Alfonso Cuaron’s *Children of Men* (2006) focuses on the overall struggles of surviving in a dysfunctional society. Without reproduction, the battle of survival becomes the top priority for refugees and citizens. Cuaron communicates through the background as Theo Faron (Clive Owen) and Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey) continue their journey towards the Human Project. In the film, Alfonso Cuaron manipulates cinematography with the techniques of a hand-held camera as well as long takes to create suspense between the central storyline and the film’s audience. Without the techniques, the film would not have as strong a connection with the viewers as it pulls them into the scenes. Cuaron also creates a convincing plot in relation to illegal immigrants to properly set the scene for the dystopian future. The usage of these elements expresses the cruel reality of their world, which makes the film worth seeing.

Alfonso Cuaron first introduces the film to the audience by showing the death of the youngest child on Earth, Baby Diego Ricardo. The main character, Theo, enters the café for a cup of coffee and the camera switches from focusing on the protagonist to the television screen. The reactions to Baby Diego’s death follow Theo as he travels around the city. Citizens and refugees fight for survival in the chaos that is shown throughout the movie. Theo’s main goal is to protect Kee, the pregnant illegal immigrant, on their journey to the Human Project. Many of the sacrifices come from the people protecting Kee. While attempting to bring Kee to the coast,
members of the Fishes shoot Julian in the car, hoping to use Kee’s baby as a political weapon against the government. The two main characters travel for the hope of freedom and safety. Through the increasing struggle, Kee is able to give birth to the baby under severe pressure. In the presence of the newborn baby, people regain hope and once again have faith in a better society.

Alfonso Cuaron introduces two cinematography techniques: hand-held camera and long takes. Throughout the film, there are a lot of significant scenes that strengthen the film’s overall theme. Without these techniques, the movie would be lacking emotions and realism. The use of a hand-held camera and long takes immerse us, the audience, into the movie. It makes us feel like we are a part of the scene. This in return creates a sense of realism and authenticity. The scene with the most outstanding use of these techniques occurs as Theo Faron hides in the broken-down bus while someone is shot, resulting in blood splattering onto the camera lens. The struggle to bring Kee to safety becomes more difficult by the second. Without this part of the film, the audience would lack an emotional connection with the movie. The technique: long takes, allows the audience to experience the effects of the dystopian future and immerse them into the perspective of the characters. Cuaron avoids cutting certain scenes because the suffering of the people in the film cannot be cut or time-skipped just like the suffering for people in real life.

To make this movie feel even more realistic, the director brings the issue of illegal immigrants into the spotlight. The somewhat realistic prediction of the struggle in the future for citizens creates a greater connection between the audience and the film. One critic, William Arnold reviewed *Children of Men*’s prediction of the future to be “so poorly conceived and full
of contradictions and is such a non sequitur coming just 20 years down the road” (Arnold). He believes the film is not relatable and quite unrealistic. However, the film is realistic due to the struggles now against illegal immigrants. The United States of America has been struggling to remove and prevent immigrants from entering in the past and to this day. Theo, Miriam, and Kee enter the detention center on the bus. Along the way, Miriam is taken with many other immigrants. The camera switches its focus from Kee to the window where an immigration officer dehumanizes Miriam. Human nature forces the government and its citizens into the mentality that illegal immigrants threaten their safety. As a result, Britain’s government treats the refugees inhumanely and even kills them. People lose common sense as human nature takes over their actions, thus becoming a threat to themselves. For the audience, the issue of illegal immigrants is rather realistic, therefore can relate to the film.

The technique of long shots and hand-held cameras, as well as the realistic prediction of the future in Children of Men, strengthens the themes of survival and hope in a dysfunctional world without reproduction. These methods affect the audience mentally during the course of the film, displaying the cruel reality without proper restrictions from the government. Without these elements, this film would not be such a captivating masterpiece for many.
Work Cited

