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A Content Analysis on Two Different Immigrants' Stories in California from Two Novels: A Step from Heaven: a Korean Girl and Esperanza Rising: a Mexican Farm Worker

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A Content Analysis on Two Different Immigrants' Stories in California from Two
Novels: A Step from Heaven: a Korean Girl and Esperanza Rising: a Mexican Farm

Worker

By

Claudia Guerrero Barrera

An Alternate Plan Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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In

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A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON TWO DIFFERENT IMMIGRANT STORIES

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This report is submitted as part of the required work in the course Alternate Plan Ethnic Studies 698 (2), and has been supervised, examined and accepted by the professor.

Under the Alternate Plan for the Master of Science degree, this report is offered in lieu of a thesis.

Dr. Kebba Darboe

Professor Hanh-Huy Phan

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The stories of immigrants are filled with challenges and opportunities. Therefore, through content and thematic analyses on two novels, the stories of two different immigrants provide us their lived experiences. Content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text (Berg & Lune, 2012). Thematic analysis is a qualitative descriptive method of examining patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The content and themes can be words, phrases or ideas. For example novel one, A Step from Heaven, a Korean girl describes her challenges in the United States. In novel two, Esperanza Rising tells the story of Mexican farm workers in Los Angeles.

From time immemorial, people who lived in towns, cities and empires share their institutional memories through stories. In this context, the first school of a child is the home and our ancestors share their knowledge through oral history, lived experiences or stories. By sharing their stories, they invite us to see ourselves in a different mirror. Further, we learn about our family's past through the stories that our parents or grandparents tell us. Humans seek to satisfy their curiosity about their environment through questioning. Children go through the stage where they question the origin and the use of everything. They want to make sense of their environment and the real life situations. Children look up to the heroes, or main characters they read or they were told about. Therefore, children often look up to the main characters of fairy tales, fiction or other genres that facilitated their stories.

Mrs. An Na in *A Step from Heaven* and Mrs. Pam Munoz Ryan did just that in their novels *A Step from Heaven* and *Esperanza Rising*. These two novels are the result of their grand- mothers' lives as immigrants in the United States. These two novels narrate the challenges that young immigrants face in the United States, regardless of their social class.

In novel one: "*A Step from Heaven*, a Korean girl describes her experiences and her struggles to adjust to a life in a strange land" (Skipping Stones, 2001). For many young immigrants, coming to the United States represents leaving the land where they grew up, and their family and friends. There are many challenges, for example, English Language, culture, and social interaction that they have to overcome.

In novel two: *Esperanza Rising* tells the story of Mexican farm workers in Los Angeles. Also, it shows the discrimination against Mexican workers and the deportation practices. Esperanza is one of the young adults who come from wealthy families to work on the farms. The novel shows the struggles faced by this young girl.

In both novels, the immigration proceedings are a fundamental part of the stories, making them an important source of understanding for young adults who are in the United States trying to make sense of the system. Novels like these ones provide another perspective in these times of fear towards immigration proceedings. More young adults are interested in reading books or novels that they can relate to. Since teenagers leaving in diverse homes feel like their families are different, they often find identifies with stories about immigrant families (Donelson & Pace Nilsen, 2005).

Significance of the Study

In a diverse country such as the United States, that welcomes immigrants from different parts of the world, this is indeed a nation of immigrants (Moon, Kang, & An). It is essential to understand the cultural differences that every foreigner carries with them. It is even more important for young adults to see their life stories reflected in the literature they read. Some of those young adults came with their parents when they were young. As they grew up, they noticed the different dynamics in their families and in their new adopted culture. They are searching for ways to understand what they share and how they differ from those around them. It is crucial to hear the different stories of people coming to the United States as it impacts their assimilation (Yu & Myers, 2006). In general, Children, young adults, and the community should know that every immigrant story is different. It is important to understand that the motives to come to the United States and to stay are not the same among individuals, even if they are from the same ethnic group and country. There will be some common struggles and successes and some individual ones, depending on many, many factors, including class, race, religion, sexual orientation, differing abilities, family dynamics, etc.

It is also important to compare and contrast these stories in order to enrich and enhance our knowledge about immigrant stories. For example, the stories narrated in *A Step from Heaven* and *Esperanza Rising* novels. “When people read stories they can take comfort from knowing that others, too, have struggled, but succeeded. These stories help young adults to conceptualize their transitions to new roles in a foreign country understanding that they will change over time” (Todorova, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2008, p. 346).

There is no doubt that every immigrant in the United States faces challenges. For instance, assimilation is a contested concept, and newcomers must “fit” in well enough to feel comfortable but hold on to enough of their own culture to feel grounded. Every story is unique, for instance, the push-pull factors of migration may be different for every individual and family. Push—pull factors--However, the cultural values, family dynamics, and social interactions are similar among immigrant groups. This study intends to compare and analyze two stories of young immigrants coming to California from Korea and Mexico. The themes through thematic analysis on migration motives, ethnic customs, family interactions, and assimilation process are identified and analyzed. The two novels also pointed out the importance of using young adult narratives as a means that libraries, schools, and cultural centers could use to promote cultural understandings.

Context

The context for this story is my own personal narrative. I came to the United States in 2008, when I was 28. I did not come, as these children’s books’ characters did, as a child. Analyzing these stories just helps me understand the analogy “two grains of sand on the beach”, one Hispanic and one Asian. I cannot understand the entirety of the beach but I can look carefully at these grains of sand. Too often readers assume that one person’s ethnic narrative represents the whole, as when teachers inappropriately ask African American students to speak for the whole African nation. Too often people think that immigrant narratives are written in a foreign language and difficult to understand. It is assumed that novels about immigrants are written for the specific ethnic group for example, main characters. There is also the assumption that all immigrants face the same

challenges based on stereotypes. The stories, however, of these two immigrants contradict that assumption. It is worth investigating the circumstances that motivated the main characters of these novels to migrate as well as their unique processes of assimilation as a reflection of a broader understanding of the struggles of integrating or fitting into a new home while holding on to the values of the old one.

Definitions of terms

Immigrant

“Immigration is the experience of leaving one's home country and culture, whether by choice or by force, to move to and permanently settle in another”(Skillman, A. 2011)

Novel

“Novel is an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. The novel is a genre of fiction, and fiction may be defined as the art or craft of contriving, through the written word, representations of human life that instruct or divert or both” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017)

Green Card

“Those with immigrant visas—also informally referred to as or one's papers or green card—are legally known as resident aliens or permanent residents. Immigrants under this status still retain citizenship with their country of origin but are taxed as American residents. They generally receive the same rights and benefits as U.S. citizens with the major exception of not being able to vote”. (Naruse, 2014, p. 939).

Farm Worker

Refers to an immigrant who enters the United States with a seasonal work visa to work on a farm and then return to their home country

Esperanza Rising:

The author, Pam Munoz Ryan talks about how her grandmother Esperanza Ortega inspired her to write this novel. She talks about how her grandmother used to tell her stories of when she came to the United States from Mexico. She talks about how brave she was and she says at the end “It is no wonder that in Spanish, *Esperanza* means, “hope” (Ryan, P. M., 2001).

A Step from Heaven: Young Ju, the main character expresses how Mi Gook, which means “America”, is not Heaven as she thought it was. She says: “Mi Gook is almost as good as heaven. Let us say it is a set from heaven” (Na, An, 2001, p. 26).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Young Adult literature, is reading materials for young people from 12 to 18 years old approximately at this age, they are too old to refer to them as children and too young to be consider as adults (Donelson & Pace Nilsen, 2005). This age is very important, as they are exploring their identities and their environment; for immigrant young adults they are also exploring their cultures—both remembered and new. They want to feel they fit into this new culture while keeping their traditions that are often kept alive at home by their parents. They want to be considered as individuals who are part of a larger group (Baxley & Boston, 2014). They are easily engaged in reading stories in which they see themselves, being the as characters in a dynamic environment.

The literature read by young adults allows them to look at their psychological needs in relation to society; this makes them feel more comfortable about their own difficulties “as they understand their struggles in other’s stories” (Donelson & Pace Nilsen, 2005, p. 42). They can see how the different dynamics they live at home are revealed in the stories they are reading, giving them tools, and the hope, to overcome their own challenges. These novels of immigrant stories for young adults help people to recognize that everyone comes from an established family (Henderson & May, 2005).

Immigrant Stories

Stories are transferred from generation to generation. There is so much the world has learnt about issues of human rights violations, genocides and other issues that color the quality of life of entire communities. In the words of Kevin Chin and Kristi Rudelius-

Palmer, thanks to the story telling, the voices of past and present accomplishments and the continuation of abuses is being heard successfully (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Immigrant stories are not the exception.

“First and second generation young immigrants experience cultural and in some cases generational tensions” (Baxley & Boston, 2014, p. 86). Such tensions are reflected in their social interactions, as they struggle to fit in a new society. The implications are even more evident when the media exploits stories of immigrants to persuade a public unwilling to recognize the acculturation process. Young adults can see YA fiction and nonfiction narratives as a way of “inner liberation” a term introduced by Anzaldua and explained by Baxley (Baxley & Boston, 2014, p. 87). By introducing this concept as a goal in narrative for young adults, it gives them the opportunity of being aware of options to bring a change from the inside out. It is not possible to bring change and awareness about immigration unless the implicated parties are fully aware of their own journey.

Esperanza Rising

Even though this novel was published in 2007, it is set during the Great Depression. This era represents a time of hostility for the Mexican people (Happemen, 2001). After the revolution of 1910 in Mexico, generations left to come to “El Norte” or United States to better their lives and those of their families, bonding together in cities in California and Texas (Garcia, 2004, p. 42.) Due to the family’s economic situation Ms. Esperanza had to work in a migrant camp. Having to do manual and difficult work is one of biggest challenges that Esperanza faces as she comes from a wealthy family where she always had servants and a life of privilege ("Review of the novel *Esperanza Rising*,"

2002, Para. 2). Ms. Esperanza had to make a transition from being a “princess” to a hard-working young woman (Crew, 2001, p. 105). While her grandmother has tried to prepare her for this difficult move, it is made harder because she had to leave her beloved grandmother behind who did have immigration papers. At the camp, she picks grapes, gets dirty, and lives through strikes that are dramatically violent, where native-born Mexican Americans must be put on trucks and transported for their own safety.

Esperanza Rising breaks a stereotype about Mexican immigrants, in that most people think of “wet backs” that have come illegally over the Rio Grande. In fact, many immigrants come through the proper channels and families are broken up because of that. Also, the popular perception is that Mexicans coming to the United States are poor. Esperanza comes from the Mexico’s wealthy and privileged. (“Review of the novel *Esperanza Rising*,” 2000).

A Step from Heaven

A Step from Heaven is the story about a young Korean girl in the United States (“Review of the novel *A Step from Heaven*,” 2001, p. 33). She struggles to assimilate in her new home. The young girl’s name is Young Ju. Her parents do not want her to become “too American” because she will become ashamed of them. (“Review of the novel *A Step from Heaven*,” 2001, p. 766). This novel represents the reality of some young adults who become ashamed of their parents because of the language or because they feel like their family dynamics are an obstacle to fit in the American society.

This story also touches the theme of immigrant families that become dysfunctional when they arrive to the United States. In this particular story, Young’s father becomes abusive due to the pressure of working in a job below his status in Korea

to provide for his family (Chira, 2001, p. 22). Her father feels humiliated by his employers. He represents the struggles that immigrant families face when they have to take jobs they are overqualified due to American licensing practices.

A Step of Heaven is an example of issues that different family members have, trying to realize the American Dream. Young's family comes to the United States with a series of projects that take time to accomplish. Two worlds: Young is a perfect example of an adult immigrant living in two worlds characterized by Korean and American cultures.

Adaptation and Assimilation of Immigrant Children from Korea and Mexico

Yu and Myers study assimilation as a process or journey as opposed to as an end state achievement meaning that assimilation mitigates the ethnic differences producing a change in the mainstream culture for new immigrants (Yu & Myers, 2006). Another assumption with assimilation is that immigrants either internalize or reject the norms and values of Americans, as perceived as good or bad perhaps this assumption reinforces stereotypes being made about specific ethnic groups, for example, Asians and Mexicans (Kwon, 2015). In the words of Kwon in the same paragraph, Asians are seen as "model minorities" and Mexicans as "underclass". This distinction is of course ignoring social classes in either group, at the same time, as it is a pejorative reference and one that reveals a false dichotomy. Immigrants experience both positive and negative aspects as they live in a new world with different basics such as food and housing and subtler differences, for example, gender and family roles.

Assumptions made about these two ethnic groups can be seen as a paradox between both groups. In the paradox, "Latino's achievement rate is lower than Asian

groups but Latinos see their group more positively than Asians perceive their group” (Oh & Kim, 2016, p. 271). The fact that Asian-origin immigrants have higher education levels means they often see a more rapid economic advancement over Mexican immigrants and this helps explain the disparity (Yu & Myers, 2006). The fact that some Asians cannot work in the fields regardless of their level of education can explain why they do not look at their group as highly as Mexicans do. Another factor is the perception of success between these two groups (Oh & Kim, 2016). For instance, Asians success might be seen as based on GPA and school achievement. While Mexicans success are through familism or being able to maintain multigenerational family ties.

Family dynamics of immigrant children from Asia and Mexico

Some parents are forced to leave their children back at home when they migrate to the United States. “It is inevitable to relate immigration with family separation” (Stodolska, 2008, p. 209). Some parents leave their children with their relatives so they can come to the United States and concentrate on earning money to send back home, to give a better education for their kids. Although they always have hope that they can bring their children to reunite with them, eventually, the sacrifice of separation is seen as worthy of the goal of a better education for their children.

Some immigrant families are not able to bring their children after 10 or 15 years of being here but the time they reunite, their little children are already teenagers (Stodolska, 2008). The fact that these families have been separated for so long affect their family dynamics. Teenagers often question their “new” parent’s authority as they are getting to know them. Despite the fact that their parents frequently communicate with

them, but they do not see them as their primary family. Teenagers learn to negotiate with their parents at the same time they are trying to understand a new culture and a new set of values.

Mexican and Korean families often face family separation as a result of migration. The difference lies in the perception between these two cultures. Usually both parents migrate in Mexican families, as they want to work hard and send money to improve their children and family's quality of life. By contrast, in the Korean family is usually the woman who migrates with her children, as Korean men want to ensure their children have a better education than the one is being offered in Korea (Stodolska, 2008).

The long hours that Mexican families' work is another challenge for enforcing they're parenting authority and supervising their children leading to absenteeism in schools. However, they usually dedicate their free time to their children as much as they can. On the other hand, Korean family's quality of time spend with their children depends on their social status. However, Korean women have more defined mothering roles than the men. Working class Korean families often establish convenience stores that demand a lot of time, which intervenes with the possibility of supervising their kids (Stodolska, 2008). Teenagers in this situation often feel as if they could not connect with their parents, creating loneliness.

In other cases, parents bring their children at a younger age and they grow up trying to fit into their American culture without leaving their own. Teenagers tend to feel embarrassed by their families due to differences in family dynamics and cultural values. American society is seen more "relaxed" in comparison to other societies such as Asian and Latin American. Korean parents are more authoritarian and what they expect their

children to follow the rules established in the home (Lee, Kewon, & Brown, 2016).

Teenagers in these families might feel too much controlled, when they compare themselves to their peers at school, developing disobedience and other behavior problems.

Mexican families are very traditionalist. They are family oriented and expect their children to take care of their siblings while parents are at work. It is easy to see young adults taking responsibilities of adults. This creates a discomfort and lead to behavioral problems as children do not believe is fair for them to take on these roles.

Young Adult Immigrants in School

One of the most difficult challenges that young adults face when migrating to another country is their social integration in schools. They are intimidated by the fact that they do not speak the same language of their peers, which creates anxiety and in some cases even isolation. It is important that schools understand the immigrant children's motivation of achievement as well as their aspirations in order to create a transition plan to ensure their success (Todorova et al., 2008).

It is important to understand the influence that immigrant children have from family, community, and social factors. Another important aspect to take into consideration is the "parents' involvement in school activities" (Moon et al., 2009, p. 279). Schools must understand the factors behind the lack of engagement of parents of immigrant children in school.

Summary: Literature Review

The review of literature on immigrant stories revealed that the young adults struggled to “fit” into a new American culture while keeping their cultural background. Therefore, the pressing challenge is how to live between two worlds. This phenomenon is illustrated in the two novels: *Esperanza Rising* and *A Step from Heaven*. The authors through stories provide valuable information about struggles that immigrants face in the United States. Additionally, the immigrant stories are useful in schools for natives who want to learn about their peers’ ethnicity and culture.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study combined the following qualitative research methods, for example, content and thematic analyses to collect and analyze data. The units of analyses are phrases and themes that have manifest and latent characteristics. The manifest characteristics of messages are the intended meaning of communication content. While latent characteristics are the unintended meaning that requires corroboration. There are two general categories of content analysis: conceptual analysis and relational analysis. Conceptual analysis can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts in a text. Relational analysis builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among concepts in a text. While thematic analysis examines themes or patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question.

Data Reduction

Following a careful review of the two novels, the researcher chose six out of more than 1000 significant words, phrases and themes.

The following phrases or themes are derived from the two novels: *A Step from Heaven* and *Esperanza Rising*:

1. **Everyone Can Make Lots of Money:** In both novels, opportunities to make money and improve the quality of life, as well as for new opportunities, are part of the motivation to migrate to the United States, they are part of the pull factors for migration and the lack of money or resources in their home country becomes the push factors. The character's motivation is related to push and pull factors,

which are considered as a function of the motivations to leave the home country and choosing a new one. Esperanza's mother realizes they are not able to make money in their home country, as her husband's brother is a powerful man who would not allow anybody to help her. Young Ju's father sees the United States as the land of opportunities.

2. **Work, Second Job:** In both novels, the financial situation for the families is difficult forcing them to look for a second job. This is different than their expectations or anticipation of the new life. The novels show how this situation impacts the realities of the new situation and culture shock. Esperanza has to work in order to pay for her mother's medical bills. They realize in order to provide for their families they have to work two jobs, leaving less time to spend with families, different than in their home country.
3. **American Friend:** the author implies the fear the father has that Young is becoming too Americanized; this is the reason her father prohibits her from seeing her American friend. Young Ju sees herself in an Americanization dilemma when she feels shame for her family's behavior. Esperanza, on the other hand, sees America as an opportunity to learn, although she has a conflict with the way workers are treated and the lack of opportunities for educated immigrants and for those who come from Mexican families regardless of their immigration status. She doesn't have an identical struggle as Young Ju, as she is not in a daily environment where white culture and her own Mexican culture, though vastly different from her own privileged understanding of her culture, creates tension for her.

4. **Immigration:** Esperanza and Young Ju have direct experience with the immigration system. Young Ju as someone renewing her green card and Esperanza encounters the legal system as she is crossing the border of Mexico with her mother and when ICE comes to detain workers who were inclined to strike, and the ICE staff were acting to support the farmers' interests and prevent the strike.
5. **Parents, Brother, Grandmothers:** The two novels start with the interaction of the main characters and their fathers. Both stories end with the relation between the main characters and their mothers. Their parents and the dynamics in the family are very important throughout the novels. The girls' relationship with their grandmothers is also one of the most important parts in both novels. In both novels they suffer the absence of their grandmothers, as they cannot take them with them. For Young Ju, her grandmother's death is the event that makes her father depressed and increases his alcohol consumption. For Esperanza, her grandmother's absence is one of the reasons for her mother's depression and at the end the reunification is her joyful moment.
6. **Man and Woman:** In both novels, the man figure seems to overpower women. There is clear an expectation with gender roles, the man is the person who has privilege in the society, a single woman does not have as much agency as they cannot do the same things men do. In both novels, women need men to function in the society, as both Korean and Mexican cultures are more patriarchal than America's culture.

After analyzing the phrases or themes, the researcher will compare and contrast the two different stories of immigrants who came to California. Their life stories reveal that, even though, they are from a different ethnic group, both have the same journey in their acculturation process; they have the same questions in a moment of reconsideration and re-centering about their lives.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

The data analyses are based on the six significant phrases or themes derived from the two novels: *A Step from Heaven* and *Esperanza Rising*. The phrases and themes are: 1) Everyone can make lots of money, 2) Work, second job, 3) American Friend, 4) Immigration, 5) parents, brother, and grandmother, and 6) Man and Woman. After analyzing the phrases or themes, the researcher compared and contrasted the two different stories of immigrants who came to California.

A Step from Heaven written by An Na

Everyone Can Make Lots of Money

The family of the novel is a clear representation of people who migrate to the United States motivated by the American Dream. The pull factors include the amount of wealth that people can accumulate in the United States, the access to a better education, and the guarantee of a quality of life for the entire family. While the push factors are represented by the lack of opportunities in their home country. In the first pages, Young Ju, the main character of the novel, a Korean child who enjoys playing in the sea has been hearing about her parents talking about going to “Mi Gook”, which means America. On page 11, her father Apa and her mother Uhmma pointed out that Mi Gook is a place where everyone can make a lot of money even if they don’t go to the best schools. In general, people have big houses and pretty dolls.

Her mother tells her that in Mi Gook she will be able to live better than a fisherman's wife, implying that as the only option for her if they stay in their home country. Her parents tell Young Ju that she can be anything she wants to be in Mi Gook. Young Ju compares Mi Gook with heaven and really wants to go, although she does not know that she is coming to stay. She starts questioning the real meaning of Mi Gook, as she is not able to bring her grandmother, friends, and pet with her. Once they arrived in the United States (U.S.), as stated on page 27, the family talks about how happy they are in this land of opportunity where they find many jobs, good schools, big houses; where they can make a living.

Work, Second Job

Many families migrate to other countries with hopes and dreams about what the new place might be. Depending on the situation that the immigrant family faces when living, they prepare themselves to fit into the new culture. In this novel, the mother goes to the hair salon with her daughter to curl their hair as they think everyone in the United States has curly hair. For a little kid, probably that is difficult to understand but for her parents it is part of their acculturation process even long before traveling. Once in the U.S. Young Ju is introduced to different drinks-- Coca-Cola is what people drink. Even though she does not like it, she lies, as she does not want to disappoint her parents, she also wants to fit in.

Young Ju faces her first challenge in the new culture when she goes to school. From pages 29 to 31, there is a scene where she does not understand why her teacher does not pronounce her name correctly. She also talks about how difficult is for her to understand

her classmates as she does not understand the English Language. However, she recalled what her dad said about learning from her teacher so she can teach her mother and her father. Her father says that at school her name is only Young as people find it difficult to pronounce all the syllables in Mi Gook. Her father also faces a challenge of acculturation as he sees that he has to work two jobs in order to provide for his family. He misses Korea, and he regrets coming to the U.S.

As Young Ju gets older, she understands differences about how the government and its entities see them and treat them differently than they do treat white Americans. On page 120, her friend's parents who are white are being stopped at a checkpoint but they are let go without asking questions. She compares that situation and the outcome if this experience were to happen with her father or mother because in her neighborhood the police stop people and they do not let them go until after an extensive interrogation. On page 53, she also questions why she has to speak Korean at home so she does not forget where she comes from. She does not understand why they came to America if she is only speaking English at school.

American Friend

The novel touches on one of the challenges of young adults who came to the United States when they were kids and want to fit in, and have the same resources as their American peers. There is one short story that Young Ju tells about how much she wishes her mother could have as much money as her American friend to take her to all the rides in the park. In some instances children even feel ashamed of their family. On page 55 her

little brother is peeing on the street and she feels embarrassed because the Americans are watching him—deviant behavior but not criminal. She is happy she lives far from school.

There are also instances where she prefers her friend's parents leave her at the library instead of giving her a ride home because she is ashamed of her apartment and her neighborhood. She is shame of her poverty. On page 75 she is embarrassed because her mother is paying with pennies. She says that she does not like Americans thinking she is a poor oriental who saves pennies like gold, she rather pretends she is not her mother's daughter in front of the clerk.

Young Ju also faces the pressure of her father who does not want her to be friends with an American girl because he says she is becoming Americanized since she has that friend. On page 103, her father says that he does not want her to become a boy-crazy and a careless being as the American girls. He says that American girls do not study and only care about themselves and he does not want her to end up like them.

Young Ju asks for permission to go to her American friend's party but denied at first request. In the end her mother lets her go but she emphasizes on the fact that she is a Korean girl and has to act like one. When she comes back from the party, she asks her friend's parents to leave her in a different house, blocks from her apartment, as she does not want them to see her old and deteriorated apartment. Although, her friend's mother ask Young Ju to bring her mother for coffee, she lies about her mother being at work all the time. She makes excuses to hide her parents from her friend and her friend's parents. She also lies to her parents about the continuance of her friendship with her American friend.

Immigration

There is a short story about Young Ju going to the Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services with her father to renew her green card. She describes the long lines waiting for a person to direct them to other offices where their questions can be answered. She describes how she has to interpret for her father and how he asks the same questions several times as he wanted to make sure he does not have to go back to that office. She describes the officer's attitude with the public. She says that she feels as if they were machines repeating same information over and over.

She talks about a Mexican family waiting with them to be called. She remembers a bilingual officer answering to their question in Spanish. On page 84, Young Ju talks about how she thinks school is better than being in that space as it is very threatening and uncomfortable. She pointed out that her father repeatedly asked the clerk the same questions many times so that he does not have to come back.

Parents, Brother and Grandmother

Although the story begins with a happy family, father playing with his daughter in the sea; there are instances where mother and father fought over situations that appear to get worse because of her father's drinking problem. Her grandmother tries to help her mother with the abuse of her father. Her father's alcohol abuse increased in the United States, as he is frustrated about the long hours and days of work and the lack of recourse. His abuse towards her mother also increased and escalated when he started hitting her brother following the death of his mother.

The first time her father hit her mother in the United States was when she disagreed with his idea of moving to an old apartment from her sister. She suggested to him that they save money and buy a house after she gives birth to her son. Her father hits her because he does not think that is the best option. The scene on page 33 marks the beginning of a series of abusive behavior that could result into killing her and that only stopped when Young Ju called the police for help.

Young Ju's parents want their children to keep their traditions, for that reason they cook Korean food at home and only speak Korean. They emphasize the importance of studying. On page 57, dad plays with both children as a harmonious family, unfortunately that changes after his mother dies. He feels shameful because he is unable to go to the funeral due to lack of money. He takes all that anger with his family and consumes alcohol as his coping strategy. He leaves the house and in some cases does not return until next day or even three days.

Young Ju's mother works long hours to make enough money to support the family. Since none of the parents are at home her brother starts missing school and Young Ju takes the responsibility of looking after him. Her mother finds solace in the church and starts taking her kids to mass every Sunday. In one of her father's drinking instances, he was arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI). On page 111, Young Ju describes how she saw this arrest as a punishment.

The family dynamics became dysfunctional because of the abuse, alcoholism and lack of financial resources. One night her father came home drunk and angry and hit Young Ju for lying to him about visiting her American friend. Her mother intervened and he hit her so hard that Young Ju called the police. The police came and arrested him. The following

day, her mother went to the police station to pick him up because she did not want to press charges. Subsequently, he disappears with another woman, and Young Ju's mother blames her for his behavior.

After a time of ignoring her family, Young Ju's mother realized the value of her kids and she bought a house for them. The family dynamics changed because her father plans to go back to Korea and her mother will stay with them.

Man and Woman

Young Ju's father is an arrogant man who believes that women are not capable of thinking for themselves—patriarchal value. Her father is happy because his second child is a boy. He feels that his son will make him proud. He does not believe that women can work in important positions. On page 38, Young Ju mentions that she can become president and her father laughs at her and tells her she is a girl.

Her father tells Young Ju that her responsibility is to help her mother and take care of her brother. He pointed out that she is not strong enough to occupy the same roles that men do. Young Ju is happy that she is in the United States where she can be valued as men. In some cases Young Ju does not understand why she is being treated differently than her brother. She does not understand why her father sees women different than he sees men.

Young Ju's dad is very close to the patriarchal society's values. On page 67, he hit his son because he was crying. According to him only a girl exhibits such a behavior of crying. He asks him if he has forgotten how to be a man and then he hits her hard in the stomach. He tells him that he cries like a girl and he whines like a girl. He treats her

mother as if she does not have a voice. He is the one who makes the decisions in the house. One day he goes to church with his family and when the pastor talks about how nice is his wife he did not say anything. When Young Ju asks her mother about the abuse, she says that her father is a proud man and that is why he hits her. At the same time, her mother encourages Young Ju to study and to be strong because women have choices in America. At the end she would make her choice as well.

Esperanza Rising written by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Everyone Can Make Lots of Money

The novel presents the reality of some people's push factors for migrating to the United States as a tragedy. Esperanza, a Mexican young adult girl, her mother, and her servants (a family of mother, father, and son) decided to immigrate to the United States after the death of her father and her uncle set her house on fire because her mother refuses to marry him. They had to leave Esperanza's grandmother because she is not able to walk due her injuries sustained from the fire. Both families see the United States as an opportunity to start over, and a place to provide safety to their children.

One of the kids, on page 75, sees the U.S. as a place where he can work at the railroad without needing to know someone and bribe them, as it is the case in Mexico. Miguel is convinced that in the United States even the poorest person can become rich as soon as he/she works hard. However, for Esperanza and her mother were different as they were seeing the United States as a safe place. They had lost everything that they owned and now they had to work for the first time and share with the people that had served them their entire lives. This reality changed their socioeconomic position from middle class to

lower class—very difficult to adjust. Even when the families saw the precarious conditions they were living in as far as housing, camps without running water, they embraced those pull factors they had considered when migrating. On page 134 they described how grateful they are for having the opportunity to work, and their camp is better than others. Esperanza's mother is grateful for having the opportunity of being closer to her daughter.

Work, Second Job

In the stories of two families with different social status, the author presents different perspectives about culture shock. For instance, Esperanza and her mother the culture shock began when they left their home--“rancho” and arrived in Los Angeles. As a rich family, their privilege did not allow them to see how other people are devastated from the war, the unfairness in the distribution of land, and the lack of opportunities for people who are not rich.

The challenges that they face include wearing second hand clothes, sharing the space with poor people and other services. When they arrived in Los Angeles, Esperanza was shocked to see the farmer's living conditions and her new home. On page 97, Esperanza is introduced to a young girl who knows about Esperanza's past, that is wealthy lifestyle and she laughed at her new situation. Esperanza learns about the division of camps is done by cultures as people from different cultures go to work on the farms.

Although, Esperanza lives in the Mexican camp, she does not feel like they can relate to her culture. On page 99, the girl she just met says this is not Mexico and no one will be waiting for you; making a statement about a new reality for her. Esperanza's mother

works in the field and Esperanza has to stay at the camp taking care of two kids that belong to one of the families living on the camp with her. Esperanza has to learn to sweep and to clean and she is often embarrassed because she does not know how to do it, although her culture expects her to know how to do it.

Esperanza's mother gets sick and Esperanza has to work and support her mother in order to bring her grandmother to the United States. Esperanza sees how some workers from Mexico are reuniting people in order to get better wages.

American Friend

The Americanization dilemma in this novel is more perceived through the realization that even though they are living among Mexican people but they are living in the United States, and the expectations were accordingly different. When Martha tells Esperanza that this was not Mexico and she should not expect anyone to wait on her, she emphasizes being in America. Esperanza does not want to become an American, but she wants to learn English, so she can understand the American people. On page 101, Esperanza is questioning herself about how she could fit into this new world. Perhaps she does not think about America itself but the camp, as her new world.

Esperanza pointed out to Miguel, on page 221, that his decision of coming to the United States as the best. She states that Mexicans are discriminated against, for example, they cannot even work as engineers even though they have better training. She pointed out that Mexicans are treated as second-class citizens. Even in the camps she feels they are not treated fairly. This reality made her understand the motives for people to strike but she needed to work like many of the workers.

Immigration

Standing in front of an immigration officer can be one of the most stressful situations for an immigrant. Esperanza's first experience with immigration was at the border in California. Even though they had a letter of employment written by the owner of the farm, their personal papers were photocopies because the original ones were burnt. On page 81, Esperanza describes how nervous she was as she came closer to the front line. She just hoped that the officer would say that her papers were in order and he would let them go. She asked her mother the reason why that other group of people was being sent back to Mexico and she said it was because their papers were not in order. Esperanza explains how sad she felt and how confused she was with the idea of seeing people sent back to Mexico when they were eager to work.

Esperanza's other experiences with immigration were while she was working on the camp and immigration authorities were asking people for papers in an attempt to stop people from striking. On page 170, Esperanza explains her confusion at seeing people who have never lived in Mexico being deported. On page 207, she also talks about seeing an officer tearing a person's paper into pieces so he could deport her, as she did not have proof of being a U.S. citizen. She questions the so-called voluntary deportation, as people did not have much of a choice.

Parents, Brother and Grandmothers

Esperanza's story begins as if it was a fairy tale about a rich girl living with her mother and father in a mansion--in El Rancho. Esperanza had many servants who would do everything for her and family. She also had her grandmother who would spoil but

educate her. Esperanza attended the best school and received good education. The family dynamic was harmonious and happy, she loved her parents deeply and she would do everything her parents asked her to do. Her father would provide for her mother, grandmother and her servants.

After her father was killed, the family dynamics changed. Now, she lives with her mother and grandmother for a short period of time and then moves to a farm camp in California. In the United States, the family dynamics change as she is now living with three other families in the same camp or cabin. Her mother provides for her and helps by cleaning and babysitting two children while the adults are at work. Later, her mother gets sick and Esperanza had to take the responsibility of the household. She has to work in the fields to pay for her mother's medical bills. Esperanza also saves money with the intention of bringing her grandmother to live with them in the United States, as a way of helping her mother with her depression. Once her grandmother reunites with them, Esperanza will continue to support the family.

Man and Woman

The men work in the fields, and the cowboys are in charge of planting and fixing machines. Conversely, women do household work-- social differentiation, for example, clean, prepare meals, and take care of the children--a patriarchal society value. Due to traditional expectation of gender roles, Esperanza's uncle immediately asked her mother to marry him in order to keep providing for the family.

On page 30, the lawyer tells Esperanza's mother that her husband was not able to leave the land in her name because it is not customary to do that since only men have

property rights. Esperanza's father had to leave the land to his brother who was the banker. Following Esperanza's mother rejection her husband's brother, she had to immigrate to the United States, as she feared for her life and that of the daughter and mother.

On page 102, Esperanza's mother told her that they have to stay in the same cabin on the camp with the other family members because camps are assigned to the head of household, for example, a man. Since they do not have a man in their family any more, they cannot request a cabin on their own.

Comparing and contrasting the two novels: *Esperanza Rising* and *A Step from Heaven*

The two stories of immigrant young adults coming to the United States present similarities and differences on the six significant phrases and themes. For example, push and pull factors, culture shock, Americanization dilemma, experiences with the immigration system (laws, regulations), family dynamics and gender roles. Further, the manifest characteristics of phrases and themes revealed the intended meaning of communication content. However, it is difficult to corroborate the unintended meaning that is the latent characteristics. Additionally, the conceptual and relational analyses of the two novels are supported through the six phrases and themes.

The push factors are different as one of the characters migrated after her father's death and the character from the other story migrated because of her parent's decision. However, the pull factors are similar in both stories. In *Esperanza Rising*, her mother and her servants wanted to find a land of opportunity, a place of new beginnings; a place

where anyone can be whoever they want to be as long as they work hard. While in the United States both stories take different directions. Even though both families came to California, one family worked on the farm and the mother supported the family at the beginning until she became sick, and the daughter had to work.

In the other family, the father supported the family until he was not able to do it and then the mother had to work. In both stories the social problem was depression. In *Esperanza Rising*, the mother became depressed due to an illness, the loss of her husband and the nostalgia for her mother. In *A Step from Heaven* the father became depressed due to the death of his mother, lack of financial support for her funeral, and the need to work and support his family.

The Americanization or acculturation of the young adults in the two novels is also different. Young Ju is able to go to school where she be friends an American and she wanted to be like her to the point she is ashamed of her own family. Esperanza does not go to school as she immigrated at an older age, and she had to work and support her family. Although she is not ashamed of her past rich life she does not want to talk about it as she is living in poverty. She wants to learn English so she can understand the Americans.

Both, Young Adults or females feel isolated and discriminated against in this new society. Although, in both stories, the girls see the United States as the place where they can become important people because women have more opportunities like men unlike their patriarchal culture. In both stories the families keep their traditions, food, and cultural values at home. Even though they are in the United States, for example, Esperanza surrounded by Mexicans, they embrace the culture of their native home. Even

though *Esperanza Rising* provides a historical context for the story, it is easy to set the time in the other novel, *A Step from Heaven*. Both stories have a happy ending where the characters are able to overcome their challenges like many new immigrants.

CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusion

This study analyzed through content and thematic analyses two stories in two different novels of immigrants who came from Korea and Mexico. Six significant themes emerged from the novels illustrating the challenges of the two immigrants. In both novels there is a cultural sensitivity that helps the readers understand and compare the character's situations with their own reality or with some other person's realities as immigrants in the United States.

Each novel is divided into short stories. *In A Step from Heaven*, the titles of the stories are based on something that represents Young Ju's feelings in that particular story. The reader can identify the time line and the reason for the title because the events are chronological in telling the stories of Young Ju since she was four years old to college age. Every story takes the reader to a real scenario where young adults try to negotiate with a new system that often ignores their struggle as teenagers, immigrants and humans.

In *Esperanza Rising*, each story is named after a fruit, or vegetable, depending on the harvest for that season. This creative method helps the reader to know the seasons and the opportunities as well as the struggles that each season brings. The stories are written chronologically, for example, Esperanza's 15th birthday to her 16th birthday. It is interesting to see the life changing experiences that a person, in this case a young adult can face in only one-year period. Esperanza's immigration story reveals how a young adult tries to negotiate with a system that often ignores her struggles, for instance, as a privileged teenager girl trying to survive through hard work on a farm, a foreigner, and a second-class citizen.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size is small, for example, the units of analyses are words, phrases and themes that have manifest and latent characteristics. Therefore, the study can be replicated but not generalizable. The selection of themes varied depending on the novels, as well as the results. Contemporary immigrant stories may highlight more pressing challenges, for example, changes in the immigration laws or policy, economic, and social and political environments.

Recommendations

The stories narrated in the two novels enrich and enhance the understanding of the American experience of many immigrants. The themes are very familiar to anyone who has known immigrants, though the individual stories are different and reveal the challenges of immigration and assimilation. The following recommendations can guide future research

1. Every immigrant group should learn the English Language in order to take advantage of the opportunities in the United States
2. Emulate good role models, for example, successful immigrants who have succeeded through hard work
3. Learn how to live between two cultures—worlds
4. Each immigrant group should share their stories, so that we can learn from each other—educational utility

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