

Ideological meaning: Real Women have Curves (2002)

Real women have Curves (2002) directed by Patricia Cardoso is about the story of a young Latina girl named Ana and her battle against the family tradition. She is a gifted, ambitious, smart, talented, and independent girl who is being held back by Latin tradition, economic status, and her family. After receiving a full scholarship to college and winning a self-battle in which she finally decides to dictate her own life, she pursues her education. Besides the explicit meaning, a young girl working in her sister's factory trying to afford college, Cardoso captures the battle and oppression of low economic status, Latin culture, and most importantly gender.

Ana has the ability and grades to go to a 4-year college but her family cannot afford it (a problem we see every day). In the beginning of the film we see her avoid answering the question of what she will do after high school. She quickly dismisses the question, saying she would like to embark on a backpacking trip through Europe. As a viewer, we know that this is a false statement; her real intention is to hide her economic status from her schoolmates. Gradually we see a change in her character. This embarrassment that she felt we can see her overcome. When her sister Estella's dress shop is facing adversity and having trouble finishing an order, Ana decides to attempt to help. With confidence, she approaches the buyer and asks for more money to finish her (the buyers) order. Unfortunately her confidence is bigger than her impact and she has no effect and receives no help from the buyer.

We gain some insight on her character when we see that the buyer's dismissal doesn't stop Ana. She proceeds to ask her father to borrow the money, and is successful. It is this bold woman that also fights her family's tradition and leaves for college.

Ana has the academic record and ability to succeed and do well in school. Her teacher, Mr. Guzman, a protagonist, sees potential in Ana, and aids her along the way. He manages to get her a full ride to Franklin College. The family is initially excited to hear the good news until they know the location, New York City. Ana is quickly brought back down to the reality that she isn't going to college and is going to work in the factory at least for a while. It is at the end of the movie when she decides to defy her mother and go regardless, not letting any family oppression hold her back.

Her family is similar to most Latin families in that she is expected to remain living at home until she is wedded off. That being said, her mother, Carmen, is mostly focused on wedding off Ana not much else. Carmen consistently makes fun of her daughters weight, looks and potential. We can see the effect this has on Ana, in scenes where she studiously examines herself in the mirror. Or even more directly some of the statements she makes to her new boyfriend, questions like, “don’t you want a skinny girl?” Ana reaches a turning point in the movie and persuades the whole factory to work in their underwear do to the miserable heat. It is this scene, which I believe embodies the true ideological meaning of this film. She is overcoming, or shedding free (meant symbolically) the traditions, low expectations or anything else that has with held her. She is proud to be who she is and isn’t afraid who sees, a true feminist.

Although this film is applied to women its message can be generalized. Tradition isn’t what has to be, full potential can be reached it just takes coming in to yourself and recognizing your inner beauty.