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Women with Beards and Men in Frocks: Gender Nonconformity in
American Modern Film

by

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Thesis Approval Page

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Abstract

Women with Beards and Men in Frocks: Gender Nonconformity in Modern American Film

Victoria Kronz

The present study examines the portrayal of gender nonconformity in 36 American films released between 2001-2011. Mainstream and independent films with at least one character portrayed in a gender transgressive way were chosen for analysis. The films were coded at two levels: (1) the entire film, and (2) individual characters. The entire films were coded for mainstream versus independent production, genre, and screen time of gender nonconforming characters. The characters were coded for type of gender transgression, character demographics and the purpose in the plot. The most common purpose of the non-conforming characters was humor, especially in mainstream films. Exploring identity was a much less common purpose and these films were far more likely to be independent films. The non-conforming characters were far more likely to identify as a static identity, man or woman, rather than anything else.

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Women with Beards and Men in Frocks: Gender Nonconformity in Modern American Film

1. Introduction

Since their introduction, films have been one of the most influential mediums for visual culture in America and are understood as a reflection of the views and trends in American Society as well as an influence on them (Holtzman, 2000, Kissling, 2002, Tabishat, 2012). Films can have an impact on people's attitudes and behaviors (Osberg et al., 2012) and the portrayal of gender is not an exception. The complexity of gender, however, is often lost in films. Women, for example, are portrayed predominantly in stereotypical ways as waiting to be rescued, with a main focus on finding true love, sacrificing their personal life to protect the larger community (Dundes, 2001). However, portrayals of gender nonconformity appear occasionally in popular media, such as Pat in *Saturday Night Live*. In this skit, Pat is presented as an entirely androgynous character. In each skit, the other characters try to figure whether Pat is a man or a woman by situating Pat into highly gender situations (Bruckman, 1996). Bruckman (1996) provides the example of Pat going for a haircut at a shop where the price is posted as slightly less expensive for men than women. The tension in the scene is created as the other characters eagerly anticipate learning what price Pat will pay. In the end, instead of paying either set price, Pat tells the cashier to keep the change leaving the questions of price and gender unanswered. Portrayals of gender nonconformity, like the *Saturday Night Live Skit of Pat*, provide a frame of reference for understanding gender and may influence attitudes toward gender non-conforming individuals (Holtzman, 2000).

The present study considers how the portrayal of gender nonconformity in film contributes to the larger construction of gender in American film from 2001-2011. The study utilizes content and thematic analysis of gender transgressions in modern film. Analysis focuses on the portrayal of gender nonconformity and considers the larger implications for understanding the construction and performance of gender in everyday life.

2. Literature Review

The portrayal of gender nonconformity in film contributes to a larger understanding of gender. In film, images are intentionally constructed performances by actors, film editors, and other film crew members and policed within the plot (see: Lumet, 1996). This literature review will situate the discussion of gender within the feminist research literature in three areas: (1) gender as a construction; (2) gender performance; and (3) gender policing. In each section the portrayal of gender in film will be considered. The literature will be concluded with a brief look at queer film theory, history and recent research in gender nonconformity in film.

2.1 Gender as a Construction

Feminist theorists have emphasized gender as an idea built and defined, at least partially, within a culture as part of a gender hierarchy (Butler, 1990, de Beauvoir, 1953, Kaufman, 1999, Tong, 2009). Gender is a concept that has been developed gradually over time. More specifically, a person's gender describes a set of socially constructed and reinforced characteristics assigned to a person at birth, usually based on their genitalia (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Gender, 2008). This definition of gender is different from the common definition of sex which refers to the individual's biology, including genitalia and chromosomes (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Kaufman, 1999). However, gender is something that is taught and constructed within a society. Masculinity and femininity do not exist in isolation of each other where, femininity is defined in relation to masculinity (Gebder, 2008). This construction creates a binary between the concepts of man and woman and places man in a place of power over the woman (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Kaufman, 1999). This gender binary is often conflated with a sex binary, male-female,

based on chromosomes, hormones, genitalia or whichever medical definition is currently in use (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). These binaries and their conflation create a perception that they are natural. People's views of gender/sex as natural makes them difficult to challenge, since what is natural cannot be challenged.

The construction of gender is systematically reinforced and institutionalized into all aspects of our culture (Ridgeway, 2001). Parents have different expectations for their boys and girls (Kane, 2006). Books can be labeled for girls/women or boys/men (Cabrera and Menard, 2013, Dutro, 2001). There are different expectations for men and women in terms of physical appearance (Fahs, 2011). Unsurprisingly, expectations for sexual desire and experience also differ along gender lines (Cabrera and Menard, 2013). The gender roles can even proscribe our body's genitalia and label the appropriate length to the centimeter of the clitoris or penis (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

The portrayal of gender in popular media, including film, often mimics and influences these real life examples. Films serve as insight into people's views (Tabishat, 2012). These portrayals often include the gender stereotypes developed along with the construction of gender (Glick and Fiske, 2012). Holtzman (2000) discusses how gender, along with other identity markers such as race and class, developed together after film was introduced as a medium. Holtzman (2000) provides a description of the portrayal of women in film throughout American film history and discusses how it influenced and reflected women's lives in America at those times. She begins by describing the types of gender stereotypes portrayed in popular films in the 1920s. The types of women portrayed included "the good girl", "the flapper", "the chorus girl", and "the bad girl" (Holtzman, 2000, p. 83). She continues her description, focusing on films during World

War I and the 1950s, and finds a continuation of these types of characters, although some of the specifics changed.

2.2 Gender Performance

The construction of gender provides a critique of gender at the cultural level. Feminist theorists have also considered the ways in which individuals continually construct gender through their actions. This notion of gender performance is the idea that gender is always being acted out and that it is constantly being encouraged, discouraged and reinforced depending on the current definition (Butler, 1990, Deutsch, 2007, Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Risman, 2004, Schilt and Westbrook, 2009, West and Zimmerman, 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987) called the performance “doing gender.” They describe gender not as something into which a person is born or even just and ideal taught at a young age. Gender is something a person *does* and *adjusts* over time. Butler describes gender as “an ongoing discursive practice” (1990, p. 33). She goes on to describe it as repeated actions with each repetition reinforcing and/or changing the definition of the gender. Each of these reiterations allows for a possible moment of change. These repeated actions reinforce the idea that the gender binary and distinctions are a result of nature (Butler, 1990). The implication of the doing gender theory is that gender can be changed, but, as Deutsch (2007) explains, not a lot of changing seems to have been happening. These performances are not necessarily conscious decisions, though, which may contribute to the lack of change. A person does not usually decide that they will be performing a female gender and these actions are a necessary part of social life (Butler, 1990).

The portrayal of gender nonconformity in film may be a particularly useful lens through which to view gender performances. In films, the production team makes constant decisions on the behalf of the characters (Lumet, 1996). This creation includes numerous conscious decisions made by many people about each character's gender and occasionally that gender is switched to better serve the plot or other considerations (Lumet, 1996). Film allows a view into gender performance in an intentional environment. The film's creators, a relatively small group of people, decide who will follow gender norms, who will not and what the consequences of these actions will be (Holtzman, 2000). As the feminist theorists described above argue for an individual's gender performance, the filmmakers' decisions may or may not be made consciously with gender performance in mind. However, these creators do get more of a chance to make a conscious decision than many people exercise in their everyday lives. Almost every line, movement and wardrobe choice is consciously selected and can be edited out at any time during production and encode meanings about gender (Lumet, 1996).

2.3 Gender Policing

As a result of an individual's gender performance, feminist theorists argue that the people around the individual react, positively or negatively, to their gendered actions (Halberstam, 1998, Kaufman, 1999). The very idea that people make choices every day that either have them conforming or not conforming to gender stereotypes implies that there are boundaries between the genders. These boundaries must be established and maintained in order to hold any meaning. People learn about gender expectations constantly from a young age what is appropriate behavior for their gender. Each new action gives the people around an individual a chance to react and label the choice positive

or negative (Deutsch, 2007). In her study, Kane (2006) found that parents actively discouraged their boys from playing with toys or performing actions that were considered feminine. Children discourage each other from moving across these boundaries, as well. Dutro (2001) provides the example of boy teasing another boy over his choice of the book *Beauty and the Beast*. The first boy teased the second for “being a girl” (Dutro, 2001, p. 376). The lessons on and patrolling of appropriate gender behavior continues throughout life. As adults, other adults will inform an individual of the assumed results of their nonconformity, such as failing to attract a significant other, having children, and career choices (Fahs, 2011). Not all gender policing is negative, though. In Kaufman’s (1999) examination of male power and its positive and negative effects on men, he describes men learning how to behave and use the power they gain from being men. They learn that acting in certain ways gets them positive results and encourages them to repeat those actions and/or behaviors.

Gender boundaries are so firmly set, whether or not people are aware of them, that crossing those boundaries almost never happens without some sort of backlash (Turner, 2007). Sometimes this backlash comes in the form of violence, various forms of discrimination, or reactions as seemingly harmless as jokes (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Fahs, 2011, Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). According to Provine, “laughter reveals us as a social mammal, stripping away our veneer of culture and language, challenging the shaky hypothesis that we are rational creatures in full conscious control of our behavior” (2004, p. 215). Robinson and Smith-Lovin (2001) describe four theories on the use of humor: (1) creates meanings; (2) builds hierarchy; (3) binding a group together; and (4) tension relief. As they describe, none of these theories are mutually exclusive and more than one

could be applied to any use of humor. It is also useful as a persuasive technique and effective humor is likely to increase people's bonds to each other (Chattopadhyay and Basu, 1990, Cooper, 2005, O'Quin and Aronoff, 1981). Jokes also tend to use well-known stereotypes and ideas, as shown in Shifman and Lemish's (2010) research on blonde jokes on the internet, further cementing these bonds with shared experience.

Wilson (1990) theorizes that jokes are most likely to focus on a group's opponents or the ideas they find most upsetting. Fahs (2011) writes about the different reactions to women who fail to fall in line with the typical feminine appearance, specifically the removal of body hair. These women are often labeled as angry, lesbian feminists (Fahs, 2011). Failing to remove this body hair places them in a category separate from accepted femininity. The presence of hair or its removal is an example of a gender boundary. Hairiness is viewed as masculine, while hairlessness is viewed as feminine (Fahs, 2011). In her study of hair rebellions, Fahs (2011) found that women were frequently confronted directly about their body hair and the consequences of it, including personal questions into their sex lives.

For example, a joke about someone being a "fag" has more meaning than just the basic meaning of the term (Pascoe, 2010). This sort of name-calling establishes a certain type of masculinity, specifically heterosexual, as the dominant form of masculine identity and the only truly acceptable one. Using terms for gay or feminine as derogatory establishes heterosexual masculinity as the preferred identity above homosexuality and femininity and often equates the two. This name-calling defines this form of masculinity and its boundaries (see: Kivel, 2010). Anything that deviates is grounds for mocking. Lyman (2010) also writes that jokes are an act of domination and a person telling a

successful joke or not helps set up a person's place in the hierarchy. Therefore, most jokes, even the most innocent seeming ones, have some level of aggression to them. The jokes told about the gender nonconforming character set up the other characters, especially the ones participating in the other half of the joke, as higher in the hierarchy. Part of humors use in reinforcing boundaries is its use in solidifying one group's identity in opposition to another. Studies have found that people tend find more enjoyment in jokes which match their political views and involve topics and ways of thinking with which they are familiar (Wilson, 1990).

Films are one of the ways people learn social rules that they are unable to learn in daily life (Holtzman, 2000). Humor is one way to teach these lessons and police these actions. For example, gender confusion, Holtzman (2000) writes, can be funny, but it also makes people uncomfortable. Lyman (2010) writes that humor is a time when usual social rules are suspended and it is often used as a way to comfortably say what a person really feels. However, even though social rules are set aside for the joke teller and his/her audience, the social rules for others are still in place and the premise for the joke.

2.4 Queer Theory and Film

Queer theory examines gender and sexuality in culture and often focuses on non-normative experience (Green, 2007, Kruger, 2007, Valocchi, 2005). Queer researchers often seek to understand the construction of normative identities and the resulting implications for experience that falls outside of these norms and studying the identities which are excluded from these norms. These identities most often include those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. This queer framework makes a direct and concerted effort to disrupt gender and sexual norms.

Queer theorists have examined the presence of queer individuals in film.

Benshoff and Griffin (2006) describe queer film as fitting in into at least one of four categories: (1) films with queer characters; (2) films made by queer individuals; (3) films watched by queer individuals; and (4) experiencing life through another person's eyes, such as a man watching a film that is told from a female perspective.

The focus of much queer film theory has been on homosexuality in film, and this research often examines gender nonconformity as a result or indicator of queerness and sexual orientation (see: Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Russo, 1987, Straayer, 1996).

Gender nonconformity has been present in entertainment throughout known theater.

Female actors were extremely rare before the 19th century, and the characters themselves crossed gender lines at the same time, as seen in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (Crewe, 1995, Russo, 1987). According to Russo's (1987) description of film history, gender nonconformity has been present in film since the first silent films and often took the form of implied homosexuality. These characters were not directly acknowledged as gay men until the 1960s, but they were frequently present, even though lesbian women were rarely even implied (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Russo, 1987). Russo argues that the presence of characters fulfilling the role real or hegemonic masculinity necessitated the characters who filled the roles of lesser men, which meant feminine men. These more feminine men were sometimes seen as lesser and filled the very dramatic and/or sissy stereotypes of gay men at the times of silent and early spoken films (Russo, 1985). In these films, being gender nonconforming could indicate the character was gay, although Russo's implication that this was always true is incorrect.

In the 1960s, gender nonconformity was performed more obviously, and the characters tended to be presented as more intimidating (Russo, 1987). The gendered portrayals of gay men and lesbian women were exaggerated. The lesbian women were more butch and tougher, and the gay men's femininity was more threatening. In the 1970s, the focus on homosexuality and the accompanying gender nonconformity became violent in mainstream film and entered what Russo refers to as a "kill 'em or cure 'em climate" (1987, p. 162). The characters were less complex than previous gay men, lesbian women, or gender nonconforming characters and relied more heavily on stereotypes to build the characters (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). Homosexuality was not acceptable and seen as a disease, so the only way to deal with it in many films at the time was to make them straight or kill them. Both responses were often violent.

Many mainstream films in the 1980s continued to be very anti-gay and lesbian as the AIDS crisis became well known (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Russo, 1987). Anti-gay language was often given to the character with which the audience was meant to identify. In modern movies and in movies of the 1980s dealing with racism, language termed bigoted is far more likely to be given to the characters the audience is supposed to dislike, showing disapproval for those ideas (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Russo, 1985). The queer individuals in the 1980s films were often portrayed as mentally ill or dangerous psychotics, although there were a number of more sympathetic, and popular portrayals, such as *Fame* (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). There was an outcry against the negative portrayals and more positive, but still problematic and simplistic, stories were told (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). These films were still trying to draw in a straight audience

in the hopes of making more money and mirror the fear present in society, ignoring or making veiled references to the community.

After the Stonewall Riots in 1969, when the LGBT community started making itself known, films made by queer individuals became more popular as the community wanted its own voice (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). Benshoff and Griffin (2006) discuss New Queer Cinema, their term for queer independent films. These films have been far less well-known and popular than their mainstream counterparts, since films without queer content were the ones making money and the mainstream films were more feel-good than the films with queer content (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006).

Both Benshoff and Griffin (2006) and Russo (1987) argue that homosexuality and the resulting gender nonconformity in all film, not just queer made film, serves to problematize gender. It creates a space of contention and discomfort for the other characters and viewers and gives these individuals a chance to respond. It is another opportunity to create and police gender. The ways films are created attempts to encourage a particular decoding of the film and get a certain reaction and queer film theory examines these films to find the intended and unintended lessons (Straayer, 1996).

Based on these sources, the majority of queer or gender nonconforming characters in film have been gay or lesbian. Since this paper attempts to look first at gender identity, and only looks at sexual orientation as a result of that identity, it is useful to look at more recent research into more recent films containing gender nonconformity. Much of this research has considered one or two specific films and conducted an in-depth qualitative analyses. Two of the most common films examined by these researchers are *The Crying Game* (1992), a mainstream film, and *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), an independent

film based on real events (Cooper, 2002, Crewe, 1995, Esposito, 2003, Grist, 2003, Handler, 1994, Wilson, 1990). Both of these films feature a transgender individual and their identity as a main feature of the film. In *Crying Game*, one of the characters, Dil, is not revealed as a transgender woman until the second half of the film when the audience learns of her status along with her love interest, Fergus. *Boys Don't Cry* is based on the true story of a transgender man, Brandon Teena, who was brutally assaulted murdered when her status as a transgender individual was discovered.

The analyses of both of these films described here focus on how the sexual relationships and tensions in the films problematize heteronormativity and gender assumptions. In Handler's (1994) analysis of *The Crying Game*, she describes how Dil's and Fergus' romantic relationship begins as heterosexual from the audience's viewpoint, especially since Dil's anatomy was such a well kept secret when the film was first released. After Dil's penis is revealed, the audience, Handler argues, has to go through the same readjustments Fergus must. Part of these readjustments question sexuality and gender identity for both Fergus and Dil. The film complicates gender and sexuality, forcing the audience to attempt to make sense of these issues as they make sense of the film (Crewe, 1995, Grist, 2003). Cooper's (2002) analyses of *Boys Don't Cry* yielded similar results. She found that Brandon Teena's relationships and his prominence as the central character in the film rearranged gender hierarchy. This rearrangement made female masculinity the primary identity and presented Brandon Teena as a sympathetic character. Cooper (2002) argues that the film portrays heterosexuality and culture's view of the nonconforming, both in terms of gender and sexuality, as what is sick, not the nonconforming individuals.

Part of these analyses are, of course, criticisms of where the films fail to effectively deal with gender nonconformity. Handler (1994) explains how *the Crying Game* deals with masculinity and the feminization of men rather well, but the masculinization of the feminine gets less attention. The attention it does get appears, in her opinion, to be a compensation for the feminization of the men. The one main female character in the film is what is stereotyped as a *femme fatale*, a dangerous and usually sexy woman who cannot be trusted. Esposito's (2003) analysis of *Boy's Don't Cry* questions how much this portrayal of Brandon Teena really questions gender or gender performance. Esposito argues that Brandon Teena is presented as a lesbian, failing to perform as a man. Brandon Teena is shown preparing to perform as a man, but all other characters' genders do not have the similar scenes, making their genders appear to be innate.

The portrayal of queer individuals in film has shifted over time from only a suggestion of their presence, through an open acknowledgement, but an intense reliance on positive and negative stereotypes. LGBT culture has also produced a number of independent filmmakers who look more closely at LGBT or queer experiences. It is difficult to separate gender identity from sexual orientation. The examinations of films over time described in this section occasionally address gender identity, and sexuality as separate ideas. However, the construction of gender itself relies heavily on sexual desire, making the examination of these ideas as separate nearly impossible (Green, 2007, Valocchi, 2005). More recent, and film specific research, such as the research on *the Crying Game* and *Boys Don't Cry* discussed above, examines transgender identity, but still often focus on the sexuality aspect in terms of lesbian or gay identity instead and

gender nonconformity. An effort is made in this research to examine gender identity first, and sexuality or sexual orientation only as a result of that gender identity. It is extremely difficult, however, as the films frequently deal with those two issues at the same time, as seen in *the Crying Game*, and *Boys Don't Cry*.

2.5 Cross-dressing in Entertainment

As seen in the queer theory analyses of film and entertainment examined in the previous section, cross-dressing has been present in most forms of entertainment throughout history (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Ginibre, 2005, Russo, 1985). In these instances of cross-dressing, characters disguise themselves as the other gender and convince all or many of the characters around them of this other gender identity. Cross-dressing has been present in Western storytelling as far back as mythology (Bullough and Bullough, 1993, McKinnell, 2000). Even Hercules has dressed as a woman in some of his stories. The cross-dressing in these stories allows for an examination and problematizing of gender (Bullough and Bullough, 1993, Modleski, 1997). The type of cross-dressing, male to female or the reverse, has changed over time. In Medieval times, cross-dressing was more commonly a woman dressing as a man. However, much of this was on stage and the actors were male, so it was, at one level, a cross in gender from male (actor) to female (character) to male (character) (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). This breakdown has shifted to mostly man to woman, as indicated by the descriptions of cross-dressing in film (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Ginibre, 2005, Russo, 1987).

Cross-dressing has been an almost constant presence in stage and theatre. Cross-dressing was a prominent theme in ancient Greek theatre (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). This trope continued into Medieval theater, Renaissance romances, and early modern

English entertainment (Howard, 1988, Schleiner, 1988, Sponsler and Clark, 1997).

Cross-dressing was also commonly present throughout American entertainment (Bullough and Bullough, 1993, Ginibre, 2005, Modleski, 1997). There was hardly a vaudeville act, for example, without a man dressing as a woman (Ginibre, 2005). These performances were extremely popular. Ginibre (2005) describes *Charley's Aunt* in which the main character's rich aunt fails to appear and he must pretend to be her. The play was so popular that there were 44 performances running simultaneously. The regularity and popularity of cross-dressing continued into the translation from stage to screen (Ginibre, 2005). Modleski (1997) describes cross-dressing in Western stories and films, such as stories about cowboys and the old American West. In the case of these Westerns, it was most frequently a woman dressing as a man and learning meaningful lessons about their lives and identities. Cross-dressing has continued to be a strong presence throughout more recent film history (Ginibre, 2005). The audience is almost always aware of the character's underlying gender identity, creating a dramatic irony for the audience. The audience is aware of the deception of the other characters, setting up these cross-dressing individuals as deceptive no matter their motivations.

Consistent with the notion of the cross-dresser as being deceptive is the trickster archetype. The trickster has been the focus of a lot of research in a variety of fields, such as cultural studies, psychology, and anthropology (Cox, 1989). As far back as Norse mythology, the trickster characters have used cross-dress as a means of deception (McKinnell, 2000). In one instance, Loki cross-dresses, perhaps even becomes a woman, and convinces Thor to do the same. Their goal is to trick a frost giant into returning Thor's hammer (McKinnell, 2000). This tradition continues into much more recent

storytelling in Bugs Bunny cartoons (Baker, 1994). Baker describes a number of instances of Bugs Bunny cross-dressing in order to protect himself and achieve various goals. Baker's description focuses on rabbit tricksters, but she gives a basic outline of tricksters in general. Tricksters are able to use their weaknesses to create strength and often take on the guise of weaker individuals, women in the relevant cases, in order to succeed.

All of these instances of cross-dressing create spaces to explore gender identity and sexuality and challenge the gender hierarchy. Cross-dressing characters often create homoerotic tension, such as when Bugs Bunny seduces the characters he is tricking (Baker, 1994, Cox, 1989). They may also challenge the audiences' own ideas about their own identities and sexuality (Howard, 1988, McKinnell, 2000, Modleski, 1997). There is almost always, however, a set gender identity under the gender nonconformity. The clear switch from one gender to another does little to challenge the gender binary.

2.6 Statement of Purpose

The main goal of the present study is to examine the different ways that gender nonconformity is portrayed in modern film given the increased visibility of the transgender and intersex identities, as well as, the larger number of gender identity labels (Bernstein and Reimann, 2001, Gamson, 1998, Holmes, 1998). The current study utilizes content and thematic analysis on 36 films released between 2001 and 2011 and their portrayals of gender nonconforming characters. The content analysis counts the frequency of certain characteristics, such as film genre or screen time, to create an overall understanding of the patterns of representation of gender nonconformity. Thematic

analysis allows for a more in-depth analysis of the larger themes and the gendered meanings encoded into them.

3. Method

3.1 Sampling Design

The present study utilizes both a content and thematic analysis of the portrayal of gender nonconformity in film. For this paper, gender nonconformity means behavior that does not fit what is expected in terms of the gender binary described in Gender as Construction. Gender nonconformity includes both identities, and brief changes in appearance, or behavior¹. Gender nonconformity occurs when an individual behaves, or appears outside of their assigned gender's expected roles. Films were chosen from top 100 movie lists for each year between 2001 and 2011 based on box office receipts and ratings from Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and lists of films with transgender, intersex and cross dressing characters made by film viewers on Wikipedia². The IMDb lists were used in an effort to focus the sample of the most popular films and those people were most likely to have seen. The Wikipedia lists were used in an effort to include independent films and allow for a comparison between the more mainstream and independent films. The selection process excluded documentaries, because the analysis focuses on imagined worlds. The selection process also excluded films made by non-American production companies. Documentaries are meant to depict the real world,

¹ A number of female characters, such as Trinity from *The Matrix*, who exhibit gender nonconformity in their masculine, often very violent behavior are not included in this sample. However, this paper, and the databases it draws from, focuses on characters whose appearance differs from the gender norm.

² These lists can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_transgender_characters_in_film_and_television, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-dressing_in_film_and_television on September 4, 2012. Unfortunately, a more reliable database than Wikipedia lists, and IMDb was not found. Watching each film released in the United States between 2001-2011 was not possible in the time available for this project. These two sources are not academic, and, while they are policed by fans, they are not held accountable for their content in any truly reliable way.

while the movies included here, even those possibly based on true stories, are placed in world's people have imagined and created (Smith, 2011). In all, 36 films were selected for analysis (see Table 1). These films, therefore, include both well-known and less well-known films. Because there were so few of these films, all films that were found on these lists were used. Of the IMDb film lists, 3.27% of the films fit the criteria and were included in the study. In the case of the *Madea* films, there were five films released between 2001-2011. The first and the last released in those ten years were included in this sample. Because the main character herself is not gender nonconforming the results should not be skewed by limiting the analysis to these two films.

3.2 Analytic Strategy and Defense of Method

The analytic strategy was three tiered. First, the films were coded in each of the three main coding dimensions: (1) mainstream versus independent; (2) genre; and (3) screen time. Second, each gender nonconforming character was coded on seven separate dimensions: (1) type of transgression; (2) the character's gender; (3) race of character; (4) class of character; (5) character's purpose in plot; (6) appearance of character; and (7) relationships with other characters. Third, thematic analysis was conducted to better understand the larger context in which gender transgression was portrayed.

Reinharz describes content analysis as the systematic study of cultural artifacts (speeches, advertisements, television shows, articles, art work, etc.) with the intention of interpreting them (1992, p. 146). This interpretation can include counting aspects of the images and coding them or a more qualitative exploration of themes. According to Reinharz, content analysis is useful for exposing how these cultural artifacts are used to privilege some information, marginalize other information, and sources of information.

Other methods would not allow for a thorough exploration of gender nonconformity in film. These other methods would either be too rigidly qualitative or do vaguely quantitative. Interviews would not effectively explore the ways these individuals are portrayed in film. They could be used for learning about the opinions of the writers, producers and viewers on the films or the individuals in question. The interest here, though, is the final product which viewers are watching. Similar methods have been used to study popular media portrayals (see: Cabrera and Menard, 2013, Hennink-Kaminski and Reichert, 2011, Menard and Kleinplatz, 2008).

Thematic analysis is closely related to content analysis, but provides slightly different benefits (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a qualitative method and allows a researcher to look beyond the numbers provided by the content analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method which organizes and analyzes the detail in depth. Thematic analysis looks for themes, an idea present throughout data that can be examined for patterns. These themes are not only examined for their frequency in their data, but the importance of that theme in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The number frequency of an item does not necessarily mean that that theme is more important than another theme, although that difference can certainly be part of the analysis. Thematic analysis allows for a close analysis of one piece of the data set, or a broader analysis of the entire set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Performing both content and thematic analysis allows a researcher to look at the basic quantitative patterns, but enrich that examination with a more in-depth analysis on the themes present. Braun and Clarke (2006), warn, however, that, along with thematic analysis being poorly defined as a method, researches often do not clearly explain how they went about

performing their analysis. Combing thematic analysis with content analysis will hopefully lesson this risk. Describing how the content analysis was formed will set up a pattern of transparency in the research that will follow through to the thematic analysis.

One of the benefits of these methods is that, since they do not involve interviews, questionnaires or any other direct contact with subjects, the ethical concerns are limited and easily managed (Babbie, 2010). There is no need to be concerned with confidentiality, since the programs are available as a public source. The main ethical concern will be making sure that the analyses are considerate of issues of race and gender. With these ethical concerns in mind, there are a number of benefits to using content and thematic analyses. Content and thematic analyses allow the researcher to perform an in-depth analysis of something someone put thought and effort into creating (Babbie, 2010, Cabrera and Menard 2013, Reinhartz, 1992). There are benefits to looking at accidental or unconscious action, of course. Analyzing these purposeful creations can provide insights into the creators. However, content and thematic analyses do not allow the researcher to ask questions of the creator or the viewer of the program (Babbie, 2010). The researcher can only speculate about the meanings without knowing what was presented consciously or recognized as meaningful.

3.3 Coding Strategy

To analyze these films ten coding categories were used. These codes are used to better understand when and how types of gender transgression are seen and portrayed. The coding is split into two levels. The first level of codes characterizes the films in their entirety and includes three coding categories: (1) mainstream versus independent; (2) genre; and (3) screen time. The second level of codes characterizes each individual

gender nonconforming character in the films, 58 characters in total. There are seven codes focusing on individual characters: (1) type of gender transgression; (2) the character's gender; (3) race or ethnicity of the character; (4) class of the character; (5) the character's purpose in the plot; (6) appearance of the character; and (7) relationships with other characters.

3.3.1 Codes for Films

Three codes deal with all of the films in their entirety: (1) mainstream versus independent; (2) genre; and (3) screen time. In this study, mainstream films are those films made by major film production companies. Major film production companies are those companies that release a large number of films every year and gross a high amount of box-office revenue every year. A few examples of large production companies are 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros., Paramount and Walt Disney Studios. Independent films are defined here as films that are not made by major film production companies. These films tend to be made by either individuals or small production companies, often owned and run by the producer or director of the film. Each film was also coded based on genre. All 36 films are coded in only one of two genres: (1) drama and (2) comedy.

Screen time for gender nonconforming characters in each film was measured by the second and represented the total screen time for all gender nonconforming characters. Portrayals of gender nonconforming characters in time frames less than a second were not counted as part of screen time with the assumption that a viewer would not really make note of the character. However, this happened very rarely, and is therefore unlikely to skew the results. Almost all appearances of the gender nonconforming characters were of a second or longer. All scenes containing gender nonconforming characters were

included regardless of how central the individual was to the main action of the scene.

There were six films that did not receive time coding in this manner because the entire film is about gender transgression. It is arguable that it is not possible to forget the relevant transgressions at any point during the film.

3.3.2 Codes for Characters

Gender nonconforming characters were coded on three dimensions: (1) type of gender transgression; (2) character demographics; and (3) the character's purpose in the plot. Of the 36 films, seven contained two gender nonconforming characters and five contained three or more gender nonconforming characters. Each character was coded independently, resulting in 58 coded characters. Therefore, the resulting statistics reflect this coding and the percentages will be calculated based on the total number of 58 characters (see Tables 2, 3 and 4).

3.3.2.1 Codes for Types of Gender Transgression. There are four categories of gender transgression codes: (1) trope; (2) identity; (3) both; or (4) neither. The transgressions in the trope, identity, and both categories can occur with or without the audience's, or the characters around the gender nonconforming character's knowledge.

Within the trope category there are three categories: (1) cross-dressing; (2) trans-casting; and (3) gender swap. For this study, the gender transgression was coded as cross-dressing when the character wears clothing of the opposite sex, but it is not part of their identity. The trope category covers most of the gender transgressions that have a long established history in theater. In a few of the films, a male actor is playing a female character. The character themselves are not crossing gender boundaries, but the actor is doing so. In these cases, the character is coded as trans-casting and not as cross-dressing,

drag or transgender (Straayer, 1996). The character is coded under gender swap when a character's physical gender changes. This change is not a result of surgery or meant to be a natural occurrence. In these films, it is a result of either magic or the character's imagination. It is not a matter of the character's identity and focuses on their physical appearance.

The second category, identity, is based on the person's gender identification not matching the gender assigned to him at birth, or being an unclear match with their physical form. Identity differs from trope, in this context, because these transgressions involve a questioning of the character's gender identity, as opposed to just their gendered appearance. There are two identity transgressions: (1) transgender; and (2) intersex. The gender transgression was coded as transgender when a character identifies with a gender identity other than the one they were assigned at birth (Gill and McBride, 2007). This is a constant identity throughout the film, barring any potential flashbacks. The character was coded as intersex when he or she has either ambiguous genitalia or the genitalia that they were born with does not match their chromosomes following the definition of Fausto-Sterling (2000). The code requires that a character identify themselves as such, since none of the films provide a direct look at a character's genitalia.

A couple of the transgressions cannot be clearly fit into trope, or identity. These transgressions have an established place in entertainment, but they can also be part of an individual's gender identity. There are two of these categories in this study: (1) drag; and (2) ambiguous appearance. Drag was originally a theatrical term in the 1870s referring to a man wearing female clothing on stage (Miller, 2013). The term has changed slightly since the 1870s and is now most frequently used in reference to Drag Queens, someone

whose performance of the female gender is often flamboyant and very much a performance, but still frequently part of the character's gender identity. The code for drag is very similar to cross-dressing, but the other characters, not just the audience, knows it is occurring (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). This definition places the category of drag somewhere between cross-dressing and transgender for this study. The second code in the both category, ambiguous appearance, is selected when a character could easily be mistaken as the opposite gender. The character identifies and lives entirely as the gender they were assigned at birth, however, they have either a very masculine (for women) or feminine (for men) appearance. In order to avoid personal opinion in regards to characters' attractiveness, there has to be some clue in the script that indicates that the ambiguous appearance was on purpose. This clue may include, for example, a direct reference to the characters' appearance.

There are no specific codes in the fourth category, neither. This category is chosen when an instance of gender nonconformity cannot be accurately described as a trope, identity, or blend of the two.

3.3.2.2 Character Demographics. The character demographics consist of five codes: (1) gender, (2) race, (3) class, (4) appearance, and (5) relationships with other characters. The gender of the character is centered around how the character identifies him or herself. The deciding factor is frequently the pronouns used when the character provides this information explicitly, then the classification he/she provides is used. In many of the films, the character does not explicitly state his/her gender. In these cases, the gender pronouns used by other characters will be used as long as they are not used sarcastically or mockingly. In most cases, the pronouns used by other characters match

the gender the character has chosen to identify as, even if that is not the gender the character was assigned at birth. Not all of the characters are clearly defined. When using these criteria some of the characters would be coded as men and women at different parts of the film. These characters refer to themselves at some point throughout the film as men and women frequently through a change in name and pronouns used to address them. Other characters are never clearly identified and are coded here as unclear.

When possible, the race of the character was coded based on the character's self-identification or classification by other characters. When race was not signaled, race was judged broadly based on the broadest type of racial and ethnic classifications, such as Black, White, Latino, and Asian.

The class of the characters is slightly harder to estimate. Classifications of class are frequently based on a number of characteristics, such as income, social status, and how the individuals compare to the others in the economy. Because this analysis focuses on film depictions, applying the more quantitative analyses to these characters is not possible. A similar, but more qualitative version is possible, however. In their discussion of American film, Benshoff and Griffin describe class "involve[ing] a consideration of income level, type of profession, inherited wealth and family lineage, and a diffusely understood idea of 'social standing'" (2009, p. 165). As a result of this method, the coding for class in the present analysis is necessarily subjective.

The categories of class were broken down into poor, middle, and wealthy, and focus mainly on the character's expected income. Direct references were rarely made to a character's income. Therefore, indicators of income were chosen. After reviewing the range of films, it was determined that the most consistent basis for interpreting income

was to focus mainly on the type of job the character has, and the expected income from that job. Other cues of wealth were also considered in addition to the character's job. Age was a major consideration, though, as a teenager working in a fast food restaurant could easily be middle, or wealthy based on their parents' jobs. The type of area in which the character lives was also considered, since a reference to well-known wealthy areas, such as the Hamptons, or a well-known working class area may be a strong indicator of what class the creators intended the character to fit into. The person may not own the home in the area, but their social connections were considered as a possible influence on their class status. Benshoff and Griffin (2009) indicate that the assumption of most Americans is that there are no classes, or that they are middle-income. Therefore, middle-income was the chosen category when no indications to the contrary are presented.

3.3.2.3. Transgression's Purpose in the Plot. There are four codes under the transgression's purpose in the plot: (1) exploring nonconforming gender identity; (2) comedy; (3) both; and (4) neither. This description is meant to examine the reason for including the transgression in the film. A film is coded as exploring identity when the transgression(s) in the film give the characters or the viewer a better understanding of gender nonconforming identities. This code is not used when the character's only learn about gender conforming identities, man or woman, even when that identity is not their own. The comedy code is used when the transgression is just part of jokes and does not help create a better understanding of the character's gender nonconforming identity or transgression. Some films may contain both or neither of these categories and will be coded appropriately.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Content Analysis: Describing the Films and Characters

The content analysis of these 36 films focuses on the frequencies of certain representations. Together these frequencies provide an overall characterization of how gender nonconforming characters are portrayed across films. Gender nonconformity for the purpose of this study is when a character, as either a part of their identity, or behavior, crosses the gender binary, either partially or completely. In the context of film, gender transgressions could be portrayed in line with the common tropes described above in the history of cross-dressing in films, or as authentic identities or experiences. Some transgressions are a blend of tropes and identities, or fall outside of the two.

4.1.1 Mainstream Comedies and Independent Identities

Mainstream and independent films differed in the way in which gender transgressions tended to be depicted. Table 1 illustrates that most of the films included in the analysis are mainstream films (66.7%) rather than independent films (33.3%). When gender transgressions were portrayed, mainstream and independent films showcased gender transgressions differently. Mainstream films (83.3% comedic and 8.3% both) when compared to independent films (8.3% comedic and 16.7% both) showed gender transgressions in largely comedic ways. In contrast, independent films are far more likely to explore nonconforming gender identities (75.0% exploring identities and 16.7% both) than the mainstream films (0% exploring identities and 8.3% both).

The difference in this portrayal is largely influenced by the fact that the mainstream films are more likely to be comedies (83.3% of mainstream films) than are independent films (25% of independent films). Major production companies seem to be

less likely to back something that contains identity explorations, especially if it is the main character such as *Transamerica*. The goal of mainstream production appears to focus on big money pictures or blockbusters. They support the films that are more likely to make money (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). Films focusing on queer identity, Benshoff and Griffin (2006) write, are more likely to focus on the smaller, therefore less lucrative, queer audience. No matter the intended audience, the film makers are trying to appeal to them and this appeal frequently consists of using familiar images (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006). In the few mainstream films that did explore identity, it was either barely doing so, such as in *Lord of the Rings*, or the identity was a negative medical condition, like the multiple personality disorder in *Peacock*. At the outset it is clear that gender nonconformity is primarily portrayed as a comedic element and in comedic films.

4.1.2 Cross-Dressing with a Side of Cross-Dressing

As described above, comedies are far more common in these 36 films than dramas. Over half of all of the films analyzed are comedies. The breakdown is similar for the purpose the gender transgressions serve in the films, 27.8% for exploring identity, 58.3% for comedy, 8.3% for both, and 5.6% for neither. This difference indicates that during this time period gender transgression and nonconformity lends itself more towards comedy than meaningful exploration of identity. It was surprising to find how little the portrayal of cross-dressing and its use had changed over time (see: Bullough and Bullough, 1993). The comedic treatment of cross-dressing has been a major trope throughout Western storytelling tradition. As Ginibre writes, “nothing in the theatrical experience seems to guarantee a laugh like a man in a frock” (2005, p. 8). Not only does

the tension that the cross-dressing creates lend itself to humor, people are used to seeing cross-dressing in these situations.

The most common type of gender transgression presented in the films is cross-dressing (44.4%). However, cross-dressing was far more likely to occur when the purpose of the gender transgression was comedy (61.0%) in comparison to exploring identity (7.8%), or both (0%). One of the two instances where the gender transgression was not comedic and did not explore gender nonconforming identity was also cross-dressing, Eowyn in *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*. However, this instance is far more similar to the exploring identity category, since Eowyn explores her feminine identity by not conforming to expectations. Transgender identity, however, was far more likely to be the transgression when the film was exploring identity (53.8%) or both comedy and exploring identity (40%) than if it was comedy (3.0%) or neither (0%). Cross-dressing appears to be much easier to use for comedy than any other form of gender transgression. It is easier to not take cross-dressing seriously, possibly because it is not directly linked to the individual's gender or sexual identity. Because cross-dressing is not an identity like transgender, it is far easier to avoid any serious gender identity exploration.

To best understand how cross-dressing is portrayed it is useful to consider the context in which it is presented. A common explanation for cross-dressing occurs when a character needs to go undercover as the other gender. For example, in *Sorority Boys*, the three main characters have to hide out in the sorority across the street so they can break back into their fraternity house. In order to do this, they are forced to go undercover as women so they can join the sorority. Similarly, in *Juwanna Man*, the main character is a

suspended professional basketball player. In order to play again, he pretends to be a woman to play on the professional women's team. These instances are very similar to those found in other descriptions of cross-dressing in film. Ginibre's (2005) describes *Tootsie* (1982), a story about an actor who needs to present as a woman in order to find work, in way very similar to *Juwanna Man* or even the much earlier story of *Charley's Aunt* (1941).

Cross-dressing is more likely to be depicted with male characters cross-dressing as women. Fourteen out of the eighteen cross-dressing characters are men. Ten of those fourteen male characters were undercover. The purpose in the plots for all of the undercover cross-dressing, and most of the cross-dressing for other purposes, were coded as comedies with the exception of Eowyn in *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*. Eowyn goes undercover as a male warrior to follow her uncle into battle and when she is revealed to be a woman it is not discussed further. In all the instances of male cross-dressing undercover, the character is revealed to be a man as part of the film's climax. The character or characters solve their problem and get revealed to be men in the process. The prominence of undercover cross-dressing is hardly surprising considering its long standing presence in film and theater (Benshoff and Griffon, 2006, Bullough and Bullough, 1993, Crewe, 1997, Russo, 1987).

It is important to note that the majority of the humor depicted in gender nonconforming characters is at the expense of femininity. The men are being mocked for taking on the roles of women and the guise of femininity. In the case of cross-dressing men, femininity is something that holds these characters back. Kaufman (1990) describes the dominant masculinity, which most of these men possess, as coming with power in

society. He describes it as being a complicated and sometimes painful power, but a powerful and more highly rated place in society nonetheless. The men are not only forced into these less powerful positions, but they are forced to deal with situations in ways they were never taught (Halberstam 1998, Kaufman, 1999). The portrayal of cross-dressing men can be seen in as another instance in which masculinity is not discouraged, but femininity is portrayed as a negative (Kane, 2006).

In contrast, the women who cross-dress gain power. Eowyn is perhaps the most literal example of this. She pretends to be a man, not only enabling another man to empower himself in the process, but manage to defeat a foe previously believed impossible to defeat. Admittedly she could defeat the person because she “was no man,” but it still required her to pretend to be a man to get on the battlefield in the first place. In these cross-dressing narratives, there is a clear gender distinction. Women must prove their worth, while the men are only required to keep themselves from falling too far into femininity.

These male cross-dressing characters are put in situations that they are unable to get out of as women. Part of the joke is often that, if they were in their masculine personas, they would either never be in that situation or they would easily be able to escape it. In *Sorority Boys*, the three men have to shave their legs in order to blend in as women. Shaving their legs takes a lot of effort and results in painful razor burn and ingrown hairs for one of the men. As men, no one would expect them to shave their legs and they would have avoided this consequence. However, since they were women and did not want to call attention to themselves, like the negative attention received by Fahs’ (2011) hair rebellion participants, they were forced to deal with the results.

Anxiety arises when gender performance as a natural act comes into question (Halberstam, 1998). The character who is cross-dressing or in drag likely spends some time conforming to their assigned gender roles and stereotypes. This switch in identity highlights the uncomfortable situation and uncomfortable situations are where a person can often find humor (Holtzman, 2000, Lyman, 210). Mulvey (1975) writes that, in film, the women represent castration and the resulting anxiety and that the writers and creators go to great lengths to relieve this threat and the viewer finds enjoyment in this process. If woman poses this threat of castration, it seems likely that a man in a female role would result in a similar and possibly worse situation. It may be especially true considering another of Mulvey's (1975) point that the male character cannot stand up to the same objectification as the female character. The uncomfortable gender contrast in these characters' actions may be what makes the cross-dressing and drag funny. Humor allows for a release of these tensions (Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 2001). People's struggles with their identity are unlikely fodder for humor.

4.1.3 Men or Static Identities

Analysis revealed that even the depictions of gender nonconforming characters' genders were portrayed in binary ways. Out of all 58 characters, 86.2% presented either as men (41.4%) or women (44.8%) (see Table 4). Only a small fraction of the characters have an unclear gender identity (5.2%) or label themselves both a man and a woman throughout their respective films (8.6%). This result indicates that even when a gender transgression is present, a clear identification to one end of the gender binary is made. There are no truly androgynous characters like Pat.

In the *Zerophilia*, three of the characters have an “intersex condition” where they switch sexes completely upon orgasm. There is a brief time when the character’s male form has breasts or a vagina, but these moments are met with horror. Reinforcing the gender binary representation further, each time a character switches from male to female (and back) the personalities and sexuality of the individual changes accordingly. The grey area between man and woman is not something these films explore.

There are only three characters who have unclear gender identities. These characters are in the films *Shallow Hal*, *Joe Dirt*, and *Rage*. The first two characters have very little screen time and, therefore, did not have time to establish their gender identity. Their inclusion in these films, however, serves as larger gender commentary. In *Shallow Hal*, Hal is hypnotized to see a person’s inner beauty so he will stop judging women by their appearances. The first person he interacts with after the hypnotism is broken is the restaurant’s hostess. A few moments before, he had spoken to the hostess, a petite, attractive brunette dressed in a blue halter top with tasteful make-up. When he returns to the host/ess’ station, the person standing there is wearing the same outfit, same make-up (although a bit more garishly applied) and the same hairstyle. However, instead of the female actress the character is being played by what is likely a biologically male actor. The character does not refer to him or herself by name at any point nor does anyone use a gendered pronoun. The best clue to the character’s gender is that Hal saw him/her as a woman and biologically female under hypnosis so the character’s identity is more likely to be feminine. His/her style of dress is clearly feminine even though the actor/ess was almost certainly assigned male at birth. Even just a minute more of screen time would likely have cleared up what gender the writers imagined this character to be. In *Rage*,

and independent drama, however, Minx, a model, uses feminine pronouns, but occasionally questions her identity. Minx is the only example of a major character having a truly uncertain gender identity and Minx herself seems uncomfortable with it.

4.1.4 Black and White and Middle Class

An individual's experience of gender and gender identity exists at the intersection of multiple identities including race, class, age, religion, nationality, and sexuality (Collins, 2009, McCall, 2005). Across all of the films analyzed, gender nonconforming characters were portrayed in a way to signal their race/ethnic background as clearly White or Black. This finding is consistent with the breakdowns described in previous research including queer identities and gender nonconformity in film (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Esposito, 2003, Grist, 2003, Russo, 1987).

Eowyn from *Lord of the Rings* (Jackson, 2003) and the ugly stepsisters from the second and third *Shrek* films (Katzenberg, Adamson, Asbury and Vernon, 2004, Adamson, Miller and Hui, 2007) are all White characters. The FBI agents from both *Big Momma* films (Davis and Wedge, 2005, Friendly and Whitesell, 2006) and *White Chicks* (Alvarez and Wayans, 2004) are all Black. *Connie and Carla* and *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* do have Asian and/or Latina characters, but they are not the main or most memorable characters. Black characters are almost always in comedic roles with the only exceptions being in *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* and *The World's Fastest Indian*. The rest of the Black characters in the films, all men or played by men, are men cross-dressing for comedic purposes.

The characters all appear to live comfortable lives in regards to their class and financial situations. The younger they are the more likely they are to appear to have

lower-incomes, such as in *Itty Bitty Titty Committee*. In this film, Aggies, the young trans man, appears to live in a large one bedroom apartment in a suburb of D.C. He is comfortable for his age and appears to be happy that way. Most of the other characters in these films appear to be at about average income compared to other characters. They are advertising agents, FBI agents or wealthy college students. In *Stardust*, the Captain is a successful captain of a flying ship catching lightning. There is no indication from these films of a belief that being gender nonconforming is correlated to a positive or negative economic effect. In fact, they are portrayed as in the same basic economic situation of the gender conforming characters around them. In *Shrek*, the Big Bad Wolf is moved to Shrek's swamp just like all the other characters. He was not removed from his home because of his gender presentation, but because he was a magical creature just like Pinocchio and Snow White.

4.2 Thematic Analysis: Understanding Gender Nonconformity

The thematic analysis takes the patterns found above in the content analysis and examines the encoded messages about gender performance more closely. In addition to the information from the content analysis, thematic analysis also included attention to the appearance of the characters and relationships they had with other characters in the films. Analysis revealed five main themes: (1) comedy as gender policing; (2) romance is for the conforming; (3) highlighting gender segregation and heteronormativity; (4) nonconformity as deception and trickery; and (5) lessons children learn.

4.2.1 Comedy as Gender Policing

A main theme revealed in the way that gender nonconforming was portrayed in films is that comedy was used as a way to police gender. The Big Bad Wolf in the *Shrek*

films is a clear example of how these characters are used for comedy. The Big Bad Wolf appears in each film for only a minute or two (see Table 1), but he is very memorable. Not only is the wolf a well-known character from Western mythology as a whole, as the Big Bad Wolf from at least two fairytales, but he is present during some of the most important moments in the *Shrek* films. He is possibly the worst trespasser on Shrek's privacy by taking his bed. He is present during the questioning of Pinocchio when Shrek's plan is revealed to Prince Charming, and he helps in the rescue plan used to defeat Prince Charming. To be frank, he is one of my favorite characters.

The wolf looks much like any animated wolf might, but walks on two legs and wears what is presumably Granny's (from Red Riding Hood) pink, slightly frilly nightgown. That alone would be the joke, but they gave him a deep voice³ which alleviates any of the audience's confusion as to the wolf's gender, since there are never really any other indicators. Cross-dressing is central to the Big Bad Wolf's story, so there is no real option other than to have him cross-dressing (Grimm and Grimm, 2009). However, the original wolf is meant to be terrifying and the one in the *Shrek* films is friendly and funny. Instead of increasing the terror, the Big Bad Wolf's cross-dressing is humorous in this situation. It makes the Big Bad Wolf's cross-dressing more in line with the humorous cross-dressing that is a characteristic trope film and theater (Bullough and Bullough, 1993, Ginibre, 2005).

At first glance, one might see the wolf as a positive character in that the other characters mostly leave him alone and he is no longer the same terrifying figure as in the older fairy tales. He is not directly mocked and his joke is left to stand-alone without a

³ Voiced by Aaron Warner, one of the producers. Big Bad Wolf is the only acting credit he has in the various films.

lot of reference to it until the third film when the fairy godmother, the villain of the film, calls him “gender confused.” However, leaving a character alone may do almost as much as harm as actively attacking him. It does not allow for direct confrontation of the issue in any way. The jokes are not really jokes that would make a person, adult or child, uncomfortable with the mockery. It is just a male character in a dress. The joke is playing on people’s ideas that a man in a dress is unnatural and therefore funny.

Gender transgressions being used as comedy is present throughout all of the films with comedy as their purpose, and many of these transgressions fit into the standard trope of cross-dressing or drag. The jokes are usually not made directly or are masked as complimentary, such as when someone compliments Rango on his dress. These characters are always the butt of a joke, at least while they are cross-dressing. In *Robots*, for example, there are two instances of cross-dressing. The main character needs a new part and has to take a hand me down from his female cousin and another robot loses his legs and grabs the first pair, a set of attractive lady legs. In both instances, the same pattern is followed as that described with the Big Bad Wolf. It is portrayed as something funny and acceptable to be mocked. This person is not normal, so we will laugh until they fix the problem. It is not something that is thrown into the viewer’s face and it may be all the more pervasive for that fact. In the end, the gender transgression is presented as funny because it is inappropriate, and because the audiences has been cued into the transgression all along, even when the surrounding characters are not. It serves to draw attention to the gender boundaries and highlight what is deemed appropriate within them.

These examples of gender transgression reinforce larger notions of masculinity. According to Kivel (2010), boys are being taught how to act like men and the

consequences for when they do not fit this role can be extremely detrimental. Gender policing reinforces and creates the gender boundaries, scripts and stereotypes that each gender is expected to follow. This policing can be done through a number of methods, including direct confrontation about the transgression or a less direct approach which focuses more on concern about the consequences for the individual (Dutro, 2001, Fahs, 2011, Kane, 2006, Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). These responses can come from just about anyone the individuals encounter and start basically as soon as a child can start showing a personality and opinions (Dutro, 2001, Kane, 2006).

Humor, both malicious and more lighthearted humor, is another way for this policing to occur (Lyman, 2010, Pascoe, 2010). Humor is certainly a common mode of expression in these films, as described above. Masculinity and femininity are concepts which consist of a number of assumptions about how individuals in each category should act (Kivel, 2010). The comedic moments in these films were based on these shared assumptions. These assumptions are present at a young age, which is why the jokes can be so similar between movies meant for children, adults, and both. Much of this humor is of a lighthearted nature, unlike the teasing described by Pascoe (2010), but it creates a hierarchy between the gender non-conforming characters and the conforming characters. These films help in creating this hierarchy through their humor, and treatment of these characters. They may also reflect the hierarchy already created by society in general.

4.2.2 Romance is for the Conforming

The gender nonconforming characters' access to romance is another way to show the consequences of not conforming to gender expectations. Romance can be tricky for the nonconforming characters in these films due to their gender transgression. The

trouble for characters that fit into the trope of cross-dressing or drag follow the same ones seen for these characters in all entertainment media (see: Benshoff and Griffin, 2006, Russo, 1987, Straayer, 1996). In most of the cross-dressing comedy films, the lead male is cross-dressing and has a romantic interest in one of the women he is misleading. There is always sexual tension meant to be humorous. Although the female character does not always notice, the audience does.

In *Sorority Boys*, for example, one of the men has a romance with the leader of the sorority both as a man and a woman while she thinks the two are cousins. In *Big Momma's House*, there are two romantic plots centering on Malcolm Turner, the main male character. The first is with the niece of the real Big Momma (the woman he is pretending to be) and the second is with a male acquaintance of Big Momma. Turner courts the niece as himself, but there are several scenes where he checks her out while in the form of Big Momma. As for his male suitor, the man comes on strong and it is meant to be funny rather than creepy, since the audience knows that Turner is actually a man. The joke here is that it is funny when Turner as Big Momma gets into sexual or romantic situations, since he is so obviously not a woman or clearly a man at the time. This finding is similar to Benshoff and Griffin's (2006) description of queer film. They describe that issues of sexuality are often raised in films when a character dresses as the opposite gender, resulting in romantic issues between them and their potential or current partner. It is also the same dilemma that has been faced by characters in theater since at least Shakespeare (Crewe, 1995).

Romance is not completely out of reach for most of these characters though, because they are cross-dressing, and because their real identity conforms to social binary

expectations romance is still a possibility. Romance and a sexual relationship are a reward for conforming to gender roles. When the confusion found in these films and described by Benshoff and Griffin (2006) is resolved, the romantic issues end, as well. By the end of the films, they are firmly established in their gender and they can pursue a heterosexual romantic relationship. Even Eowyn from *Lord of the Rings* meets her future husband as a result of her cross-dressing and entering battle. Fitting the gender roles and expectations is rewarded with a happily ever after ending.

Romance is acceptable when the individual's gender is clearly defined, either as part of the transgression, or outside of it. In *Rango*, for instance, Rango is in a dress for a major fight sequence. About halfway through this time period, Rango almost kisses the female lead, Bean. Rango's masculinity is never really in question. His opponents may have seen him as a woman, but Bean never did. This means that he remains an acceptable romantic partner.

The situation for the ugly stepsisters in the *Shrek* films, whose ambiguous appearance comes under the both category of transgressions, is slightly different. The ugly stepsisters, Doris and Mabel, from the *Shrek* (Katzenberg, Adamson, Asbury and Vernon, 2004, Adamson, Miller and Hui, 2007) films are very masculine women in terms of physical appearance and their voice actors are men, Larry King and Regis Philbin. Both sisters have a scene that references their sexuality. In the second film, Prince Charming flirts with one of the sisters, Mabel. This instance shows individuals with ambiguous appearances to be disinterested in romance. Almost every woman comments on the attractiveness of Prince Charming at some point. So why is Mabel so different? The resulting message is that in the world portrayed in the *Shrek* films, only a woman

deemed ugly and masculine is the only woman who can thoroughly resist Prince Charming's charms. The implication, then, links Mabel's female masculinity with asexuality, since there is no hint of lesbianism. In the third film, the second sister, Doris, voices her attraction to Prince Charming and the princesses' react with disgust. As soon as Doris indicates a sexual interest in the prince, the reaction is immediately harsh and negative. Doris provides the idea that a woman not filling acceptable notions of femininity should be aromantic. A similar situation is seen for the supporting characters in drag in the film *Connie and Carla*. They either show no interest in romance, since the focus is totally on Connie and Carla's cross-dressing/drag confusion, and its effects on their romances, or their interests in romance are present as part of joke.

Romantic results for the individuals categorized under the identity transgressions are similar to those in the trope transgression in that romance seems possible once their "identity crisis" is clearly resolved. Although this resolution is complex, and potentially dangerous, it still requires the individual to "choose" between binary options. For example, in *Transamerica* (Bastien and Tucker, 2004), the main character is a transgender woman. Once she so thoroughly identifies as a woman and rejects her previous life as a man that even the discussion of it disturbs her. By the end of the film she comes to accept her past more, but on the way to that acceptance she has a romantic interlude, though nothing sexual occurs, with a Native American man. There is even the strong suggestion that she plans to return to continue this relationship once she is firmly established as a woman and follows all the rules for femininity consciously; she is rewarded with a man's heterosexual interest.

The two possible exceptions are the cross-dressing minion in *Despicable Me*, and the main characters in *Zerophilia*. However, the portrayals in *Despicable Me* and *Zerophilia* serves to reinforce the heteronormative, gender conforming romantic assumptions. In *Despicable Me*, in order to go to the store, the main character's minions must go undercover as a family, husband, wife and baby. The husband and wife minions never have a romantic moment, but the presence of a baby as part of the cover certainly implies the possibility. It shows that the normal actions and lifestyle, the actions and lifestyle that will not get tiny yellow clones with goggles on noticed is being a nuclear, heterosexual family matching stereotypical gender roles.

In *Zerophilia*, the main character, Luke, has a fantasy intersex condition that switches him from male to female or the reverse upon reaching orgasm. As a result, he has to struggle throughout the movie with his sexual, and gender identity. At the end of the film, he accepts these switches. The resulting romance makes this acceptance easier, since he is consistently heterosexual, since his partner is always the other sex. There is also no long term in between state in terms of sexes for these characters. Luke only briefly has anything that might resemble a state other than what is considered the norm for males and females. Romance is not possible when he is anything but clearly male or female.

In all of these cases, whether they fall under categories of identity, trope, or both, romance and often sexuality is acceptable when each party has a clearly defined gender role and is preferably heterosexual. The specific details of how these different categories deal with their romantic story lines differ. Their interactions with other characters are highly influenced by their type of transgression. However, the thread running throughout

these characters' experiences is that clearly defined, and traditional, heterosexual relationships are romantically preferred.

4.2.3 Highlighting Gender Segregation and Heteronormativity

Romantic relationships are not the only interesting relationships in these films. These gender transgression portrayals also serve to illustrate how firmly separated the genders are within the context of heterosexual platonic friendship. Through the use of intentional gender transgression, each of these characters gains access to individuals otherwise inaccessible due to gender segregation. In each film, some character makes contact with a future heterosexual romantic partner or just new friends.

This bridging of the gender divide is mainly seen in films with cross-dressing characters. In *She's the Man* (Leslie and Fickman, 2006), based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Viola poses as her brother to gain access to the men's soccer team. In doing so, she becomes friends with several male soccer players, as well as the target of her romantic interest. These are not friendships should could have made otherwise. The separation of genders in this film is a bit exaggerated in comparison to the others, since she is able to move into a boy's dorm. Viola's cross-dressing allows her to cross into this male arena and, after some fumbling, assimilate effectively. There are moments in the film while she is playing a man where her true personality comes through and these are the moments that lead to her friendship with the boys. It is a similar situation in *White Chicks*. The two FBI agents not only cross gender lines, but also race and class lines. They make friends with white female socialites and the moments that cement these friendships are the times when their true personalities shine through the latex.

The ease with which these friends are made aligns well with how arbitrary the gender lines the literature describes can sometimes seem. Dutro (2001) describes a young boy being teased for choosing *Beauty and the Beast*, story labeled as being for girls. This story shows how framing a story can easily shift it from seemingly feminine (Beauty falling in love with a beast, who rescues her), to masculine (a monster kidnapping a young person, and they then become friends). Similarly, the personas these gender nonconforming characters adopt are not what creates these friendships. The friendships are often cemented when they break character slightly. Such as in *White Chicks*, when the characters bond when the agents act more like themselves, than the socialites they are pretending to be. The transgressing characters help the people around them in some way that they want to as individuals, regardless of their own gender identity, or the one they are pretending to be. It clearly is not beyond the writers', directors', producers', or viewers' imagination that these individuals could make meaningful connections, romantic or platonic, with the other gender. These relationships also highlight the truth in Kaufman's (1999) argument that hegemonic male power comes with a price. In these cases, the price to not crossing these gender boundaries would have been never making these connections and friendships or learned lessons about their own identities and personalities.

4.2.4 Nonconformity as Deception and Trickery

The relationships, both friendly and romantic, can also place sinister suspicions onto the gender nonconforming characters. These jokes and the films not only reinforce gender boundaries, but communicate the expectation of staying within them. They also set up a character of deceit for those who move outside of their assigned gender's

boundaries. In terms of the plot, all of these characters are attempting something worth achieving. Deception itself is not the main goal, as seen with previously discussed tricksters such as Loki or Bugs Bunny (Baker, 2004, McKinnell, 2000). These characters are helping in a war, protecting citizens as law enforcement agents, proving their own innocence or protecting their families. These are honorable goals, but no matter the goal they are still attempting to fool those around them. They end up in situations that, if the other characters had known about they never would have entered into.

The tension between the audience being fully aware of the characters' identities, and the other characters not knowing is often the point of the specific joke, or the entire film in all three categories of transgression. For example, in *Big Momma's House* (Davis and Gosnell, 2001), Big Momma's niece gets into bed with Turner, who is an undercover FBI agent, when she thinks he is Big Momma. She never would have done that with Turner if she had known who he was. In *White Chicks* (Alvarez and Wayans, 2004), there are a number of scenes where the two FBI agents get involved in activities with the young women that would have made them uncomfortable had they presented as men. They go into dressing rooms with them and even give them bad tips on performing oral sex with a sex toy to demonstrate.

This finding is similar to the analysis performed by Cooper (2002) on *Boys Don't Cry*. The other characters in that film reacted negatively and extremely violently to what they viewed as Brandon Teena's hidden identity. This violent consequence to Brandon Teena's "true" identity is a much more extreme reaction than what was seen in any of the films in the present analysis, but similar in important ways. The reaction hinges on a belief that they have been tricked into revealing a different side of themselves to someone

based on their (mis)understanding of the person's gender identity. There is a fundamental assumption that people have the right to know what a person's gender or sexual identity may be. When a person is perceived as clearly fitting into a category, it is unnecessary to ask questions. However, when someone crosses into nonconformity, people feel they are allowed or even have the right to ask questions (see: Fahs, 2011).

4.2.5 Lessons Children Learn

As discussed above, gender is learned throughout a person's life, starting in childhood (Dutro, 2001, Gender, 2008). Six out of these 36 films are animated children's films. The previous findings all apply to the six films, with the class and race applying to a lesser degree. In fact, many of these characters, such as the ugly stepsisters, Rango and the minions, have been examples in the sections because they are some of the clearest examples in all 36 films. Children are getting a more concentrated dose of these lessons. These films, like their predecessors in Grimm's fairy tales, are meant, at least in part, to teach children lessons (Palmer et al., 2006). Stories are one way that children learn how to interact with the world around them. Films like these teach them that gender conformity is grounds for mocking and dismissal on a number of fronts. It teaches them that the only sure way to be accepted and achieve happiness is to follow gender rules.

Childhood and the teenage years are commonly considered an important time in forming identity and opinions (Zemmels, 2012). According to Palmer et al. (2006), it is generally accepted that a main goal of storytelling, especially to children, is to teach moral lessons. Palmer et al. (2006) also explains that stories have historically been the ways that societies set down the rules of social interaction and expectation, such as work hard, be generous and so on. In a story with as many characters as these films have, there

are any number of lessons that could be taught outside of the main story line. After establishing this teaching as one goal of the stories, the question becomes how much can a child actually learn from a film. Are children able to make the leap from the story on the screen to the real world? Troseth and DeLoache's (1998) study indicates that children as young as 2 ½ years old can make that transition. These children were able to find a hidden object after watching a video of someone hiding it. This is, of course, a much simpler lesson than how to view transgender individuals, but it is indicative of the possibilities. Especially when combined with the information that children become aware of gender and ethnicity and begin sorting themselves along those lines around the ages of 3 and 4 as reported by McKown and Weinstein (2003). Their study found that children between the ages of 6 to 10 are aware of stereotypes and that this knowledge for children in groups stereotyped as performing poorly in academics affects their cognitive performance. Clearly understanding the messages encoded in these films, whether the creators are aware of their presence or not, could go a long way in knowing what steps need to be taken.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the present research suggests that gender nonconforming characters are more rare than expected at the beginning of this research. In the lists of just over 1,000 films released between 2001-2011, only 36 films were found with gender nonconforming characters. The majority of the films portraying gender nonconforming characters are mainstream comedies. The increased visibility of gender nonconforming identities has not translated into film, as the main focus has continued to from early theater and storytelling to modern film to focus on cross-dressing. Most of these comedies contain cross-dress as the gender transgression, and these rely on the standard trope established throughout entertainment media. There is very little variety in the type of person portrayed as gender nonconforming. The majority of their gender transgressions are from male to female. They are largely portrayed as middle-class and White. It was also surprising to find how little the portrayals of gender nonconformity have changed over time.

Gender nonconformity functioned to support the larger narrative of gender as a binary between men and women. There was little androgyny in the characters' gender identities regardless of their gender nonconformity. Characters were portrayed as having a gender nonconforming appearance, such as the Big Bad Wolf or any of the cross-dressing characters, and were mostly portrayed comically. Part of this comedy was the result of gender nonconformity and showed the sort of gender policing an individual might face when crossing gender lines. The reaction to these portrayals of gender nonconformity not only undermined these actions as part of a legitimate identity, they

sometimes painted the characters as untrustworthy. Not having a clear gender identity meant that they were deceiving the people around them.

Not only are these depictions rare and of a pretty specific type of person, but when they do occur they are most likely to be seen in comedies or as comedic characters. The main jokes in these films are the gender nonconformities. This result does not paint a positive image of how gender nonconformity is portrayed by films and may reflect or shape how individuals view gender nonconformity (Holzman, 2000, Seixas, 1993, Tabishat, 2012). Most of these films are not meant to educate viewers on gender nonconforming individuals, and it shows.

The inclusion of gender nonconforming characters can help to frame understanding of gender construction as a whole and have the potential to expand our thinking regarding gender nonconformity. These films could work to show that gender is not a simple binary – male and female – even though much of America still sees it that way (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, Hausman, 2000). However the majority of gender transgressing characters typify the standard trope, and fail to effectively move outside of the gender binary in a meaningful way. The expression of gender is far more complex than just the masculine or the feminine. The biological categories male and female may, in the end, prove to be all but meaningless. These characters cross the gender divides with relative ease. Their major personality traits rarely change and they manage to create real friendships and connections. If gender is truly a construction and a performance as Butler (1990), West and Zimmerman (1987) and others have argued, then the number of ways it is possible to construct and perform gender are unimaginable. However, the characters in these films, despite their occasional movements along or across the gender

binary lines, almost all fit into a clearly defined gender, man or woman. There is much room for exploration, but films seem to have made little progress from their origins of early films or even as far back as Shakespeare.

5.1 Limitations of the Current Study and Directions for Future Research

This study faces a number of limitations. First, the sampling method is not ideal. While it is possible to find all the films created in the chosen years, it was not possible to watch each one in order to determine which contained gender nonconformity. Therefore a different method was chosen. Because films were selected based on top 100 lists, these represent films with a mass appeal and made more money (Benshoff and Griffon (2006)). Less popular films or films specifically for a queer audience may portray gender nonconformity in different ways. Future research is necessary to better understand how the narrow presentation of gender nonconformity in film impacts how people view gender nonconforming individuals.

There are many interesting ways to take this research in the future. First, a study looking specifically gender nonconformity across a longer time frame would allow for an examination of the frequency of how gender nonconformity has changed over time. The majority of past research has taken a qualitative approach, but little research appears to be have been done on a quantitative level. Additional quantitative research may be useful for uncovering patterns of representations over time and across media types. Second, a closer examination of children's films, again across a longer time frame, would provide a better understanding of what children specifically are likely to be learning. Similar studies on a wider variety of media, such as books, television, and music, would show whether or not findings like these are specific to films or have a broader impact on

entertainment media. It may prove interesting to see how the broader visibility of gender nonconforming identities has translated into film and other media types. It is possible that the portrayals will broaden and focus less consistently on cross-dressing, or contract in order to avoid potential backlash.

Despite its limitations, the present research provides a beginning point for considering the lessons about both gender nonconforming individuals and the larger concept of gender encoded in film. Examinations of film give researchers the chance to analyze these views over time. This research is the start of a much longer and much more in-depth course of study.

Appendix

Appendix A: Tables

Table 1: Summary of the Films

Genre: Comedy

Purpose: Exploring Identity

Film Title (Year, Rating)	Type of Transgression	Screen Time	Mainstream/Independent
Zerophilia (2005)	Intersex (fantasy version)	90 minutes (entire film)	Independent

Purpose: Comedy

Film Title (Year, Rating)	Type of Transgression	Screen Time	Mainstream/Independent
Baby Mama (2008, PG-13)	Intersex (Discussion)	21 seconds	Mainstream
Big Momma's House (2001, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	36 minutes 20 seconds	Mainstream
Big Momma's House 2 (2006, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	62 minutes 39 seconds	Mainstream
Brothers Grimm, The (2005, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (punishment)	18 seconds	Mainstream
Despicable Me (2010, PG)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	1 minute 8 seconds	Mainstream
Gamers: Dorkness Rising, The	Cross-Dressing	Male Actor – 7 minutes 51 seconds Female Actor – 13 minutes 14 seconds	Independent
Hairspray (2007, PG)	Trans-casting	23 minutes 57 seconds	Mainstream
Joe Dirt (2001, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (serial killer)	1 minute	Mainstream
Juwanna Man (2002, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	47 minutes 16 seconds	Mainstream
Madea's Family	Trans-casting	19 minutes 39 seconds	Mainstream

Reunion (2006, PG-13)		seconds	
Madea Goes to Jail (2009, PG-13)	Trans-casting, Ambiguous Appearance	19 minutes 12 seconds	Mainstream
Rango (2011, PG)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	4 minutes 5 seconds	Mainstream
Robots (2005, PG)	Cross-Dressing	2 minutes 49s	Mainstream
Shallow Hal (2001, PG-13)	Transgender (unclear)	31 seconds	Mainstream
She's the Man (2006, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	55 minutes 2 seconds	Mainstream
Shrek (2001, PG)	Drag	10 seconds	Mainstream
Shrek 2 (2004, PG)	Drag and Ambiguous Appearance	1 minutes 44 seconds	Mainstream
Shrek the Third (2007, PG)	Drag and Ambiguous Appearance	3 minutes 29 seconds	Mainstream
Sorority Boys (2002, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	56 minutes 21 seconds	Mainstream
White Chicks (2004, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	47 minutes 40 seconds	Mainstream

Purpose: Both

Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives (2010, NR)	Transgender	90 minutes (entire film)	Independent
Connie and Carla (2004, PG-13)	Drag, cross-dressing (undercover)	62 minutes 43 seconds	Mainstream

Genre: Drama

Purpose: Exploring Identity

Film Title (Year, Rating)	Type of Transgression	Screen Time	Mainstream/Independent
Camp (2003, PG-13)	Drag	1 minute 1 second	Independent
Heart is Deceitful Above All Things, The (2004, R)	Cross-Dressing (bordering on Transgender)	3 minutes 49 seconds	Independent

Hedwig and the Angry Inch (2001, R)	Transgender	95 minutes (entire film)	Independent
Itty Bitty Titty Committee (2007, NR)	Transgender	6 minutes 25 seconds	Independent
Peacock (2010, PG-13)	Transgender (multiple personalities)	Woman – 39 minutes 19 seconds Man – 40 minutes 7 seconds	Independent
Rage (2009, N/A)	Transgender	11 minutes 1 second	Independent
Rent (2005, PG-13)	Drag	25 minutes 41 seconds	Independent
Transamerica (2005, R)	Transgender	103 minutes (entire film)	Independent
World's Fastest Indian, The (2005, PG-13)	Transgender	3 minutes 15 seconds	Independent

Purpose: Comedy

Film Title (Year, Rating)	Type of Transgression	Screen Time	Mainstream/Independent
Stardust (2007, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing, Gender Swap	3 minutes 19 seconds	Mainstream

Purpose: Both

Sweet November (2001, PG-13)	Drag	In drag – 6 minutes 44s Not in drag – 7 minutes 5 seconds	Mainstream
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Purpose: Neither

Badge, The (2002, R)	Transgender	68 minutes 5 seconds	Mainstream
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King (2001, PG-13)	Cross-Dressing (undercover)	4 minutes 4 seconds	Mainstream

Table 2: Coding Percentages for Each Coding Dimension by Film– All Films v. Mainstream v. Independent

Dimension	All Films (Number out of 36)	Mainstream Films (24)	Independent Films (12)
Genre: Comedy	63.9% (23)	83.3% (20)	25.0% (3)
Genre: Drama	36.1% (13)	16.7% (4)	75.0% (9)
Mainstream Films	66.7% (24)	100% (24)	0% (0)
Independent Films	33.3% (12)	0% (0)	100% (2)
Purpose: Exploring Identity	27.8% (10)	0% (0)	75.0% (9)
Purpose: Comedy	58.3% (21)	83.3% (20)	8.3% (1)
Purpose: Both	8.3% (3)	8.3% (2)	16.7%(2)
Purpose: Neither	5.6% (2)	8.3% (2)	0% (0)
Cross-Dressing	44.4% (16)	58.3% (14)	16.7% (2)
Transgender	25.0% (9)	8.3% (2)	66.7% (7)
Drag	11.1% (4)	8.3% (2)	16.7% (2)
Ambiguous Appearance	8.3% (3)	12.5% (3)	0% (0)
Trans-casting	8.3% (3)	12.5% (3)	0% (0)
Gender Swap	2.7% (1)	4.2% (1)	0% (0)
Intersex	5.6% (2)	4.2% (1)	8.3% (1)

Table 3: Purpose of the Transgression in All Films

Purpose: Comedy v. Exploring Identity⁴

Dimension	Comedy (33)	Exploring Identity (13)	Both (10)	Neither (2)
Genre: Comedy	93.9% (31)	23.1% (3)	80.0% (8)	0% (0)
Genre: Drama	6.1% (2)	76.9% (10)	20.0% (2)	100% (2)
Transgender	30.3% (1)	53.8% (7)	40% (4)	0% (0)
Drag	12.1% (4)	15.4% (2)	60% (6)	0% (0)
Ambiguous Appearance	9.1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Trans-casting	9.1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Gender Swap	3.0% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Intersex	3.0% (1)	23.1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Cross-Dressing	61.0% (20)	7.8% (1)	0% (0)	100% (2)

⁴ Tables 3 and 4 are tabulated based on the number of characters.

Table 4: Gender of the Characters

Gender of Character	Percentage (out of 58)
Identifies as Men	41.4% (24)
Identifies as Women	44.8% (26)
Unclear	5.2% (3)
Both	8.6% (5)

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Appendix B: Curriculum vita

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Education

Towson University	Towson, Maryland
Women's & Gender Studies – Master's Program	August 2011 –
Current	
Women, Leadership and Public Policy	
University of Maryland	College Park,
Maryland	
Anthropology and Linguistics	August 2006 – May
2010	

Research Interests

Intersex and Transgender Issues in the Media
Gender and Gender Nonconformity in the Popular Media
Sexuality and Feminism in Modern Versions of Fairytales and Myths

Conferences & Presentations

- Victoria E. Kronz. Women with Beards and Men in Frocks: Gender Nonconformity and Ambiguity in Modern Film. Towson University Research Expo, Towson, MD, April 2013.
- Victoria E. Kronz. Guys, Gowns and Guns: Gender Ambiguity and Nonconformity in Male Characters in Modern Film. The Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association Conference, Washington D.C., March 2013.
- Victoria E. Kronz. The Case of the Ugly Step-Sisters: Gender Nonconformity and Romance in Animated Children's Films, Intersectionality Symposium. Morgan State, Baltimore, MD, March 2013.

