


## CINEMA AND EDUCATION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANIZING YOUNG PEOPLE

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### ABSTRACT

Youth is often seen as problematic and maladjusted. However, there are few efforts to understand it, especially in school. This article addresses the movie *Among Us*, which portrays the friendship of 3rd grade teenagers. The analysis focused on the identities and roles of the characters. The writer and director portrays, in a fun way and without shocking the viewer, the reality and meaning of adolescence, highlighting the importance of friendship. The screenwriter managed to convey to the public the youthful vision of entertainment. The film addresses topics such as drug use, alcohol and sex, in a planned meeting. The objective of the work is to understand the psychological and identity universe, provoke reflections and present possibilities to include cinema in education.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Exclusion, Adaptation, Image, Latin American Youth.

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## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the technological and scientific revolution, society has come to be seen as a producer of knowledge, creating platforms for access to information that generally promote quick access to diversified knowledge. As a result of economic and technological globalization, this process has intensified, which in recent years has led to transformations in the political, social, technological, economic, educational and cultural fields. Such transformations obviously do not reach all people equally, which produces more subtle forms of exclusion.

Another important source of knowledge production is cinema, which can be explored at all stages and levels of education, due to the wealth of information and relevant social themes, which can be presented in his works and worked on in the classroom through his products, the films. Cinema produces and makes available works that address diversified content and even themes experienced in the daily life of society. The films can be presented to students to encourage the debate of social, political, humanitarian, educational issues, among others.

Cinema provides education professionals with access to a tool for pedagogical practice. When used in a critical, conscious, and planned way, it can promote the cognitive development and socialization of the individual, in addition to contributing to their integral formation and preparation for living in society. In this way, Carvalho (2017, p. 2), states that: "The use of videos and films in the classroom emerges as tools that provide opportunities for socialization, learning and the development of various knowledge and skills". By using cinema in education, it is possible to promote different ways of understanding how the production of material and symbolic knowledge occurs.

Luiza da Luz Lins, general director of the Florianópolis Children's Film Festival, in an interview conducted by the Cultura Infância website, in August 2017, said, when considering Law No. 13,006/2024, that "the right of the Brazilian child to see himself on the screen is one of the important points, to be guaranteed with the law". International cinema is still very focused on the representation of the public with higher purchasing power, which makes it difficult for young Latinos to identify with the content of the films. Those in situations of social vulnerability often see on screens a completely discrepant image of their reality and of what is presented as a possibility for the future.

Thus, in an attempt to guarantee access to cinema in Brazil, Federal Law No. 13,006/2014 was sanctioned, which adds paragraph 8 to article 26 of Law No. 9,394/1996

to the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB). This paragraph included in the LDB determined that, as of its validity, it became mandatory to show films of national production, for at least two hours a month, in Brazilian public schools, and that this activity should constitute the complementary curricular component integrated into the institution's pedagogical proposal.

Furthermore, what happens in practice is the absence of public policies that guarantee the enforceability of this law, both in relation to inspection and, mainly, to the availability of resources and incentives to schools, so that it is possible to provide, in public schools, this contact with Brazilian cinema. The reality still shows a gap in the law regarding the mechanisms and forms of enforceability of this action, which makes it unfeasible to comply with it. There is insufficiency, if not, absence of effective public policies that promote equal access to cinema by students in the public school system, which would give access to the cultural aspects of Brazilian society.

Contact with cinematographic works provides intellectual and creative development of students. Its absence, especially for students from low-income families, who often do not have access to cinema outside the school environment, can limit the potential of most of them to explore and reflect on relevant themes that the films address. The film of different cinematographic genres can present, in a playful way, social, cultural and political issues, providing the individual with the opportunity to develop new knowledge by relating to their lives the ways in which the characters find solutions to problems presented in the narratives, for example.

Cinematographic works contribute to society by providing access to entertainment and various cultural elements. They also offer the public possibilities to expand knowledge through reflection, imagination and representation. To make sense to students, it is necessary for teachers to provoke situations that motivate them to reflect on the film's message in its depth and explore different perspectives. Thus, the use of cinema in the subject's formative process, from its first stages, is relevant, as it can provide learning through playful and active methodologies. Duarte (2002, p. 17) points out that: "Watching films is a social practice as important, from the point of view of people's cultural and educational formation, as reading literary, philosophical, sociological works and so many more".

## DEVELOPMENT

Stuart Hall (2016, p. 31-36), in his book *Culture and Representation*, presents the understanding that cultural productions such as cinematographic works represent values, behaviors and social ideologies, which in turn can strengthen or weaken society. There are certain cinematographic works that intend to represent past or present facts of society, and cinema also has the ability to anticipate by portraying the possibility of future scenarios. According to Stuart's theory of cultural representation, these film productions should not be interpreted as models to be followed, but as critical reflections on individual behaviors. He also warns that cinema has the power to represent and question social practices and values, as a mirror that exposes not only reality, but also the consequences of certain behaviors. Thus, by portraying these issues, cinema alerts to the possible consequences of these behaviors in society, which, if not questioned, can trigger problems in various psychosocial spheres.

Film as a pedagogical methodology is sometimes used in school sporadically, without clear objectives that can generate some type of learning, which can limit its formative impact. According to Carvalho (2017, p. 2), "The use of videos and films in the classroom emerges as tools that provide opportunities for socialization, learning and the development of various knowledge and skills". That is why it is important to use cinema in a planned way, to produce discussions and activities that relate audiovisual content with the cultural capital and linguistic repertoire of students, in order to expand them.

In this sense, in order to understand how cinema can be used in the production of knowledge, a research was carried out on a Brazilian film, considering the historical and social context in which the script was based.

For this study, the following methodological procedures were adopted: 1) research of interviews published in the media with directors and actors of the film *Among Us*, written and directed by Paulo Morelli, who was also director of the film *City of Men*, and 2) analytical observation of the film itself, in order to understand both the main and secondary message of the work. The film object of this analysis was released in 2014, with a duration of 1h40min57. The audio was made available only in Portuguese, without subtitles, and the work falls into the drama genre, with an indicative rating for the public from 14 years old.

In an interview with G1 (2013), the director of the film said how important the participation of his son Pedro, a young man, was for the success of the work in Brazilian cinema. Pedro participated in the recordings and the elaboration of dialogues and scenes,

showing the best angles and commenting on each character during filming, said his father. Morelli believes that it was only possible to produce a work with great quality due to Pedro's commitment, because he is young and enthusiastic about cinema, to which he credits part of the success presented in the final work. The cast of the work was made up of nationally known actors, such as Carolina Dieckmann, Caio Blat, Maria Ribeiro, Paulinho Vilhena, Martha Nowill, Júlio Andrade and Lee Taylor. All are very popular with the general public, as they usually participate in long-running soap operas on open channels and for generating a lot of media exposure, making them known.

The film was awarded in the categories of best screenplay and best actress at the Rio de Janeiro Festival, in which Carolina Dieckmann acted as a supporting actor. Caio Blat acted as the protagonist with the character Felipe, responsible for carrying the mystery of the story. The actor acted with his wife Maria Ribeiro (45 years old), with whom he was married from 2007 to 2017, who, in addition to being an actress and writer, is a Brazilian film director.

Caio Blat (33 years old), in an interview with G1, spoke of the desire to continue the work *Among Us*, problematizing that, when the characters are 45 years old, the film *Among Us 2* will aim to show how they will be, and that the release forecast would be in 2025. *Among Us* is a Brazilian drama with characteristics of an Argentine film. The author bets on the reflective and complex style to differentiate it from the comedy genre.

Thus, the use of films as a pedagogical practice in educational institutions offers possibilities for the teaching and learning process to occur with the respective expansion of culture. However, for this practice to be effective, education professionals must seek adequate qualification that allows them to understand how audiovisual resources can be strategically integrated. Bulgræn (2010 apud Carvalho 2017) asserts that:

[...] Undoubtedly, the teacher, in addition to being an educator and transmitter of knowledge, must act, at the same time, as a mediator. In other words, the teacher must place himself as a bridge between the student and knowledge so that, in this way, the student learns to "think" and question for himself and no longer passively receive information as if it were a deposit of the educator (Bulgræn, 2010, p. 31 apud Carvalho, 2017, p. 2).

The proposal to debate youth and, especially, what their lives will be like in the future is a topic that interests schools and teachers. The author Marcos Napolitano, in his book *How to use cinema in the classroom*, states that: "In this sense, the school can make a contribution to the diversification of audiovisual culture by working with films of different

origins, times and languages, despite the difficulties of access" (Napolitano, 2003, p. 61). Drama tends to be a type of film in which the problem is related to everyday or subjective social issues, which can be real or imaginary. Whatever they are, the goal is to provoke intense emotions in the viewers.

The cinematographic work *Among Us* discusses the passage from youth to adulthood, the dilemmas and uncertainties of this phase of life. By analyzing the film as a pedagogical proposal, it was possible to think of the following strategies to be used to work on the film: adapt the curriculum, guide the student to analyze or make a written review of the work, hold a debate after the film and use specific parts of the film to illustrate concepts.

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR THE USE OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORKS**

The film is an important pedagogical resource for the teaching practice and the formative process of the individual and the collective sense, as is the theme of *Among Us*. The plot makes the viewer emotional, but also reflects and can elucidate, or even solve, personal, family and social conflicts. Because of these possibilities, this film is recommended in teaching practice. The cinematographic work also has the function of being a source of new scientific knowledge, providing possibilities to education professionals and strategies to work with curricular content, in addition to analyzing the real world from fiction. Although the pedagogical work with films in school and university is possible, the bibliographic references point out that social inequalities are factors that hinder and/or prevent the provision of teaching practice that achieves the objectives that cinema can offer. Economic, social and cultural differences end up interfering internally in the school community and are maintained after the end of studies, which should not occur.

In the film *Among Us*, the plot mixes elements of drama and suspense, explores tensions, frustrations, secrets, comparisons and, above all, professional insertion and its barriers, human feelings that are mixed during the reunion of school friends after 10 years. The film deals with themes such as friendship, guilt, regret and the personal changes that occur over time. By using actors who already had a close relationship, the film benefited from more genuine representations, especially in moments of conflict and intimacy, which contributed to the sense of verisimilitude in the portrayal of longtime friendships.

Director Paulo Morelli chose actors who were friends in reality to compose the cast of the film, which presents two periods. In 1992, a group of 3rd year high school students defined themselves as the most friendly in the class and decided to write letters to be



opened after 10 years. Their intention was to know how they would be when they saw themselves again in the same geographical place where they were during schooling, the place of the parents of one of them. The commitment made at the time was to spend a weekend at the country house where they would open the written letters. Through a film, true facts can be reproduced, such as the murder of actress Daniela Perez, which to this day still moves society.

Among Us portrays the yearnings of middle-class young people with the future, especially in relation to the profession, the assumption of sexuality and the formation of families or not. At the reunion of this group of friends, 10 years after the end of high school, emotions were aroused, and there were kisses, smiles and jokes, but also many demands. The year of the reunion was 2002, with the death by traffic accident of one of the friends, on the way to the meeting, who was present, but physically absent. Felipe took possession of the manuscripts, quality material written by his deceased friend, and published a book, with great success.

The high point of the narrative is undoubtedly the reading of the letters that were written by the members of the group and buried in a box near the house where the meeting between the school friends took place. To ensure that no one would find the letters, they placed a stone over the buried box to mark the location and set a tree as a reference. The scene shows the fallen and dry tree, a symbolic image for the continuity of that friendship.

During the reading of the cards, the characters showed feelings of joy, passion and betrayal. In an atmosphere of melancholy, the farewell of the characters takes us back to reality and to the understanding that the individual does not always have the power of decision or the guarantee of planning his life. There is unpredictability in life, which can completely alter one's plans, and this is the symbolic message of the work that, although what was previously planned is frustrated, it is possible to see other possibilities even unthought of until then.

## **SOCIETY WATCHING MOVIES: TRIALS**

The judgment that determines the quality of a work is based on various reports from viewers. To define a film as good or bad, some characteristics are observed. The subject observes whether it is fun or not, the quality of the image and in which historical context it is reproduced. Normally, when watching a movie, society makes a prejudgment, and this posture is not the best to determine the content of the movie. After watching the film, the

individual can conclude the idea he proposed at the beginning, that is, to tell the story of young friends very naturally.

The entire organization of the script was very faithful to the way youth lives, with lots of fun, alcoholic beverages, drugs and even the passions and discords between them. The script presents the involvement of all the characters to represent the friendship of young people around 20 years old. In a country house far from any interference from other people and noises, they isolate themselves to enjoy that exciting moment, and the scenes value dark tones. The protagonist, played by actor Caio Blat, changes his behavior out of ambition and selfishness in the face of the opportunity to take for himself the material of his friend, who died in the accident.

To be able to understand the message between the lines of the plot, it is important to know physical, psychological, and economic elements. The film is a classic narration, as it identifies a protagonist. The predominant colors are somber, etched at dusk, to collaborate with the mysterious atmosphere of the story. Only a few scenes were shot in sunlight. The relevant information for the understanding of language, customs, manners and how young people act helps to understand the universe of contemporary young people. It is also seen in the film how women are inserted in the job market when it comes to publishing, and even the freedom to drink, use drugs or choose sexual partners. The work not only intends to show how young people see life and work, but how an attitude based on what can be good can affect morale and emotional feelings in the future.

## **THEORETICAL REFLECTION**

For the purposes of this reflection, education, culture and society have left history as an important legacy to continue education. According to Maria Lúcia de Arruda Aranha (2014, p. 19-31), "Thinking about the past, however, is not an exercise in nostalgia, curiosity or erudition: the past is not dead, because the roots of the present are founded on it".

Knowledge is not innate, and the experiences lived are felt and interpreted differently by each person, as the film showed. That is why it is important to have theoretical knowledge that helps in understanding how the interpretation of events and feelings occurs and, therefore, the learning of young people. According to Durkheim (2011, p. 53), "Education is the action exerted by adult generations on those who are not yet mature for life". For the author, the social role of education is seen as a means by which adult



generations transmit norms, values and knowledge to young people, preparing them to integrate into society.

Nowadays, it is necessary to rethink the teaching practice in the sense that school and university education provide diverse cultural experiences, such as: going to museums; technical trips; cultural trips; going to the movies, as well as to the theater; cinema at school, among others, to systematically provide more culture and, finally, more autonomy. The education practiced in schools moves away from culture and art, and the impoverished learning they provide aims to alienate students. According to Weber, education without art and culture is focused on a type of bureaucratic domination: "It seeks to train students for practical purposes, aiming to train the student for practical purposes useful to the administration", both in the organization of public authorities, as well as in offices, workshops, industrial laboratories, disciplined armies" (Weber, 1971, p. 482).

For Maria Alice Foracchi, the socialization process of young people is characterized by the search for identity and autonomy, when youth is seen as a period of transition and confrontation with social norms. By relating this perspective to cinema, especially in works such as *Among Us*, it is observed that the representation of the dilemmas, friendships and conflicts of young people, in the school and social context, creates a symbolic space that favors the development of their autonomy. In this way, cinema emerges as a powerful means for reflection and learning and allows young people to recognize and understand their experiences, in addition to the family and social pressures they face. This process highlights the importance of exploring these themes in the educational environment, expanding the understanding of the complex relations of identity and social belonging that permeate youth (Weisheimer, 2014, p. 91-117).

The practice as a curricular component is characterized by contributing to the training of students to work in basic education, through research in cinema.

According to Saviani (2010):

To understand the need to harmonize education with scientific and technological progress, teaching must be a conscious, deliberate, systematic and methodical process, aimed at a double function: to serve as a source of information and to contribute to the organization of students' cognitive activity (Saviani, 2010, p. 61).

However, he draws attention to the fact that, in capitalist society, this attempt to justify inequalities resorts to new arguments, more specifically, the discourse of meritocracy. This discourse basically consists of the defense that the social position of individuals has to

do directly with the use of available social opportunities and with the talent and competence of each one, and inequalities, therefore, are the natural result of differentiated personal successes. The use of cinema as a pedagogical resource in the teaching practice and in the subject's formative process in the classroom constitutes a source of new scientific knowledge and can be worked with the same proportion as the other curricular contents, contributing to deny the fallacious meritocratic discourse.

The authors Silva, Santos and Cunha (2017, p. 4) cite that: "the first inclusions of cinema in the educational field can be observed since the early years of the twentieth century". In this way, the film made available to society already had a character that goes beyond entertainment, constituting itself as educational cinema. This knowledge is essential for the formation of the autonomy of thinking, but generally schools do not provide it, or the subject is unable to extract the message that is implicit because he is not in the habit of watching movies. Cinema is an inexhaustible source of knowledge production, but it is less explored than it should.

In the work *The Student and the Transformation of Brazilian Society*, Foracchi (1977) examines the role of students in social dynamics and approaches youth as a transition phase, which goes through family dependence and the search for autonomy. According to the author, the student is socially driven to fulfill family and social expectations and finds, in education and student movements, a form of contestation and expression of identity. The educational environment and class pressure intensely influence youth behavior, creating a circumstance of conflict between adaptation to the environment and the aspiration for transformation of oneself and the world.

In the book *Youth in Modern Society*, Foracchi (1972) investigates the social dynamics that shape youth identity and notes that in modern society, youth is often labeled as a phase of rebellion and inadequacy. For Foracchi, young people are seen less as developing individuals and more as subjects who must be molded to fit preexisting norms. This definition is limiting and leads to the standardization of behaviors, making it difficult to genuinely understand the challenges and conflicts that characterize this phase. The author analyzes the way in which institutions, especially the school and the family, influence the construction of this stereotyped image, offering little attention to the complexity and uniqueness of youth. Thus, framing youth has never been successful, nor desirable.

By observing youth from a sociological perspective, Foracchi argues that the stigmatization of young people as "problematic" derives from the absence of approaches

that consider them in their entirety and aim only at discipline and control. The author defends the importance of understanding young people as active social beings, whose attitudes and values reflect not only their personal conditions, but also the pressures and tensions of the social context in which they live. In this way, Foracchi criticizes the reductionist and meritocratic approach, proposes a more comprehensive understanding of youth and indicates that the (re)knowledge of cultural, educational and socioeconomic influences is essential for a true understanding of the behavior and aspirations of youth.

### **PROPOSAL FOR FILM ANALYSIS FROM A CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE**

In this section, we present a proposal for pedagogical practice focused on the critical-reflective perspective, based on the reflections we made in the bibliographic research and on the experience of watching and analyzing the film *Among Us*. Social reflections were also made obtained mainly in the disciplines taken in the 1st and 2nd periods of the Pedagogy Course, Sociology I and Sociology 2, in which the film was shown and discussed.

In this way, the theoretical and practical basis made it possible to highlight how cinema through fiction or other genres is important for people's intellectual and emotional formation. In the third-to-last scene, actor Paulinho Vilhena reveals his character, a young man with a psychological disorder who, after going three days without taking the medicine, has an anxiety crisis. Already very impatient with the jokes of his friends, he loses emotional control. The situation provokes in him the desire for anger and suicide. In this sense, family problems and the ways of experiencing and solving them impact the formation and reflect situations in adult life.

Cinema can be a powerful channel to express intentions and feelings that the characters or even the spectators could not possibly be articulated directly in situations of reality. The film's visual, sound, and narrative language explores the characters' interiors, their deepest motivations, and unexpressed thoughts. This occurs in various ways, through internal dialogues, monologues, meaningful silences, use of visual symbols, or even sound design and the soundtrack itself.

Through fantasies and elements of fiction, it is possible to treat realities and present, in a figurative and playful way, the possibilities of science and its developments, allowing the visualization and experience of cinematographic language. The purpose of cinema in education is to promote interpersonal interaction and the problematization of the reading of

old/new codes, preparing to assimilate, understand, interpret, produce and reproduce knowledge. In the meantime, for the film to produce results, it is necessary to have a dialogue between cinema, literature and education and the comprehensive and complex social representations required in adult life. Regarding the use of cinema in educational institutions, Cipolini (2008, p. 47) emphasizes that:

[...] If we make a retrospective in relation to cinema-education, we can see that since its invention cinema has been pointed out as a source of research, and since then, much has been theorized and discussed about it. If at the beginning of the twentieth century the cinematographic theory debated whether the image expressed or reproduced reality, today we know that reality does not illustrate, nor reproduce reality, but (re)constructs it from its own language, produced in a certain historical context (Cipolini, 2008, p. 47).

Next, some images used in the promotion of the film were selected, such as a photo taken on the set and scenes from the film. In the first image, director Morelli and his son Pedro can be seen at the location of the recordings. In the second, a scene from the film, where the characters are all together in one of the moments of interaction and distraction. The third image reveals the scenes in which the characters open the letters and in a tense atmosphere with each other. In the fourth, a scene from the last moments of the end of the film is portrayed. Understanding the process of film production makes us understand that the transmission and production of knowledge are not exclusive roles of the school, but also happen in cinema in films of various genres, such as drama, romance, adventure, comedy, science fiction, action, among others.

Frame 1 - Behind-the-scenes photo and scenes from the movie *Among Us*



Source: G1 Cinema, 2024.

The reasons for addressing this theme were academic, due to the need to deepen knowledge in culture and cinema and how both can be used in the classroom. As Alencar (2007, p. 137) points out, "[...] Cinema makes it possible for people to meet, expands each one's world, shows on the screen what is familiar and what is unknown, and stimulates learning." Thus, it is natural that "it sharpens perception, makes reasoning more agile to the extent that, in order to understand the content of a film, we need to concatenate all the resources of the filmic language" (p. 137). We defend Brazilian cinematography so that reflections and concatenations can be based on the understanding of our potentialities as an autonomous nation free of segregating ideologies.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After the content analysis, it was possible to notice that cinema and school education can be related for didactic use or for the production of other knowledge and audiovisual products. By analyzing the comments related to the exhibited and commented work, the relevance of including cinema in school and university is confirmed so that students/spectators can problematize situations that they experience or fear to experience.

From this perspective, the cinematographic work, as well as the literary one, has the ability to reflect the real tip presented. Cinema, therefore, is a resource that can teach how

to understand and interpret society, in addition to influencing the choices and habits of the individual and the collectivity. In this way, one of the comments about the work can be observed, which a young man says was very moved by the following phrases: "I only hope that when I look in the mirror, I will still recognize myself. Who will we meet? Will we have changed the world, or the world us?" This reflection is quite impactful, since it considers human formation.

Thus, the results obtained with the analysis of the film were the following: i) ability to expand the possibilities of discussions and knowledge of the importance of bringing cinema to the classroom, and ii) proposing, increasingly, cinema for the training of teachers in the public school system in Brazil and Latin America. The intention is to contribute to the formation of the population, which needs to detach itself from the influences of the global north, especially when it comes to the appreciation for Brazilian cinema.

The importance of this study brings reflection on the training of university students to work in basic education, with quality based on professionalism. In this way, one cannot refrain from having broad cultural and artistic experiences so that the mentality can change for the generations passing through the school.

It is at this moment of training that research must be carried out that really complements intellectual training and close and individualized contact with the advisor, who has in-depth knowledge of theories, important factors for quality training to work in basic education. Finally, when observing the relevance of researching the use of cinema in school and university, there is a lack of studies in the area of cinema, in which culture and the appropriation of symbolic goods of each country, including its cinematography, are first conditions with a civilizing human right.



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