

Danielle Daniel-Ramsey

SBS 3201

9 December 2019

Professor Adomaitis

Real Women Have Curves Character Critique

This movie is a coming of age story about a teenage girl, Ana Garcia and her journey to womanhood. Ana lives with her family in a predominately Latino community in Los Angeles, California. Fresh out of high school she receives good news from her teacher, Mr. Guzman, that she was accepted to Columbia University on a full scholarship. Mr. Guzman is the only one in support of Ana going for higher education. Ana is struggling between following her dreams of going to college or doing what her mother, Carmen Garcia, feels is best and work in the family sewing factory with her sister, Estela. Carmen never approves of the decisions her daughter makes and feels her daughter is overweight. During this time, Ana is fond of a guy at her school, Jimmy and they start having romantic feelings for each other. Jimmy sees Ana for the beautiful young woman that she is regardless of her weight. Torn between the two Ana decides to work in her sister's factory though she's not happy about it. After spending weeks in the factory Ana has a new-found appreciation for the work the women do for such low wages. She realizes leaving home to pursue her education is essential in her finding her place in the world as a first-generation Mexican American.



Figure 1. *15 years later, “Real Women Have Curves” remains ...*

Being a part of society we come across hundreds of people every day. In passing we compare over selves unintentionally when it comes to facial attractiveness and body type. Western standards of beauty are based on facial and body attractiveness for men and women. Though there are ideal examples of what the beauty is in magazines and on television, in this film there are other influences. Ana’s appearance is shaped by the role that she plays in her family and community. Ana lives in Los Angeles where the weather is mild so she wears light, breathable clothing. Carmen, Ana’s mother, does not approve of her daughter’s decisions or weight which often leads to conflict. He mother makes comments like “you would look beautiful if you just lost a few pounds, you should walk like a lady” (Brown, LaVoo & Cardoso, 2002) which makes her upset. Ana knows her mother only cares about how attractive she is for the attention of men.

Based off how the main character Ana is dressed it is communicated through appearance that Ana is just an average Mexican American teenage girl trying to figure out her next move

going forward. Costume designer Elaine Montalvo uses oversized long sleeve shirts to communicate that Ana is overweight and a graphic shirt with the numbers “16” wears looser clothing to hide that. Ana is seen wearing overalls in one scene that lets the viewer know she is a young girl. The costume designer tells the view through dress how much money Ana makes and what her social class is. In the film, the factory was behind on an order and couldn't afford rent or to pay the workers so they had to borrow money from Ana's father Raúl (Brown, LaVoo & Cardoso, 2002). Although Ana's family may not come from money, they still have an abundance of love.

Dress of an individual is an assemblage if modifications and or supplements to the body (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992). Through dress the viewer is aware of a few things about Ana. The looseness of her clothes tells the viewer that Ana is overweight and thicker than the skinny girls they are making dresses for. Ana's hair was often messy and in her face at the start of the movie and towards the end she wears her hair in a ponytail or straightened with a middle part (Brown, LaVoo & Cardoso, 2002). The carelessness of the way her hair was styled was to signify that she sees herself as unattractive. Ana is also seen wearing a backpack that gives the impression that she is a student. Throughout the film, Ana shows interest in a boy named Jimmy that wants to get to know Ana and surprisingly takes an interest in learning Spanish. “Ana: You probably want some skinny girl, don't you? Jimmy: I think you're beautiful...” (Brown, LaVoo & Cardoso, 2002). She quickly realizes that Jimmy is friendly but she knows it's never going to go anywhere between them because he's leaving for college soon.

As most us do during a time of transition, we change to adapt to a new environment. During the film, Ana was shopping at the pharmacy for condoms. She was showing a little more skin wearing a pastel pink shirt that had a V-neck cut with short sleeves. Ana was also caring a

purse that shows she is becoming more of a mature woman on the verge of being sexually active. In addition to taking charge of her sexuality, Ana makes the big decision to go East to New York, with her father's blessing and attend college on a full scholarship. Montalvo, uses a blazer, cross body bag and leather boots to signify that Ana is a young adult wanting to be taken seriously in this new city.

Reference

Eicher, Joanne B., Roach-Higgins, Mary-Ellen. (1992). Retrieved from. *Dress and Identity*.

Johnson, Kim K.P., Lennon, Sharron J., Rudd, Nancy A. (2017). *Social Psychology of Dress*. New York, NY. Bloomsbury.

Preciado, Marty. (2017) 15 years later, “Real Women Have Curves” remains one of the most important films for brown girls. Retrieved from. <https://hellogiggles.com/reviews-coverage/movies/real-women-have-curves-still-important-film-brown-girls>

William Alexander Romero Monge. (2013, April 19). *Las mujeres de verdad tiene curvas. Real Women Have Curves*. [Video File]. Retrieved from. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-YEUBQ-fQE>