Real Women Have Curves. Dir. Patricia Cardoso. Perf. America Ferrera, Lupe Ontiveros, Ingrid Oliu. HBO, 2002. Film.

Real Women Have Curves narrates the summer of Ana, a Mexican-American woman, as she is transitioning from high school to college. Her transition story portrays problems around body image, race, generational conflicts, feminism, and developing a sexual identity. The first and last appearance of Ana in the movie clearly shows her transition. Viewers first see Ana as an unhappy teenager, buried in the responsibilities of her domestic and claustrophobic life: cleaning the windows of the family home and being asked to make breakfast for 'the men' on her last day of high school. She drags her slouching body around like a sack from home to school. The movie closes with Ana's image as she emerges from the subway in NYC, a confident independent woman, attending Columbia University on full scholarship. She walks playfully finding joy in her sexual identity.

In the spectrum of the races represented in the movie, Caucasian characters ride the system smoothly while Latino characters struggle to fit into the system. For example, Ana is ambivalent about attending college and her family discourages her about attending college. She needs a full scholarship to leave. Ana does not have a summer job, uses public transportation to travel or she awkwardly travels in his father's landscaping truck. She writes her papers on a clunky desktop computer. Her mother criticizes Ana's body image, how she walks, and her decisions, placing them in continuous conflict. In contrast, her Caucasian boyfriend Jimmy smoothly makes a transition to teachers college from high school and he does not need scholarship. He spends his summer working for their English teacher at school, drives his Volvo car, uses a slim mac laptop, and seemingly total parental support. Ana's sister, Estela, owns a dress making business and she barely pays the rent and the bills. Her Caucasian buyer bulk purchases the dresses sewn at Estela's sweatshop for $18 to be sold $600 at Bloomingdale. The buyer does not understand Estela's struggles to keep the business running and treats Estela as if she is being lazy. Overall, the movie emphasizes the fact that fitting into the system requires higher effort from Latinos.

The movie is sugar-coated for the purpose of identification. While Ana's family has love, they live in a poor neighborhood where people are not educated. The movie does not dive into the nasty and cruel parts of

life such as fights, curses, drug use, cheating, abuse, and violence. Ana's boyfriend is an ideal young man who does not date with other girls, does not use drugs or alcohol, treats Ana gently while they both are sexually experimenting for the first time. He is almost too good to be true. Ana lives in a small space with her crowded family--her parents, sister, grandfather, aunt, and two male cousins around her age. In this crowded family there are conflicts but they never literally fight. *Real Women have Curves* is a female bonding movie, giving almost all the major roles to women. The movie does not bash men and almost each male character in the movie is very caring and gentle such as the boyfriend, father, grandfather, and the English teacher. The sugarcoating of the film invites the mainstream audience to identify with Latino female leads and makes the movie a crowd pleaser as it is written with capital letters on the cover of the DVD.

Ana's mother has a traditional take on women's roles. She thinks that Ana is fat. When the mother is reminded about her own fatness, she says: "Yes, but I am married". Being single means to her being aimless in life. Ana expresses desire to lose weight but she does not like being told how to look like and to be reduced to only her body and weight. Ana accepts and celebrates her body with curves by enjoying the reflection of her naked body on the mirror not hiding herself from her boyfriend. Her actions lead all women sweatshop workers to strip their clothing in Estela's steamy workshop and work in their underwear. The movie presents nudity of curved bodies with stretch marks and celluloid in opposition to the nudity of skinny and flawless women in mainstream American movies. The tile of the movie has a slogan: *Real Women Have Curves.* While this title celebrates voluptuous bodies and makes a rebellious statement to the mainstream film and culture, it also creates another bias category. Are not skinny women real?

Real Women Have Curves gives a voice to the challenges of a hardworking middle class Latino family and presents a role model in the character of Ana, who is accepting and celebrating her body. Ana gives hope to the audience by getting admitted to Columbia University with full scholarship. A trouble lies here: what if the Latina student cannot get full scholarship? That would be a story worth telling too.

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