

CINE MUJER: Films for Women

by Amparo Parra
Translated by Luz Martinez

Cine Mujer in Colombia was formed as an institution for film production in the early 1980s. It produces films that focus on the distinct problems of women and projects different images of women. Cine Mujer has evolved itself in a parallel process to the women's movement as well as popular women's organizations.



Equipo de Trabajo Con Mujeres (Teamwork with Women), a women's collective that frequently uses films from Cine Mujer in their promotion activities, also began ten years ago. It is a group of popular educators that belong to distinct entities of promotion and carry out their tasks within a support network.

FIRST PHASE

Cine Mujer accepted the project in order to assess the role of Cine Mujer films in the development of popular education and their own evolutionary process from cinematography to video production.



Cine Mujer

The public

To carry out this evaluation Cine Mujer chose three groups located in Bogota that shared similar characteristics. These groups have collaborated with Cine Mujer either as receivers or participants in their production of films or videos.

"Fundacion de Apoyo Comunitario" (Community Support Foundation) is a group of women who 10 years ago began developing small gardens in their communities. Their coming together allowed a group of women to work on women related issues.

"Asociacion de Veredas de la Calera" is a group of peasant women from the Andes who for 10 years have developed their own production in virgin wool, raising sheep, weaving and dyeing yarn and cultivating plants for natural dyes. They meet on occasion but are active participants of *Equipo de Trabajo con Mujeres*.

The third women's group came together as a result of the catastrophe of Armero. *Equipo de Trabajo con Mujeres* worked closely with them to reconstruct their lives and what it meant to be a woman. Cine Mujer films were used extensively with this group.

Initial process

Seventy questionnaires were distributed among the three groups to find out the most common form of media consumption for these women. Women selected for the study were those who had served in leadership capacities and were familiar with women issues.

Results of the survey

The most preferred form of media was radio and television, followed by "foto novelas", newspapers, videos, films and magazines. According to the survey, radio provided useful information to improve their lives, such as recipes or information on illnesses, and on current events.

The most popular television programs were news and soap operas. News kept the women informed and attracted to the visual images. Soap operas are viewed mainly for relaxation but at the same time they portray situations of women. Television provides them entertainment, culture and general information from the variety of programs and themes but they expressed discontent that no television programs were produced especially for women.

With regard to films, the majority reported that they do not watch film. However, video offers them the possibility of watching films at home. Films they prefer are those that will elicit emotion, entertain them, help them forget their everyday problems and on some occasions allow them to identify with the characters.

With print media, women said they read it occasionally. Those who read newspapers are drawn to those that carry supplements on women that can help them with their children and their work.

SECOND PHASE

Film showing and discussion forums were scheduled.

Two films produced by Cine Mujer were chosen: "And Mother What Does She Do?" an early film that reflects the woman within her home and domestic chores and "Miriam's Look", a film that focuses on women's organizations.

Methods used

The two Cine Mujer films were shown in comparison with a commercial film, "No One Will Love You As Much As I Do." This film depicts a middle-class girl who becomes a nun, only to be raped by a delinquent. She is left pregnant so she goes out to find the father of her child, forgive him and ask him to marry her. In the end he repents for his crime and marries her.

One group of women saw only the commercial film and the other group viewed the Cine Mujer films first and the commercial film.

The responses from the group of women who saw only the commercial film were surprising. Many of the women were moved to tears from this film. In their evaluation they liked the happy ending. The surprising part was that the rape was not seen as important and they did not focus on this in their discussions. Many liked the female character who they saw as strong and decisive and applauded her desire to defend her son and to make peace with the father of the child. They responded that they would not change anything in the film.

The second group was angry at the way the woman was portrayed in the commercial film. They were disturbed at how lightly the rape was handled in the movie and the subliminal messages of motherhood and the need to sacrifice. This group did not identify at all with the

main character and rejected the idea of the woman giving up her ambition because of her pregnancy.

In response to the films of Cine Mujer, they felt that these films provided them with concrete analyses of women seeking alternatives. They claimed that films like "Miriam's Look" provide them with an image of a different woman. Many of the women considered the films from Cine Mujer as educational and non-commercial. Educational films make them think while commercial films entertain them.

Conclusion

The evaluation was useful in recognizing that for these women educational and entertainment films were on two totally different levels. They stated that films from Cine Mujer were important for educational workshops but requested that for Women's Day, only entertainment films be shown. Obviously, this was not how the producers of Cine Mujer had envisioned their films but because of this feedback they are developing proposals for the production of a melodrama.

Source: *Identidad Comunicativa y Propuesta Alternativa para la Mujer - Memoria de Seminario Taller, CEAAL/Red de Educacion Popular Entre Mujeres/CALANDRIA, Lima, Peru, 1993*



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