

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

MASTER THESIS

Muertas en vida

“The living-death [fem.]” Representations of necropolitics in Mexican cinema about feminicides

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the portrayal of necropolitics in Mexican cinema in relation to feminicides, utilizing the theoretical framework of Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics and Melisa Wright's application of this concept in the context of femicide. This study is motivated by the question of how the disappearance of women in Mexico has been addressed in films directed by women. The content analysis methodology is applied to two films: "Prayers for the Stolen" directed by Tatiana Huezo and "Noise" directed by Natalia Beristain. The findings of this study emphasize the contribution of these films to shedding light on Mexico's widespread, invisible violence. They reveal the latent violent aspects of women's gender performance, as well as the enduring violence experienced during the grieving process and bearing with absences. By investigating these themes, these films compel us to investigate the unseen monsters that exist within society — the threats that affect not only those directly involved in disappearances, but the entire community. This thesis exposes the oppressive forces of necropolitics that perpetuate the living-death experienced by women in Mexico by analyzing the selected films. The research highlights the urgent need to confront and resolve the systemic violence and impunity that allow femicide to continue. In addition, it emphasizes the significance of amplifying the voices and narratives of those affected, as depicted in these films, in order to provoke societal reflection and action.

Preface

Supervisor: Steffen Krüger (autum 2021 - spring 2023)

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Thanks to the University of Oslo, especially the Department of Media and Communication for give me the opportunity to study this program.

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Introduction

“The best thing you can be in Mexico is an ugly girl.”

Jennifer Clement J.

Can long hair kill you? Wearing red lipstick? Express your gender? Maybe, maybe not, is not a problem just in Mexico, women's freedom is a complicated subject, in my culture, I supposed to follow several beauty standards, but at the same time hide them in the streets, wearing big clothes that cover my body on the public transport, even if we are at 30 degrees; wear a cap in the streets to hide my long hair, walk with an umbrella on the hand, even if it is not raining just to have one on hand as a weapon; wear headphones without music, to block the verbal harassment but still be always aware of the environment; hide in the closest store if there's something suspicious in the environment. Careful with any male figure in a power position, your politeness can be misunderstood with flirting, if it so, blame yourself and apologize; never share real information, have a fake social accounts for general stuff and maybe a real one for really close friends. Never share your real address or phone number with strangers; share your live location all the time that you are out home; be pretty but not too much, smile but not too much, be a woman but not too much.

The inspiration of this project came from my own experience as a woman in Mexico. What I am sharing is just a small sample of advices collected as a girl born and raised there. This is not a victim point of view research, just the experience of being a woman in Mexico. We are raised and live in defense mood, when something happens is like a fallen soldier in an unfair battle ground, nobody should be threatened.

According to the Mexican National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), 27,234 women vanished in Mexico at the end of 2021¹; "las desaparecidas," or "the ones who vanish," are women deprived of their freedom, taken or kidnapped against their will, either for an organized crime or the state². Since 1964, the majority of missing women have been between the ages of 14 and 19, raising the possibility of human trafficking and sexual exploitation³. This issue is part of illicit activities in Mexico, particularly drug trafficking and organized crime. Women disappearing has become a national crisis, and the total of people who have vanished since 1964 is at least 100,000⁴; however the majority of the registered cases are after 2006, when Felipe Calderon's government initiated a military war against drug cartels⁵. From the large number, 24.7% of the cases are women, and less than 1% of the total received a criminal penalty; in other words, more than 99% of the cases since 1964 have been unpunished⁶. Films and documentaries that focus on the subject of women going missing can significantly contribute to spreading awareness, promoting positive social change, safeguarding memories, and empowering individuals who are directly impacted by the problem. Women disappearing has become a national crisis, and in this thesis, I will direct research on the topic addressed in films by women film directors.

Theoretical framework

¹ "Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas." Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas, n.d.

² "Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas." Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas, n.d.

³ Arenales,. "Más Femicidios y Desapariciones En México Revelan 'Una Realidad Que Las Autoridades No Quieren Ver.'"

⁴ Lopez, "Gone"

⁵ Astorga. *¿Qué querían que hiciera? Inseguridad y delincuencia organizada en el gobierno de Felipe Calderón*: 19-20

⁶ Noticias ONU. "México: Ante Los Más de 100.000 Desaparecidos, La ONU Insta al Gobierno a Combatir La Impunidad,"

For this research is important to have clear how the women disappearing belong to a larger category of gender violence: femicide. I will stick to the definition of Fergoso and Bejarano: "Femicide (or feminicidio) is the murder of women and girls founded on a gender power structure. Second, femicide is gender-based violence that is both public and private, implicating both the state (directly or indirectly) and individual perpetrators (private or state actors); it thus encompasses systematic, widespread and everyday interpersonal violence. Third, femicide is systemic violence rooted in social, political, economic and acultural inequalities⁷" This definition give the umbrella for the research an the further understanding of the acts of violence against women like the abduction or kidnaping of them and the implications of this, not just for the one that disappeared, but the relatives and the affections to the community.

For the matter, necropolitics is a another important concept to develop. The concept is from Achille Mbembe and draws on the Foucault's mechanism of biopower, complementing with a Postcolonialism perspective. Biopower for Foucault are the ways on how the power operates over the societies in terms of their biological and social life. Biopolitics is the described on practice, institutions like the government exercise this power with the this disposition of health care, security, societal norms that translate to regulate peoples behavior and bodies⁸. This concepts were developed by Michel Foucault reflecting on western european societies, and the case of the Nazi state as an extreme example on how this works. Achille Mbembe, Cameroonian philosopher argues that on the postcolonial look and research, the concept is of biopolitics is not enough to fully understand contemporary forms of submission to the death over life.

⁷ Fergoso, Rosa-Linda, and Cynthia Bejarano, eds. *Terrorizing women: Femicide in the Americas*: 5.

⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, *An Introduction*:140

Necropolitics, on Mbembe thinking, go further explainin the sate of colonies or the Other on the border; for example the state of slavery, where “the lost of a ‘home’, loss of rights over his or her body and loss political status [is a triple lost that put the person under] absolute domination, natal alienation ans social death.”⁹ The vision of slavery is explain how the biopower can be exercised throught manipulation and exploitation of death, a “contemporary form of subjugation of life to the power of death”¹⁰. Necropolitics examines how certain populations or groups are subjected to systematic violence, oppression, and even extermination, necropolitics is not only about physical violence and direct killing but also encompasses indirect forms of violence and social death. Either as a colony, form of slavery o the Other on the border, he refers Franz Fanon fo this matter; necropolitics involves practices like structural discrimination, economic exploitation, social exclusion, and the creation of conditions that make life unbearable or disposable for specific groups, a contemporary dissemination of the necropolitics and necropower. “...the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*. (...) under conditions of necropower, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred.”¹¹ concluded Mbembe on his text Necropolitics.

Mbembe developed the concept putting special attention to the role of death around the mechanism of power instead of the governability of the body. This reflection come over the institutions regulations access to health and justifying the right of life over the death of others. Melissa W. Wright, scholar on Latin American studies, bring the concept of Necropolitics to the case of feminicides in Mexico. Her

⁹ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. pp. 21

¹⁰ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. Pp. 39

¹¹ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. pp. 40

article "Necropolitics, narcopolitics, and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US border" put the Mbembe concept in the gender violence context; necropolitics, control the bodies in ways of who kills and who is the target, government should protect life in both ways, but is this relationship that is essential to understand the gender violence.¹² Thought interviews with political, corporate and activists leaders, and ethnographical material Wright offer an answer to the impunity of these crimes and the justification of the government of this apparently lack of action on these crimes; they justify the loss of people in favor of the war against drugs, as if it was what the population ask for. In organized crime, gender violence is central in this kind of necropolitics, the politics of death on this power relationship are significantly unfortunate for women, as gender violence is present in daily lives at the same time of survive the war against drugs that celebrate losses as a valid part process.¹³ Wright draws a conclusion on the efforts of antifemicide activists to demolish the idea that death is a sign of the government success over the war against drug gangs, however, something that is endeavor and must be discuss is the masculinity discourses that silence the citizens and leads to impunity. In addition, the patriarchal ideology that weighs in the government and the culture, fail to crack the biopolitics and necropolitics in the situation.¹⁴

The key concepts of femicide, biopolitics, and necropolitics apply on the context of Mexico and nourish the interpretation of the results of the content analysis and assist in drawing conclusions on the topic associated.

Literature review

¹² Wright, Melissa W. "Necropolitics, narcopolitics, and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US border." *Signs: journal of women in culture and society* 36, no. 3 (2011): 709

¹³ Wright, Melissa W. "Necropolitics, narcopolitics, and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US border." *Signs: journal of women in culture and society* 36, no. 3 (2011): 710

¹⁴ Wright, Melissa W. "Necropolitics, narcopolitics, and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US border." *Signs: journal of women in culture and society* 36, no. 3 (2011): 726

My research is an intersection of the topic of women disappearing in Mexico and the films that addressed this topic. People disappearing in Mexico is already a multifactorial topic that involves a political historical dimension, a sociological perspective, economical angle, psychological effects, and so on. Mexico has been increasing violence and the number of people disappearing in the last three decades, dealing now with more than 100,000 people missing at the moment¹⁵, The topic has been addressed in movies, mostly in documentaries, having the focus on specific cases like the case of Ciudad Juarez, the activist Marisela Escobedo, or the 43 students vanish in Ayotzinapa.

To begin with the keywords of this research, violence against women y/o femicides in Mexico has been a studied topic from different disciplines, in "Theories of femicide and their significance for social research." by Corradi, Consuelo, and others, explained how the english term was translate and apply to another dimensions of violence, and offer an interdisciplinary approach to case of Mexico.

Some books on the topic explore have recent historical documentation tried to offer some solutions to the topic like "MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands" by Rosa Linda Fregoso published in 2000, Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas edited by the same author in 2009, "The Femicide Mashing" by Sergio Gonzalez Rodriguez from 2012, "The war against women" by Rita Segato and more recently "The killing fields: Harvest of women" by Diana Washington Valdez from 2021 . These books give an overview and informative research on the violence against women and approach from different angles. Either in the whole American continent or specific cases like Ciudad Juarez in the Mexican border with US, they explain some of the cultural, political, and economic factors that have contributed to the epidemic of gender violence and

¹⁵ Lopez, "Gone."

femicide. A study from the news, from 2014 to 2017, analysed 2,527 articles on the topic of women disappearing in Mexico y/or femicides from three of most important news pappers in Mexico (El universal, Reforma and Excelsior) and they conclude that the narrative present a more negative portrait of the victim than the perpetrators¹⁶.

In the academic field, several academic articles analyze the portrayal of the issue of women disappearing in Mexico in popular culture, like the article "Gender, order, and femicide: Reading the popular culture of murder in Ciudad Juárez." by Volk, Steven, and Marian Schlotterbeck or "Cultural Representations of Femicidio at the US-Mexico Border" by Nuala Finnegan or relocated the cases to others than the Juarez case, like the work of Patricia M. Martin and Nohora Carvajal in "Femicide as 'act' and 'process': a geography of gendered violence in Oaxaca." who make a study in the southern of Mexico. Relevant conclusions are that media is an instrument used to give the issue a voice in the social sphere and cultural memory, evidence of gender violence, and bring out the impunity on the cases and the Mexican government's inability to provide justice and find a solution. On the other side, this research aided in the debate of victim stereotypes and dominant discourses and narratives on the subject.

Academic articles on the movies: Prayers from the stolen and Noise

The novel "Prayer from the Stolen" published in 2012 has been studied from several literary angles, both outside and inside the narrative. However, the film also has relevant academic analysis, such as Sarah Lehnerer's "Translocal Perspectives: Rural-Urban Dynamics in Tatiana Huezo's 'Prayers for the Stolen'" (2021), which examines the representation of rural-urban dynamics in the film and their way to associate to larger social and political issues in contemporary Mexico. The next is

¹⁶ Gutiérrez Aldrete, Mariana. "Marcos de femicidio en la prensa mexicana." (2020).

"The Politics of Daily Life in Tatiana Huezo's 'Prayers for the Stolen'" by Lisa Jarvinen (2021). This study examines how the film portrays the impact of violence on the daily lives of women and girls in rural Mexico. Sandra Gutiérrez's "The Image of the Invisible: The Role of Women in the Films of Tatiana Huezo" (2021) examines the portrayal of women in Huezo's films, notably "Prayers for the Stolen," and how they disrupt traditional gender norms and stereotypes. In "Fiction, Reality, and the Intersection of Both: An Study of Tatiana Huezo's 'Prayers for the Stolen'" by Paulina Suarez-Hesketh (2021), the author analyzes how the film blurs the lines between fiction and reality to make a striking statement on the topic of women disappearing in Mexico. This scholarly analysis of the film generates interest in discussing Tatiana Huezo's presentation of the theme of violence against women in rural Mexico, stereotypes, and her ability to translate her understanding of the real-life treatment of women into fiction with a noticeable effect.

For the movie *Noise*, the scholarly research surrounding *Noise* centered on various technical aspects that provide the film a new level of genre-appropriate intensity. "Tackling Gender-Based Violence through Film: An Analysis of 'Noise' by Natalia Beristáin" by Roxana Galusca (2021), examines how the film employs the psychological thriller genre to address the issue of gender-based violence in Mexico and how it contributes to a larger discourse on the subject. Similarly, in "The Sound of Silence: A Critical Study of 'Noise' by Natalia Beristáin" by Cristina Fernández-López (2021), the author analyzes how the use of sound and silence in the film adds to its portrayal of gender-based violence in Mexico. Same in "Sonic Feminisms and the Politics of Silence in Natalia Beristáin's 'Noise'" by Daniela Jauk (2021) - This essay analyzes how the film employs sound and silence to express the stories of women who have endured violence and how it contributes to a feminist discourse on the subject. On other hand, Edurne Portela's "Cinematic Representations of Women and Violence in Modern Mexico: An Study of 'Noise' by

Natalia Beristáin" (2021) examines the film's depiction of gender-based violence and how it reflects broader social and political issues in contemporary Mexico. The primary focus of these studies is the interpretation of aesthetic qualities of the film, particularly sound and its absence, in relation to political and social issues.

The research

I intend to investigate the portrayal and representation of femicide in contemporary film for my research. I will specifically examine the depiction of the disappearance of women within this concept in recent films. To limit the scope of my research, I have chosen to focus on Mexican films directed by women and released within the past three years. Using this selection method, I hope to capture a sampling of the cinematic landscape and investigate how female directors have chosen to address the pressing issue of femicide in their films. By analyzing these films, I hope to cast light on the various artistic and narrative decisions made by filmmakers in their attempts to address this grave social issue. I've identified two films that will be released between 2020 and 2022 based on the established parameters. The first film is "Prayers from the Stolen," which Tatiana Huezo directed. This film provides a window into the director's unique perspective on femicide and her artistic interpretation of the issue. "Noise," directed by Natalia Beristain, will be the focus of my second analysis. By analyzing this film, I intend to investigate Beristain's depiction of the disappearance of women within the context of femicide and how she contributes to the ongoing conversation about this lamentable reality. Through a comprehensive examination and analysis of these selected films, I expect to gain insight into the ways in which Mexican female directors are tackling the topic of femicide on the cinematic platform. By focusing on these recent works, my research hopes to contribute to a greater understanding

of the societal impact of femicide and the potential of film as a medium for raising awareness and fostering discussions on this crucial issue.

Methodology

In order to answer my research question, *how the topic of women disappearing in Mexico has been addressed in films by women film directors?* the methodology I employed for this study is content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Gillian Rose in her book "Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials" as a systematic and objective method for analyzing visual materials by examining their content and identifying patterns, themes, and meanings¹⁷. It requires a detailed examination of the visual elements, symbols, and messages present in the visuals and their interpretation within a larger social or cultural context. Content analysis can be applied to a variety of visual media, including films. According to Rose, the purpose of content analysis is to reveal the underlying meanings, ideologies, or representations contained within visual materials. Rose emphasizes that content analysis must be rigorous and systematic, with well-defined research questions and a predefined coding scheme or framework.¹⁸

Based on my research question and the preliminary exploration, I identified a sub research question to find the key coding categories that will capture the visual elements that I will analyze: *What is the topic of women disappearing in Mexico?* This will be explained in chapter one and the result of the coding framework. Then, in chapter two the content analysis of the movies will be present along with the results. Finally in, chapter three I will draw on the results and the interpretation of them with the theoretical framework previously explained, to answer the main

¹⁷ Rose, "Content Analysis and Cultural Analytics." pp. 85

¹⁸ Rose, "Content Analysis and Cultural Analytics." pp. 99

research question. With the method and structured described, I recommend to my reader to watch the movies, even though, I will provide a detail description of them, and the selected parts for the analysis, the experience of watching them will give a deeper insight for the upcoming chapters. Both movies are currently available on Netflix.¹⁹²⁰

¹⁹ Watch Prayers for the Stolen | Netflix Official Site. "Watch Prayers for the Stolen | Netflix Official Site," n.d. <https://www.netflix.com/title/81499072>

²⁰ Watch Noise | Netflix Official Site. "Watch Noise | Netflix Official Site," n.d. <https://www.netflix.com/title/81498010>.

Chapter I.

Women disappearing in Mexico

The phenomenon of women disappearing in Mexico is a profoundly alarming example of gender-based violence, specifically femicide. To examine comprehensively how this pressing issue has been addressed and portrayed in the aforementioned films, it is necessary to first establish the topic's context within the Mexican context. To provide a firm foundation for the analysis, the pertinent contemporary Mexican historical facts that have shaped the femicide landscape must be examined. By analyzing significant historical events, societal dynamics, and the actions of various stakeholders, we can gain insight into the underlying causes, contributing factors, and consequences of this pervasive problem. By conducting this historical analysis, we hope to gain a better understanding of the issue's multifaceted nature, the societal forces at play, and the systemic obstacles that perpetuate the disappearances of women. Although, this chapter will provide the coding framework for the analysis in the next chapter.

Ciudad Juarez' case

The topic of women disappearing has been addressed in different ways with the purpose of visibilizing the problem and making people conscious about it; making more people aware put pressure on the government to find solutions and act to protect their people. Even though the cases of women disappearing are across the country, there are some places of more concentrated violence, something that will be explained forward, but it was in the early 1990s where a group of activists showed in the local and national news about the women disappearing in Ciudad Juarez and the corpses found with signs of extreme violence on them²¹. This was a defining point in Mexico

²¹ Wright, Melissa W. "Necropolitics, narcopolitics, and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US border." *Signs: journal of women in culture and society* 36, no. 3 (2011): 707-731.

because of the international attention that this cough up. Some actions taken was the creation of the Special Comision to follow up on Femicide and the restructuration of the The National Commission on Human Rights in Mexico. However, like in other countries of Latin America, the narco-culture, organized crime and structural violence²², are normalized and are part of the institutions on the daily basis, as a result the Mexican society have a big list of problems to solve and women disappearing is just part of increased violence result of decades of curruption.

The National Commission on Human Rights in Mexico (CNDH) condem the crime of Missing people as:

“The disappearance of people, including forced disappearance²³, constitutes a multi-offensive violation of human rights, since in addition to causing irreparable damage to the victims, it causes suffering in their relatives by ignoring the final destination that they will suffer, generating fear for an indefinite period of time, and the uncertainty of knowing the whereabouts of their loved one, in addition to economic deterioration and physical and mental health. The practice implies depriving liberty and in many occasions of life.”²⁴

²² Corradi, Consuelo, Chaime Marcuello-Servós, Santiago Boira, and Shalva Weil. "Theories of femicide and their significance for social research." *Current sociology* 64, no. 7 (2016): 984

²³ Force disappearing is a legal category inside the disappearing of people and is definie as “an arrest, kidnapping, detention, or any other unrecognized form of deprivation of liberty carried out by State agents, that is, carried out by public servants, or by persons or groups acting with the authorization, support or approval of the State. Forced disappearance is characterized by the refusal of the authorities to recognize said deprivation of liberty and by the concealment of information about the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, thus preventing the victim from being protected by law.”

In [¿Qué es la desaparición forzada? | Secretaría de Gobernación | Gobierno | gob.mx](#)

²⁴ Original text: “La desaparición de personas, incluida la desaparición forzada, constituye una violación pluriofensiva de derechos humanos, toda vez que además de causar daños irreparables a las víctimas, provoca sufrimiento en sus familiares al ignorar el destino final que aquéllas correrán, generándoles por tiempo indefinido el temor y la incertidumbre de conocer el paradero de su ser

An abduction is a violent act that violates a human's right to freedom. This affected other areas including their family's search for them, the violence they face in pursuing legal action, and the threat to others around.

Mercedes Oliviera, an academic researcher and a member of the Center for Women's Rights and the Independent Women's Movement explains in her article "Violence Against Women and Mexico's Structural Crisis" how femicide and violence against women are components of Mexico's current structural crisis. Violence against women, is a naturalize part of the mexican cultural, coming form the inequalities between genders and the excessive poverty, unemployment, and social polarization caused by neoliberal policies. The author express "the cultural models for being a woman assign positions to women that subordinate them to the personal and institutionalized power of men, creating real and symbolic inequalities. These inequalities are expressed in direct or hidden messages, discriminatory actions and excluding omissions, lack of resources, limits on freedom and coercion, objectification, exploitation, self-depreciation, feelings of guilt and shame, deception, and false justifications"²⁵ With this ground, the problems can escalate to direct or indirect discriminatory actions, objectification, harassment, threats, abuse, or murder. Abduction and the fear of being abducted is just one of the many manifestations of violence against women in Mexico.

Femicide a concept proposed by Diana Russell, a feminist scholar and activist, in 1976, pointed out the rise of the homicides against woman so as to distinguish 'neutral gender' homicides from violence specifically enacted against women in a patriarchal society. Russell aimed to challenge and change the

querido, además de un deterioro económico y de salud física y mental. Su práctica implica la privación de la libertad y en muchas ocasiones de la vida."

In [Personas Desaparecidas](#)

²⁵ Oliviera, Mercedes. "Violencia femicida: Violence against women and Mexico's structural crisis." *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 2 (2006): 105

prevalent attitudes and structures that perpetuate violence against women by highlighting the gender-based motivations behind the killings and the broader societal context in which they occur.²⁶ In 1979, the United Nations defined femicide as a mechanism of domination, control, oppression, and power over women²⁷. Femicide is not just the murder of a woman, but the explicit and non explicit violent acts against a woman for being a woman reproducing gender relations of domination and subordination. The term "feminicidio" (the Spanish equivalent of femicide) has been used specifically to address the problem of excessive levels of violence against women in Mexico, the concept promoted by Marcela Lagarde in its explained as "Feminicidio (instead of femicidios) tends to be employed in Spanish as the one notion that best expresses the violent death of women and girls, because it incorporates the semantic field of connivance of state and public institutions as relevant factors in femicide"²⁸. In the 1990s, Mexican feminists and activists sought to draw attention to the alarming rates of violence against women by popularizing the term. In 2007, Mexico enacted the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence²⁹, which acknowledged and criminalized feminicidio as a separate offense. This law intended to improve protection and support for women and girls, as well as to promote femicide prevention, investigation, and punishment.

²⁶ Russell, Diana EH. "Femicide: Politicizing the killing of females." In *An opening panel discussion for the meeting was co-sponsored by the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) of the US Agency for International Development. The presentations are available at www.alianzaintercambios.org and www.igwg.org. The opinions presented in this report are those of the respective authors*, p. 26. 2008.

²⁷ UN, 1979

²⁸ Corradi, Consuelo, Chaime Marcuello-Servós, Santiago Boira, and Shalva Weil. "Theories of femicide and their significance for social research." *Current sociology* 64, no. 7 (2016): 984

²⁹ Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres. "Sobre La Ley General de Acceso de Las Mujeres a Una Vida Libre de Violencia." [gob.mx](http://www.gob.mx), April 5, 2023.

<http://www.gob.mx/inmujeres/prensa/sobre-la-ley-general-de-acceso-de-las-mujeres-a-una-vida-libre-de-violencia>.

The events refer in the early 1990s are the unresolved homicides and disappearances of women and girls that have occurred in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juárez. There are estimates ranging from several hundred to over a thousand victims. Numerous victims were youthful, destitute, and employed in the city's maquiladora industry. Many of the victims were sexually assaulted and mutilated³⁰. Human rights organizations and media channels began reporting on the case in the late 1990s, attracting international attention. Responses to these femicide incidents have generated controversy and criticism. The authorities have been accused of negligence, inadequate investigations, and a lack of accountability by activists, human rights organizations, and family members of the victims. There have been allegations of police corruption, evidence alteration, and perpetrator impunity. In their pursuit of justice, the families of the victims have encountered obstacles and frustrations. The National Commission on Human Rights in Mexico (CNDH) is a product of these case, and approved and authorized by The United Nations because of the international attention of the case. Even though, the place has been increasing the number of victims since everything became public in 1990s; since then the place is always in the most violent places for women in Mexico.³¹

In 2009, the government of Mexico established a special prosecutor's office in Ciudad Juárez to investigate femicide the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Women and for the Investigation of Femicides (Fiscalía Especial para los Delitos de Violencia contra las Mujeres y Trata de Personas - FEVIMTRA)³². This action was interpreted as a response to increasing domestic and international

³⁰ Valdez, Diana Washington. *The killing fields: Harvest of women*. Peace at the Border, 2021, p. 26.

³¹ Guillén, Beatriz. "Juárez, Femicida En Serie." *El País México*, January 30, 2022.

<https://elpais.com/mexico/2022-01-30/juarez-femicida-en-serie.html>.

³² República, Fiscalía General de la. "Fiscalía Especial Para Los Delitos de Violencia Contra Las Mujeres y Trata de Personas." *gob.mx*, n.d.

<http://www.gob.mx/fgr/acciones-y-programas/fiscalia-especial-para-los-delitos-de-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-y-trata-de-personas>.

pressure to resolve the problem and bring those responsible to justice. The new prosecutor's office was given the responsibility of investigating both old and new cases, as well as coordinating the efforts of federal, state, and local authorities. The Mexican government established a national program to prevent violence against women in 2011, which included measures to resolve the problem of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. The program aimed to enhance the investigation and prosecution of offenses against women, as well as to promote gender-based violence education and awareness³³. Despite these efforts, femicide has persisted in Ciudad Juárez, and most of cases remain unsolved. The government has not done enough to address the root causes of the problem, such as poverty, inequality, and corruption³⁴. In Mexico and around the world, activists and human rights organizations continue to advocate for justice and accountability on behalf of victims and their families³⁵.

This first section reveals four significant aspects of the disappearance of women in Mexico. The disappearance of a person affects the victim, their family, and the community. The disappearance of women is under the category of feminicidio because it involves direct gender violence and results from the normalization of gender inequality. Poverty, organized crime, and structural violence in Mexico are essential components of the battleground that has become the Mexican way of life. The topic has garnered attention due to the efforts of relatives of the victims and activists in Ciudad Juárez whom brought it to national and international attention.

The war against drugs

³³ Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres | Gobierno | gob.mx. "Comisión Nacional Para Prevenir y Erradicar La Violencia Contra Las Mujeres | Gobierno | Gob.Mx," n.d. <https://www.gob.mx/conavim>.

³⁴ Olivera, Mercedes. "Violencia femicida: Violence against women and Mexico's structural crisis." *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 2 (2006): 111

³⁵ Fregoso, Rosa Linda. "'We Want Them Alive!': The Politics and Culture of Human Rights." *Social Identities* 12, no. 2 (2006): 116

Over the whole country the number of people disappearing in Mexico increased dramatically after the War against drugs started in 2006 by former president Felipe Calderon³⁶. Calderon initiated a large military campaign against Mexican drug dealers during his presidency. The objective was cartel eradication and violence reduction. The growing domination and brutality of the cartels represented a threat to Mexican society, provoking this intervention. Tens of thousands of military and federal police were dispatched to hotspots for drug trafficking around the country. The explanation was that there were insufficient state police, therefore military assistance was required, but this decision made the intervention more problematic.³⁷ The next years, the campaign resulted in the capture of a large number of cartel leaders and considerable quantities of cocaine and firearms. However, the drug wars had negative consequences; in reaction to the military assault, the cartels increased their violence against civilians³⁸. At the same time, Mexico was charged with torture and unlawful homicides. According to some estimates, the drug war has cost Mexico billions of dollars in tourism earnings and investment. Drug cartels continue to dominate Mexico's drug trade despite government efforts. Some claim that, as a result of the detention of so many cartel leaders in those years, the cartels' structures have fragmented, leading to an increase in internal and external violence.³⁹

The drug war in Mexico has prompted discussions about the military's involvement in drug trafficking. The link between disappearances and the Mexican government's response to drug-related violence has been outlined. State officials or

³⁶ In Mexico, Nearly 100,000 People Are Missing - The New York Times. "In Mexico, Nearly 100,000 People Are Missing (Published 2021)," October 4, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/10/03/world/americas/mexico-missing-people.html>.

³⁷ Valdés, Guillermo. *Historia Del Narcotráfico En México*. Aguilar, 2013, p 558.

³⁸ Astorga, Luis. *¿Qué querían que hiciera? Inseguridad y delincuencia organizada en el gobierno de Felipe Calderón*. Grijalbo, 2015, pp54

³⁹ Valdés, Guillermo. *Historia Del Narcotráfico En México*. Aguilar, 2013, p 584.

others frequently abduct and vanish, individuals, ending in their presumed death. It was alleged that security forces were involved in disappearances or failed to investigate incidents⁴⁰. Moreover, criminal organizations employ enforced disappearances to intimidate local communities⁴¹. Since 2006, the number of enforced disappearances in Mexico has risen. The government established a national search commission to address the issue, but it remains a serious concern and has garnered international criticism. As we can see on the Figure 2 at the end of this chapter, the map published by the mentioned commission; it shows the percentage of people who vanish per state in Mexico in 2022.⁴² The continuous war on drugs has left a military presence in some areas of Mexico. The hostility and rivalry amongst cartels have created an environment of perpetual tension and mistrust between civilians and the local police and military. The map in Figure 1 illustrates the current situation of the cartels that rule Mexico and the disputed regions.⁴³

Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Morelos and Veracruz are the conflict zones where the majority of persons have disappeared, as evidenced by the comparisons between the two maps. And yet, even when cartels were not in combat, people continued to vanish, as we will see in the films we analyze. In both cases, either there are two cartels in conflict or one cartel is stable, and the disappearance of people is a component of their operations, an overview of the distribution of cartels on 2021 and were they

⁴⁰ Astorga, L. *¿Qué querían que hiciera? Inseguridad y delincuencia organizada en el gobierno de Felipe Calderón*, P. 176

⁴¹ Fisher, Steve. "‘We Need More Protection:’ Violence in Rural Mexico Ensnarers Doctors." *New York Times*, June 7, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/07/world/americas/mexico-violence-doctors.html>.

⁴² Derechos Humanos, Comisión Nacional de los. "Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas." *Personas Desaparecidas, Atención al Caso Ayotzinapa y Desapariciones Forzadas*, n.d. <http://informe.cndh.org.mx/menu.aspx?id=80062>.

⁴³ Beittel, June S. "Mexico: Organized crime and drug trafficking organizations." *Congressional Research Service* 3 (2021), p. 10.

operate in Mexico is shown in Figure 1 at the end of this chapter. From the total of people who disappeared until 2022, 24.7% of the cases are women⁴⁴ and the cases solve until 2022 is less than 1%⁴⁵. In addition, the number and the nature of this crime can be related to the drug flow in the country, “any analysis of gender-based homicides that does not examine the balloon effect in regard to instances of escalating violence in place-specific contexts forecloses opportunities to discuss the human effects of drug policies”⁴⁶

Since the 1990s, I already mentioned four special commissions for the cases of women disappearing and femicides, and a law promoted by the government that ensure women access to a life free of violence. In theory, Mexican government has been claiming to take action on the problem with this kind of initiatives, however the rising number of women disappeared,⁴⁷ shows that in practice, the commissions or specialized laws are not the solution. One famous case that shows this is Marisela Escobedo. Even if the murder of the victim or the ones guilty of their vanishing are identified, this does not guarantee their detention. A case famous product of the war against drug cartels and the activism of the mother of the victim was Marisela Escobedo. She was a Mexican activist who sought justice after her daughter, Rubi Marisol Frayre Escobedo, was murdered⁴⁸. Due to the failure of the justice system and the tragic events that followed Escobedo's pursuit of justice, the case received considerable attention in Mexico and internationally. In 2008, Sergio Barraza

⁴⁴ Noticias ONU. “México: Ante Los Más de 100.000 Desaparecidos, La ONU Insta al Gobierno a Combatir La Impunidad,” May 17, 2022. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/05/1508892>.

⁴⁵ Noticias ONU. “México: Ante Los Más de 100.000 Desaparecidos, La ONU Insta al Gobierno a Combatir La Impunidad,” May 17, 2022. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/05/1508892>.

⁴⁶ Agnew, “Reframing ‘Femicide’: Making Room for the Balloon Effect of Drug War Violence in Studying Female Homicides in Mexico and Central America.”: 443

⁴⁷ WOLA. “Mexico: 100,000 Disappeared and Missing People,” n.d. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/mexico-disappeared-and-missing-people/>.

⁴⁸ Paz-Mackay, María Soledad, and Argelia González Hurtado. “De crímenes de familia a crímenes de Estado. La figura de la madre en la lucha contra la violencia de género en Crímenes de familia (2020) y Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo (2020).” *Cuadernos del CILHA* 22, no. 1 (2021): 270

murdered Rubi Marisol Frayre Escobedo, the 16-year-old daughter of Marisela Escobedo. Barraza was released in 2009 despite the existence of strong evidence against him as a result of a lack of thorough investigation and mismanagement of the case.

In the search of justice, Marisela Escobedo became a prominent activist and outspoken critic of the Mexican justice system. She organized demonstrations, lobbied authorities, and tirelessly advocated for reopening the investigation. Her endeavors brought attention to the problem of femicide and gender-based violence in Mexico as a whole. Marisela Escobedo was tragically shot and murdered on December 16, 2010 outside the government palace in Chihuahua City, where she had been protesting. Her assassination shocked the nation and brought to light the dangers activists face and the inadequacies of the Mexican justice system⁴⁹. Her pursuit of justice resulted in tragedy, but her legacy continues to inspire others to fight for justice and bring attention to the issues women in Mexico confront.⁵⁰

The documentary “The three deaths of Marisela Escobedo” and similars are another strategy to rise the awareness of the problem. Media in diferente formats has been another tool to rise awareness and pressure the government to protect their people, their women. But, in the case of Mexico's drug war and the disappearances, the media has been criticized for sensationalism or to support the narco-propaganda spread between cartels and regions, media's coverage is influenced by political interests and that certain stories are suppressed or minimized so as not to offend influential figures.⁵¹ On the other hand, some media outlets and

⁴⁹ Swaine, “Mexico in Shock at Murder of Anti-Crime Campaigner.”

⁵⁰ Perez Osorio, Carlos, director. *Las Tres Muertes De Marisela Escobedo*. Vice Studios Latin America, Scpio, 2020. 1 hr., 50 min.

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/81002192?trackId=14277281&tctx=-97%2C-97%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2CVideo%3A81002192%2CdetailsPagePlayButton>.

⁵¹ Campbell, Howard. "Narco-propaganda in the Mexican “drug war” an anthropological perspective." *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 2 (2014): 64

journalists have been commended for their efforts to cast light on the issues and bring those responsible to justice, or other have labored to provide a platform for the voices of those affected by the violence and disappearances, using investigative journalism to expose corruption and human rights violations, but a lot of them have been murdered or forced to leave in their pursuit or light the truth.⁵²

From this second part, there are three important things to remark. The daily life is filled by tension because of the war against drugs on a national level. At the same time, the local conflicts result from that. The special commissions like CNDH⁵³ or the National Commission to prevent and eradicate violence against women⁵⁴ or explicit laws assuring women's access to a life free of violence⁵⁵ are not enough actions to solve the problem in practice.

Activists mothers

Marisela Escobedo and other Mexican mothers have had initiatives to solve the problem from other angles; Marisela Escobedo was not the only one to try to make justice for her daughter, there are several organizations across the country of mothers and relatives of someone missing doing searches for any clue of trace. Latin America already has a history of mothers taking action on their sons and daughters, like the case of the mothers from Plazo de Mayo in Argentina⁵⁶. Support

⁵² Rely, Jeannine E., and Celeste González de Bustamante. "Silencing Mexico: A study of influences on journalists in the Northern states." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19, no. 1 (2014): 111.

⁵³ Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos. "CNDH Funciones," 2023. <https://www.cndh.org.mx/cndh/funciones>.

⁵⁴ Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres | Gobierno | gob.mx. "Comisión Nacional Para Prevenir y Erradicar La Violencia Contra Las Mujeres | Gobierno | Gob.Mx," n.d. <https://www.gob.mx/conavim>.

⁵⁵ Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres. "Sobre La Ley General de Acceso de Las Mujeres a Una Vida Libre de Violencia." gob.mx, April 5, 2023. <http://www.gob.mx/inmujeres/prensa/sobre-la-ley-general-de-acceso-de-las-mujeres-a-una-vida-libre-de-violencia>.

⁵⁶ Bejarano, Cynthia L. "Las super madres de Latino America: Transforming motherhood by challenging violence in Mexico, Argentina, and El Salvador.": 128


groups of women searching for traces or clue of people disappearing is a comun practice in Mexico, is that so, that every state of the country has at least one searching group, mostly women and connect with the local prosecutors. They are not paid, and are groups that offers emotional support and consolation. However, their labor has some risk on dealing with the cartel and uncover their crimes, cases like Marisela Escobedo are product of this, even though the official authorities collaborate with them, there is still a resistance on them working by themselves on uncovering crime.

Media coverage and representations

The disappearance of women in Mexico has attracted international attention and prompted social and political groups demanding justice for the victims and their families. Many films, documentaries, and other forms of media have also addressed the problem, helping to raise awareness and promote social mobilization. Such examples are Lourdes Portillo's documentary "Missing young women,"⁵⁷ which examines the disappearance and death of hundreds of young women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, since the 1990s. The documentary investigates the social and political backdrop that has allowed these atrocities to go unpunished and the impact on the victims' families and communities. "Tempestad" Tatiana Huezo's documentary⁵⁸ centered on two Mexican mothers who had been separated from their families, although for two distinct causes but both of which served as examples of the repercussions of Mexico's widespread corruption. Marc Silver's 2016 documentary "Disappeared: Mexico's Lost Students" recounts the 2014 disappearance of 43 students from a teacher-training college in Ayotzinapa, Mexico,

⁵⁷ Portillo, Lourdes, dir. "Senorita extraviada" (Mexico: Xochitl Films, 2001) DVD.

⁵⁸ Huezo, Tatiana dir. "Tempestad" (Mexico: Pimienta Films, 2017)

 [Tempestad \(Tatiana Huezo, 2017\) / HD](#)

one of the most famous cases in the last years. The film uncovers the corruption and complicity between government officials, law enforcement, and organized crime that has fueled the disappearance epidemic in the country. The three deaths of Marisela Escobedo is another documentary about the case already described and that share in a popular streaming platforms as it is Netflix⁵⁹, the controversial case of Escobedo and her daughter.

Books and websites have been documenting the problem from an informative perspective and in aiming to prevent violence or alert the community around, where something has happened. One of the most relevance books in this way is the long investigation of Diana Washington Valdez "The Killing Fields: Harvest of Women" from 2006, she documented closely the case of Ciudad Juarez. It is a detail investigation on the cooperation and agreements between the local cartel, Mexican authorities and their economic conveniences with Colombian cartel and USA. Chihuahua became an area of impunity, generating a killing field as the title said⁶⁰. The author was threatened and put herself in danger with this investigation, the book has critics of lack of editing and poor writing, but the rush on the notes was because of the constant journalist threats around⁶¹. Another book "The Femicide Machine" by Sergio González Rodríguez, published in 2018, investigates the systemic violence against women in Mexico, particularly the epidemic of femicide⁶². This book does not emphasize on the case of Ciudad Juarez, but examines the historical, cultural, and political origins of this violence, as well as the Mexican government's reluctance to address the issue. The website "Borderland Beat" offers news and analysis regarding the drug war and organized crime in Mexico, as well as the

⁵⁹ "Streaming En México. ¿Cuál Es La Plataforma Número Uno En Nuestro País?"

⁶⁰ Valdez, Diana Washington. *The killing fields: Harvest of women*. Peace at the Border, 2021.

⁶¹ Oz Woloshyn and Mónica Ortiz Uribe, hosts, "A cross-border killer?" Pod Forgotten (podcast), June 2020, access May 2023, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5MrzfwySTrk5uE13eQ6tCa>

⁶² Rodríguez, Sergio González. *The femicide machine*. Vol. 11. MIT Press, 2012.

subject of disappearances. The website contains articles written by journalists, experts, and victims' families and campaigners⁶³. Other website with the initiative to inform about femicides is the initiative “Yo te nombro” a map of femicides⁶⁴, María Salguero created this as way to prevent danger in one state of Mexico (Estado de Mexico), and then it expanded to the country. The information is form the local news and aims to recognize the deaths of women that are not always classify as femicides by the government.

Media is an instrument used to give the issue a voice in the social sphere and cultural memory, evidence of gender violence, and bring out the impunity on the cases and the Mexican government's inability to provide justice and find a solution. On the other side, this research aided in the debate of victim stereotypes and dominant discourses and narratives on the subject. Media coverage, can be shape by the cartel or the politics of the place, not allowing the free acces of information to the population, at the same time, journalist are in high danger or even push to leave.

Coding Framework

This research question examines how the disappearance of women in Mexico has been addressed in recent Mexican films. The following chapter will use content analysis with a justifiable coding framework to address this query. By investigating the first part of the question, "How has the topic been addressed?", the chapter's conclusions will help define the topic of women's disappearance.

The topic identified can be summed up as follows:

⁶³ Prendido et al., “Borderland Beat.”

⁶⁴ “Los Femicidios En México.”

The Disappeared: The abduction of women affects not only the victims but also their families and poses an ongoing threat to the community as a result of the absence of justice and the prevalence of impunity surrounding these crimes. The disappearance of women is frequently categorized as femicide, a form of violence against women because they are women.

Factors of Geography and History: Significant factors related to feminicides and disappearances include historical cases such as Ciudad Juárez in the 1990s and the ongoing drug war that began in 2006. Local conflicts involving cartels, the government, and the presence of the military all contribute in various ways to the problem. In conjunction with corrupt authorities, the operational activities of cartels increase the dangers confronted by civilians.

Institutional Responses: In response to these crimes, the government has established special commissions at both the local and national levels to investigate them. In addition, laws have been passed to ensure the safety and security of women.

Non-Institutional Responses: Civilians and communities have also taken action as a form of activism regarding this issue. Mothers of the disappeared have conducted searches, coordinated protests, and disseminated information outside of official channels by using websites, articles, and books, documentaries, and films to document cases.

To provide a comprehensive analysis of how the topic has been addressed in film, each of these aspects will be analyzed. A thorough analysis can be conducted by defining the topic within the context of each film and providing a comprehensive response to the primary research question regarding how the topic has been addressed in recent Mexican films directed by women filmmakers.

Figures Chapter I



Figure 1. Mexican Cartel Territory and conflict zones. Notes: CJNG= Cartel Jalisco Nueva generacion
Congressional Research Service, June 07, 2022. Access May, 2023.
<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41576.pdf>

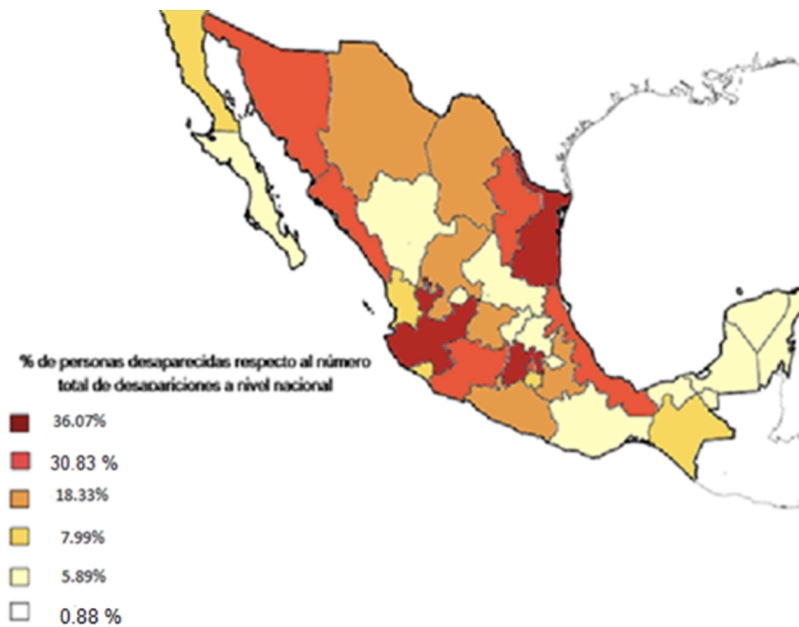


Figure 2. Map of percentages of people missing in relation to the total at national level. Registro Nacional de Personas Desaparecidas y No Localizadas por entidad federativa. 2022. Acces May 2023. <https://informe.cndh.org.mx/menu.aspx?id=80062>

Chapter II

Content analysis: “Prayers from the stolen” and “Noise”

This chapter will present a content analysis of the selected films using the framing code derived from the previous chapter. To provide a comprehensive analysis, each film's plot will be summarized in detail and divided into three acts for use when citing specific sequences. The content analysis will then be coded according to the four identified categories within the topic. The report will conclude with a summary of both films and their respective outcomes. Beginning with an overview of each film's plot, highlighting crucial events and developments, the narrative will be discussed. This will serve as the basis for the content analysis that follows. According to the four categories identified in the topic, the films will be analyzed and coded. A summary will be provided upon completion of the content analysis, capturing the substance of each film and its respective findings. This will provide insight into how the disappearance of women has been addressed in recent Mexican films directed by women. By conducting this content analysis and summarizing the films, it is possible to gain a thorough comprehension of the topic's treatment and exploration in these films. The findings will contribute to answering the primary research question and cast light on how the disappearance of women is portrayed and addressed in the context of these films.

Prayers from the stolen

The fiction is placed in a rural community in Guerrero where the community is under a local cartel group, and most of them work in the field for them. Ana, a young girl of eight years old, lives with her mother, Rita. The film begins with Ana and her mother excavating a hole in the ground large enough to accommodate Ana in it. Ana spends her time at school, with her two best friends, Maria and Paula, exploring nature and supporting her mother with household chores. Her father

works in the United States, as do many villagers' relatives; despite their efforts, they rarely communicate with him. The majority of the population works is in the harvested poppies for the Cartel up in the montains. Working for them provides protection. One day, a girl Juana, around Ana's age, is taken, followed by her dad; her mother leaves the town with the the little sister just after the abduction happened.

The military arrives in the town to distribute the Poppy poison, but they mistakenly distribute it everywhere except in the right location. Ana and one of her friends, Paula, get a new haircut after Juana's disappearance; they are told that is because of lice, but the intention is to make them look like young boys. Anas's mother is frequently irritated when Ana wears lipstick or if she is not at home when she is supposed to be. She taught Ana to hear carefully and distinguish distant sounds, such as cows in the field, dog, owls, and specially cars soming, SUVs, so they can be vigilant for possible dangers. The cartel threatens the school's professors, forcing them to leave unless they pay a fee. Ana and her friends pretend to read minds and stay linked in case of one of them goes missing unexpectedly. The current professor try to investigate what happened with Juana in a school meeting, but none of the parents, mostly mothers, said anything. Later that day, they SUVs arrive to the twon, Anas mother send her to hide, they hear the school teacher and an argument with them, then a couple of shots are heard.

Ana, at 13 years old, finally completes elementary school; Maria, her friend with the harelip, will undergo surgery thanks to a doctored campaign that arrives in town. In the salon, people comment on it, suddenly, the SUVs passed on the street in front of the place, they shot gunshots to the air; everyone hides and hugs, including the militars acors the street. "This is the new cartel," someone said, after the shock. Afterwards, there is a jaripeo in which Maria's brother Margarito participates, and everyone joins in for a dance afterwards. While returning home,

Ana and her mother discovered a girl's body hidden in the trees next to the road, with a message on her.

Anas's mom talks with Paulas mom, they know that they are not safe there. The next day, she tried to convince Ana's dad to take her with him to the USA. Ana listen the phone conversation and confront her mother "you want to hide me like a worm" Ana said, "you know what happened to the girls? Have you heard what they do the girls?" Rita answers. Ana runs after the argument and go to Marias place, they talk about it without fully understand, but Maria assure Ana that she wont go to her dad, then they found a scorpion that Ana trap in a bottle. Next day in the school, the professor is giving a lesson about the human body, ask them to make themselves with objects that they brought; Ana builds her body with stones in her heart, the scorpion in the bottle as her spine and an eraser for her sex. Ana occasionally hangs out with Margarito, Maria's brother. On other day, he show her his gun, and how to shot. The school professor along with poeple in the town install a bell to alert community close if theres danger coming or a porblem so they can help each other. No so long after that, the professor visits Anas house, to announce that he is leaving, Anas mom propose a dinner as in gratitude and as a farewell.

Ana and her friends are preparing for the event, they run into Margarito on the road, he is drinking beer and hanging out with some policemen. After it, Ana and her mom preparing food at her house heard some truck coming, Rita sends Ana to hide, and she takes quickly Anas belonging and hide them. Two men arrive armed to Anas's home and they state bluntly, "We are here for the girl." Anas's mother insists that she only has a boy and no girl is living there. One of them goes inside and searches the house and finds nothing, Ana see everything from her hole in the ground, they treath the woman and warn her that they will find the girl. They depart shooting at the entryway, Ana's mother goes laying on the ground to avoid the shots. She looks at Anas direction and run to her, stoping her to go out they hug

and cried together. Ana runs then to Marias house, and dont find her, then hear the people in town gathered and burning stuff at the entrance of the town, the professor directing the people to try to blok the entrance and protect the town, the bell is ringing, asking fo rhelp. Marias mom is crying close to the fire, Margarito is in shock. In the final scene, Ana, her mother, Paula and her mom are leaving the town in the back of a truck with more poeple. Anas tries to use the mindgame to communicate with Maria.

The movie is shot moslty with camara in hand style, and alternative open shots of the environment, the mountain range. The story is from Ana's point of view, almost the entire movie follows her, exept for the secuences that follows Margarito, as a complementary overview of how the town operate, and how he gets involved in the local illegal business.

Content analysis

Who disappeared?

The ones abducted in this movie are two girls, one that disappeared at the beginning of the movie, Ana's neighbor, Juana, and by the end of the movie, Maria, one of Ana's friends. The mother of Juana, whom Ana found after they take Juana, is shown after they took the girl, she is in shock and with rape scars. Later in the movie we found out that the family moved (the mother with a little girl) from the town, and the father, Pancho, was forced to disappear.

A way to show the absence of the ones taken and the effect on the main character, Ana, are the empty sandals. After Ana and her mom tried to communicate with her father on the mountain, Ana is sent home by her mom. She is carrying a jar of milk, and briefly plays with Margarito who spills the milk on the street and then Ana has to fill the jar of milk again. Ana is walking to Juana's house, the neighbor who has milk cows, she passes the cows, and when she is close to the door, she hears Juana's mom crying and calling her daughter's name, Ana stops and approaches quietly, then she sneaks and looks through the small space of the almost closed door, from her POV we see the legs of a woman with some blood and the pants down, she is wearing sandals (Figure 3); then Ana opens the door a little bit more, and we come back to her POV, she can see now Juana's mom sitting crying, bleeding and with the pants down, she looks at Ana's direction (the camera), and says "go home, Ana". Then Ana runs immediately. The shot after it, are the empty sandals of Ana next to her bed, and then a close-up with Ana in her bed, inside her blanket with the eyes open and a scared look.

Further in the movie, Ana visits Juana's house, now abandoned; on her way to Juana's bedroom, she picks up something from the ground full of mud; the next shot is her sitting on the bed and from her POV we see a picture on the floor, some clothes, a notebook, when the camera comes back to the shot of Ana, she is

sitting on the bed and puts a dirty sandal next to the one that was already there, on the side of the bed. On the shot we see Anas feet wearing sandals too, next to the red empty ones, Juana's sandals (Figure 4). The days pass and Ana come back to Juanas house, this time everything is closed, she see from the window towards were she left the sandals.

By the final act of the movie, after "them" tried to get Ana, and she is hiding in the ground, she runs to check on Maria, at her house. We follow a middle shot of Ana running to the camera, then a shot from the side when she goes into Marias house, she goes in, the camera then is place under the the bed, where we see Ana seeking something briefly, she goes out of the frame and the light coming in show an empty pair of sandals (Figure 5). The next shot is Ana walking in the street towards a noise and a big fire, people running around, and then she find Marias mom in shock, crying, huged by two other women, and Paula standing next to them.

What's the historical and geographical context?

The movie takes place in Guerrero, in a small town ruled by the cartel and were the main activity is the havervest of poppies fields. The place is what is know as a migrant village, because of the migration of usually the dads to United States and the women staying with the kids waiting for them to send money or communicate every now and then. One of the initial scenes of the movie is Ana and her mom on the top of the mountain trying to get signal to talk with Anas dad, then an open shot revel a larga group of poeple spreade in the mountain trying to do the same (Figure 5). As I showed in the map from the first chapter, Guerrero has been a place ruled by a local cartel and surrounded by the conflict of Cartel Jalisco Nuevo Generacion trying to gain that territory. In the movie, someone mentioned that there is a new cartel around, and that can be a reference of this conflicts. Guerrero is a place too were hig number of disappearances had happened, not the one with the

most but higher than the average. We can place the movie after the war against drugs started, because of this conflict of a new cartel trying to take over the place. Another reason is the military presence in the town, it was after this war started when the military presence started being more common in towns like this and some cities.

What are the institutional actions?

In the first part of the movie, there is a scene where Rita, Anas mom, fell asleep in front of the TV, the news are on and we can not hear the entire story, but the host explained something about an event where police act in corruption and she is concerned that they might be from federal authorities. This assumption refers to the ongoing belief that you can not trust local police, they are always corrupt, and federal and military authorities are harder to corrupt, as well as the marines. But, in several cases, this is not accurate and everybody might be a little bit or a lot involved with the cartels.

The presence of the military in the movie, are an institutional action, the government sent to keep the people safe and to spread the poison over the poppy fields as an effort to block the production of opiates, but as the people in town said, they throw poison everywhere except in the right place. Later in the movie, Paula gets sprayed with the poison in the town, she is walking on the streets and the helicopter sound increases, the poison is spread, and when Paula understands what is happening she starts running, the camera is in front of her, she finally goes into the classroom, and Maria and Ana guided her to the bathroom. Then from the mirror reflection we see how the two friends take out the clothes and wash her, Paula cries and we can see the visible burns on her skin that is turning red. The shots alternate from the full mirror to parts of the reflection, and some shots of parts of the body. The

scene sequence ends with Paula crying completely wet on the floor and Ana and Maria on each side of her comforting her (figure 6).

Another action show from the government is when the doctors come to the town, a temporary campaign to attend minor surgeries need it in response to the lack of hospitals or doctors in the place, as is said at the beginning; the only doctor in town is forced to leave for not paying the fee to the cartel to have the right to stay and do his labor.

What are the non institutional actions?

Hidden girls. The movie started with Ana and her mom digging a hole on the ground and trying to make Ana fit in there. During the movie are several symbols that indicated how dead is constant treated without showing explicit violence. These opening scene resembles to a body in a coffin or in a possum, and by this moment of the movie, we don't know what the hole is for. Throughout the movie, death is a close or a recurrent concept in their lives; there is another scene while they playing hide and seek, and Paula hides in a similar position as Ana in the described sequence; in the game, before they find Paula, Maria said the line "I know that you are there, you'll die" (28:02). Before the professor is shot in the first act of the movie, when Rita hear from far the confrontation, she send Ana to hide in her hole, an alternative shoot show Paula in a similar hole. Close to the end, we see the hole in the ground saving Ana to be taken, she hides there while they are searching the house. In order to stay with their families, they need to hide their existence or buried themselves alive.

Part of hide the gender of the girls, these is in part shown with the haircut and the fact that is forbidden were make up. After a day in the school, the three girls are in Paula's house, the scene is a shot where Ana and Paula are sitting one in front of the other and Paula is rubbing some beet on a box, she gives instructions

to Ana on how she should put her mouth, then the shot is from Paulas shoulder and Ana gets a piece of the beet rub on her lips, an alternative shot shows Maria sitting watching them, then we come back to Ana with red lips and she picks up a small mirror, Paula asks Maria if she wants to get make up too, and the camera looks at Maria saying yes, doubting. Then the shot is from Anas shoulder, and we see her reflection on the small mirror. The same mirror will be used when Ana goes and visits Maria, after a surgery for her harelip, they are 13 years old now. Ana is sitting next to Maria, who is lying in the bed hospital, she asks if she has pain, Maria says no with the head, when we have a head shot of Ana, who looks at Marias direction and says "You'll look pretty" and smile, she then proceeds to give her the little mirror, Maria takes it, and carefully takes out the bandage, then we have her POV and we see the reflection of the stitches under her nose; a last shot of Ana smiling, looking at her.

Ana and Paula get a haircut after Juana disappeared when they are 8 years, the same haircut that they will keep the rest of movie, and that Maria would get after her surgery. In the scene, we have an 8 years old Ana, looking at herself on the mirror of the hairstylist, the camera is showing the reflection of the mirror, the image is blurry on the corner, Paula is next to Ana getting the hair cut, we have alternative shots of Paula seeing how Ana is getting her haircut, and Anas mom. Slowly we can see the change on Anas face, the tears coming (figure 7), alternative shots of the hair on the floor, and the militars by the window. Then Paula crying on the same mirror, her mom is in the frame too, finally a shot of Ana, sitting in the middle of a red sofa, with light on her, a face of resignation, she looks through the window, and sees the militars outside.

Be extremely aware of the environment, Rita trained Ana to hear and know what sounds are there, where does they come from, like in the sequence where they are in their backyard, and Rita asks Ana to close her eyes and described what she is

listening and of course identify poison animals like the in second sequence of the movie. It has several close ups of insects, like ants, a type of mantis, butterflies, and then we see individual shots of Ana, Maria and Paula between leaves, whispering “yellow, black, yellow, red” they are looking to something on the ground, Paula gives the instruction “don't move, is poisonous”, and then a shot with the serpent moving towards in front of the camera. At the beginning of the movie, the night when Juana disappeared, we have a shot of Ana trying to sleep, the camera then show Ana on her bed and then we follow to what she is seeing, she finds a scorpion on her wall, then the camera show her again, who reacts turning on her side and covering briefly her head, she looks scared, then she is against her pillow and some animals are in the background. The next sequence is at the school, and some shots of objects in the classroom, we can distinguish kids talking and one of them said “The scorpion has a stinger to defend itself from its enemies.”

The non official channels of information in the community are show in different ways, in the first act of the movie, we have an open of people trying to communicate with their relatives by cellphone, and open shot of the people in the same spot of the mountain trying get signal, we know that is not a community with easy access to telephone signal. What is known in the town is information shared in the hairstyle place by the woman working there and as reunite spot for the women of the town, they share information, and is like a voice to voice information shared. There we find more details about the girl that disappeared; afterwards, when the military arrive, they shared the information there, like avoid the town when they are throwing the poppies poison except the poppies fields, or when they medical campaign arrive and the new cartel pass by shooting to the air and all of the women gather to protect each other.

Summary of results "Prayers from the stolen"

Who disappeared? Juana, around 6 years old and Maria, when she is 13 years old.

What is the geographical and historical context? The movie takes place in a small town in Guerrero, a place where the cartel rules and poppies field for the opiaces production. There's an ongoing conflict with other cartel there.

What are the institutional actions? the presence of local police and militars, who have the purpose of spread poison on the poppie fileds, and a campaing of temporary doctors doing local surgeries.

What are the non- institutional actions? Hidde the gender of the girls with haircuts and avoiding make up. Lear how to read the sounds and the environment, possessions animals or SUVs coming. Share important information with the community between people in the community, have alliances between mothers.

Noise

The movie follows Julia, a mother that is looking for her daughter, who disappeared nine months ago. At the beginning of the movie she is called to identify a body that could be her daughter, but at the initial interview, they realize that some important data was missing on the file (the tattoo on the arm of her daughter); then, they conclude that the body can not be same as her daughter's. After it, Julia goes to a support group with other women looking for a missing person, Julia express some details of the story of Ger, and the fact that day is 9 months since her disappearance. She express her feelings with the support group, how much she missed her daughter and her relationship with Ger's dad. April is a journalist that met Julia in the supportive group, she contacts Julia with a lawyer that has a good number of people found in similar situations. The lawyers sent back Julia to the place where Ger disappeared, claiming that in that area is a human trafficking point and she might know someone that have seen her.

She goes with April and evidence of the corruption between the police is shown, they had to pay illegal fees to be able to look in a truck with bodies if Ger is there, from there they follow the clue of a shelter where they might know something about Ger. When they arrive there, outside what they paid the police, they are left without "protection" because that's another territory. Almost the moment when they arrive they are kicked out because "she is making them angry with the questions and the search", they are sent to another shelter, the one with the priest. After finding the place, Julia and April look around, and even though they do not find Ger, they found a group of women supporting each other, raising kids and cooperating in the maintenance of the house. In a room in the shelter Julia finds an altar, there are some written prayers and more people missing on it.

Julia and April then joins a local group that look for relatives disappeared, doing what the authorities are not doing, on their words. They started in an open

field, eventually they found a hidden place in an abandoned house with some human rests, bones and teeth. April make interviews to the women participating in the search. After the day of work, the group share some food and music. After it, April share with Julia the news that she went viral because of all the articles that she has been publishing along with Julia's journey. On the bus on the way back home, some SUVs with people armed stop them, they come in to the bus with guns and started asking in a very aggressive way for IDs, when they see April, she is taken by force, even though April resists and fights against them, she is taken in a car. She yells her name and her profession to everybody in the bus, but with the threat of the guns and the tension in the environment, nobody fights for her, nobody does or says anything. Julia watched everything in shock.

When the bus arrives, Julia is desperate, cries and screams at the same fiscal on the Gers case, who was waiting for her there. He then warns her that "they" are asking for her too, that she is pissing people off. He then takes her to a building where they apparently found someone working for the ones that took her daughter. They are in an empty floor of a building. Julia takes a seat and he comes and sits in front of her, a guy around 20 years old, she shows a picture of Ger, and chats a little bit about the picture, then he suddenly just throws the bomb "stop looking for her, you won't find her". Julia reacts and makes questions about what happened. He answers "she had coke but not ours... and she was hot" Julia gets in shock, he then looks at the police around there and threatens them, it looks that it was a deal. The fiscal begged her to go out, and he would contact her about April.

Outside she melted and lost in the protest happening in the streets. The protest is about femicides and women disappearing. She stops to listen to the speech, puts the embroidery about Ger with other ones there, about other women missing. The crowd and the police start getting violent and the panic attacks; both sides started to be more and more violent. Julia gets lost in the crowd, the people running

and suddenly gets hit on the head and felt to ground. Someone help her to lift up, a girl that Julia follows, the last scene is the girl revealing that is Ger in an open field in front of Julia.

All of the movie follows Julia, and between the main story, that is Julia looking for her daughter. But outside the temporality of the movie we have some shots in between facts with Julia dressing a dark red shirt in an open field, the first one, just after meeting the new persecutor, there is a shot from far where we barely recognize Julia silhouette from far, and a mountain behind, and then a close up to her, covering her face. Then after she leaves Arturos house, theres another similar shot of her in the mountain with three different body shots. Then the next one is after they are ruch put from the shelter where they were asking for Ger. Then after Abril is taken. The last one is after the caos of the manifestation, Julia is hit and falls on the ground, someone gives her a hand and the step into the open field, then is revealed that is Ger, and from a long distance with a shot of both of them paralele on the hill the movie ends.

Content analysis

Who disappear?

The one that disappear in this movie is Ger, the daughter of Julia, the main character. She disappeared after a trip close the city, she is a graduate from psychology and decide to go on a small trip with two friends, as it is said and show in the last video that Ger sent to Julia that she looks in a loop (Figure 8). The last thing that they knew about her was that she was in a bar and took some drugs with her friends. Julia explained because of the drugs, the case was not taken seriously at the beggining.

What is the geographical and historical context?

From a historical perspective, it is important to note that the film was shot in San Luis Potos, a city in Mexico. During an interview, however, the film's director made a conscious decision not to expressly name any city within the fictional narrative. This decision was made to emphasize that the issue depicted in the film is a national issue that transcends specific cities and regions. By eliminating a location, the director intended to emphasize the generality of the issue of missing persons in Mexico⁶⁵. In addition, the director drew inspiration from actual cases that have occurred across the nation. For instance, the journalist April Escobedo works as a reference to the case of Maria Escobedo in the film (figure 9)⁶⁶. This conscious reference to an actual case demonstrates how the fictional story incorporates examples from different regions of Mexico. Therefore, the film depicts the essence of the national crisis surrounding missing persons, increasing the issue's urgency and significance. The decision to depict the film's events as a fictional story based on real-life examples demonstrates the director's desire to create a story that resonates with a wider audience. The film seeks to shed light on the magnitude of the problem and its impact on countless families across the country by combining elements from multiple cases. In this way, the film functions not only as a work of art but also as a powerful social commentary on a pressing issue that has profoundly affected all of Mexico.

What are the institutional actions?

The response of the government to the events presented in the film appeared initially insufficient. Julia and Arturo received an appointment to the Prosecutor, where they were asked to identify a corpse as the story progressed.

⁶⁵ “Ruido’, de Natalia Beristain, y Los Desaparecidos Que Son Parte de Nuestros Cuerpos.”

⁶⁶ Muñoz Uriarte, “Ruido: La Película de Un País Violento y En Guerra Con Sus Mujeres.”

However, upon arrival, they had to deal with a frustrating delay before discovering that vital identifying information, such as Ger's distinctive forearm tattoo, was missing from the official records. It became apparent that the proper identification procedure had not been followed, leaving the identity of the body unknown. Julia's anger grew as she became fixated on details, such as a man using his cellphone as a distraction, which exemplified the overall indifference and disrespect for her daughter's case. A new prosecutor was assigned to the case, signifying the third change in leadership while Ger remained missing, adding to her frustration. Julia found comfort in the fact that Ger's case files were being frequently updated, despite the difficulty in establishing a consistent point contact due to the constant change of prosecutors.

As the film progressed, Abril introduced Julia to a lawyer who had experience locating missing individuals in similar circumstances to Ger's. During their initial discussion, the attorney asked Julia if the government had offered her money to cease her pressure and advocacy. Having no idea of this offer, Julia responded negatively with surprise and disbelief. The attorney provided counsel and assistance as they began a new investigation in the area where Ger had vanished. This collaboration gave Julia renewed optimism and resolve in her search, she has the fame to find missing people, as it is show on the wall of her office (Figure 10).

In the film's climax, the prosecutor eventually made a breakthrough and identified a suspect associated with Ger's case. While this individual would not be brought into custody immediately, the prosecutor offered Julia the chance to confront him, providing an opportunity to learn the truth about Ger's fate. This turning point in the investigation was marked by Julia's desire for closure and resolution.

In the concluding scenes of the film, the government institution tried to control the disturbances caused by public protests and demonstrations. As tensions escalated, the prosecutors began collaborating closely with the search groups, recognizing the significance of community-based initiatives. Despite the fact that the search efforts originated mainly from the community, the results of these searches were analyzed and collected in collaboration with the respective prosecution, showing the possibility of cooperation and coordination between the institution and the community-based movement.

What are the non-institutional actions?

Julia took a difficult journey in search of her missing daughter. She embarked on a difficult journey to locate her, accompanied by a group of strong and resilient women. They formed a close-knit community by attending a support group for embroiderers where women shared their heartbreaking stories of missing loved ones. These women found solace and consolation in their shared experiences at this gathering (Figure 11).

Julia met Abril, a compassionate reporter who was profoundly moved by the stories she heard, during one of these support group meetings. Abril felt compelled to aid Julia in her quest after being impressed by her unflinching resolve. She connected Julia with a legal counsel who specialized in missing person cases, offering advice and assistance in their search.

As the search for Ger increased, Julia and Abril embarked on a voyage filled with unanticipated obstacles and revelations. Julia meticulously detailed their findings and drew attention to their mission by writing articles for each stage of their journey. She hoped to raise awareness and gather support for their cause by shedding light on the desperate situation encountered by countless families searching for their missing loved ones.

In their persistent pursuit, Julia encountered many obstacles, including the need to navigate a complex web of legal procedures and bureaucracy. She paid illegal fees to local authorities in the area where Ger disappeared in order to gain access to vital information and a truck suspected of transporting unidentified corpses. Julia's perseverance compelled her to investigate every avenue, regardless of the risks.

In the course of their search, Julia and Abril also visited two shelters, where they encountered women in precarious circumstances. Observing the dire circumstances these individuals were experiencing only strengthened their resolve to locate Ger. They reached out to these women with empathy and compassion, offering support and joining forces with the local group dedicated to locating missing relatives. By joining this group, Julia and Abril hoped to combine their efforts and resources in their search for answers (figure 12).

Throughout this arduous voyage, Julia's tenacity and unyielding spirit remained unwavering. She persisted, sharing her story and enlisting aid in her mission to locate her daughter. She became an advocate for change as she drew attention to the plight of missing persons with each step.

Summary of results Noise

Who disappeared? Ger, daughter of Julia.

Whats the geographical and historical context? The movies takes place anywhere in Mexico, and have a tribute to the activist Marisela Escobedo.

What are the instituional actions? There is a prosecutor following Ger case, he found someone involve in the disappearance. The lawyer that gives a guided path to Julia, to keep nvestigating the disappearance. The goverment effort to control the disturbances of the protests.

What are the non institutional actions? Embroidery support group, the new search of Julia to Ger, the journalist Abirl documenting everything, the payment of illegal fees to keep having more clues and places to search, the joining of the search group and finally, the protests.

Conclusions of the chapter

The films investigated deeply into the topic at hand, meticulously investigating and selecting various aspects of the narrative and story. Additionally, details on the on the production process have been provided, giving insight into the creative choices and efforts made to bring these stories to the screen. Different perspectives on the general subject of missing persons in a society troubled by their unsettling disappearances identify these films.

In one of the films, a young girl struggles with the difficult task of comprehending her hostile surroundings, in which females vanish without a trace. This perspective enables the audience to observe the effects of these disappearances on the lives of the younger generation, revealing the profound sense of confusion, fear, and vulnerability felt by those left behind. Through the eyes of this young protagonist, the film examines the larger social context in which these disappearances occur, capturing the essence of the non spoken crisis of the community.

In contrast, the second film portrays the heartbreaking journey of a mother seeking desperately for her missing daughter. This viewpoint offers a profoundly individual and emotionally difficult perspective on the topic. The audience is taken on an absorbing and heart-wrenching journey, witnessing the mother's stubborn determination and resiliency as she overcomes various challenges and obstacles. This perspective allows for a profound exploration of the human experience, providing an intimate representation of the sorrow, hope, and relentless pursuit of answers that characterize a parent's search for their missing child.

By presenting these various perspectives, the films provide a thorough and multifaceted examination of the issue of missing persons. Each film offers a distinct viewpoint, casting light on various facets of the issue and inviting viewers to consider the broader societal implications. Together, they contribute to a deeper

comprehension of the complex and deeply troubling reality that countless families and communities affected by these disappearances must confront. Through their unique perspectives and narratives, these films aim to raise awareness, elicit empathy, and spark meaningful conversations about the issue of missing persons. They provide a more nuanced depiction of the human toll, societal challenges, and the imperative need for collective action to address this pressing national concern by providing these diverse perspectives.

Figures Chapter II



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

Chapter 3.

Analysis of results

How is the topic addressed in the movies?

First, those who have vanished fall under the concept of femicide, which is discussed in the introductory section. The two females who vanish in "Prayers from the Stolen" are taken because they are women (girls). This is a recurring theme throughout the film, as well as a major effort to cover up the girl's gender in the community. As these abductions are a form of gender-based violence, they are a form of interpersonal and covert harassment based on the manifestation of gender. In the second film, the revelation of Ger's disappearance is both shocking and a confirmation of an invisible threat; she was abducted for possessing cocaine, but not from the locals, as described by the aggressor; when Julia minimizes this detail, the aggressor remarks, "also, she was hot." In the original dialogue, he used the phrase "ademas, estaba buena" to describe women as if they were food or a well-made object. The simplicity and carelessness with which the man said it causes Julia to be in a state of shock (figure 14), and her reaction and the entire sequence that follows reveals how she feels overwhelmed and shocked by the words, the reason of what happened with Ger. Ger disappeared because she was an attractive woman (figure 8, 13) who was considered an object and taken with a minimal excuse. For this, Wright in her article previously quoted, said "The government's discourse of drug violence rests on a blame-the-victim strategy that, like the discourse of public women, relies on the gendering of the public sphere to tell the following tale: Drug violence is an outcome of the disputes internal to the drug trade that emerge when competition over markets, resources, alliances, and political protection develops"⁶⁷ In that way, violence from the drug gangs justify by the government discourse, is a

⁶⁷ Wright, "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border.": 720

violent way to threat competition in the business, but the victims then inside this kind violence, in way were involved. The ones that took Ger justify that it was because she was caring product from others, and Julia explained too in her meeting with Abril, that the fact that Ger was last seen in a bar having fun was a factor for the polic to take the case seriously and started the process of searching. It is not specify how much of cocaine was caring Ger, but just the fact of having it, her disappearance and confirm murder, is justify by the goverment for being someone in the trade, as a consumer. As Wring analyse in her article, this kind onf view of the mafia as rational, business man circulated in media in the 90s and became a popular discourse form the Mexican government. Then she proceeds to explain how the next explanation before the war agianst drugs started, were that the conflict betewen cartels exclude civialians and tourist, unless you were involve.⁶⁸ Cases like Ger, are all over the country and the recent declarations are that the killing and dissapering is a positive aspects, as the cartels continuing killed each other until there is no more remains of them.⁶⁹ The necropolitics in this situation is the disarm civilians that are just living their lifes, as Ger did in a small trip after she graduates of Psychology, and the dismiss on the case because of the consume of legal and illegal substances, the perpretaror said it, her apparence influence their decision and the casualty of be there with product that was not local.

For this matter, the situation of Abril is something similar, she was abducted even though she was not consuming any product from the competition. The episode happened on public transport and the action is directly on her. the fact that she was writing the pad of Julia on the matter of finding her daughter, and similar stories put her on the spotlight, and became a target too. As Wright detail in her

⁶⁸ Wright, "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border.": 721

⁶⁹ Wright, "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border.": 724

article, that journalist in Mexico do not sign many of their articles, information about cartels and drug dealers have a lot of violent responses that the documentation on the topic needs to be on anonymous channels. Abril's abduction, and the reference to Marisela Escobedo, is the threat of that activism and outspoken on the topics are other reasons to be a target, chase, even in public spaces. The hostility and the tension, makes other civilians go into the living-death state too, as more than what can do at the moment of action, their lives are threatened, so the passivity as a death-world⁷⁰ is the only answer to stay alive.

Maria's harelip is another important detail from the movies that is important to go deeper; when Ana and Paula were 6 years old, Maria did not get a haircut because the type of her blood was not good for lice, and it was only after her surgery to correct this, at age 13, that she received the boys haircut that everybody has. Here are two explanations: first, her brother Margarito's gradual involvement with the cartel throughout the years of the film, and Maria's non-hegemonic appearance could be a means to keep her safe from them. But, after she receives the surgery, they are already aware of her existence, so it was only a matter of time before they took her, either with the short hair or with Ana and Paula, after they were seen with Maria. To reflect this evolution and the conflict on the moment to express their gender, the mirror serves as the inner conflict reflection. The mirrors that appear in the film are either small blurry, or obscured by something in the frame. In the context of the film, the mirrors may represent the characters' efforts to comprehend themselves and their position within the community. The mirrors represent their efforts to confront the self-perspective of themselves and how the absence of information of the entire picture makes their placement in the world blurry, small, and incomplete; they reflect themselves without truly recognizing them and their position or function.

⁷⁰ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. pp. 40

Ana for example, in the scene where Paula puts beet on her lips imitating lipstick (figure 15), the conversation is about how adults kiss, in a way playing to be that kind of adults, and Maria is in line to get "make up" too; later that day, when Rita see Ana's lips reacted very angry and send her to wash her face, she said "I already told you that you are not allowed to do that and it is forbidden to touch my stuff" implying that is not the first time. (Figure 7) Then, the mirror in the hairstylist's salon, where the blurry scene of Ana getting a haircut can be seen, with Ana looking at herself while her hair is being cut, and tears slowly running down her face. The same mirror that appears when they play to wear make-up when they were 6 years old is the same small mirror that Ana give to Maria in the recovery of her surgery. When Maria removes her bandage and looks in the mirror, Ana says "you'll look pretty" (figure 16) without realizing this was condemn, as she passes to look "normal" she becomes a candidate for abduction. Although, if we set down the biopower and biopolitics concepts of Foucault in this case, is the lack of doctors that keep Maria with harelip until she was 13, and then the availability of them, provided by the government campaign, that bring her on the spotlight again. Even though, is not specific if it was the surgery what make her a target, there are some indication of it, like why she got the boy-haircut after the surgery. So, her body, her harelip was something shape and control by the disposition or not of the medical attention close to her. The next step then, is the necropolitcs, they have a recognition as a hidden gender, is on this what their depends on, even if they do not fully undestard. They need to be well hide, even when the militaries are there, one of the advices at the school, is not to look at the militars to eyes, since they are close to the cartel, is better to pass unnoticed.

The empty sandals are the absence of their owners, the victims, the grils that were taken, but for this context to is reminder of that possible danger, the inestability of the place and the treat to Ana and similars. The movie show with this

the sense of loss, and the impact on the others, specially Ana as a little girl that do not have the entire picture, and she reads and interpret that kind of traces. The same when she asked her mom why if Jauna's mom left, along with her family, leaved everything on the table, ready to be eaten and her mom answered "That's how is done, people leave everything as if they will come back one day". In a way, is when they do not really close the chapter, they have to run from a place to another, the necropolitics of this, is to have the threat so close, that like Mbebe explained with the slaovory situation, is a lost on their home, the rights on their body, because of the force displacement , and then their political statutes; since the poeple in this town migrate to the States, their lost a political statutes, becmoing ilegal crosing the border. There can be interpreted as ways to show the resilience and resistance from the community, but it puts them in a state of living death⁷¹.

Historical and geographical context

Tatiana Huezo has discussed her film based on Jennifer Clement's book "Prayer from the Stolen" in numerous interviews. The book describes the lives of three Mexican women in a hostile environment. Tatiana Huezo has predominantly worked in documentary filmmaking, so this is her first exploration into fiction. As a result, she insisted on including scenes showing the internal operations of the Cartel, including the collection of opium, the weighing of the product, and Margarito's diverse works within it. She simultaneously investigated the relationship between the females and their environment. She attempted to imitate aspects of her own daughter's behavior, such as her interactions and playtime with peers, by drawing on her motherhood experiences. The film's script and perspective centered on the innocence of a young girl navigating a dangerous environment. Similar to her approach in documentaries, Huezo established personal relationships with the

⁷¹ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. pp. 40

actors and incorporated aspects of their actual lives into their characters. She incorporated, for instance, the fact that many people from rural areas have numerous relatives residing in the United States. The duration of photography was approximately three years, and the film sought to answer the question, "What does it mean to be a woman in a violent context?" The three girls in the film are on the verge of womanhood, but they must conceal their femininity in order to survive. Huezo delved deeper into the theme of violence, depicting it as an invisible creature and emphasizing the ever-present danger of losing a daughter. The film assumes a horror film-like quality through the use of silence and specific sounds. The girls observe everything but are unaware of its complete scope. The film depicts the reality of many communities in Mexico, which are ruled by cartels and plagued by human trafficking, with countless females going missing. The film avoids portraying the victims and their families as victims by humanizing them. Instead, it features real women who discover their own solutions within their own realities. Due to the actual danger in Guerrero, the filming took place in Queretaro, even though the plot is set there. The settlement depicted in the film is referred to as a migrant village and is comprised of a large number of abandoned homes, a common occurrence in rural Mexico. In a separate interview, Huezo discussed adolescent resistance and the necessity of confronting violence in order to comprehend the situation. The film attempts to evoke a variety of emotions and uses cinematography and sound design to create an additional character within the narrative⁷²

In interviews, the film director Natalia Beristain has discussed the difficulties of tackling the subject of disappearances over a four-year period, beginning with her initial research when the number was still increasing. During the production of her previous film, she conceived the idea for this film, which was officially launched in

⁷² Acuña Navarajo, "Noche de Fuego: Una Historia Más Allá de La Tragedia. Entrevista a Tatiana Huezo."

2017. Beristain immersed herself in search groups in the film's location, San Luis Potos. She was trying to convey the profound uncertainty felt when someone vanishes, the lack of closure caused by the absence of a grave or the opportunity for a formal farewell ceremony. This film's protagonist's voyage is intended to demonstrate how others are affected by the protagonist's disappearance, highlighting the profound love between family members, especially a mother's love for her daughter. The film also attempts to depict the collective support and assistance that has emerged within society as a result of this circumstance. Natalia Beristain visited numerous organizations involved in the search and witnessed the development of open support networks. She views this as a tribute to the bonds forged during wartime. In order to portray this dynamic realistically, Beristain decided not to use actresses in the scenes depicting the search party. Instead, she invited the actual members of these organizations to appear in the film, highlighting their actual interactions and the strong bonds they've developed as a group. This includes sharing meals, dancing, having serious conversations, and being there for one another. Therefore, in sequences where human remains are discovered in abandoned houses, the emphasis is placed more on capturing the group's dynamic than on the routine discovery of human remains. The film intends to communicate the notion that individuals are not alone in their struggles and that they can find support in a community.⁷³

The characters' perspectives determine the difference in perspective between the two narratives. In the first film, Ana, a young girl who may have been abducted against her will, functions as the protagonist. The narrative transpires through the lens of Ana's violent surroundings. Not only does Ana lack comprehension of the situation's larger context, but so do the adults in the community. Their sense of

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[▶ Ruido | Natalia Beristain : "No solo está mi madre, está mi padre, mi hermano, todos s...](#)

[▶ Detrás de cámaras con las creadoras de la historia | Ruido](#)

security is centered on preserving their own lives and protecting the young.

Through Ana's perspective, we acquire information about the location and observe her inquiries and complaints. Even Ana's mother appears to have only a partial understanding of the truth. She knows enough to safeguard herself and her daughter, but a constant feeling of insecurity compels her to drink in order to cope.

This film differs from others by focusing on a juvenile girl growing up in a drug dealer-controlled environment. In contrast, "Noise" follows Julia, a mother who begins searching for her daughter nine months after her abduction. The film introduces Abril, a journalist who accompanies Julia on her search in San Luis Potosi, a significant city in Mexico that, like much of the country, is under the control of drug traffickers. Abril becomes a victim of abduction while attempting to write an article on the subject, alluding to the actual experience of journalist Maria Escobedo, as described in the film's opening chapter. From a narrative perspective, both films feature a female protagonist in distinct settings: one in the city and the other in the country. Ana, a young girl and prospective victim who is abducted early in the film, assumes a role distinct from those of the other characters. In contrast, Julia is the mother of a victim in the city and confronts the kidnapping of a younger friend near the end of the film. The films cast light on the perspectives of those impacted by the recurrent abduction of women through the use of these distinct narratives.

Both Ana and Julia, are living in a living-death⁷⁴ situation, the historical and geographical background, reach the point where the daily life in a rural community or in the city, have the strong threat of violence and death. The environment claims to and impunity on the cases, Ana and the people in town knew who took Juana and then Maria; same case for Julia when she meets one of the involves that recognize Ger and what happened with her, And in this hostile environment, impunity is one key to make the living death world. The pressure on the government about the

⁷⁴ Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. pp. 40

impunity of the cases start rising in 2001 with protests, documentation on cases by different media and have roots on the normalizacion of the violence as part of the mexican culture⁷⁵ knowing that the political protection are not an option, this has became one of the major thing to fight for, not only matter or safety but go against impunity, the percentages of solves cases is insanely low, les than 1%, even for stadistic, the number should be higher.

The role of institutions

The institutional actions represented in both films cast light on the presence of political power and, to a certain extent, the inadequacy of current solutions. Both films show cases of cooperation between law enforcement and Cartels, as well as with locals. The feeling of tension permeates both directions. As a new cartel makes their presence known by discharging gunshots into the air, the military personnel in one instance seek refuge like the women in the hairstylist's salon, mirroring the scene. This exemplifies the blurred lines between safety and danger in which the military presence, rather than providing protection, becomes unsettling.

Similarly, in "Noise," the police that Julia pays to gain access to a truck containing dead bodies initially cooperate, but later demonstrate hesitation to help her outside of their jurisdiction. As with civilians, they lack genuine authority and pose an additional threat. Even though they are a part of the hierarchy and have a wider spectrum of abilities than regular people, they are still vulnerable. They exist as instruments of biopower, sustaining a presence without necessarily holding positions of significant power. Their knowledge makes them vulnerable, and they must employ effective survival strategies. These representations reveal the intricate dynamics within the power structures of Mexican society. While the military and local police are expected to uphold the law and safeguard citizens, they are

⁷⁵ Wright, "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border.": 717

portrayed as flawed and incapable of addressing the increasing number of abductions. As they navigate a system in which corruption and compromised loyalties predominate, their presence adds another layer of uncertainty and dread. In the end, their actions demonstrate the complexity of power and the struggles encountered by both civilians and those within the institutional framework.

Non-institutional actions

Both movies have a strong community that support their main characters. In *Prayers from the Stolen* seems to be represented by stones. In the first act of the film, the community is portrayed as an integral part of its natural environs. In one specific sequence at the school, a female lectures on living and nonliving organisms. The camera captures various middle views of the classroom, including Ana with her notebook, an engaged group of adolescents, an older girl with short hair, and the professor seated at his desk. The perspective then shifts to that of a student, immersing the audience in a classroom environment. The girl delivering the lecture describes various characteristics of living organisms, highlighting the significance of interaction within their own community. When asked by her professor why she included pebbles on her poster, the girl responds that rocks are also living organisms. This generates hilarity in the classroom. Another girl concludes the sequence by explaining that rocks are not alive because they lack eyes, hearing, and blood. Ana, Maria, and Paula are depicted playing beneath a tree later in the film. The scene features close-up shots of ants collaborating and a wide shot of a large tree beneath which three companions are seated. They each select a stone and position them together while saying "me." A close-up view of the stones is followed by a cut to Ana, who is positioned between the two girls and asks what would happen if one of them were to abruptly leave. Moreover, as the film progresses, there is a scene in which Ana uses the same stones to symbolize her heart during a

school activity in which students create self-portraits using objects they brought (Figure 17) These moments in the film emphasize the connection between the characters' individual experiences, the community, and nature. The stones serve as a symbolic representation of community cohesion, companionship, and interdependence among living things.

In *Noise, Through embroidery*, the community that supports Julia in the movie is brought together. Not only is embroidery Julia's primary artistic medium, but it also appears in the film's opening and concluding credits. Julia attends a support group for family members of missing persons, where they sit and embroider while conversing, and the room is decorated with these works of art. As seen in the newspaper displayed by April at the coffee shop and in images of Julia's art studio, Julia is an artist who integrates embroidery into her works. Julia mentions that she embroiders for herself, despite the fact that a gallery has expressed interest in her work. There are numerous instances of embroidery in the film, such as when Julia encounters Abril and her daughter at a restaurant and gives her daughter red thread to play with. Julia encounters the girl on the street during her first night at the motel and shows her an embroidery with the phrase "Que arda" (let it burn). This is a significant moment. In addition, Julia uses her cellphone illumination to continue embroidering on the dark bus. During a protest, Julia combines her embroidery with those of other women to create a striking display (Figure 18). Julia's attendance at a support group exemplifies how embroidery societies or collectives have served as a means of uniting people in similar circumstances. The craft of Julia's choice, embroidery, has been utilized by various collectives in Mexico to draw attention to unsolved homicides, missing persons cases, and as a form of group therapy, providing a space for empathy and solidarity in the face of adversity.

The inner actions of the main characters

In addition to these elements, the movie is notable for the presence of the blue scorpion. The first time we see it, after the first female has vanished, is in Ana's bedroom. Ana captures a scorpion and incorporates it into her school assignment, incorporating it as a representation of herself. Ana captures the scorpion in a container for this assignment in which students use objects to depict themselves. The final representation of herself includes the scorpion as the spine, the stones as her heart, and discreetly, an eraser in place of her sex, which can be interpreted as her attempt to conceal her gender in order to avoid abduction (Figure 17).

Ana, the primary character, wears blue in the majority of her scenes (Figure 19). However, during one scene in which she is playing with Maria and Paula in a lily field, she is wearing a light, icy yellow costume. In addition, she wears a light brown blouse with a blue undershirt during jaripeo night. The color blue is also present in the water, certain views of the mountain, and Maria's attire on occasion. Blue according to the Tatiana Huezo, means the innocence of Ana on trying to understand her world.

Red appears in a variety of elements and shots that are associated with femininity or danger. At the outset of the film, a shot of a poisonous snake emphasizes the significance of the color red as a symbol of warning or danger. Also associated with the cartel are the poppy fields, Margarito's motorcycle, his cap, and Ana's blue jacket with red accents when he displays his pistol. In addition, red is associated with items belonging to girls or women, such as Juana's red sandals, the corpse of a girl discovered in the second act wearing red clothing, red lips painted with beet juice, Ana's red nails, and the red hair clip she wears in the final scenes. This make sense with the especial attention that the girls and the community has on the details of upcoming danger. As one of the non institutional actions, the special attention to the environment in the movie, as well to hide the signs of

femity, red appear to be a sign of alert. Margarito's tale unfolds as he begins working in the local mine. In the third sequence, there is an explosion on the peak of one of the mountains, which is depicted with open views of the steps involved and no dialogue. At the beginning after the controlled detonation, a machine is seen picking up stones, followed by the process of breaking, washing, and transporting the stones. Margarito's side story gradually exposes his involvement with the cartel, beginning with small favors such as washing their car and progressing to working full-time for them rather than the mine. Margarito's shocked expression at the conclusion of the film, when Maria is taken, reflects his mistaken belief that he would be safe or protected due to his association with the cartel and his family's connection to it.

In the case of *Noise*, in the film, Julia is frequently depicted wearing dark hues, including blue, gray, purple, and red. These color selections contribute to the overall symbolism and characterization of her character. In addition, there is an important moment when Julia departs from her usual color palette and wears a matte white ensemble while assisting the group in the field. The use of dark colors in Julia's wardrobe, such as blue, gray, purple, and red, depicts the somber and intense nature of her journey. Blue is frequently linked to profundity, introspection, and emotional resonance. Gray can represent neutrality, ambiguity, or the feeling of being trapped between opposing forces. As mentioned previously, purple is associated with protests and represents unity, empowerment, and the collective voice of women pursuing justice. Lastly, red is commonly associated with passion, peril, and femininity, and it appears throughout the film in elements relating to femininity or danger. However, Julia's decision to wear a matte white ensemble during her field assistance is a departure from her usual color palette. White is frequently associated with purity, innocence, and a sense of hope or fresh starts. By donning white in this context, Julia expresses solidarity with the group's pursuit of

truth, justice, and the restoration of humanity. It represents her willingness to actively participate in the quest for clues and remains, demonstrating her dedication to combating the injustices women face in her community. In the film, the community's participation in demonstrations, represented by the color purple, is yet another significant action.

The opening shot of the film depicts Julia's face surrounded by purple smoke, overlaid with red embroidered credits (Figure 20). At the conclusion of the film, these images are revisited and it is revealed that they depict a manifestation in which Julia becomes involved after learning Ger's fate. Also evident in the artwork displayed outside the prosecutor's office, which Julia visits in the first act, is the color purple. In addition, during the concluding sequences, when Julia joins the crowd at the manifestation, they are surrounded by purple smoke. Numerous women congregate to express their dissatisfaction with impunity, insecurity, and the ongoing occurrence of femicides. The location of the demonstration is adorned with embroidered pieces hung in solidarity. A woman stands in front of the government palace and delivers an impassioned speech that resonates with the wrath felt by Mexican women. She denounces the complicity of those in authority, emphasizing that each woman who has vanished is an integral part of their collective identity. Their presence serves to remind the government that the victims were actual people, and that their memory will not diminish until justice is served. The woman declares, "We are here to say that every day in Mexico, women are murdered and disappear." Powerholders are complicit. Every woman who has vanished is a part of us. Let it be known that we no longer feel fear! Let it be known that we are angry!" The audience responds with a resounding "Justice!" The prominent use of purple as a symbol in the demonstrations is a potent symbol of collective outrage, solidarity, and determination to seek justice for the victims of violence against women in Mexico.

Julia is a Mexican artist who embroiders and works for a gallery, but since Ger's disappearance she has been creating her own artwork. There are sequences in the film, particularly the beginning, that describe the suspenseful condition she is in. She expresses some of her emotions to the support group. The shots of mirrors and reflections that depict parts of her, such as a disconnection within herself, fractured parts, or dissociation of her on the situation, her present, are another way to reflect this. At the beginning of the film, Julia is in her home, where she gets out of bed, wraps a towel around herself, and looks in the mirror. Then, when she encounters April in the restaurant, there is a shot of both of them conversing at a table with a mirror above them. Then, as Julia walks down the street on her journey to Arturo's (Ger's father) house, a mirror eliminates her from the frame (figure 1). The following morning, when Julia knocks on Arturo's door before she departs, there is a shot of her reflected in the mirror there, or we see Arturo sitting in his room with his back to a second mirror. After being in the truck with the bodies, she proceeds to the ATM to withdraw cash for the local police, and there is a shot of her face in the ATM's reflection. Before April is kidnapped, she also observes herself in the bus's reflection mirror. The themes of identity, dualism, and self-reflection can be related to the reflections on mirrors or similar objects, which are investigated through the examination of unsaid inner conflicts. The reflections on this context may reveal Julia's struggle as a mother without grief who lives in a state of constant dread, anxiety, and limbo. This reveals the strange dissociation in her life and the constant state of unease, revealing her fragility and inner conflicts.

The film depicts the actions of a mother searching for her daughter, as well as the psychological impact of her constant state of suspense and search. The community takes action with an embroidery support group, a journalist documenting the tales of those searching for a missing family member, messages on public walls, and the seizure of the government palace. The voice to voice

attempts to locate Ger by following the indications. The search parties who scour open fields and other locations for any traces of the missing. Julia and Arturo's decision to transfer their son outside of Mexico to prevent another abduction.

Other aesthetic decisions that complement this representation of the psychological estate are the particular lightening scenes and the closeups were are blurry around the faces. Julia's face is illuminated by the light of her cellphone in multiple scenes; in the first act, when she receives the message telling her where she must go to identify the corpse, she is in the dark and the light of her cellphone illuminates her face. Then, after visiting Arturo, she watches Ger's final video before she vanished. After resuming her search for Ger in the area where she vanished, she has a video conversation with her son while the room is completely dark and only the screen illuminates her face. The following image is a fire outside, on the road, that illuminates her face. There is a second take on the bus where she is embroidering in the darkness of the bus using the light from her cellphone. Fragmentary facial images similar a blurry image to the previous photos, ten women enter the frame, but only their faces are in focus, for a documentary moment. In the background, we can hear Abril asking a sequence of questions regarding the disappearance of their families, and the next shot shows them conducting the interview with Abril. This blurry aesthetic is displayed in the alternate shots of Julia in the field, as well as around her face after her video contact with her son. This surfaces again after she learns what happened to Ger in the elevator (Figure 22) on her way out of the building.

Dance

At the conclusion of both films, a dance scene with cultural significance in Mexican culture is presented. This inclusion emphasizes the significance of community, celebration, and resiliency within the context of the told stories. In "Prayers for the

Stolen," the dance sequence occurs during a jaripeo event involving bull riding. Following the intense bull riding action, there is a gathering where live music is played and people put together to dance and have fun (figure 25). Jaripeo is a traditional Mexican event that symbolizes valor, skill, and overcoming adversity. The dance scene in this film exemplifies the community's resiliency and happiness despite its difficulties. Similarly, in "Noise," after a long day of labor and the discovery of human bones, the collective of women invite Julia to a gathering. The meeting involves sharing food, listening to music, and interacting with the prosecutor's office employees present (figure 26). This scene emphasizes the collective's cohesion and fortitude, demonstrating their capacity to find solace and support in one another. The dance and music provide an outlet for expression, allowing the characters to temporarily escape the difficulties they confront and discover a sense of joy and community. In Mexican culture, dance has profound social and cultural significance. It is frequently employed as a form of celebration, expression, and community-building. Dancing enables people to express their emotions, commemorate their cultural heritage, and find respite from the stresses of daily life. The inclusion of dance sequences in these films emphasizes the resiliency, unity, and spirit of the characters as they overcome adversity and discover community strength. The dance sequences in both films serve as potent examples of the significance of community, celebration, and cultural traditions in Mexican culture. They illustrate the vibrant and diverse aspects of Mexican culture and reinforce the themes of resilience, unity, and the power of collective strength.

Conclusions of this chapter

Wright's investigation of feminicides in Mexico provides context for the findings from the analysis of these films, which provide compelling examples that correlate with Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics and are supported by the findings from the

analysis of these films. The films illuminate how female directors have addressed the disappearance of women in their narratives. The concentration is on the abduction of women, which is classified as femicide, a violent act committed against women due to their gender alone. The films also highlight the impact of these disappearances on the victims' families and the larger community, depicting them as living in constant dread and uncertainty due to the lack of justice and the pervasive impunity surrounding these crimes.

The increasing rates of femicides depicted in these films have a significant impact on the prevalence of impunity. It is portrayed as a persistent and normalized occurrence, perpetuating a cycle of violence and reinforcing the absence of accountability. The films expose the inadequacies and ineffectiveness of authorities in bringing perpetrators to justice, highlighting the government's lack of commitment and accountability in addressing the issue. This depiction is a critique of the systemic flaws and broader sociopolitical context in which femicides occur. However, the films also depict the initiative and resiliency of the community, especially the mothers who take proactive measures to safeguard their children and themselves. These women become independent activists who organize movements and advocate for justice. Their collective actions demonstrate the fortitude and resolve of communities affected by femicides, as they actively challenge the prevalent culture of impunity and demand change. In conclusion, these films offer a nuanced examination of the topic of women disappearing in Mexico and a potent critique of the systemic factors that contribute to femicides. They emphasize the significance of approaching this issue from multiple perspectives, including an examination of government responsibility, a call for justice, and community-driven efforts to protect and support one another. By shedding light on these aspects, the films contribute to a larger dialogue about gender-based violence and the imperative need for societal and institutional transformation.

Figures Chapter III



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 25



Figure 26

Conclusion

The CNDH definition acknowledges the impact on families impacted by the disappearance of a loved one, condemning this act of violence while recognizing the direct consequences encountered by the individuals deprived of their freedom and, in some cases, their lives. Nevertheless, the role of the community and their responses to these disappearances are frequently overlooked. In the film "Prayers from the stolen," women are portrayed as having a strong sense of community and support as they band together to combat the situation. There is a complicity among them in which they choose not to reveal the truth to non-members of their community. For instance, they conceal Juana's disappearance from their teacher. The montage of scenes depicting ants cooperating serves as a visual metaphor, reinforcing the concept of a community working toward a common goal: their protection. Another mechanism of the community is the dissemination of political information. In one scenario, shortly after Juana's disappearance, Ana's mother falls asleep in front of the television while watching a news report about corrupt police officers. This depiction indicates a possible reason why Juana's mother did not contact the police after her daughter's rape and abduction. The hairdresser's shop becomes an important gathering spot for the women, where they discover not only about Juana's abduction but also about the disappearance of other families. The hairdresser serves as a vital link, disseminating information about the spread of poison, the advent of a new cartel, and how to seek safety.

The presence of both the local police and the military in the town provides a contradictory but accurate depiction of the community. The authorities are depicted interacting with Margarito and ignoring his drinking and driving. Similarly, when the military arrives, the girls are instructed to avoid eye contact and soliciting their attention. Both organizations appear to operate on the fringes of the city, far from the action. In addition, while the Mexican government plays a role in the plot by

poisoning the poppy fields and organizing doctor camps, these actions have indirect effects on the primary characters. Paula is completely doused in poppy poison, and Maria undergoes lip surgery, which renders her a target in the future. It is disclosed that both the military and the local police have ties to the ruling cartel, highlighting the irony of government actions based on corruption and a lack of understanding or concern for the town's actual needs. In these films, the community, including the girls, performs an important role. As a reflection of the complexities they confront, the girls' projections and perceptions of their own gender are unclear and muddled. This is demonstrated by conflicts regarding their lips and individuality.

In the film "Noise," the female community is crucial in counseling Julia and giving her a sense of purpose in life. Throughout the film, these women establish a support group where they share their stories, fears, and hopes, demonstrating the strength of community. As they sew together their experiences, suffering, and resiliency, the act of embroidery serves as a metaphor for their solidarity. This group of women becomes Julia's lifeline as she traverses her voyage. In times of despair, they provide emotional support, empathy, and encouragement, lifting her up. Their combined fortitude encourages Julia to continue searching for answers and justice. They give her a sense of community and serve as a reminder that she is not alone in her struggle. When Julia encounters obstacles or receives shocking revelations during her journey, the community's influence is especially apparent. For instance, when another member of the community, Abril, joins Julia on her quest, their solidarity enables both women to find solace and fortitude in each other's company. In addition, when Julia discovers the truth about Ger, it is the community's support and counsel that assists her in navigating the shock and processing her emotions. Through their participation in protests and the creation of manifests, the community's collective strength is highlighted near the conclusion of the film. This unified front amplifies their voices, demanding justice for their loved ones and

drawing attention to systemic problems that perpetuate violence and disappearances. The women's community in "Noise" functions as a driving force in Julia's journey. They offer her emotional support, a sense of purpose, and perseverance. Together, they emphasize the significance of communal support and collective action in the face of adversity, demonstrating the power of unity.

In conclusion, both films provide perspectives not only from the victims themselves, but also from those who may be at risk, such as a young girl and a mother seeking for her missing daughter. Both cast light on the problems associated with the Mexican drug war and the government's involvement. In addition, the films depict members of the community engaging in illegal activities to defend themselves from drug cartels or to find information about their missing relatives. Throughout, there is a clear connection between groups of women protecting themselves and the children. In addition, the films use recurring motifs referencing cultural knowledge or works of art to make political statements.

The contribution of this research on this movies emphasizes the invisible violence that permeates daily life in Mexico, including the hidden violent aspect of women's gender performance and the enduring violence of bereavement and dealing with absences. These films invite us to investigate these unseen monsters, the threats that engulf not only those directly involved in disappearances but also the entire community.

The investigation into the disappearance of women in Mexico was a slow and painful process. It required a profound introspection and a sincere recognition of the harsh realities Mexican women confront. The researcher was forced to confront the alarming reality that women in Mexico are constantly threatened and hostile. This recognition was not only a mental exercise, but an emotional and intimate one as well. Throughout the research, there were cathartic instances in which the gravity of the subject matter necessitated pauses for reflection and processing. As the

researcher grappled with the profound implications of the topic, the gravity of the situation necessitated cautious and deliberative progress. The slow pace of development reflected the issue's complexity and the violence and injustice that surround it. In the context of Mbembe's concept of "death in life," or "muertas en vida" the research revealed how Mexican women are consumed by various forms of violence, culminating in a state of living-death. The omnipresent danger they confront, the impunity that allows perpetrators to go unpunished, and the systemic injustices they endure contribute to a sense of perpetual suffering. The women continue to fight despite their dire circumstances, demonstrating resilience and resolve in the face of insurmountable adversity. The research process served to cast light on this dreadful reality and give a voice to those who had been silenced. It intended to raise awareness, spark dialogue, and inspire action to address the underlying issues that perpetuate Mexico's lethal environment for women. By recognizing and investigating these complexities, the research aimed to contribute to Mexican women's ongoing fight for justice, empowerment, and the restoration of their humanity.

List of figures

Figure 1. Mexican Cartel Territory and conflict zones. Notes: CJNG= Cartel Jalisco Nueva generacion *Congressional Research Service*, June 07, 2022. Access May, 2023.

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