

# Female Representations on Crossing the Borders. Analysis of the relationship between Catholic teaching and Latin American female drug mule's thought.

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## 越境の女性表象： カトリック信仰と中南米ミュールの思考の関係性

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### Abstract

本稿では、体内にコカイン62袋を隠し持って空路で米国に入国を試み、そのまま不法移民として米国に滞在していくコロンビアの少女の表象を、カトリック信仰の観点から分析していく。コーパスとして分析に使用するのは、María Full of Grace (2004) で、この作品は実際のミュール取材し実話に基づいて描かれており、どのような要因で10代の少女が麻薬密輸に関わっていくのかその厳しい現実を伝えている。この研究では経済的困窮という社会的観点から切り込むのではなく、中南米社会文化を形成してきたカトリック信仰の観点から分析していき、どのような思考ゆえに最も危険な麻薬密輸のコマとなろうとしたのか、また不法移民という立場であっても米国に残留しようとするのかを考察していく。

In this article we will analyse the representation of a Latin American drug mule who tries to enter JFK Airport, hiding 62 bags of cocaine inside her stomach and staying in the US as an illegal immigrant from a religious point of view. The Colombian American film María Full of Grace (2004) will be used as the corpus, this film demonstrates to us the harsh realities of the protagonist, explaining what factors brought her to become involved in drug smuggling. Therefore, in this research we will use religious perspective, especially Catholic mentalities, to find out factors that bring the drug mules to sacrifice themselves, because Latin American societies such as Colombia have been profoundly

influenced by Catholic thinking during the period of over five hundred years ago until the present day. Amongst the Catholic teaching, we will focus on the concept of sacrifice and analyse how much the concept has affected them. This perspective will lead us to understand better people living at the bottom of Colombian Societies and Latin America.

**Keywords** : Female representation, Catholic Teaching, Identity.

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2022, the world was faced with the reality that huge numbers of people from Ukraine were forced to escape from their own country due to the brutal invasion by Russia. Nobody imagined that people within Europe could suddenly become asylum seekers crossing the border with only a few pieces of luggage, in modern times.

However, this should remind us that there are thousands of people who constantly try to enter developed countries to escape from their own severe circumstances, and especially permanent economic hardship, which causes them great suffering. But as we well know, these people are more often than not judged as undocumented immigrants and, if they are unlucky, they are destined to be deported back to their own countries.

Nowadays, immigration restrictions have been tightened up more than ever in most of the developed countries which are the usual destinations for illegal immigrants. Despite such political changes, the number of people who intend to emigrate to the EU or the UK remains high. According to the BBC, in 2021 more than 28,000 African immigrants tried to cross the English Channel in small boats<sup>1</sup>. However, the British government is utterly intolerant for these people, and the Government has decided to deport them, even though the cost of deportation will come to more than £500,000.

Similar to the UK, severe immigration restrictions were shown under the US Government ruled by Donald Trump. There were many TV news reports

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1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-59861376>

regarding illegal immigrants in the US. In 2018, much of the media frequently reported on immigration issues which we had never seen before: dozens of people from Central America were walking together northward to Mexico's border with the US. The media named them *Caravans* and some of them were families with small children.

The series of the image of *Caravan* made us realise the fact that, despite the Trump's declaration of building walls on the borders, so many people still eager to enter the US in order to seek economic stability and secure life which they have never obtained in their own countries.

According to the data of the US Department of Homeland and Security Report in 2009, since 2000 to 2009, the number of illegal immigrants who entered the US increased dramatically, from 8.5 million people in 2000 to 10.8 million in 2009. Also, this data shows the name of countries of the immigrants. The five countries from Latin America occupies as the largest, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Ecuador, 75% of all the illegal immigrants hold Hispanic nationalities<sup>2</sup>.

This data indicates certain tendency about illegal immigrants from Latin America, however official information has not demonstrated about what kind of measure was taken to enter the US, taking a huge risk to across the borders where the US immigration Control might deport them to their original countries.

In this research, we will focus on verbal representation of a 17-year-old Colombian drug mule who swallows 62 sealed packets of cocaine and smuggles them into New York. She is the principal protagonist of American-Colombian film, named *María Full of Grace* (2004), and she, María, is represented as an example of illegal immigrants who is exploited by Colombian drug cartel. María is a girl living in a small city of Colombia, unemployed, pregnant, furthermore, her own family relies on her economically. In this film, in the end, the protagonist María decides to remain in New York illegally, cutting off relationship with her own family and the Colombian drug cartel which forced her into this cruel and severe situation.

The director and screenwriter of this film, Joshua Marston who wrote this

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2 Source: US Department of Homeland Security Report 2009, available on [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

screenplay based on interviews he conducted with more than 1000 women who had worked previously as drug mules between Bogota and the US, many of whom decided to stay in the US illegally.

What the mules experienced is condensed into this film and it is possible to consider that the representations which will be discussed here in this article<sup>3</sup> are examples of not only female mules who are exploited by drug cartel and but also of undocumented immigrants who decided to stay in the US.

Although the film was released more than 15 years ago, however, the hegemony of the Latin American drug cartels has not been in decline, their power is much stronger than ever and has spread deeper into the American society<sup>4</sup>. Regarding the kind of measures to smuggling have changed in these decades, however, swallowing cocaine packets and flying to the destination is the most common way to smuggle drug to the developed countries and we often watch news regarding this criminal way these day<sup>5</sup>.

Consequently, the number of studies about the relationship between immigration and drug smuggling from Latin America has increased over the past decades (Campbell, 2008: 256). Here it should be pointed out that most of those studies has concluded that the poverty is the crucial factor which caused drug smuggling by female mules from Latin America into the US. However, it should be mentioned that those conclusions do not explain entire reason why they tried to

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3 From the interview of the director included at the end of the DVD Japanese version.

4 <https://witnessforpeace.org/six-reasons-the-drug-war-is-disastrous-for-latin-america/> Joaquin Guzman, commonly known as El Chapo, the leader of the Mexican giant drug cartel from Sinaloa was considered as the biggest enemy for the US since Al Capone by the Chicago Police. El Chapo escaped from prison two times in 1993 and in 2015, he made fool of the judicial and the police of the US for two decades. While he as in prison, the power of his cartel continued to spread and the flow of cocaine did not slow at all. Until 2015, the cartel created variety of measures to smuggle drugs and the two decades are considered as the flourished time for the smuggling drug business. In 2015 El Chapo was convicted as life sentence in the US. (Time of access 3<sup>rd</sup> of Jan, 2019)

5 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48426198> 27 May 2019, A Japanese man died on a flight from Mexico City to Tokyo after swallowing 246 bags of cocaine. Authorities said the man died of a cerebral oedema caused by drug overdose. (Time of access 30 Dec 2019)

enter the US, trafficking drug from their own countries. Thus, those stereotyped conclusions do not make us understand sufficiently what kind of socio-cultural elements exist behind the hard situation in which Latin American women decided to sacrifice themselves committing the crime.

The film director, Joshua Marston did not create the film, *Maria Full of Grace* in order to show grinding poverty as the principal reason why the protagonist decided to be a drug mule. His purpose was showing familial and cultural factors behind the decision of the female protagonists, rather than poverty itself or how cruel measure the drug cartels had taken to smuggle cocaine into the US.

Also, it should be aware of that there is a certain tendency existed in Hollywood generally; most of the films described drug smuggling have focused on the men involved. For example, the 1983 film *Scarface*, in which Al Pacino plays a successful drug dealer who originally immigrated illegally from Cuba; or the newest film about drug smuggling, the 2018 Clint Eastwood film *The Mule*. Not only did Eastwood direct the film, he also plays the title role of a 90-year-old Caucasian man who carries cocaine from Texas to other states in his car. However, it may seem surprising that in the Hollywood productions all the protagonists who ended up being drug smugglers were male. Yet, in real drug smuggling, by the early 1920s women were occupied for 60 percent of the drug flow across the borders between the US and Mexico, as various role, not only as mules, but also as boss of cartels, or lover of the male boss who controlled the trafficking of drug between the two continents, North and South America. Thus, constantly women had key role in the drug trafficking world (Carey, 2014: 3), but the reality has never been accurately portrayed by Hollywood over the past decades.

From this point of view also, the film *Maria Full of Grace* is a very valuable film because it depicts not only the reality of drug smuggling into the US but also showing psychological states and her religious identity of female drug mules which exists behind the dialogues which demonstrate complexed factors should be analyzed, not just concluding that the poverty caused the criminal consequences.

Therefore, in this paper, verbal representations which, in particular, show psychological states of the protagonist will be very carefully analyzed and we

will seek what kind of factors made the protagonist agree to smuggle drugs, as mentioned previously, cultural and familial factors are crucial one, in particular, religious factor should be taken as the most significant perspective to analyze in this work. So that, we are going to examine the specific relationship between identity and catholic teaching. Though this analysis, we will reach to know a part of the reality of drug mules who choose to remain in the US.

## 2. Outline of the film *María Full of Grace*

A 17-year-old girl María works on a rose plantation in a rural town of Colombia living with her mother and an older sister who is a single mother with a new-born baby. Her family is struggling with poverty and María keeps most of her salary for the family. One day, María is treated unjustly by her boss, and she resigns immediately due to her accumulated dissatisfaction for the working conditions. María's family blames her for lack of patience and insists to apologize to her boss in order to return to work. Especially, María's older sister financially relies on her family, excusing having a new-born baby, and she blames María in a hysterical manner. Also, her mother forces María to make a full economic contribution to the family. In addition, María finds out her unwilling pregnancy with her ex-boyfriend. She is fed up with her home environment entirely.

One day, on her way to Bogota in searching of a job, a young man approached to her, with who she met before in a party by chance, saying, "There is a good job, you can earn a lot of money, what you have to do is just carry a thing to New York". It was the job of Mule, handled by a Colombian big drug cartel. María decides to accept the most dangerous job without thinking well, which is swallowing sealed packets of cocaine. María travels to the JFK with her close friend Blanca who also accepts the dangerous job offer, the two girls will be under the supervision of the big drug cartel in Bogota.

At the JFK Airport, María and Blanca passed a rigorous immigration control and left to the City of New York, however, what has waited for them was the cruelty of the drug cartel which they had never realized before.

Recognizing the hard circumstance where they are, María and Blanca break away from the drug cartel's surveillance, and María chooses to remain in New York after all, thus, she chooses to be an illegal resident in the United States.

### 3. Social Background of This Research:

#### 3. 1 Colombia, the Kingdome of Cocaine producing.

One of the crucial policies demonstrated by the former Government of Trump was closing the *door* on the border with Mexico to block the influx of people who aimed to enter the US illegally.

In May 2019, the US Government demanded Mexico for taking measures to reduce the number of illegal immigrants from Mexico, President Trump added to announce that the US would impose 5% tariff on all Mexican imports and the tariff would gradually increase monthly up to 25% until illegal problem is improved. Due to this policy which seems to be an economic threat, the official data shows that the number of illegal immigrants arrested on the border reduced 56%, more precisely, 144,266 people was arrested in May 2019, but three months later, the number was turned to be 63,989 in August<sup>6</sup>.

Currently, the proportion of legal immigrants in the United States is 17.4%, it is above the 12.4% of black legitimate citizen, also, within in 40 years it is estimated that the Caucasian population will fall from 62.2% to 43.6%, on the other hand, the Hispanic population will rise to 28.6%. Thus, that 30% of population of the US will be occupied by people with Hispanic origin.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the legitimate Hispanic citizen's economic condition used to be not satisfactory quarter century ago, but now they are growing to the middle class with four times higher birth rate than the Caucasian citizens. Thus, it is assumed that the structure of race in the US society will be changed dramatically within next decades<sup>8</sup>.

Also, the number of people who entered the US from Latin America is increasing, especially, there is a tendency that they count on their relatives who already acquired the American citizenship tends to end up staying in the US when they try to enter the US. At least, it can be estimated that more than 11 million people remains as illegal in the US, and they accept to work in jobs which

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6 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/06/mexico-us-border-crossings-down-trump-tariffs>

7 [https://www.nhk.or.jp/syakai/10min\\_tiri/shiryuu/pdf/006/shiryuu\\_002.pdf](https://www.nhk.or.jp/syakai/10min_tiri/shiryuu/pdf/006/shiryuu_002.pdf)

8 <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO41760130W9A220C1TCR000/> (Nikkei News Paper 27 of Feb, 2019)

American Caucasian hesitates to engage in.

Historically, the US has been exposed to problems of immigration from Latin America, due to the geographical location, next to the South American continent. However, the flow of illegal immigrant from Latin America is not only problem but drug smuggling also has been huge threat for the US society.

The leaf of Cocaine has the origin in the Highland of the Andes and the people of Inca used to take cocaine on daily basis because the leaf healed fatigue and vitalized people to work energetically. Especially in Colombia, the indigenous people used to bite the leaf on daily basis. That is, it is the most familiar plant for people in Colombian indigenous culture (Terasawa, 2011: 149).

The leaves of Cocaine itself are harmless for human body and it is required to be predicated to be “drug”. The way of purification was developed by a German Scientist in 1855 and it took more than 100 years to arrive at Colombia, before Colombia’s dominating the trade of the cocaine, Chile had been the principal country, where produced and smuggled the drug to other countries until 1970s.

However, during this period, the Chilean internal political affairs were quite fragile due to the Chilean dictatorship broke out. Consequently, the drug cartels inside Chile were wiped out and the core point of drug trade was moved to Medellin, the second city of Colombia (Terasawa, op.cit: 150).

The growth of drug cartels in Colombia was nothing more than a threat to the US, The US government has already considered the inflow of drugs from Latin America as a big menace since the Nixon administration in the 1960s (Terasawa, 2011: 146).

In addition, the Carter administration, the US Government constantly monitored drug wars in Colombia and made DEA (US Drug Enforcement Administration) staff resident inside the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, in order to eliminate the drug cartels and applied political pressure on the Colombian Government (Terasawa, *ibid*) (Ramirez, Lemus, et al, 99, 103: 2005).

Under the name of regaining democracy in Latin American countries which were deeply contaminated with drug cartels, the United States helped constantly the Colombian Government to crack down on the drug cartels (Youngers and

Rosin, 2005, 4-5). However, contrary to the effort of the US Government, the biggest Colombian drug cartel, Medesin Cartel, was well-funded through the international business, smuggling the drug to the US and Europe, which enabled them to make huge fortunes. The Cartel started to massacre the top political members of the Colombian Government who try to punish them, including the juridical one (Terasawa, op.cit: 155) (Restrepo, 2015: 145). The cartel reached to the untouchable position keeping their absolute power over the government inside the country and the US even if the US government has taken any kind of measure against the smuggling drug conducted by the cartel.

### 3. 2 Female mules: Drug Smuggling and Women.

Since the 1990s, Colombian and Mexican drug cartels have expanded their drug business to the US. Especially, using female mules was the most common strategy that the cartels has exercised to enlarge the business into the US market, because it took advantage of the classic gender prejudice which the US agents or censors generally held. Thus, those gender prejudice 'vulnerable woman would not smuggle cocaine' made the judgement of US agents on the borders weaken (Campbell, op.cit, 244). Now, the question is, what kind of women who smuggle drugs to the US?

Campbell classifies Mexican female mules into three categories: (1) Female Drug Lords, (2) Middle Level of Drug Organizations, and (3) Low-level Mules (Campbell, *ibid*). Although it should be paid attention to the geographical difference between Mexico and Colombia in relation to the way of smuggling, these categories can be applied to cases of Colombia on account of that both countries are the birthplaces of the world's largest drug cartels, and it is possible to think that they share same similarities.

These three types of "female mules" differ greatly in their position inside the drug cartels and the rewards they receive from smuggling drug. For example, (1) Female Drug Lords are women who are voluntarily involved in the cartels, receiving higher rewards than any other type of mules, thus, as same level as male members in higher position. In other words, they are female leaders of the drug cartels. Regarding (2) the Middle Level of Drug Organizations, is the

classified group by white-collar and professional women such as civil servants, business managers in private companies, even including police officers, they are irregularly involved in drug smuggling to earn extra money. This is the group which has the lowest possibility to be arrested by the Drug control agents.

And, the mules classified as the third group, (3) Low level Mules, are always in danger of being arrested and detained. Not only being arrested, but the Low-level Mules are also often killed by the drug cartels even after being deported to their home country, which means they are the target of exploitation. Women with Low Level Mules are often in savage working conditions. For example, women who are single mothers or are in serious financial distress, carry drugs on their bodies. Normally this level of mules can get big rewards if they enter the United States without being detained by immigration control and smuggle successfully. They often get a successful feeling which also read them to repeat the work as mule (Campbell, op.cit: 245-256). The protagonist of the film, María belongs to exactly this category and the story shows that she will be exploited by the drug cartel, which takes advantage of her harsh situation.

#### 4. Representation Analysis: What we can understand from the representation of the main protagonists.

The film *María Full of Grace* describes how young Colombians girls get involve smuggling drug and their psychological process facing the reality of drug smuggling. Especially, the representations regarding how the drug cartel forces young mules swallow wrapped pellets of cocaine and educates them ideal behaviour they should take during their flight to New York to avoid deportation.

When the story moves on to the US, a Colombian woman appears, who is a very crucial person for María because she herself turned to be a legitimate immigrant after being in the illegal status for decades. It indicates an ideal structure of immigrants, showing certain possibility to be documented residence and it drives María to decide to remain in New York, not going back to her home city in Colombia as a mule. María realizes that she should find out her own life without being sacrificed by anybody, her own family, and the drug cartel.

Drug smuggling and family relationship of illegal immigrants has tight relationship, so that this analysis will focus on not only the linguistic representations of María, but also her family and her best friend called Blanca will be analyzed, to understand how those people, think and react in time of trouble and how they judge what they have to do in reality.

Through the analysis we attempt to find if there is certain relationship between their way of thinking and certain cultural elements in particular Catholic teaching.

#### 4. 1 María

María is a 17-year-old girl engaged in unskilled labor on a rose plantation, which is the only industry in the city. From the beginning, the film describes how much she is sacrificed herself for her family and forced to devote economically for them. The point should be considered is that María is the person most exploited not only by the employer of the plantation but also by her own family.

One day, María's boss found fault María's performance in the rose plantation, and very momentarily she quits the job. Her family blames her because her quick decision causes worse economic condition for the family, because they are dependent on the slightest income of María. This fact drives her feel get tired of her own sister, because of making an excuse not to work because she has a small baby. The following two scenes (1) and (2) show their verbal expressions, which can be understood as a kind of exploitation.

#### 4. 2 Isolation

	Subtitles in English	Original Lines in Spanish
① Sister	It's ninety-six hundred.	Son 9600, ¿Usted tiene para pagar?
② Mother	María, give me the money.	María, Déme la plata.
③ María	And why should I pay?	¿Por qué tengo que pagar yo?
④ Sister	It's for Paco. He started vomiting.	Para Pancho que empezó a vomitar.
⑤ María	Where's your money?	Eso plata qué?
⑥ Mother	María!	María!

⑦ María	I give up all I make, Diana doesn't put in anything. Plus, I have to pay for the kid's medicine?	Ay Mamá yo prácticamente pongo todo mi sueldo, ella no pone un peso. Además de todo, me toca gastar la medicina de chino?
⑧ Mother	Don't start with me, María. Just give me the money. You can keep the money from your next check. I don't know why everything is so difficult with you.	María no me saque la piedra. Muestra la plata y punto. Puede quedarse con los nueve mil seis cientos de la próxima quincena. Yo no entiendo por qué con usted todo es una rogadera.

This conversation is a scene in which María encounters accidentally with her mother on her way home from the rose plantation where she has just quitted the job, and she joins at a pharmacy with her sister Diana who was buying medicine for her son. As shown in the table above, the lines ② shows that the mother urges María to pay the medicine, "María, Déme la plata" (María, Give me the money), while María responds clearly and calmly in the line ③ "¿Por qué tengo que pagar yo? (And why should I pay?)", using the verb which signifies a sense of duty and the line itself indicates inequality which María feels constantly inside family. However, it should be pointed out that the sister Diana insists in ④ that María also should dedicate to her baby because she is a member of the family.

However, María accuses her sister Diana of being dependent on her family as we can see in ⑦, but María's claim does not reach her mother. We can see that María's sense of isolation stands out in the line ⑧ in which mother responds "María no me saque la piedra. Muestra la plata y punto (Don't start with me, María. Just give me the money)", "Yo no entiendo por qué con usted todo es una rogadera (I don't know why everything is so difficult with you)", thus, instead of being on her side, María's mother treats her as a villain and demands her more contribution for the family. The audiences who watch this scene understand the reality that the family never care for María who is just 17 years old, needs to be cared by her own mother especially, however, this line indicates that María is rather mistreated and forced more economic contribution by the mother. It is another kind of exploitation by own family which is the burden that María shoulders, and what we must point out is that

the mother and sister take it for granted and never realise the exploitation inside home.

#### 4. 3 Family concept and Catholic teaching.

Next, we are going to look at a scene in which María's sister Diana once more forces María a financial contribution, insisting to apologize to her boss in order to back to work on the rose plantation which is the only industry in the city, and they start a hard argument. The older sister Diana's expression in those lines below clearly shows her concept about family, how she considers family should be. The situation takes place when María returns from Bogota where María got contact with the drug cartel and accepts the job of drug smuggling to New York.

	Subtitles in English	Original lines in Spanish
⑨ Sister	You didn't find anything. You would have said so. You have to go back to the plantation and get your job back.	¿No conseguí un trabajo lo cierto? De lo contrario me lo hubiera dicho. Te tocará a volverá disculpar al jefe para atender de nuevo.
⑩ María	No.	No, pues, no.
⑪ Sister	It is not fair for Mom. You know how hard it is for her.	No es justo para mamá. ¿Sabe que es duro que le toca a ella?
⑫ María	Don't bug me.	No me joda.
⑬ Sister	And you're making things harder.	Yo le estoy haciendo las cosas aun más difíciles?
⑭ María	Get off my back.	No me joda.
⑮ Sister	Pacho had a hundred and six fever this morning.	No me joda que no la joda, María. Pacho tuvo 42 grados esta mañana.
⑯ María	He is you son.	Es tu hijo.
⑰ Sister	I know he is my son, so?	Yo sé que es mi hijo, ¿Y ?
⑱ María	He is your responsibility.	Es su responsabilidad.
⑲ Sister	Who do you think you are? We all pull our weight. You have to find a job.	Aquí, todos somos iguales y usted tiene que conseguir algo.
⑳ María	Well I got one.	Pues ya conseguí trabajo.
㉑ Sister	Yeah, like what? Cut the shit.	¿Sí? ¿Cómo qué? ya pare con esa mierda.
㉒ María	At least I put in my share.	Yo sirvo a casa.

In this scene, it should be focused on the older sister Diana's lines in which her concept in terms of family stands out.

As it has been mentioned previously, Diana has forced María more economic contribution for the family and insisted that her younger sister should go back to work on the plantation whatever happens in the workplace. On the line ⑪, Diana is expressing "*It is not fair for Mom. You know how hard it is for her*", in this expression she blames María for her irresponsible decision to quick the job, because she thinks that it is ungrateful action to their mother. What we can understand from here is taking priority on the feeling of their mother is nothing but a principle that she believes to do so, and behind that, it signifies that Diana is just afraid of losing the tiny income which María had used to put in the family. However, it should be pointed out that her way of thinking brings such expression in the line.

Also, as we can understand that the line ⑬ implicates a part of way of thinking of Diana. Clearly, she considers it is natural to prioritize family over individual and doesn't understand María's feeling of being exploited by her own family. The line ⑲ gives us more clue in this respect, whose subtitle in English explains more precisely how Diana's way of thinking is ; "*Aquí, todos somos iguales y usted tiene que conseguir algo (Who do you think you are? We all pull our weight. You have to find a job)*". In fact, in the original line in Spanish, the part *We all pull our weight* doesn't exist at all. However, this additional part in the English subtitle explains exactly the concept Diana holds. The subtitle *We all pull our weight* implies all member of family should be sacrificed equally to support themselves. Thus, she believes that supporting family prioritize over respecting individual wish, even though she herself is in the position of being supported by her family, in particular, by her younger sister María.

Prioritizing parents over any other matter can be happened to anyone in any culture, however, in this story the protagonist is represented as being exploited in the name of supporting family. As mentioned previously, the film director described all the protagonist based on true experiences and backgrounds of the drug mules working between Colombia and the US. That is, it is possible to judge that many of drug mule tend to be sacrificed herself for their families due to hard economic and social conditions.

Since being colonized by Spanish Empire in 1510, Catholic teaching took root in Colombia as well as other Latin American countries, even now Catholic teaching has a great influence on the way of thinking and on their spirituality of Colombian people.

There is a scene in which the protagonist María visits the Church to play alone in the beginning of this film. The fact that a 17-year-old girl voluntarily goes to church alone signifies that she has a strong faith in the Catholic Church, and we can understand the purpose of describing such action of María. Thus, the representation of María in the church implies the fact that her way of thinking can be deeply influenced by the Catholic teaching.

There are 425 million Catholics in Latin America, accounting for 40% of the world's Catholics. Latin America is the only place where Catholicism is still so strongly rooted in people's lives. Of course, the Catholic faith in Latin America has been changing in these decades. From the 1900s to the 1960s, 90% of the population in the continent had identified themselves as Catholic very clearly, but until now about 20% of them had changed to Protestantism. Nonetheless, there are studies showing<sup>9</sup> that 84% of Latin Americans recognize that they are still Catholics because they brought up in a Catholic environment, which signifies that Catholic teaching had affected them in respect of forming their identities.

For reference, as for the former suzerain, Spain, which brought and used the Catholic faith to Latin America for the invasion, according to a British newspaper, *The Guardian's* survey, 60% of the population responded to the same question regarding, their answers were No. However, they responded about a question in terms of their religious identity, they responded "I am Catholic", which accounts for three-quarters of the Spanish population<sup>10</sup>.

The Spanish Government has carried out innovative strategies as a member

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9 Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>

(Access time, 7<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2019)

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/31/neweurope-spain-catholics-church-influence>

(Access time, 7<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2019)

of EU, such as allowing same-sex marriages much earlier than any other European countries, however at the same time the country has kept Catholic as the national religion which has kept transmitting conservative opinions to the Spanish Society. Even though the Spanish people are not "Pious Catholics" nowadays, they still identify themselves with "Catholic" after all.

Thus, regardless practicing the religion in everyday life, we can assume that people who identifies themselves as Catholic can be affected by the Catholic teaching in respect of the way of thinking and decision making.

Now if we try to find out what the protagonists of this film think about or how they make decision facing to some difficulties, the dialogues of the protagonists should be analysed from Catholic teaching point of view. So that, we are going to focus on *Catechism* which is a summary of the Christian doctrine has been using for religious teaching of children and adult converts.

#### 4. 4 Ideal family in "Catechism"

Catechism is apostolic constitution and was promulgated in French in 1992 by Pope John Paul II, translated into multiple languages including English to transmit Catholic teaching worldwide.

The part we focus on is Chapter 2: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*, in Article 3, Part 3. This part indicates Christian's ideology about family, how we should do, how should think of our family. In fact, if you are Christian "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" is familiar wording, nowadays we have opportunity to hear regardless religion.

Firstly, we focus on a statement (2207) in the section regarding Family and Society, it states, "*The family is the original cell of social life, Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society*". This part explains us Christian ideology about the relationship with our parents, thus, a philosophy describes how we should consider the relationship with our parents. Especially, in the beginning of this part, Chapter 2, clearly and repeatedly several times mentions that we should respect our parents, "*Honor your father and your mother that you days me be in the land which the Lord your God gives you*" and "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, This*

*is the first commandment with a promise".*

Here we notice two words, *Obeys* and *Honor* are repeated twice. What is written in this part is a basic ideology which is common for any other religions, however, in *Cathequism*, clearly it is said that children should obey their parents and must respect them first. Now looking to the dialogues held between María and her older sister Diana which we have seen till now, Diana says in the line ①, "*It is not fair for Mom. You know how hard it is for her*", from this line we understand that she put priority on the mother as *Cathequism* indicates, that not only consciously but unconsciously the idea *Honor and Obeys to their parents* drives Diana to judge issues around her. However, it's nothing more than imposing stereotype idea for María. The relationship with Diana has not gone well, and Diana tends to yell against her younger sister, but María keeps cool, and handing in the money which she received from the drug cartel as an advance, and she says in the line ②, "*Yo sirvo a casa* (At least I put in my share)" the original line implies how she thinks of her dedication to the family. From psychological point of view, we can understand from the original line that María thinks that she has dedicated sufficiently to family till now, and in case of the English subtitle implies also she has completed her obligation enough.

María is a very religious girl who often goes to a church alone and obeys what her mother or older sister obligates her, but once she decides to fly to New York as a drug mule, she changed and the expression which she used to hear 'for the family' doesn't make sense anymore.

For María, her own family has exploited her for long time, however, the stereotype concepts which were taught by the Catholic Church and the social and cultural structure which has been formed based on the concept, and her own family is also included in this structure.

So, the reason why she decided to be mule is not only helping the family but also leaving from the whole environment where she has belonged to.

#### 4. 5 Traditional concept- In case of Blanca

Here, we will briefly focus on the linguistic representation of Blanca, who is María's best friend and decides to travel to New York as a mule with María.

	English subtitle	The original Spanish line
㉓ Blanca	I talked to Franklin. I am going to be a mule, too.	Hablé con Franklin, me voy de mula con usted.
㉔ María	You did what?	¿Qué hizo qué?
㉕ Blanca	You heard me, why not.	Pues sí, lo que oyó, ¿por qué no?
㉖ María	Because you can't.	Porque no la va a aguantar.
㉗ Blanca	Yes, I can.	Sí que puedo.
㉘ María	What are you thinking?	Usted qué está pensando?
㉙ Blanca	It's five thousand dollars. You know how much that is in peso? <b>I figured it out. It's like ten million pesos. I can buy my family a house with that.</b>	Son cinco mil dolares, María. ¿Sabe cuántos son en pesos? Yo averigüé. Son como Diez millones de pesos. Con esos puedo comparar una casa para mi familia.
㉚ María	No Blanca, you are not going.	No, Blanca, no vas a ir.
㉛ Blanca	You know what. I can do what I want. I don't need your permission.	¿Sabes qué? yo hago lo que me da la gana. No necesito su permiso.
㉜ María	Do you know what you are saying? You have to tell them you are not doing it.	¿Usted sabe qué estás diciendo? ¿Blanca? Usted tiene que decirles que no va a ir ya.
㉝ Blanca	No. Anyway I can't now. I already said Yes.	De todas maneras, ya no puedo. Ya le dije que sí.

This is a scene where Blanca visits María's house, saying that she decides to be a drug mule like María.

It should be paid particular attention to the part in bold. For Blanca, her family is a top priority, and this scene represents a Colombian girl which has the opposite feeling for own family. She is a girl who grew up in a poor family, we can think that everyone wants to buy a house for her family regardless of religion or culture.

However, this scene represents not only the lack of awareness and shallowness of the girl, also the choice to engage in the smuggling drug put her life at risk

showing this scene represents not only the lack of awareness being involved in a crime but Blanca has the sense of *self-sacrifice* for family.

María needs to escape from "forced self-sacrifice", on the other hand, Blanca is willing to involve in "voluntary self-sacrifice" if she can get the money for her family, thus, their decisions seem to be the same however their feelings are in contrast.

The "sense of self-sacrifice" should be a universal sense that transcends over the differences of religions, cultures, and languages. However, it can be assumed that the "self-sacrifice for the family" which we can see in the lines of the main characters María and Blanca is rooted in the culture that raised them, thus, Catholic culture.

In order to understand where this "sense of good self-sacrifice" comes from, we go back to the Old Testament and the New Testament to find the origin of the sense of self-sacrifice, and how the original Christianity grasped "self-sacrifice".

#### 4. 6 Catholic "Spirit of Sacrifice" and its transformation

Ohara (2018) of Doshisha University argues and introduces that there was no "sense of self-sacrifice" in the original Christianity, but it is considered that the logic of sacrifice was formed in civilized societies over time. This "logic of sacrifice" was defined by Tetsuya Takahashi (2012) of the University of Tokyo in his book, what Takahashi indicated a case that a Catholic believer in Nagasaki regarded the atomic bomb not as "sacrifice" but as "blessing". This idea created controversy over Christian Churches.

Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki became the epicentre of the nuclear bomb fell by the US on 9<sup>th</sup> August of 1945. Many Catholics had lived around the Cathedral area at the time and the bomb led to result 8,000 of Catholic residences in the areas near the Cathedral were killed by the bombing. At that time, there was public opinion that the sacrifice of the Catholic's lives was divine punishment.

On the other hand, Dr Takashi Nagai, who was a medical doctor of Nagasaki University Hospital and a novelist at that time, described it as "blessing" instead of "punishment" in his later novel "Nagasaki no Kane (The Bell of Nagasaki)". Takahashi (2012) quoted the following statement of Nagai.

"It was a big "God-determined providence" that the atomic bomb fell on Urakami. Urakami must give thanks to God." (Omitted) The great sacrifice of the Urakami Cathedral area was chosen as a pure sheep as a compensation for the guilt of humankind in the World War, and that sacrifice led to the end of the war and thousands of people who were supposed to be lost have been saved. The sacrifice of 8,000 believers is "God's grace (Takahashi, 2012: 139-141)"

What should be noted here is that Nagai himself is Catholic and medical doctor himself who has seen how people were killed for the bomb but eventually he affirmed the atomic bomb, and the crucial point is he regarded what so many innocent people were sacrificed as noble matter. Of course, Nagai, as a doctor and a Catholic, he would have expressed the consolation to the bereaved families in this way, however, even so, it's possible to think that Nagai's expression shows that the thought of self-sacrifice as a virtue is manifested in Catholics.

On the other hand, Ohara of Doshisha University address the following two points, (1) *Atonement interpretation*, and (2) *A sense of solidarity at the last supper*, to interpret the concept of sacrifice in Christianity correctly.

"*Atonement interpretation*" is the idea that Jesus Christ chose to hang himself on the cross to make amends for the sins that human being has committed, and that is true self-sacrifice, and it forms the basis of Christian teaching.

Looking back on the custom of making "sacrifice" in Judaism, Jesus Christ made a break with his own sacrifice, and human beings no longer must make sacrifices, that is, a world without sacrifices. Christianity clearly states that it was ideal (Ohara, 2018: 6), and originally Christianity was a religion born with the purpose of "ending sacrifice," and Christianity does not justify anything but the sacrifice that Jesus made.

However, Ohara addresses that, after the *sacred and venerable sacrifice* by Jesus Christ, an interpretation which justifies self-sacrifice" was born with the passage of history, and that idea took root in our civilized societies. Therefore, the sacrifice of the Nagasaki's bomb survivors, such as Takashi Nagai, is regarded as a "blessing" and is handed down.

In other words, the concept of sacrifice as a virtue is a concept created by later Christians, such as Catholics and Protestants, and it's considered to be a

virtuous act as a consolation.

On the other hand, in the interpretation of (2) *A sense of solidarity at the Last Supper*, Ohara points out that this painting also represents "the purpose of forming a sense of solidarity that does not cause any sacrifice as a community" (Ohara, op.cit: 6-7).

It is generally accepted that Jesus Christ announced the betrayal of Judas in The Last Supper, but Jesus Christ, who thought of the hardships that the Twelve Apostles would experience in the future. The more common interpretation is that it was a ceremony performed to unite them and also to realize that they were not going to forget a sense of solidarity, but what Jesus Christ intended was to invite Gentiles, Samaritans, tax collectors, and even sinners, and Jesus make the Twelve Apostles a vow not to make sacrifices" in front of those who could have been sacrificed in traditional Judaism. This interpretation has certainly existed for a long time (Ohara, op.cit: 8).

In Judaism, sacrifices have always been used to maintain a sense of solidarity in community. In the book of Exodus, "Moses took half the blood of the bull of the animals and put it in the bowls: and the other half of he threw against the alter. Then he took the covenant in which the Lord's commands were written and read it to the people. They said, we will obey the Lord and do everything that he has commanded. Then Moses took the blood in the bowls and threw it on the people. He said, "This is the blood that seals the covenant which the LORD made with you when he gave all these commands." (Exodus, 24.18-18, Old Testament<sup>11</sup>).

The decisive difference between Christianity and Judaism is that Jesus defined that Christianity does not produce sacrifices.

However, there is also the idea that the logic of sacrifice which prevailed with history encouraged individuals to be sacrificed, and then it was lifted as a good story (Ohara, *ibid*).

However, returning to the Gospel of Matthew, it should be noted that the following passage is described as the story Jesus preached.

"If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not

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11 Old Testament, Bible.

leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew Gospel 18.10-14).

This suggests that what should be emphasized is individual, and "sacrifice for a group" or "sacrifice for a cause" does not exist in the original Christian teachings. The original idea was not creating sacrifice of the individual.

In this regard, the oldest Catholic church's Catechism has insisted on the importance of the family, but the interpretation that "sacrifice is a virtue" or the idea that it is unavoidable to sacrifice individuals for a large number of people does not originally exist and it has been interpreted by human being wrongly over the history.

It can be also interpreted that this Catholic thinking contributed to the creation of the idea "it is unavoidable to make a sacrifice for the sake of the family" in Latin America where has been suffering from permanent poverty.

By sacrificing María alone, the family can manage economically even a little bit better, thus, María's sacrifice would be a contribution to the family. As a result, María decides to leave from her family, which has been exploiting her practically, and she crosses the border with the US, María is "a lost sheep" referred in Matthew Gospel.

In other words, economic factors are not the only factor which draws young women like the protagonist into the world of drug smuggling, and behind the decision to get involved in such dangerous job there is a sense of dedication to the family. Also, it is thought that stereotyped ideas which formed and influenced by the social and cultural elements surrounding her, such as "contribution" and "self-sacrifice," are playing a major role unconsciously.

María is a girl who shows two conflicting elements, being obedient daughter and having been exploited by her own family, and those two elements are represented both in the image and the lines.

The job of smuggling drugs to the United States, not only allowed María to fulfill her traditional role as being obedient to the family, but also made her feel to be free in the US, where she recognized that she was liberated from

her own family.

However, the point which we should keep in mind here is that she intends to leave from the family, but it was only a change of the structure which exploits her, thus from the family to the drug cartel. And she doesn't realize that she could be a true victim any moment.

The drug cartel is an entity which takes advantage of unfortunate circumstances of a girl like María and continues to exploit someone, young girl. Now we take a look briefly one scene in which how the drug cartel exploits girls cruelly.

#### 4. 7 Transition of Exploitation

In the city of Bogota, María swallows 62 cocaine while a manager of the drug cartel is observing her. After that, the following expression comes out.

<p><b>A manager of the cartel</b></p>	<p>If any of what you're carrying get lost along the way or doesn't show up, we will go and have a little conversation with your grandmother, your mother, your sister, and little Pachito. We know exactly how much each one of those 62 pellets weighs. Understood?</p>	<p>Si lo que lleva se pierde en el camino o no aparece, vamos a su casa conversamos con su mamá, con su hermana, con Pachito. Sabemos exactamente cuánto pesa cada una de sesenta y dos pepas que llevas ahí. ¿Entendido?</p>
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While María is desperately trying to swallow large, sealed packets of cocaine, the manager of the drug cartel treats María very gently, but once the conversation starts, his tone of the voice turns to be harsh. María just listens to what the explains, which can be interpreted as a threat, and she gets on the flight to New York.

After that, we will see a scene where María is rewashing the packets of cocaine, which were discharged from the intestine over time to the lavatory on the plane and applies the toothpaste to swallow that smoothly again. This scene represents the fear of so many drug mules who have been exploited but trying to obey the drug cartel's threatening words.

And what is waiting for María as arrive at JFK is a strict and professional

immigration officers who detect possible drug mules from Latin America, who try to enter the US on a tourist visa. In order to detect drug mules like María, the current US immigration in airport takes X-ray exam to a suspicious person.

In this film María is forced to have two examinations, a urine and X-ray, but she can escape from the X-ray test because the urine test revealed that she was 3 months pregnant. She succeeds to pass through the immigration. Outside the airport, there was a car which the cartel organized to pick up the Colombian mules in order to carry them to NY. In fact, it was the start point of horrible and harsh exploitation for María.

Along with other Colombian mules, María is taken and trapped in a hotel to get the 62 swallowed packets of cocaine out of the body. There was another Mule, who has been already sick on her plane, and when they arrived at the hotel, she has lost her consciousness, and shortly afterward, the cartel kills her, and tried to remove all cocaine from her large intestine, then the cartel abandons her body in the city of New York. Facing to this situation, María finally realises that she is in a position to be exploited more than ever.

These scenes showing how drug cartel handles young female mules, and how JFK's immigration officers try to detect mules, indicate us that the drug mules are truly exploited and can be easily killed and buried in a brutal manner. Thus, it is a representation which manifests that drug mules are truly victims.

Carey (2014) points out that in Latin American research, Mule was not regarded as a "victim" and the focus itself tended to be underestimated. Carey also points out that research methods which took into account the social and family background of mules have used to be ignored for many years (Carey, op.cit: 197).

It is thought that there is certain difficulty of researching the real image of Mule and the difficulty led to such underestimation against the research. In fact, taking the steps of Mules who already crossed the border to the United States are out of the records because the mules usually end up in the prison

or are deported. Thus, only limited information such as the record of prison or statistical data is only left to use for the research (Carey, *ibid*), so that, due to the omission of information, it is difficult to deny that there are difficulties to focus on mules as academic research.

The original title of the film, "*María Full of Grace, Based on 1,000 true stories*" is a very ironic one, but María is a girl who seeks freedom leaving from her family's exploitation and what has shaped her, then tried to enter to the other world where it looks better than she has, but the new way is full of hardship, as an illegal immigrant. Most of the representations in this film does not make us feel optimistic, however it should be focused on what message we can get from María's representation which were created based on true stories.

It tells us that not only economic factors drive her to be a drug mule. Economic improvement is the strong purpose, but also her wish, thus, looking for a way to be free from what makes her be sacrificed also leads to engage in the dangerous job. As a result, in order to break through the status quo, she has to choose another form of exploitation, but María's representation keep showing us her guts to get over problems caused by the cartel in New York.

The final scene shows María decides not to go back to Colombia at the last moment when she was almost leaving the JFK Airport to Colombia with her best friend Blanca. María looks rather refreshing as returning to the NY city.

María's future in the United States is difficult. But, for the time being, she chose to release herself from her family, where she has been sacrificed herself.

It is a break from the structure which has continued to exploit her. What exploits herself is the environment in which she was born and raised, and the cultural and religious elements that have effect on her.

María escaped from her family and religious preconceptions which formed her identity, but another path to open her future had waited for her in the US. As the title of this film indicating, people who watch this film can't help hoping her better future, but her face in the ending of the film represents strength mentally which might be enough to live though forthcoming hardship in her future in the US.

## 5. Conclusion

Director of this film, Joshua Marston, states in an interview at the end of the DVD, "I want you to see it from the perspective of María", it makes us desperate due to her harsh circumstance. However, mules, who lives in a structure of exploitation and sacrifice like María, constantly exist in Latin America and the United States.

In looking from the side of US, María is just a criminal and poor illegal immigrant from Latin America, but from the other side, from Latin America, she is a devoted girl, who looks for a way to save her family and does not mind sacrifice herself for them.

However, this paper has been analyzed not from the perspective of recent US immigration policies, nor from the perspective of poverty that defends Latin America with respect to involving in the drug smuggling. To analyze the representations of illegal female immigrants who involved in the drug smuggling, it was needed to be exploring the roots of the way of thinking of mules; what elements lead young girls to the way of the drug smuggling.

The Catholic teaching was used for that purpose. Returning to "Catechism" to understand the verbal representation of her family, made us understand the relationship between the traditional conceptions which we can find in Catechism and the way of thinking of the family member of María.

What was derived from it is that the Catholic teaching regards the family as the most important issue and that obedience to parents is love for God, and it is possible to interpret that this concept led to create the thought that we should not hesitate to sacrifice oneself for the family willing to sacrifice for the family.

However, originally Christianity is a religion that does not allow such "sacrifice". In returning to the theological point of view, this interpretation of "sacrifice" can be interpreted that it was transformed by posterity depending on the situation, sometime to get own benefit. Sacrifice that María's family imposes on Mary has been done for them to get the economic stability.

Even though María wished to be released from her family, she chose the job of drug mule, because the classical concept of fulfilling her responsibilities as a member of the family certainly exists in the bottom of her thoughts.

People follow unconsciously the traditional and stereotyped concept that has formed the culture that has consciously repelled the status quo. Again, the classical Catholic teachings have been firmly formed according to the situation in Latin America, and it was shown in the movie.

"Crossing-border by swallowing 62 sealed packets of cocaine" does not lead María to a true liberation from the structure and the way of thinking that have exploited her. However, in the ending of this film, we recognize that forthcoming experiences in the American society will bring her opportunities to growth acquiring true strength.

Racial and immigration problems have surfaced during the Trump administration in the last four years, which made us realise the fact that American Society has entered in the era of transformation regarding the ethnic problems, such as hate crime against non-white people living as immigrants.

President Biden, who took over the position of head of American society would inherit the immigration policies of the Obama administration.

Furthermore, not only the number of Hispanic green card holders may increase, but also people in younger generation of Latin America may try to immigrate into US. The influx of people from Latin America will never stop, and we will see a new aspect of the United States in the respect of the composition of race inside US society.

What we have examined here is universal issue, not a limited problem between Latin America and the United States, it is possible to apply to all cultures, from undeveloped countries to developed countries.

It is quite difficult to do research about illegal immigrants because they care about not showing their status quo and refuse to talk about the relationship with the drug cartels that help them to cross the border, so taking interview from illegal immigrants who have been related with the cartels is much harder than any other case study research.

However, this film shows us the most eminent problems of Latin American women and illegal immigrants that we haven't known. And analysing the representation of line made us realise that people in Latin America Catholic teaching has stuck in mind of people and it has strong influence on their decision making.

As we have looked the lines of María, we can assume that she will continue to live her life as a Catholic, even if she changes her place of life and broke up with people who have sacrificed her, because the religion has created her ideology and gives her true strength to survive in the hardest society to live, New York.

There are so many female drug smugglers like María who succeeded in remaining in the US, but they are never counted as resident. In forthcoming research, it is worth to analyse much deeper about the representation of such illegal Latin American women who are struggled to survive inside the US society henceforward.

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