Garcia paints a picture in her novel *Dreaming In Cuban* where each of the characters is drawing on their individual environments to form their cultural identity. These environments vary from character to character based on each of their individualized exterior and interior influences derived from their experiences. Together these combine to represent the cultural identity of each character. The idea of cultural identities is one that is largely not completely comprehended, globally, especially at an individual level. It is as Hall says “…an unresolved question…” (10). Stuart Hall, a respected sociology professor, suggests in the written version of his speech. “It is an element of continuity.” (Hall 10). This idea of an identity being a question that hasn’t been answered and an ongoing process is what each of the characters in Garcia’s novel struggles with throughout the book. The cultural identities of Garcia’s characters Lourdes and Pilar adapt due to their different influences from their respective experiences.

For Lourdes the country she has called home for well over a decade views her as a Cuban immigrant, despite her passionate identification as an American. This passion is a method Lourdes used to actively forget her Cuban past, which Garcia discusses in her interview with Andrew Lynch stating that, “Memory is in essence construction of identity…What you remember is who you are…equally important is what you choose to forget.” (8:00min, Garcia). Lourdes is replacing Cuba with America, deleting the bad memories, and refilling those memories with new Americanized. Lourdes convinces herself that the only reason they came to America was to run away from the revolution and to take advantage of the opportunities the U.S. had for her as a businesswoman. This however is only partially true, although Lourdes did have
the passion to be a working-woman even in Cuba. “Cuban women of a certain age and a certain class consider working outside the home to be beneath them. But Lourdes never believe that.” (130, Garcia). Her passion about working and entrepreneurship is honest as shown in the quote, however the fact that America embraces the idea of a working-woman more readily than Cuba is not the main reason why she identifies so strongly as an American. Lourdes is trying to forget the hardships of her miscarriage of her first son, slowly losing their land, and being raped. All three of these incidents were either directly brought upon by soldiers of the revolution, or in the case of her miscarriage they were in mid-argument as she lost the child. The emotional pain of these events and the connection they have to the revolution is more than enough to make Lourdes want to forget her “old identity” and fully embrace the adaptations, as she actively erases and hates everything that is associated with Cuba and the revolution.

Pilar, like any young adult, is searching, studying, questioning, and slowly piecing together her own cultural identity. Throughout the novel Garcia portrays Pilar constantly coming up with new ideas, or questions about the way things are. Throughout the novel, Garcia portrays her constantly asking questions like in the beginning where she asks, “Who chooses what we should know or what’s important? I know I have to decide these things for myself.” (28, Garcia). She is unsure whether to listen to her mother and fully identify as an American even though that feels wrong or to listen to that connection she has with her grandmother Celia and follow her Cuban roots. Her trip at the end of the book back to Cuba with her mother allows for her to find the answer to this overbearing question she demonstrates her understanding through saying, “But sooner or later I’d have to return to New York. I know now it’s where I belong—not instead of here, but more than here.” (236, Garcia). This realization is what opens the door for Pilar to
identify herself as a Cuban-American; both Cuba and New York are part of her forming cultural identity.

Lourdes and Pilar have different cultural identities despite that they are both Cuban born. They both go through experiences, particular to the individual, and these experiences affect them in different ways allowing for their identities to continue adapting as the book goes on. They both have contrasting relationships with Cuba, for example, and these relationships fuel the two differently: Lourdes decides to separate herself from Cuba and Pilar decides to equally include and actively learn about her Cuban side. Everyday events help form their identities and they both continuously adapt and grow. Stuart Hall in his paper Cultural Identity and Diaspora suggest the idea that cultural identities are adapting and growing, he says, “we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process” (Hall 222). Lourdes and Pilar have different cultural identities, even though they have a few similarities, that are continuously acclimating triggered by the personal reactions various experiences induce thus formulating the adaptations.

The complex structures that help make up both of Garcia’s characters cultural identities slowly become more comprehensible to both the character and the reader. Lourdes and Pilar were both born in Cuba but have come to identify differently because of the individual experiences they’ve gone through. Every person has a different cultural identity because every individual has a completely different set of experiences and reactions. These reactions are classified into different groups and then those groups start building up the adaptations that relate to the classification of that group, thus eventually helping to add on to an individual’s cultural identity. These two characters in Garcia’s book Dreaming in Cuban discover and grow with their
identities based on their own practices and the way they solve and interpret their intricate, and complex structures that make up their forever running cultural identity productions.
Bibliography


