

Real women have curves

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The central issue of this film is how Ana, as a girl of a Hispanic decent, is torn between pursuing her ambition and the expectations from her family to follow her cultural heritage. In the beginning we see that even though Ana spends a lot of time with her family and though she lives in a predominantly Latino community, she feels that she is destined for greater things in life. Her modern ideas mainly came from her studies as she is considered a model student by her teacher. She would like nothing better than to attend college once she completes her high school. Ana's mother, of course, has other plans.

She feels that her daughter's aspiration of pursuing college education is a waste of time and that education is not important for a woman. To Ana's mother, it is enough that a women works to contribute to her family and get married when she can. With regards to marriage, Ana is not the only one who is pressurized by her mother. Her elder sister, Estela, who owns a sewing factory, is overweight and unmarried. Although Ana's mother works for the Estela, she continuously criticizes her on her failure to find as suitor. In the film she finally agrees to try to learn working in the factory.

Her sister gave her a simple job of ironing the ready made clothes. While carrying on with her day to day mundane task, she listens to the conversations of her mother with her work peers at the factory. At first she scorns the back-breaking labor that her mother and sister perform. As time goes by, she learns to admire the hardworking team of women who teach her solidarity and teamwork. She learns what it is to be a part of something and is beginning to value herself. Her relationship with her mother

however goes from bad to worse. There was one scene that illustrates perfectly how her mother expects her to behave and how she chooses to be.

The scene was when Ana and her mother was on their way home and her mother asked her why she walks “ funny”. She continues by telling her how a woman should behave in order to be accepted in society. Ana kept quiet. Instead of arguing she gave her mother the grocery bag that she was holding and began to imitate a “ silly princess walk”, complete with the waving of the hands and arms. Her mother was furious but could say nothing. Ana realizes that her feud with her mother was going nowhere. She needed to go to college to find her place proudly in the world, even if she has accepted herself as an American Chicana.

Though only shown briefly in the film, we can see that Ana has a better relationship with her father. There were moments when Ana approached her father in private while he was at work gardening. At first he was also firm in believing that Ana does not have to go to college. Nevertheless, as a father he wanted his daughter to have a better chance at live than he does. He then decided that it was alright for Ana to pursue her dreams. Although her mother still firmly disagrees, she could do nothing for Ana’s father is the head of the family and once he decides on something, it is final.

Anna finally got what she wanted as we see her at the end leaving home and attaining the independence that she has always dreamed of. 3 What can be observed from this film are the family ties in of a traditional Hispanic family. With reference to the journal by Clutter and Nieto, Understanding the Hispanic Culture, it is noted there that in most Hispanic families, the father is

the head of the family and the mother is responsible for the home.

Individuals within a family have a moral responsibility to aid other members of the family experiencing financial problems, unemployment, poor health conditions, and other life issues.

The above observation relates to the film as we see Ana's family trying to guide her to become one of the providers of the household instead of just being another mouth to feed. In the sewing factory, we see that the employees of her sister consist of her two family members and close relations of whom she provided with employment. Clutter and Nieto also noted that ' Hispanics usually give great importance to and place great value on looks and appearance as a sense of honor, dignity, and pride'.

This explains why Ana's mother constantly nags her about her and her sister's weight and constantly remind them that back in her days she always tried to look prim and proper in order to gain respect from others. Another source that can be used as a reference is written by Keefe and Padilla (1987). In the case study of one Carmen Munoz, it was described that ' she and her husband identify as " mexicano," as do all of their children; and there does not appear to be any ambiguity in this identification'. This lady is a typical Mexican woman similar to the one portrayed in the film in the form of Ana's mother.

In the film, Ana's mother could not bear having her daughter leave for college as it would mean that Ana is forsaking her identity as a Mexican. 4 Keefe and Padilla also noted that given the persistence of ethnic boundaries, acculturated ethnic group members tend to lead a " double life," living in an

ethnic community at home while assuming Americanized behavior at work, at school, and in the public mainstream. Since the central issue of the film is how a Mexican teenager can fit in, then this is exactly what the film is portraying. Ana was branded as Mexican since she was born.

Nevertheless she was educated in the American way at school, albeit the fact that the school's major population is of Latin descent. The writers went on by noting that because Mexican-American tend to lead a “ double-life” it is hard to ‘ categorize individuals on a one-dimensional model of assimilation’. Hence we see in the beginning of the movie that she was confused of what she is and how she should be. The hard headedness of the mother can also be identified with reference to an article found in a website titled ‘ Gender Roles and Family life in Mexican – American Families’.

Sandra Cisneros, a writer, comments in this article that ‘ the traditional Mexican woman is a fierce woman, who may be victimized, but also very strong. Although Ana’s mother is not actually victimized by Ana, she is experiencing some hardship and finds strength in the form of her children. Once she knew that one of her children is leaving her, we see at the end of the movie how she broke down but refused to let it show by locking herself in the room, still silently disapproving.