originated in 1972 in the film *Tonta, tonta, pero no tanto*. Following the success of this film, the character appeared in 16 other films with 13 of them coming before 1985. In 1996, Mexican

Valentín's trip to California includes an episode where he makes two explicit comments about gender identity. It also includes other implicit representations of the role of gender in crossing borders. The first explicit reference to gender and location is made by Valentín as he walks to the border with Maggie as an infant. He speaks with her in a therapeutic way, as if to convince himself that his intentions of returning her to the United States and leaving her with her mother will somehow provide her with a "better" life. Part of his explanation to her includes a side-by-side comparison of what the results of her growing up in California will be relative to Mexico; he includes several specific references that are directly associated with both her racial and gender identity: "Si creces aquí en México, vas a ser guapa, pero prietita, chaparrita. En cambio, si creces allá, seguramente vas a ser güera, de ojo azul, alta." Of course, where Maggie grows up will have no impact on her physical appearance, but the scene merits analysis because it is replicated later in the film with several variations when Maggie and Valentín flee to Mexico. While the comparison of Mexican and Californian women is done for clearly comedic purposes, the overall sentiment of it is quite in line with the effects of cultural surroundings on an individual's identity. The pros and cons that Valentín lists are directly associated with physical appearance and traditional values for women, something that he later discards in favor of the letters from her mother. During this early period of the film, his description of who Maggie would become is a physical description of Julie, blonde, tall and blue-eyed. Later, as he settles into his role as a father and desires to instill a more complete set of values associated with his daughter's gender identity, he expands his representation of her, including mentions of her acceptance in Mexico in contrast with resentment she would feel if

Television network Televisa produced a television series starring the India María, renewing interest in the character and previous films. The most recent installment in the series was *La hija de Moctezuma*, a film which has "La mexicanísima India María" on its promotional poster demonstrating the continued cultural importance of the character 42 years after her first film.

she were in the United States. This is an example of Hall's concept of "imaginative rediscovery" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 226). Valentín attempts to redefine the original context, now with new details because of his life experiences. The stereotypes that Valentín depended on to try and describe Maggie's future condition are overshadowed by the new narrative that he develops as he gains more experience. This episode of the film symbolically demonstrates the positive effects of globalization by demonstrating growth in the character of Valentín as he travels and comes into contact with new ideas and cultures. This echoes Bhabha in his proposal of hybridization, when he said that cultural contact leads to a "process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences" (*The Location of Culture* 242). Valentín's experience in another culture leads to a change in his understanding of that culture and a reevaluation of its stereotypes.

The physical attributes Valentín describes are not ever going to be effected alone by the cultural surrounding; they are symbolic though of other stereotypes that are highlighted in cultural contact. Bhabha explains that stereotypes are born from difference and exaggeration beyond reason ("Culture's In-Between" 18). The decision to have Valentín associate Mexican and American women with their physical stereotypes which defies logic for comedic purposes connects to the other stereotypes associated with them as well, for the precise reason that attributing Maggie's physical appearance to her location is irrational. In other words, The irrationality of Valentín's statement leads the audience to think of all of the other stereotypes associated with both Mexico and California; Valentín only mentions the physical appearance, but it implies much more.

This particular scene where Valentín is addressing Maggie with these stereotypes is specifically mentioned in all of the reviews of the film in the major North American

newspapers (See Ellingson, Goodykoontz, and O'Sullivan). The critical treatment of this scene is mostly negative, with most critics finding it shallow and sexist. Michael O'Sullivan of the Washington Post remarks that the scene has "presumably comic intentions. But, it's pushing the limits of good taste" ("Instructions not Included' Movie Review"). To him, the scene is blatantly shallow, but it does have value in its representation of a true-to-life scenario.

Women's location and the dominant ideals of their surroundings influence both women's values and their appearances. Even though Mexico and the United States share similar ideals for women generally, the distinguishing features that Valentín attributes to each country show that there are variations of expectations for women in each location. The film uses this scenario to show the complexities of identity development and the irrationality of type casting based solely on geographic location.

Instructions Not Included is one of the rare comedies found within the immigration genre. Its comedic nature allows for the film to avoid representing certain obstacles without criticism. It also provides an accepting context for exaggeration. In contrast to *Under the Same Moon* which explicitly represents the difficulties in finding housing, employment, and crossing the border, Valentín crosses the border without any major difficulty or danger, he stumbles upon a job that pays a lot of money, and he finds housing and customizes it to his liking creating the perfect playground for Maggie in his apartment. Valentín's financial success, though unrealistic, presents a necessary element to his character in the film. Whereas traditional immigrant films focus on the journey and the surroundings of the immigrant, *Instructions Not Included* focuses on the characters and their relationship. Valentín's wealth is used for one purpose only in the film; to spoil Maggie. His exaggerated and over-the-top dedication to his daughter symbolically represents the importance of family and reflects an ideal that does

directly connect with the traditional immigrant narrative; family is the primary motivation for immigration among all demographics (Zavella 58-9). One possible explanation for the film's focus on Valentín's relationship with Maggie is that it intentionally uses Valentín to represent the success of immigration and hybridization. Thus, while the majority of immigrants do not have the opportunities Valentín gets, he represents a successful transnational identity. In other words, Valentín's achievements are reflections of the aspirations of those who wish to maintain their identity and influence their children in a similar way while living in the United States. He is an embodiment of the hybrid dream. If he were represented as boring, poor, and starving, he could still be comical, but the message of cultural equality would not be as strong; a wealthy Mexican dad that provides so well for his daughter sends a much clearer message about immigrants' potential for successfully integrating into a society than the alternative. It also presents an easier message to consume than the struggle and hardship of traditional immigrant film. Audiences traditionally root for protagonists to win big and hope for happy endings. While *Instructions Not Included* does not provide a happy ending, it provides a message of hope throughout that an immigrant can provide for their family and maintain their identity while living in the United States.

In contrast to the indirect connection established through the hyperbole and exaggeration in their living situation and finances, Maggie and Valentín do directly connect with audiences through an important representation of the critical role language plays in the construction of "self" among the diasporic community. Valentín has distaste for the English language. This fact is echoed throughout the film with many characters asking when he will finally learn the language after years of residing in California, and culminates with a court order to learn English. The language barriers in the film are real and apparent from the moment

Valentín crosses the border at the beginning of the film. When he first reaches Los Angeles and seeks Julie to reunite her with Maggie early in the movie, he immediately faces comical challenges because of his lack of English skills. Valentín attempts to enter the hotel where Julie supposedly works but cannot because he is with Maggie and no children are allowed inside. He seems confused why he is denied as he sees the bellhop allow a dog to go in. As the bellhop leaves, promising to get Julie's personal information, and because Valentín is unable to understand him, he decides to investigate personally. He enters the hotel and leaves the infant, Maggie, alone by the pool where she nearly drowns and is only saved by Valentín's heroic jump from a balcony high in the hotel. Valentín's inability to communicate and the nearly disastrous consequences of it, while intentionally comical, represent both sides of the chaotic contact zones of language. It shows both the humorous misunderstandings that are common and the serious danger that they present too. Valentín's repulsion of the English language symbolically represents his attachment to his "homeland" and serves as a connection with the past. This language is then inherited from him by Maggie and forms part of the dual identity that defines her as a "Mexican-American".

Maggie's bilingualism plays an important role in defining her character and allows her to serve as a representation of children who grow up in homes with parents who do not speak English and who depend on their children to act as their interpreters and mediators of another culture (Chu). The role of cultural mediator and bilingual interpreter comes with many added responsibilities and negative consequences for these children typically. Elisa Herrera of the Latino Leadership Council notes that children who serve as interpreters for their parents face added stress, pressure, and maturity that people of their ages should not, and in many cases cannot, handle. A direct representation of this added responsibility is shown in the film during a

scene where Maggie renegotiates a job contract for Valentín. Valentín, unaware of her manipulation of the situation, is forced to perform a more dangerous stunt than previously agreed upon. When he finds out what has happened, the director of the film violently lashes out at Maggie, accusing her of fraud. This event illustrates how the mind and actions of a child can have a significant effect on the life of the parent, and also the shortcomings of the child interpreter system. The fact that the film avoided so many of the other obstacles present in immigrant narratives but decided to include this particular one further attests to its unique role and importance. It would have been easy for *Instructions Not Included* to portray a professional interpreter in this scene, but doing so would have eliminated a representation of one of the most common experiences transnational and diasporic populations experience in the United States. This scene is a fair representation of the practice put into place at many institutions across the United States where children navigate adult landscapes as interpreters for their parents. The potentially disastrous results of Maggie's childish actions attest to the severity of language hierarchies and the ignorance of the real need for professional interpreter services instead of the child-interpreter system. The film critiques this practice through Valentín's injury which is symbolic of the risks involved in relying on child interpreters.

As evidence of this argument there are several key details. The change in tone when Valentín falls calls attention to the gravity of the situation. The music changes from rapid adrenaline building notes to serious, dramatic music. The screen focuses on Valentín's face which is covered in blood, and instead of showing him wake up which happens after his first fall in the film, the screen goes to black and the music fades, implying something really bad may have happened. When the screen fades back in, Valentín is being tended to by Julie, and she is warning him of the dangers of his job. As the only other bilingual on set, Julie is

perfectly aware that Maggie was the reason he nearly died. She later brings up this issue again on two occasions, the first after Maggie visits Julie in New York, and the second in court while fighting for custody of Maggie. The scene's unique realism alongside the added emphasis that the film gives this particular scene supports the conclusion that this scene does something more than just present Valentín getting injured. The scene questions the effectiveness of the child translator system.

At the end of the film, language takes a front and center position once more during the court proceedings for the custody of Maggie. While in court, Julie and her partner attack Valentín's inability to speak English and use it as one of their arguments as to why Valentín is an unfit parent. During the first deposition Julie explains, "... despite his many limitations, for example his inability to speak English despite living in this country for six years..." This statement reflects a general resentment commonly found in the United States and the subject of the book *Why Don't They Learn English?* (Tse). While the judge never explicitly states any negative effects of Valentín's inability to speak English, the film does make a direct reference to it in the terms of the custody order. This order given by the judge vocally dictates that Valentín must "learn English to the extent of developing a command of the language."

The decision of the judge represents the institutional preference for English in the United States. It shows symbolically the hierarchy of languages and ignores the fact that for nearly seven years Valentín survived just fine without learning English. The sudden attention paid to his language abilities in the film resembles the general attention and attitudes that immigrants' language use sporadically receives. This attention usually depends on national politics and general interest in immigration. National attention is typically heightened after singular incidents that spur debate of the adoption of a national language for the United States.

Instructions Not Included connects restrictive policies on language with the ignorant and poetically unjust judicial system in the film which attempts to remove custody of Maggie from Valentín.

Maggie's bilingualism allows her to navigate her transnational identity. Her Spanish relationship with her father has allowed her to intimately connect with her past and develop her sense of self – expressing her steadfast desire to become part of the Bravos and cliff dive. Her use of English, on the other hand, allows her to persist in another society and recognize it as “home” as well. Maggie's bilingualism reflects the findings of studies that have concluded that bilingualism “jointly with perceiving one's two cultural identities as integrated are important antecedents of beneficial psychological outcomes” (Chen et al. 329-31). The integration of cultural identities manifested outwardly through bilingualism represents a tangible element of hybridization. For this reason, bilingualism which stems from the parent-child relationship is a critical piece of the immigrant story and Maggie is able to play the role of the hybrid generation incorporating elements of the past and present.

Aside from the command to master English, the judge also issues an order to ensure that Maggie attends school regularly. The film presents multiple scenes where it is stated that she attends school inconsistently; her principal even says that her absence “can't be healthy”. Valentín's willingness to allow Maggie to miss school is one of the first things to worry Julie when she meets her daughter for the first time. The cultural conflict that is represented in the worries of Julie and Maggie's principal, yet seem less important to Valentín, actually represent a trend much larger than just what is shown in the film.

As early as 1979 the idea that Mexican culture caused problems in the American education system was prevalent enough that academic articles were published that

hypothesized that negative results among Mexican American students were due to the “cultural gap” between Mexican parents and an American educational system (Carter and Segura). These hypotheses have permeated American culture and continue to be the subject of studies. A government report in 1992 analyzed the relationship between cultural values of education and student success and found a significant relationship between the two (Keith and Lichtman). Ironically the results of this study showed that parents who viewed education as important, but that had a less strict view on the necessity to adhere to administrative rules, such as attending class, had children who performed better academically. Maggie is seemingly a perfect example of this condition since her principal confesses that her grades are fine, but that she does not attend school regularly. The fact that secondary characters question Valentín’s parenting abilities due to the absences of Maggie seems to represent the societal hypothesis that his being Mexican and unfamiliar with American schooling customs would negatively affect Maggie’s education. Valentín’s lack of English already discussed is also implied to be an obstacle to Maggie’s school, but the results of the government report show something else. Students whose parents do not learn English are typically unaffected in their school performance (Keith and Lichtman). Maggie’s success in school shows that her alternative approach to learning from her father and his culture is just as effective as traditional classroom learning even though there is an institutional push-back. The push-back seems irrational because the film makes clear that no empirical reason to believe that Maggie is missing out on anything exists.

At the end of the court proceedings, the judge awards custody to Valentín; this decision is short-lived though, because of the results of a paternity test. The results of the test show that Maggie is not Valentín’s biological daughter. This shocking revelation has special significance with regard to cultural identity because it is frequently associated with one’s blood family.

Instructions Not Included separates genetic and cultural identity using the example of Maggie because she has developed a Mexican-American identity in spite of her lack of Mexican DNA.

The revelation about the nature of her gene pool eliminates the physical possibility of Maggie ever looking like Valentín, but it does not deter her from understanding her identity as a Mexican-American. Maggie is no less Mexican than any other daughter of Mexican immigrants regardless of the results of the paternity test. In this regard the film fulfills a purpose by showing that cultural identity overcomes biological origins.

In a similar way that the stories that Maggie heard defined her identity and connected her with a collective past, her present with her father and her presence in her father's community formed her identity as transnational. When Valentín and Maggie cross the border back into Mexico literally fulfilling Maggie's "dream of the return," Valentín makes a subtle change to what he tells Maggie is in store for her future based on her immigration. At the beginning of the film during their trip to California he had told Maggie about all of the ways her life would be better in the United States, but upon returning to Mexico, he emphasizes the benefits of living in Mexico. One particular detail he focused on was that if she stayed in the United States "...over 100 million Mexicans will hate you just for being American..." He also sees Maggie as his daughter, and as a true Mexican, in spite of the DNA test results. When first crossing to California, he saw her as equally fitting in either the United States or Mexico and weighed the pros and cons based on her ability to adapt. Now, he viewed her as belonging in Mexico, she became ethnically Mexican and he focused on the fact that if she went there, she would not be labeled with the rest of Americans. Maggie began the film as an infant with no "self", but she becomes her own individual and is fully recognized by her father as a Mexican.

The arrival in Mexico presents a shocking twist for Valentín. His father, whom he had presumed to be alive, is now dead. Maggie accompanies him to visit the grave of Johnny Bravo. Valentín and his father had a strained relationship since his childhood, but he arrives ready to make amends. Valentín's ignorance of the amount of time that has passed is symbolic of a situation that many Mexicans who immigrate face. Zavella explains that there is a type of time disorientation that occurs for those who cross the border. While they recognize that life is moving on for them, part of them expects their homeland to remain the same. The stark changes and drastic differences that many people encounter when they successfully return home is emblematic of the cultural changes that occur in their own lives. They may not notice their own development or hybridization, but it happens nonetheless (Zavella 66). When Valentín finds out about his father's death, the film becomes a metaphor of this situation and presents it as both tragic and heartbreaking. Valentín suffers when he learns of Johnny Bravo's passing in part because of his disconnect with Mexico during his time in California which was caused largely due to his undocumented status. Had Valentín been a documented resident, he would have easily had the means to regularly visit Acapulco. Notwithstanding, his undocumented status is a central element to the plot and a contributing factor to the tragedy in the loss of his father which combine to criticize policies that separate families and prevent those represented by Valentín in the real world from seeing their families.

The death of Johnny Bravo reminds Valentín of the passage of time. While he may have expected everything to be as he remembered when he returned, it was not, and it could not be. Time continues to pass on both sides of the border, and the isolation that is felt by the diasporic populations in the United States, caused by the divisive power of national boundaries, lends itself to a disproportionate memory of the homeland. In addition, as is common with memory in

general, specifically when one is separated from a physical location that they identify as their “homeland,” they romanticize their narrative of the place and their memories are manipulated to portray an idealized version of the prior location (Rios and Adiv). This is another example of “imaginative rediscovery” that leads to the creation of myth and fantasy that Hall cites as primary in the connection of past and present in the development of cultural identity within the diaspora.

The final twist in the story of Maggie and Valentín comes when Maggie closes her eyes for the final time. The death of Maggie at the end of *Instructions Not Included* should perhaps be unsettling. Deaths of children are frequently excluded from films where the child plays any particular role (Thompson 204-212), yet the death of Maggie is not hidden from the audience, but rather is directly shown. John Thompson reflects on the lack of child deaths in cinema and concludes that there are not many deaths because “not many children die in reality,” watching a child die “is not fun,” and the commitment to death in the medium is realistically a commitment to the life cycle, not death itself (209). For these reasons, the death of Maggie is so peculiar, yet poetically just. Thompson observes that in the rare occasions where child-deaths do occur without meeting audience resistance it is because the children are unquestionably “bad,” or unquestionably secondary. Maggie in the case of *Instructions Not Included* is neither. Yet, her death seems to be generally accepted by critics and audiences alike even though it is not, as Thompson suggests, a traditional way to end the film..

So why does the film end with Maggie’s death, and why do audiences accept it? We find the answer in the circumstances revealed prior to her escape to Mexico with Valentín. The two of them are in crisis. Valentín is about to lose custody of Maggie who is the center of his parental identity which has become the central tenant of his personal identity. Maggie on the

other hand, is also about to lose her only connection with her transnational identity. While Maggie certainly enjoys her mother's company and her trip to New York, this trip is markedly "Americanized" and lacking of the cultural elements that make up her Mexican identity. She *needs* her father to be able to authenticate her cultural identity. It is for this reason that Maggie's death is symbolic of the underlying message of the film regarding cultural identity. The dichotomy that defined her was placed in jeopardy when the results of her paternity test came back negative of Valentín's DNA.

For these reasons, it is only fitting that as government or institutional forces attempt to constrain and dictate her identity, she evades them. She makes the decision to accompany Valentín to Mexico in order to maintain the most important aspects of her "self". This evasion would not be permanent however and it would not be logical for her to remain on the run indefinitely just to stay with her father. Maggie's illness itself attests to this interpretation because the only reason the custody battle ever happens is because of the lifestyle that Valentín allows Maggie to have since he wants her to be comfortable until she dies. If he held her to a more traditional standard, his parenting may never have come into question. Without the custody battle to jeopardize her identity, she may have been given the opportunity to live "happily ever after," perhaps a more traditional ending to a comedy. Yet, this is not the case. *Instructions Not Included* success stems not only from its ability to be "fun" but also from satisfying the desire of the audience to see their "self" on screen. The conclusion of the film, Maggie's death, is the only ending that would permit audiences of all demographics to be satisfied. Maggie wanted to be with her father, but the courts had already ruled that this was impossible. If she were to be forcibly removed from him, the ending would be even more tragic than her death. If she had escaped with Valentín and lived a life on the run in Mexico, it would

have been equally unsettling, especially to those who would support the United States Judicial System. The complexity of Maggie's cultural identity and the risk associated with having it stripped through political forces communicates a familiar message to the intended and extended audiences of the film. The final death of Maggie symbolically represents in this case, the loss of "self" which inherently follows any attempt to strip part of the cultural identity of individuals through any means. While this ending is striking, and unexpected – the film goes through great lengths to lead the audience to believe that Valentín is the one who is sick – it strongly represents the symbolic death of Maggie's transnational identity as a result of Valentín losing custody of her.

In the end, *Instructions Not Included* uses the parent-child relationship to embody several aspects of the development of cultural identity and the internal conflict present when conflicting cultures are in contact. Valentín and Maggie are used to show the effectiveness of cultural preservation through family and narratives of the "homeland," as well as showing the power of past generations in affecting the identities of present and future ones. Elements of their relationship, such as Maggie's role as interpreter and Valentín's storytelling allow the film to connect with audiences in a way that many other films which ignore the narrative aspect of immigration and cultural identity cannot. These elements explain why the film has achieved such unusual box office success in both the United States and Mexico. The parent-child relationship of Valentín and Maggie allows the film to connect with audiences who are Mexicans living in Mexico, Mexicans living in the United States, and Mexican Americans through its representations of Mexican cultural elements, parodies of immigrant life, and realistic portrayals of diasporic conditions.

Long-distance parenting amidst the context of globalization in *Under the Same Moon* (2007)

This chapter analyzes the representation of the parent-child relationship in the context of globalization and its impact on the development of cultural identity. Furthermore, it looks at the relationship between Carlitos and his mother Rosario from a perspective of globalization showing how the film uses this relationship to criticize traditional nationalism and political forces that divide their family. In order to show how global flows are represented in the film, the theoretical concept of “scapes” from Arjun Appadurai is used. The chapter applies Appadurai’s framework centered on the flows of ideas, people, and capital to the film symbolically to show how attempts to stop globalization result in negative outcomes consistently (295-308).

Under the Same Moon is the story of a Mexican mother who immigrated to the United States in order to provide a better life for her son. At the time of the film her son, Carlitos, resides with his grandmother who is ill and he has grown quite independent because of the responsibility that this gives him. Every week, Carlitos receives a phone call from his mother from the same pay phone; part of the routine call includes her describing the area around her. Through this, Carlitos envisions himself with her, and paints a mental image of where she stands each week, taking note of every detail. When his grandmother passes away, Carlitos determines that he needs to find his mother in Los Angeles and sets off to meet up with her before the weekly phone call the next Sunday. On his way he comes across many obstacles including financial, geopolitical, and physical barriers. He receives help along the way from strangers and ultimately arrives in Los Angeles the day before the weekly phone call. The film concludes with a rapid succession of events that culminate with Carlitos standing across the

street from his mother, separated only by a traffic light. The light changes and before the two move, the film ends, avoiding any depiction of the two of them in the same frame.

Many of the difficult and dangerous circumstances which Carlitos and his mother face as they cross the border are due to the workings of national structures attempting to control globalization and can be explained utilizing the framework of Arjun Appadurai and his proposal of five dimensions of cultural flow, namely ethnoscaples, mediascapes, ideoscapes, technoscapes, and finanscapes (296). This chapter shows how *Under the Same Moon* employs each of these “scapes” to represent the context of globalization within the film. The effects of the power structures which work against these flows on the parent-child relationship will be analyzed to show how this relationship functions as a primary platform for criticizing these non-globalized structures. Ultimately, the parent-child relationship becomes a symbol of the family which is a powerful tool in political narratives dealing directly with immigration policy.

Fractured families’ importance and implications to society led Martin and McGuire to dedicate a research project to identifying the “suffering of separation and the undercurrents of sorrow” among women who leave family members behind to immigrate (180). Their study found that women who leave family members behind are faced with emotional trauma that goes overlooked and disregarded by political commentary (Martin and McGuire 184-188). Film and the subgenre of the family melodrama in particular provide a way for audiences to relive and work through these experiences ignored in public spheres, serving a role that Martin and McGuire regard as a necessary telling of their stories which they suggest will lead to a humanizing of immigration policy (179). This chapter hypothesizes that it is for this reason that *Instructions Not Included* and *Under the Same Moon* in particular found such significant box

office success and connected with their audiences on such a large scale both in the United States and in Mexico.³

Immigrant demographics continue to change. In recent history, variations in immigrant demographics have coincided with changes in the motivations and methods of immigration. Previous generations of immigrants, predominantly consisting of men, entered the United States through traditional road ways at Customs Stations. However, as immigration policies changed and legal immigrant numbers were restricted, alternative methods of immigration became more common. *Under the Same Moon* opens with the border crossing of Rosario; she physically over powers the obstacles in her way. Her individual strength highlights her successful river crossing and evasion of the ICE officers while the majority of those with her are apprehended. Her strength contrasts the passive nature of Valentín from *Instructions*. His crossing is relegated to an off-screen smuggling in the false end of a semi truck. The strong assertive nature of Rosario's crossing and the passive, submissive nature of Valentín's place them on opposing sides of social expectations of their genders. Masculinity is traditionally associated with dominance and strength, while femininity is connected to passivity and submission. The representations in both films serve a purpose of creating a hybrid nature within the single parents because a single parent necessarily fills the roles of both father and mother transcending traditional gender roles such as provider or nurturer while "raising" their child of the opposite sex. This trait of being father and mother applies to the parents in both films and permits the characters to develop depth in their relationships with their children while also enabling audience members of either gender to connect with the singular adult main characters.

³*Instructions not Included* grossed around \$100 million worldwide making it is the fourth largest grossing foreign language film of all time. *Under the Same Moon* was also a box office success grossing about \$24 million making it the 17th largest grossing foreign language film of all time.

In opposition to the comedic tone and nature of *Instructions Not Included*, *Under the Same Moon* as a drama presents a more realistic representation of several aspects of immigrant life. Examples of these include the border crossing, the exposure to human trafficking, exploitation of undocumented workers, and conflict with local law enforcement including ICE agents. Connelly argues that the allure of *Under the Same Moon* is found in the generally positive message which resonates through Carlitos' ability to overcome the challenges in his path (95). In addition, Connelly cites the generally grim tone of the majority of films situated within the immigrant genre and points to the message of hope that is embodied within Carlitos' every victory over an obstacle (94). The optimistic and positive outcomes of Carlitos are not emblematic of the whole film, however. He also faces many hardships that he is unable to get past on his own including his father's rejection. These difficulties provide a vital sense of risk and suspense to the film that relies on emotional investment to relay its message.

Under the Same Moon introduces new aspects into the role of parenting in the development of cultural identity in children – specifically immigrant children to the rhetoric previously analyzed in the chapter on *Instructions Not Included*. In some ways, *Instructions Not Included* presents a situation that, practically, is the polar opposite of that present in *Under the Same Moon*. For example, whereas *Instructions Not Included* shows a tight-knit family relationship between a father and daughter who have developed an essential need for one another, *Under the Same Moon* depicts an independent mother and son separated from one another whose influence is through filtered and indirect channels. Though it does so in a different tone than *Instructions Not Included*, the film also addresses deportation and power imbalances between employees and employers. Both films were successes both among critics

and at the box office despite their differences, and this chapter will explore how two seemingly diametrically opposed situations both are able to resonate with audiences and critics.

While the closeness, both geographical and emotional, of the main characters in *Instructions Not Included* is quintessential to their development as individuals and in their representations of immigrant lifestyle, the distance in *Under the Same Moon* presents a distinct circumstance. Far be it from excluding the influence of the mother, the distance itself generates a dimension to the development of Carlitos and his personal identity. This parenting-through-telephone calls representation which *Under the Same Moon* presents shows a non-traditional representation of motherhood. The end result of this long-distance parenting however, appear to have no effect on the emotional closeness that Carlitos and Rosario share.

In fact, one interpretation of the travels of Carlitos could be that he is seeking to rectify the geographical displacement of his emotional state. Emotionally, he is tied directly to his mother; while his grandma was alive, he was able to find her there, memories and artifacts of her existence were all around as well as human embodiment of her. With his grandmother's death, Carlitos sought to reunite himself with her and ease the emotional dissonance he began to feel upon finding himself without a tangible, living connection to her. I will discuss this further in the section on the various scapes represented in the film and include an analysis on how the telephone is a representation of the technoscapes that Appadurai explains can be used to connect cultures and which serves as a direct service for delivering both emotional stability and American culture to Carlitos.

Several indicators in the film show that Carlitos does not allow the distance between himself and his mother to affect his relationship or appreciation of her. On the contrary, his appreciation of her telephone calls is evident early in the film because he marks his calendar

each day of the week in anticipation for Sunday when he will finally get a chance to hear his mom's voice and speak to her.

The representation of the calendar addresses the issue of hybridity by showing Carlitos and Rosario in their respective locations. The scene shows Carlitos and Rosario in a split screen going through their daily routines side-by-side with small differences catching the viewer's attention. Among these differences are the breakfasts that each person eats – Rosario eats a Pop-Tart with jalapeños on top, a clear symbol of her hybridity. The calendars also have clear and visible differences; each calendar has unique characteristics to each culture where it is located. For example, Rosario's clearly shows Sunday as the first day of the week, and Carlos' shows it as the seventh day. This distinction is clearly not coincidental, but intended to function alongside other subtle differences that occur during the split screen sequence.

The calendar also represents the importance of Rosario in the life of Carlitos. While Rosario marks each Sunday in a similar way to Carlitos, noting it as the day she is able to talk to her son, she makes special note of the day of his birthday. A typical child would probably do the same and be full of excitement for his birthday and have this day specially marked on a calendar. Notwithstanding, Carlitos only has his birthday marked identically to any other Sunday on his calendar. This distinction reemphasizes the importance of his mother in his life; she is the special part of that day, not his birthday which will be celebrated without her.

The only conversation that we witness in the film between Carlitos and his mother takes place on his birthday shortly after the opening credits. This conversation contains several hints that imply that it is representative of many conversations that they have had in the past. Dialogue cues demonstrate this throughout the phone call. For example, Carlitos says "eso siempre me dices" implying that this is not the first time they are having a conversation on this

particular topic which happens to be Carlitos' preparations for a potential trip to California. Furthermore, Carlitos is only shortly entertained by the idea of a gift and quickly focuses instead on the reunion with his mother. Whereas *Under the Same Moon* painstakingly emphasizes the time Carlitos and Rosario have spent apart, *Instructions Not Included* emphasizes the amount of time that Valentín and Maggie spend together. Both films use the representation of the relationship between parent and child to arrive at symbolic conclusions about cultural identity. The representation of closeness in *Instructions Not Included* is used to explain the cultural transference from father to daughter; ultimately concluding that genetics does not define cultural identity as shown in the previous chapter. In contrast, *Under the Same Moon* represents the transference of cultural identity through cultural values and physical objects over a long distance. The effective acquisition of these by Carlitos effectively demonstrates the inability of political boundaries to restrain or control the flow of cultural influence in a globalized society – just as postulated by Appadurai (252).

For example, while speaking on the phone with his mother, Carlitos wears the American-style shoes that she has sent him as a birthday gift, symbolically appropriating a new cultural norm that has literally been sent to him by his mother from the United States. Carlitos' acceptance of the shoes and their onscreen presence represents the flow of cultural capital and ideas that Appadurai describes as “ethno and ideoscapes” (297-302). Carlitos abandons the shoes when he makes the decision to cross the border. He never explicitly explains his motivations for leaving them, but one possible interpretation is that because he soon will incorporate himself into American culture and be reunited with his mother; he no longer needs the shoes to symbolically represent his cultural hybridization. The abandoned shoes which Carlitos gives to the boy, who did not have any, remain as an iconic part of his past. They are

how his absence is noticed by a family friend who discovers that another child is wearing them. The shoes become an embodiment of the flow within ethnoscapas because their physical movement and influence mirrors the flow of culture and individuals across borders at a pace that has not existed previously in history.

Ethnoscapas are omnipresent in *Under the Same Moon*. Appadurai refers to ethnoscapas as the landscapes of “persons who constitute the shifting world (297)” so this tale of immigrants, directed toward an audience of immigrants, exemplifies it. Beyond the obvious representations of ethnoscapas in the film of Carlitos, Rosario, and the secondary characters that associate with them are the people who indirectly or directly influence the movement of people from city to city and across the border in both directions. *Under the Same Moon* extends its representations of these ethnoscapas through the use of language, clothing, food, and sports. These emblems of “foreign” lands point to individuals as outsiders, travelers, or transnationals. The diverse range of individuality present in these landscapes paints a picture that Carlitos’ experiences enlarge as he connects the dots between smaller communities.

Before Rosario hangs up the phone, Carlitos asks her to describe her location, something he has asked on many previous occasions. Through her description, the film shows Carlitos mentally transporting himself to the location, placing himself in a distant place. Carlitos’ hybridity in the film is developed through his ability to literally exist in two places at once vicariously through his mother and her influence via phone calls. The enhanced communication ability of technology is one of the aspects of globalization that has enabled transnational cultural identities to rapidly develop in the last century. This aspect of globalization is labeled “technoscapas” by Appadurai and he calls it the “global configuration

of technology” and also the high speeds with which it moves across various boundaries (Appadurai 298).

The rapid flow and growth of technology is evidenced in the film both in the use of technology, and the lack of modern technologies that render many of those technologies used in the film obsolete. Thus both the presence and absence of certain technologies now commonly associated with transnational identities represents this landscape.

As previously observed, the primary technology that plays a crucial role in the film is the pay phone. The phone where Rosario makes her weekly calls to Carlitos becomes a character of its own by the end of the film. As the clock ticks down to the final moments before their chance of coinciding disappears, the phone serves as both a reminder to Rosario, and a beacon of hope to Carlitos, that their union is possible. As a technology, it connects a mother to her son despite the nearly 1,000 miles between them. The advent of the telephone and phone cards also, created a direct connection possibility that was both achievable – prior long distance costs made weekly calls difficult or even impossible – and practical. The ease of communication between Rosario and Carlitos despite the physical and temporal logistics involved represents the connections made possible by both the flow and rapid development of technology.

Though the film was released in 2007, just ten years prior to this thesis, technology has already rapidly changed. The payphone borders on extinction in the form it is found in the film. The idea of returning to a specific location each week to be able to talk to someone on the phone seems archaic. Calling cards like those used by Rosario have also been almost entirely replaced by cell phones that use prepaid minutes and have no international charges to connect with Mexico. Currently, nearly 95% of all residents in the United States own a cell phone, and

those that do not are generally over 65 years old with nearly 100% of residents under the age of 35 reporting owning at least one phone (PewResearch.org). Also, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) in Mexico, nearly 80% of all residents in Mexico have a cell phone with two-thirds having mobile internet access (INEGI.Org.Mx). Similarly, those who do not possess cell phones are from an older cohort with younger generations matching the United States' rate of cell phone ownership. The popularity and accessibility of cell phones has led to the decline of landline phones in general, but especially public ones. The complete absence of pay phones and phone cards in popular culture just a decade after the production of the film shows the speed of flow and growth that Appadurai cited.

Of course, technological change would have defeated the dramatics of much of the film. Rosario would have the ability to be practically technologically omnipresent in the life of her son through voice-over-IP calls, video-calls, and web messaging services. These technological advancements also add to the complexity of defining maternal identity because of the added dimensions that they give to mothering from a distance. Their existence magnifies the film's argument in favor of transnational influence however, because as contact and connection between cultures increases in scope and speed, their impact on individuals will parallel them. In other words, if Carlitos' cultural identity was able to be influenced by weekly phone calls with his mother lasting only a few minutes, it would have been even more influenced by daily video calls from her which potentially could last hours.

The difference in distance between parent and child in the two films fulfills two distinct purposes. It shows that cultural identity is developed within the context of the family regardless of the means of contact in the family. The necessary element for cultural identity development to occur is contact and emotional investment. Both Maggie and Carlitos have contact with their

estranged parents, yet their identities remain unchanged due to the relatively small amount of connection to them. The two films primarily act as differing representations of this concept. Whereas *Instructions Not Included* uses the physical closeness of Valentín and Maggie to demonstrate that nurture is more important than genetics in the acquisition of cultural identity, *Under the Same Moon* shows that through means of communication and technology, non-native identity traits can also be passed from a great distance to one's children. Additionally, it identifies the parent as a key component and contributor in the exchange between cultural narratives. The contrast between these two representations serves as a reminder of the powerful forces at play in a globalized and multinational world. Political boundaries may form barriers that prevent the physical movement of individuals, but the forces of globalization found within the technoscapes provide a plethora of alternative means of contact that still allow influence and contact. Each film contains a representation of the extremes of physical contact between parent and child yet both parents achieve similar results in their influence and connection with their child.

Stuart Hall notes that “cultural identity ... is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 223). He further explains that the relationship between identity in the present and in the past is similar to the relationship between a mother and a child (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 226). Hall postulates that cultural identity is not a stagnant attribute, but rather something that is constantly evolving, incorporating both past tradition and concurrent trends. His connection of cultural identity's relationship with the past to a child's relationship to their parent is important because in both films the children clearly inherit significant aspects of their “self” from their parents. Yet, just as individuals are not exact copies of their parents, cultural identity never exactly duplicates itself across time. Therefore it is

necessary to represent it within a context of evolving ideals and contexts. *Under the Same Moon*'s unwavering connection between mother and son is an allegorical reference to the unyielding connection of the homeland to diasporic communities. The parent-child paradigm also presents an open canvas for depicting any other fulfillment or negation of traditional roles due to the traditional nature of the family; for example, Rosario's representation of traditional motherhood in a nontraditional context.

The age difference between Carlitos and his mother is necessary for this purpose as well. Had Carlitos been a bit older, the message of the film, and likewise its representation of cultural identity would have been altered. Age plays a large role in the perception of adaptability and identity development in individuals. While adults are viewed generally as static in terms of their identities, children are viewed as more malleable. In this respect, the relationship between age and malleability is inversed, with one becoming more "set in one's ways" as they grow older. For this reason, Carlitos serves as an example of an adaptable individual whose identity is capable of balancing new experiences, priorities, and norms.

Rosario on the other hand displays the effects of a static identity. Referring again to side-by-side frames where we are introduced to Carlitos, Rosario appears to be incorporating her Mexican identity and tradition *into* her life in America rather than adapting to it. Whereas Carlitos would be much more likely to assimilate as he demonstrates by flexibly adapting to a number of situations, Rosario maintains her Mexican cultural identity despite the cultural influence around her. She appropriates American customs and elements, but remains distinct from them. Bhabha refers to this strategy as hybridization and calls it a defense against hegemonic forces within society that reject non-dominant identities ("Culture's In-Between" 55).

This is true of the other adult immigrants in the film as well who each maintain to varying degrees aspects of their “Mexicanness.” Through these representations, the film is able to portray transnational cultural identities at varying and distinct degrees, aligning with the individualization of cultural identity that Hall insists is a more accurate concept than “one people, one identity” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 225-227).

Due to Rosario and Carlitos’ separation, they depend on technology to connect with one another and their native cultures. The telephone is one example of a technoscape, but the film includes other representations of the technoscape and its ability to transmit culture at near light speed. Technology enables the flow of information and images in various forms across borders and Appadurai identifies these particular flows as “ideoscapes” and “mediascapes” respectively. The film represents the interconnectivity of these flows through the use of music, sports, and their transmission methods, namely the radio and television. The film repeats representations of globalization forces and movement through the relationships of secondary characters that parallel Carlitos and Rosario in order to connect their experience with a greater movement.

Appadurai’s frameworks of mediascapes and ideoscapes are closely related and deal with the distribution and availability of images as well as the ability to create and disseminate information (298). *Under the Same Moon* represents these two elements of the modern condition through a series of examples of media that flows across the border to and from Mexico. These images and ideas that rapidly, or even simultaneously, exist on either or both sides of the border attest to the irrationality and paradoxical nature of attempting to define national identity strictly by political lines.

Carlitos and the other immigrant workers watch a Mexican soccer game, which is an example of media flow. The fact that the game shown in the film happens to be one of the annual renditions of Mexico's "El Clásico Nacional" further identifies this moment as culturally significant. "El Clásico" bears specific importance to Mexico because of the fierce rivalry of the two teams involved. The game always has viewers from all across the country and is considered one of the most important games of the year. Most Mexicans align themselves with either Club Chivas or Club América, even if it is just for this game because of its long tradition. The two teams also represent an important aspect of cultural identity within Mexico due to the roster makeup of the clubs. Club Chivas is openly proud of their policy to only sign Mexican citizens to play for their club, while Club América is notorious for recruiting and buying the best talent they can regardless of their country of origin. The soccer game, an example from the mediascape, between two opposing business models and philosophies, examples of the ideoscape, competing on a television, part of the technoscape, in the United States in front of a Mexican audience, an example of the ethnoscape, is a significant example of the various flows that Appadurai describes as defining in the context of globalization. The iflm shows the significance of the game by the matriarch of the group's decision to allow the men to have a beer, something that she typically will not allow in her home.

The literal and audible presence of Los Tigres Del Norte in the film also exemplifies the flow of images and media within the film. Los Tigres are one of the most famous examples of a media source that fluidly crosses the border and has achieved success on both sides of it. Truly, Los Tigres prominence ignores the border entirely and their circulation is neither limited nor confronted by it. Their musical style known as "norteño" is prominent on either side of the border as well and is culturally representative of both the Chicano and Mexican culture. Thus,

the Tigres presence directly represents the free flow of media, thought, and image in the modern era.

Aside from the representation of media and the interaction of characters with images and ideas through the flows of the ideoscapes and mediascapes, the film's representation of interpersonal relationships contributes significantly as an expression of cultural identity. Within these interpersonal relationships, gender roles play an imperative part in developing and representing cultural identity within parent-child relationships. As was alluded to in the introduction, there is a pattern in these representations which present parents and children at polarized ends of a temporal and gender spectrum within immigrant cinema. Coincidentally, the pattern of alternating genders repeats itself throughout these films since the 1980s which adds to the motivation for its inclusion in the present analysis. The gender paradigm creates a platform for cultural representation due to varying norms, traditions, and roles within communities. The following analysis of gender roles and identity in *Under the Same Moon* includes secondary critical writing involving the repetition of cultural themes, specifically the representations of Rosario and Oscar, Carlitos' father. It also utilizes the final element of Appadurai's scapes, the "finanscape", to explain the motivations behind Oscar and Rosario's movement within the film, and discusses the effects of the flow of money within the finanscape on the other flows within the film and society.

Finanscapes are perhaps the most disjointed, yet dependent of all of the landscapes that Appadurai references (301). The rapid exchange and transfer of financial assets borders on light speed in the modern information age. World markets connect themselves forming both dependency and powerful connections. The flow of funds from one country to another takes place both on a macro and micro scale however.

Under the Same Moon shows how this flow of finances can affect individuals and nations simultaneously. Apparadurai notes that this flow is largely dependent on the other landscapes and that the independent motivations and variables that affect them also affect the finanscape. This is embodied in the character of Oscar who is motivated beyond a traditional financial goal, but also by the news that he will become a father to leave to the United States. Oscar was Rosario's boyfriend prior to his departure. His family challenged Rosario's assertions that he was Carlitos' father in order to justify his abandoning them. While in the United States, Oscar has begun attending an adult education high school program and appears to be working for a big-box chain store. His efforts in Tucson to get an education and to work show an individual representation of the impact of ethnoscares on the finanscape.

In the film, Oscar represents an opposing parental model from that of Rosario. At nine years old, Carlitos had yet to find out who his father was. The absence of his father seems to be irrelevant to Carlitos; he tells his neighbor who wants to claim guardianship of Carlitos in order to receive the weekly stipend from Rosario that he has no father. The neighbor insists that he does and tells him it is his brother who lives in Tucson. The fact that Carlitos just learns that he does in fact have a father shows in his facial expression of surprise. The idea of a father that he has never met sets in on Carlitos and his attitude toward his missing father changes. Eventually, he decides that it will be worth meeting him.

When meeting Oscar for the first time, Carlitos and his father discuss their lives, what their goals are, and Carlitos invites his father to accompany him to Los Angeles. Throughout this conversation, Oscar's comments reveal his perspective on gender roles in three individual areas of his life, namely parental responsibilities, priority setting, and individuality. The

following analysis of each quote from Oscar demonstrates his role in representing traditional masculine gender roles.

Oscar and Carlitos begin their conversation by talking about their lives. Carlitos explains how he did in school and then asks about his father's life. When Carlitos comments that Oscar is a bit old to be finishing high school, he gets defensive, changes the subject, and asks Carlitos where his mother is. Carlitos response that she is in Los Angeles sparks anger in his father. Oscar demands to know how long she has been there and why she left Carlitos alone. Carlitos calmly diverts his outburst momentarily by remarking that she has not been gone as long as Oscar, which clearly touches his father and instills some guilt within him.

Oscar's anger and inquiry about Rosario's whereabouts and guilt at Carlitos' response shows that he is aware of the clear double standard in his tone and action. This exchange represents a reality that is omnipresent in the immigrant community and society in general. This situation, the double standard of social expectations and biases, places a greater responsibility on women to raise and tend children and enables or justifies men to pursue individual gains and personal recognition, even at the cost of their familial responsibilities. Art Herbig emphasized this in his essay "Masculinity and the American Dream in *American Dreams*" when he said, "Stories of the American Dream perpetuate masculine ideas of public aspiration and individuality across genre and medium, influencing public conceptions of what it means for anyone – male or female – to succeed..." (65). This quote helps explain why Oscar angrily demands to know how long Rosario has left Carlitos' alone while ignoring his own absence. It identifies stories of the American Dream as problematic because they emphasize *masculine* ideas of success as being present within the American Dream rather than feminine

characteristics. It justifies masculine motives for pursuing it, while ignoring the consequences that are embodied in Carlitos' lack of a father.

Part of the conversation between father and son includes Carlitos criticizing Oscar's alleged success in America at the cost of his personal relationship with him. Oscar addresses this criticism by redirecting it toward Rosario. According to Herbig, Bordieu's concept of Masculine Domination offers insight. Herbig's understanding of Masculine Domination claims that "parts of life, such as familial responsibilities and labor practices, are subsumed into a sexually defined reality that equates being masculine with positions of social and economic power (Herbig 65)." This means that to fulfill a masculine identity, attaining social or economic power is the most important factor. Oscar's masculinity is challenged by Carlitos when he criticizes the economic power he has obtained, literally in their conversation, and symbolically when he pays for the lunch that he and his father share. Elizabeth Fish Hatfield concludes her article on balancing work and family in men and women: "In today's world, a man's identity is largely locked up in what he does and what he produces—not who he is as a husband and father" (33). Oscar does not need Carlitos to be happy or even provided for in order to feel accomplished or fulfilled in his personality according to this perspective. All that is necessary for Oscar to find fulfillment within his gender identity relative to the American Dream is to have a good job, and a good income.

As a portrayal of masculinity, Oscar's motives align directly with those criticized by both Hatfield and Herbig. He has placed his responsibilities as a father to the side to live as an undocumented worker in the United States. The representation of masculinity ultimately reinforces the final decision of Oscar to abandon Carlitos once more, leaving him stranded in

Tucson and without a father once again. This decision follows shortly after his conversation with Carlitos.

After Oscar finishes accusing Rosario of negligence, Carlitos offers Oscar an escape from his current path seeking personal gain by commenting that he believes his mom will forgive him if he accompanies Carlitos to Los Angeles. This is a decisive moment in the representation of Oscar as a masculine figure in the film. Oscar, as a representation of traditional masculine values which are associated directly through the immigrant narrative with nationalist rhetoric such as the American Dream, is given the opportunity to join Carlitos and the narrative of globalization, modernity, and progress. He instead decides to stay, abandoning Carlitos in a scene that portrays Oscar as guilty of the harm done to his son.

Carlitos' character defeats Oscar's representation of masculinity during their meeting. Carlitos addresses Oscar's failures in his traditional responsibilities in three specific ways in the film. First, Carlitos indirectly calls attention to the lack of education that Oscar has. Oscar's defensive reaction to his son's comments regarding his education shows that he recognizes it emasculates him. Next, Carlitos' decision to pay for the meal further emasculates his father. This act, considering the perspective of Herbig and Hatfield, symbolizes a complete failure of Oscar with regard to his masculine role inside of a family unit and his inability to achieve the "American Dream". Oscar is a failure as a provider, one of the masculine traits necessary to establish his status in society as a man. Oscar's tears represent the final step in his emasculation when confronted by Carlitos. Acknowledging his failures as a father and as a man, Oscar cries.

The act of crying has a direct connection to masculinity. "When it comes to masculinity, the dominant message is that felt emotion must be controlled and that open expression of emotion is a sign of femininity, and thus inferiority and weakened masculinity..." (MacArthur

and Shield). His tears represent an underlying shift from the hyper-masculinity of individual struggle and success which is promoted by the American Dream, specifically Oscar's American Dream, to an acknowledgement that he has not fulfilled the minimum requirements of manhood as a father which results in him crying.

The scenes following Oscar's meeting with Carlitos depict a weary Carlitos waiting for his father who promised to take him to Los Angeles. As it becomes apparent that Oscar is not showing up, Carlitos releases a fit of emotion. Oscar's decision to continue on the path of traditional masculinity and social norms is contrasted by Enrique, a man who Carlitos met who is pursuing his own version of the American Dream, but abandons it to accompany Carlitos to California. Enrique does not escape traditional gender norms however, as he markedly refrains from expressing any emotion and even reminds Carlitos of masculine norms when Carlitos expresses anger and sadness at the absence of his father. The varying degrees of masculinity shown through these three male characters permit the film to openly criticize traditional gender roles. In the context of the film, Carlitos is undoubtedly the hero, whereas Oscar is intentionally portrayed as a failure. Enrique plays the boundary and his evolution as a character, originally repulsive to lovingly accepted, parallels his abandonment of traditional gender norms.

Rosario's move to California to provide for Carlitos differs from Oscar's immigration. Her child and family situation more than any desire for personal gain leads to her decision to immigrate. The finanscape has an effect on her though. If Rosario had a job opportunity in Mexico that could provide the same life for Carlitos that her job in California does, then surely she would never have made the decision to leave. Her example represents and shows how the flow of finances affect both the movement of humans, supply and demand of labor, use and need of technology, and the spread of images and media. In short, the example of Rosario

reflects the interconnectedness and complexity of the landscape of a globalized society that Appadurai theorizes.

Rosario's role as a mother is the strongest representation of feminine gender roles and identity in *Under the Same Moon*. Just as Oscar, Enrique, and Carlitos represent varying degrees of masculinity and personify challenges to social norms, Rosario personifies the ideals of feminine social expectations while also criticizing the forces that restrict and limit her by contrasting her lifestyle with that of her close friend and roommate Alicia.

In one of the first critical articles written on *Under the Same Moon*, Heather Hewett analyses the importance of motherhood in the film and its representation of gender roles across borders. Hewett concludes that "In *La Misma Luna*, Rosario fits into the category of saintly mother; the contrast provided by her foil, Alicia (the "party girl"), emphasizes Rosario's saintliness and works to ensure that audiences will view Rosario as a good mother. After all, the film's success depends upon the audience's sympathetic identification with Rosario's struggle, and several potential pitfalls might ruin this affectual response (Hewett 121)." To illustrate this point, the film repeatedly presents Rosario in scenarios where she questions her decision to leave Carlitos with her mother, and go to the United States to work. Her cultural identity as a mother is clearly significant as she is never found questioning her leaving her mother, but uniquely that of leaving her son. She exhibits emotional dissidence because of the internal conflict she faces due to her desire to be a fulfilling and present figure in the life of her child, which is superseded by her desire to provide for him. In order to assure that the audience comprehends the necessity of her absence and the potential consequences of her abandoning her work in Los Angeles, early in the film as Carlitos wears his new shoes to school, a classmate in tattered clothes and worn shoes comments on how lucky Carlitos is to have a mom

that is able to buy him such nice things. The contrast between the two and the emphasis on how nice it is to have a mom who is able to support him financially justifies in part to the audience Rosario's decision to leave early on in the film.

Hewett furthers the discussion on gender roles by commenting on the sexual lives of Alicia and Rosario noting that "Rosario's denial of her own sexuality reinforces powerful scripts about what it means to be a "good" mother in both Euro-American and Latino cultures - (Hewett 127-8)." No discussion on gender roles and cultural identity would be complete without including the role of the Virgin Mary and the latino/chicano tradition of marianismo. This concept divides the cultural identity of women into one of two roles. The first is that of the Virgin Mary, a maternal, devout, patient individual, willing to sacrifice all for her family. The other is that of La Llorona or Malinche, a carnal, self-serving woman who will only take care of herself. Gloria Anzaldúa argues that the existence of this cultural norm and the traditions marianismo "encouraged the virgen/puta (whore) dichotomy (31)." *Under the Same Moon* clearly appropriates this issue of identity by exemplifying the Virgin tradition, while Alicia contrasts it with her less devout lifestyle. The contrast between the two corresponds with the counter-hegemonic message of the film. Alicia has incorporated herself into American society to a greater degree than Rosario who maintains her roots in Mexico because of her son. Rosario's appropriation of American culture comes out of self-defense and survival as Bhabha stated, not out of any intention for assimilation (55). Considering the target audience of the film, this relationship and dichotomy creates an equivocation by association; Rosario connects with the positive "virgen" image and an independent hybrid identity while Alicia relates to the "Malinche", betrayer, negative image and loss of her "self".

One final note concerning the role of feminine identity within *Under the Same Moon* concerns the issue of documented immigration to the United States. Undocumented residency and immigration present situations where immigrants are forced to take submissive roles. These acts of submission cumulatively form a narrative that is not necessarily feminine in nature, but is certainly emasculating to men who traditionally act in dominant roles in society. *Under the Same Moon* is able to present this correlation through several situations in the film where legal residency is brought to the forefront.

One occasion in the film where immigration status is brought to the forefront is a “migra” raid where immigrant workers who accepted Carlitos into their group are arrested and detained. The men who previously portray traditional masculine roles – cutting plants, drinking beer, watching sports – relegate themselves to hiding, being tackled and restrained, and running away. This change comes suddenly and is a violent reminder of the reality that comes with living without documents. Individuals are in a constant state of submission and cannot do anything independently to change it.

Rosario’s efforts to obtain legal status are another example in the film where gender and immigration cross paths. Rosario, wholly dedicated to the life of her son despite the distance between them, consigns herself to marriage for the purpose of becoming a documented resident. This decision is made for the sole purpose of obtaining papers and in no way reflects any kind of emotional connection with Paco, though, as Hewett notes, the film goes out of its way to imply there could be if she were interested. Ultimately however, Rosario decides that she cannot marry Paco just to bring Carlitos to the United States and decides instead to return to Mexico. The limited number of options she presents herself with reflects the weight of her time spent away from her son and of the social expectations placed upon her as a mother. She

feels that she needs to make a decision *now* and the only options that meet that time requirement both imply her fulfilling a traditional role, returning to either passive motherhood or becoming a bride.

Hewett criticizes this representation of Rosario as submitting to cultural norms and reinscribing them (125). Alternatively to this conclusion, this representation may be viewed as emblematic of a struggle between the past, present, and the idealized future within her character. She seeks to return to the traditional roles she experienced in her mother's home, which we see firsthand with Carlitos to begin the film, but she also desires to advance herself as a provider. She mentions to Carlitos that her plan to bring him to the United States failed before because of an attorney that robbed them. This desire to bring him north proves her desire to continue seeking after the American Dream and her adoption of a masculine role which women began adopting on a mainstream basis since the 1990s (Martin and McGuire 179; Zavella 55)

Hewett also criticizes the "happy ending" of the film by dismissing its ability to relate the realities and difficulties present within the immigrant community due to the fairytale ending. However, a closer review of the ending tells a different story; Rosario and Carlitos never actually have their faces appear within the same frame in the film outside of a dream sequence where Carlitos fantasizes of being reunited with his mother. The closest they ever get to appearing within the same frame is the split frame at the beginning of the film which in fact highlights their distance. The final scene is their closest physical proximity to one another. They are shown on opposite sides of the street, but always in separate frames, never from a singular view. They certainly see each other. The crosswalk sign changes allowing them to finally embrace for the first time in four years, but there is a conscious decision to deprive the audience of their meeting which provides exactly what Hewett seeks. The doubt that can be

drawn from those who know the future in store for the undocumented family will be seen by them, but hope can also be found by those seeking it. Ultimately, what the final scene provides is an open ending for the audience to apply using the narrative of the film to inform them, and that narrative, though technically positive for Carlitos, contains a web of difficult and dangerous circumstances.

As shown earlier in this chapter, the parent-child relationship in *Under the Same Moon* is a powerful representation of many aspects that comprise cultural identity. Comparing and contrasting the representations in this film with those of *Instructions Not Included*, emphasizing these differences and similarities, shows why they are effective for the goals and message of each respective film and for criticizing the forces that attempt to restrain or manipulate the flows of globalization. *Under the Same Moon* in particular is able to represent cultural identity in the diaspora with a more faithful tone due to the dramatic nature of the film, while also employing traditional narrative of mothers. This narrative of maternal roles permits discussion on gender, both among and exclusive of immigrants, and the dichotomy of Rosario and Alicia shows that the film intentionally represents the Mexican/Chicano female-cultural identity within the context of marianismo (Hewett 127). Rosario's maternal role represents gender, cultural, and social norms in such a way that her separation from Carlitos is foundational in the discreet criticism of nationalism present in the film. Furthermore, the parent-child relationship effectively represents the diverse nature of cultural identity and permits representations of an otherwise paradoxical condition through polarized attributes of the pair. These diametrical opposites of young-old, male-female, present-absent, and static-fluid represent the cultural identity which Stuart Hall described, "It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But,

like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 226).

Finally, by connecting the globalization theory of “scapes” from Arjun Appadurai to the film, it is easy to identify the forces that the film seeks to draw attention to as problematic. These forces include the social traditions that lead to separation of families for personal gain, the political forces that prevent the free flow of families across borders, and the institutional forces that create imbalanced financial opportunities. These representations of the various “scapes” relate to cultural identity and contemporary society and attest to the essential nature of them as “perspectival constructs” of “global cultural flow” (Appadurai 296). These flows are individually represented and together form a symphonic voice of cultural influence which represents the complex reality of a globalized world, serving as the background of and a facilitating tool in the film. They unite to attest to the legitimacy of transnational identities by forming a foundation where these cultural identities can thrive.

Conclusion

The parent-child relationships in *Instructions Not Included* and *Under the Same Moon* play important roles in representing cultural identity among transnational communities and in positioning the films in the debate between globalization and nationalism. The relationship between parents and children become a symbol of families in general and in turn, criticizes everything that becomes an obstacle to the family's unity.

The family as a symbol represents the most basic unit of society and the most fundamentally protected entity politically in the United States. However, currently, globalization has enabled for the rapid movement of people causing transnational and multinational families to exist at a rate never before seen. Technology further complicates this issue by connecting those living apart with one another, granting continuous access to cultural reminders of their past and genealogical traditions. Edward Said concluded, "No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about" (336-337). In this quote Said notes the irrational nature of nationalism and instead supports the exchange and free movement of cultures and identities allowing for multifaceted identities to emerge and exist. He recognizes the past history of separation and the value in tradition, but clearly believes the time for homogeneous societies is over. *Instructions Not Included* and *Under the Same Moon* present hybrid and transnational identities that are embraced by audiences and critics alike. The legitimization of these transnational cultures in the films strongly supports globalization and the validity of movement and interconnection in the modern world. Simultaneously, the films

criticize institutions and policies that attempt to maintain the status quo and further hegemonic ideals that Said calls problematic.

The analysis of *Instructions Not Included* shows how storytelling is used by Valentín to transfer elements of his cultural identity to Maggie. It shows how the film's nature as a comedy allows it to avoid traditional tropes in immigrant film by parodying some of these common themes. This chapter also considers the role of language in the film and how the film uses language as a way of identifying hybridity in Maggie. Furthermore, the nature of Maggie as a non-biological daughter of Valentín is analyzed in order to show how her acquisition of his cultural identity takes place despite their lack of a genetic relationship. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Maggie's death, determining that her death symbolizes her lost identity as a result of a court order that would permanently separate her from her father.

The analysis of *Under the Same Moon* considers the film from a more realistic perspective than *Instructions Not Included* due to its nature as a drama. The chapter includes analysis of culturally iconic references in the film as well as using the framework of scapes by Arjun Appadurai to explain the interconnected web of characters and the rapid exchange of ideas, media, and people across the border. The chapter discusses motherhood and traditional masculine and feminine roles in parenting relating these roles to the representation of Carlitos' absent father, Oscar. As part of this analysis, the chapter includes a reference to the Mexican and Chicano tradition of Marianismo and observes that Rosario fits within the traditional narrative of the Holy Mother while other women represent the opposite end of the spectrum, or the Malinche. The chapter concludes that *Under the Same Moon* directly criticizes nationalist ideologies by presenting representations of them as opposing forces to the union of Carlitos and Rosario. By presenting symbols of nationalism, such as border patrol agents, as dangerous or

incompetent, the film succeeds in portraying globalization as a legitimate alternative to traditional nationalism.

The contrast in genres of the two films makes their side by side analysis informative because their similarities and differences become more striking. Though the two representations of parents vary greatly in detail, they share similar characteristics such as self-sacrifice for their children, and a desire to return to Mexico. The children also share similarities in spite of their differences. Both children clearly adopt elements of their cultural identity from their parent. For Maggie this means she develops an interest in death defying stunts, and for Carlitos this means he incorporates elements of American culture into his life despite never visiting personally. The children represent a modern transnational identity devoid of historical prejudice and stereotype and their endearment to audiences attests to their potential as symbols for a future less dependent on borders to define identity.

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