

COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD  
SHIFTING GENDER ROLES IN MEDIA  
A THESIS  
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BY  
JILL R. STEWART  
DR. MELINDA MESSINEO  
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY  
MUNCIE, INDIANA  
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## INTRODUCTION

Media is considered an agent of socialization (Lorber 1994), and as such, it can aid in the development of peoples' attitudes, behaviors and gender expectations (Kellner 2003). While viewers tend to think of gender as biologically determined, it is, in fact, a fluid, socially constructed set of traits that begins at birth, and continues to develop and change throughout one's lifetime (Lorber 1994; Shields 2008). This progression of gender identity, however, exists within a cultural context that includes stereotypical representation and expectations. Stereotypical masculine behaviors and traits include aggressiveness, independence and power; while gentleness, submissiveness and nurturing classify stereotypically feminine traits (Harris and Harper 2008). While all traits can be exhibited by both males and females, biological females are generally expected to exhibit feminine gender expressions while biological males express masculine traits. These gender role expectations can limit gender expression and result in the stigmatization of individuals who violate the norm.

However, given the fluid nature of gender roles, they have shifted and broadened over time, and women have taken on more masculine traits than men have taken on feminine traits (Auster and Ohm 2000). Explanations for these changes often stem from women's shift from the domestic sphere into the workforce (Prentice and Carranza 2002). Media has slowly started to reflect society's change in gender roles, although at a slower pace and often in exaggerated form (Collins 2011; Lauzen and Dozeier 2005; Powers, Rothman and Rothman 1993). From children's books to films, messages about gender are pervasive and stereotypical (Diekman and Murnen 2004). Even in media that claims

to present egalitarian ideas, there are usually traditional ideologies that are ultimately portrayed (Auster and Ohm 2000; Diekman and Murnen 2004).

Although media and gender have been studied in various combinations, little attention is paid to people's reception to nontraditional gender displays in media. Are nontraditional gender displays looked on favorably? Do these displays represent women in a positive or negative light? In this study, undergraduate students at a Midwestern university were surveyed to gain an understanding of how receptive students are to changing gender depictions in American media. Gender ideology was also studied to identify any correlations with positive or negative views of nontraditional representations of women, as well as identify any differences among male and female participants.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender socialization begins at birth, as babies and children are taught the difference between being male and female, and what societal expectations are of appropriate behavior and appearance based on their gender (Harris and Harper 2008; Jankoski 2011). Young girls are protected, and young boys are given independence (Smith, White and Moracco 2009). Children in elementary school have an advanced understanding of gender stereotyping of personality traits (Powlishta 2000), with young boys avoiding "feminine" behavior as to avoid taunting from other children (Harris and Harper 2008). Even in college these fears persist. Young men may be hesitant to become more involved on campus or to develop close friendships for fear that some may interpret these behaviors as feminine (Harris and Harper 2008). In American culture, violating gender roles or taking on undesirable qualities can be met with hostility and devaluation, especially if men take on traditionally feminine traits (Garst and

Bodenhausen 1997; Powlishta 2000; Prentice and Carranza 2002). However, since gender is socially constructed and therefore not set in stone, different interactions and events can change how people not only perceive gender but also perform it (Lober 1994).

Femininity and masculinity are formed by interactions, feelings and relationships over the life course (Lober 1994). Stereotypically, women have been labeled as warm, nice, nurturing, compassionate and easily influenced (Kimmel 1994; Seem and Clark 2006; White and Gardner 2009). Men, on the other hand, are thought to be aggressive, competitive, strong, successful, capable, reliable, defined by power and control (Glascok 2001; Kimmel 1994; Neville 2009; Seem and Clark 2006). In a study by Seem and Clark (2006), the researchers were interested in identifying the traits that characterize a healthy individual. Respondents were given stereotype questionnaires and asked to indicate on a pole which item a healthy mature male, healthy mature female and healthy mature adult would be closer to. When compared to healthy males, healthy female adults were described as being less independent, less aggressive, less competitive, more submissive and more emotional (Seem and Clark 2006).

Over time, women have begun to take on more masculine characteristics, largely related to their entrance into the workforce (Prentice and Carranza 2002). Auster and Ohm (2000) researched desirable traits for men and women, comparing results from a 1972 sample to those of a 1999 sample. Despite the 27 year gap, desirable traits for men have stayed fairly consistent, while desirable traits for women have changed. Specifically, the desirability of masculine traits in women increased as feminine traits in women decreased. When asked to rate the most important 15 traits for themselves, women on average chose 7 feminine traits and 8 masculine traits. The masculine traits

included being independent, individualistic, defends own beliefs, self-sufficient, ambitious, self-reliant, willing to take a stand, and leadership ability (Auster and Ohm 2000). This coincides with evidence from Seem and Clark's (2006) study that the masculine gender stereotype has remained consistent as the female gender stereotype has evolved.

Despite its evolution, the representation of females as more masculine is not always perceived well. When Hillary Clinton ran for office in 2008, she arguably presented a high level of masculine qualities, and as such, she faced backlash from both men and women. Carlin and Winfrey (2009) point out that when Clinton showed anger in debates, she was often seen as unfit to be a president because she was seen as having a 'meltdown.' However, if her male opponents showed anger, they were never accused of such a thing (Carlin and Winfrey 2009). This double-standard of gender role expression limits the options available to women to an extremely narrow range that is not too masculine or feminine; a challenging situation to say the least.

### *GENDER VIEWS*

This range of gender roles can be described along a spectrum. Conservative views of gender, sometimes known as complementarian, advocate distinct role differentiation between men and women (Warner Colaner and Warner 2005). There is a set hierarchy that positions men with more power than women. The converse of this view would be more modern views, also referred to as egalitarian, in which both genders are seen as equal (Warner Colaner and Warner 2005). Egalitarian women feel less compelled to get married or have children compared to more traditional women. Egalitarian men expect to work less and stay at home more (Kaufman 2005).

Significant differences have been found between perception of gender roles and chosen careers (Warner Colaner and Warner 2005). Women who want careers outside the home are more likely to identify with egalitarianism (Kaufman 2005; Warner Colaner and Warner 2005). Often more education is needed to obtain a career outside the home, and as Kaufman (2005) and Spence and Hahn (1997) point out, higher education tends to nurture more liberal views towards women, with college aged students subscribing to less traditional gender ideologies. However, women tend to possess more positive attitudes toward nontraditional gender displays than men, including during college, where a greater endorsement of traditional masculine ideology is associated with single, young (college age) males. (Kaufman 2005; Levant and Richmond 2007; Mazur and Emmers-Sommer 2002).

#### *GENDER AND MEDIA*

Research shows that media such as TV, film, music and magazines have a significant impact on gender role formation (Kellner 2003; Lober 1994), although most people fail to realize just how influential media can be (Marshall and Sensoy 2009). Social cognitive theory is often used to explain how media transmits ideas and messages to the public about gender, and how those messages are then adopted by viewers (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008; Rudy, Popova and Linz 2010; Taylor 2005). As Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) and Hoffner, Levine and Toohey (2008) note, the more people can identify with a show, plot line or character, the more likely they are to incorporate the gender related messages presented.

Animated movies are popular among children, and in addition to being more persuasive than they first appear, they have the ability to produce culture as well as

reinforce stereotypes (Bazzini 2010; Marshall and Sensoy 2009). Many animated films are marketed to children, and unlike animated television shows, films are long enough to develop more detailed characters (Foust 2006). Children who identify with these characters are more likely to adopt presented messages (Foust 2006). Disney is well known for their animated children's movies, especially their princess line. England, Descartes and Collier-Meek (2011) decided to take a closer look at the gender representations in nine of Disney's popular princess movies. Although many of the recent princesses display masculine characteristics, all the princesses are, for the most part, stereotypically feminine characters (England, Descartes and Collier-Meek 2011). Snow White takes on a motherly role by taking care of the dwarves, while Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella are affectionate, fearful and "pretty" characters. Later princesses such as Mulan and Pocahontas are depicted with more masculine traits (assertiveness, physical strength), but face issues stemming from their increased masculinity and pursuit of nontraditional paths.

The most recent movie at the time of England et al.'s (2011) study was *The Princess and the Frog*, in which the princess is more career-orientated than family focused. However, wanting a career is displayed as problematic in the movie, thus reflecting society's concern with what effects a career might have on the stereotypically female domain of family. As for the other princesses analyzed, three of their top five common personality traits are feminine. The two masculine traits are assertiveness and athleticism, although as the researchers bring to attention, often the assertive behaviors are directed towards children and animals (England, Descartes and Collier-Meek 2011).

One animated movie that seems to challenge traditional gender roles is *Shrek 2* (Marshall and Sensoy 2009). Princess Fiona is often independent, assertive and strong. She is seen burping and passing gas with her husband Shrek, which is not typical behavior exhibited publically by females. However, the researchers Marshall and Sensoy (2009) eventually conclude that despite the movie's outward appearance, it actually reinforces normative ideas. Frequently when Fiona is displaying independence and "girl power," it is not for her own good but to compete for and try to keep her husband (Marshall and Sensoy 2009).

In relation to media influence, realism is just as important as viewer identification. The more realistic a show or character, the more likely a viewer will be able to relate, and subsequently adopt the views being presented (Steele, 1999). In a study looking at aggressive female protagonists, Taylor and Setters (2011) found that women are only impacted by messages if they view the protagonist as someone they would want to emulate. Furthermore, Taylor (2005) found that undergraduates who perceived sexual content on television as realistic were more likely to endorse permissive sexual attitudes. If viewers do not find TV content realistic, they are much more likely to resist presented messages (Taylor 2005). A concerning factor is that frequently the media fail to reflect the real world, especially when it comes to gender roles (Rudy, Popova and Linz 2010), often opting to exaggerate gender portrayals and gender equality (Lauzen and Dozier 2005; Powers, Rothman and Rothman 1993). As Walsh, Fursich and Jefferson (2008:131) state, "perhaps women will never be able to progress on TV because it's already assumed they are where they want to be."

Women have progressively had an increased presence in TV and film over the last fifty years (Glascock 2001; Powers, Rothman and Rothman 1993). Despite this progression, women are often seen in the same roles, with their focus on family and marriage (Collins 2011; Lauzen and Dozier 2005). Males, on the other hand, are more frequently depicted in occupational settings (Lauzen and Dozier 2005). Interestingly, in a content analysis analyzing the top grossing films in a 44 year time frame, Powers, Rothman and Rothman (1993) found that a significant number of women held nontraditional jobs, such as doctors, lawyers and CEO's, although often these women were unmarried and focused on romance.

Women are expected to not only display stereotypical feminine traits but also more recently, stereotypical masculine traits as well; leading to the idea of women becoming 'superwoman' (Taylor and Setters 2011). As Friend (2011) notes, often in media representation women are expected to have both masculine and feminine traits, but yet they rarely can have a career and family simultaneously. In Furia and Beibly's (2009) study of women in military films, it was only during WWII era films that women were represented in a way that they were seen as one of the guys but also maintained their femininity. Outside this time period, women in military films were never able to have it all; women were either depicted as bad females and good soldiers, good soldiers and bad females, or very rarely they were good at both (Furia and Beibly 2009). It would seem that despite the masculine traits they exhibited, women were viewed as the objects the men were fighting for (Furia and Beibly 2009).

Collins (2011) suggests that increasing women in media is one thing, but changing the way they are portrayed is more important. In their research on

transformation of gender roles in Hollywood, Powers et al. (1993) explains how the “Hollywood Elite” control what movies are produced, and subsequently what messages are portrayed to the public. The elite are a smaller group of people (compared to the old movie days where large studios controlled production), who are more liberal than previous groups, and have a desire to reform the ideals of American society. At the time of their study, Powers et al. (1993) discussed how the elite group did not accurately reflect American society, especially concerning gender roles, citing that most Americans were much more conservative in their values than the liberal Hollywood elite.

Two decades have passed since Power’s study, and gender depictions in film continue to change. The most recent change in media has been toward representations of more aggressive, dominant women (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008). In one study, aggressive protagonists were considered better role models than less aggressive protagonists (Taylor and Setters 2011). Glascock (2001) found that women in prime time comedies are rated more verbally aggressive than men. Additionally, women in prime time TV are now more “fearfully respected” by their TV husbands, who themselves have become targets of female put-downs (Glascock 2001; Tragos 2009). Letendre (2007) notes that aggression displayed by females in media is often used to showcase power. Viewing women acting more masculine may, in fact, cognitively make women feel as though this is expected behavior (Taylor and Setters 2011).

### *GENDER BACKLASH*

Gender roles have undergone many transformations over the last few decades. The lines between what is masculine and feminine have become blurred (Glascock 2001), creating for some a confusing set of ideas for what is and is not socially acceptable

behavior and personal presentation. As women have reached for more equality with men, often times they have discovered that they have to either lose part of their femininity or try to represent both stereotypical masculine and feminine ideals (Lauzen and Dozier 2005). When Sarah Palin ran for Vice President in 2008 (a position only men have filled since its creation), she was often scrutinized in the media for not being tough enough for politics (Carlin and Winfrey 2009). For women who want to enter a male dominated field of work, they are often viewed as flawed men (Powell, Bagihole and Dainty 2009). In Powell, Bagihole and Dainty's (2009) study on women in the engineering field, many women said they rejected their femininity in the work place and felt the burden of their gender when working in such a masculine dominated field.

It would seem that whichever sex could possess the most masculine traits would be victorious, for in our society masculinity represents authority and power (Gilmour 1998; Glick et al. 2004). For women to be able to compete with men, perhaps absorbing masculine characteristics would seem beneficial. Aggression is often tied to power (Letendre 2007), and for men, power has been used to keep women in stereotypical domestic roles (Kimmel 1994). Changing gender roles have created resentment in men with traditional gender views, who may feel threatened by women's new traits, and subsequent power (Glick et al. 2004).

Women are not the only ones facing a shift in gender expectations; men now face increasing pressure to take on more feminine qualities (Garst and Bodenhausen 1997; Tragos 2009); a man needs to be strong but sensitive. The issue with a progressively androgynous society becomes not one of creating equality, but confusion, stress and burden (Brinkman and Rickard 2009; Seem and Clark 2006; Tragos 2009). Although

women are still expected to take on more gender roles than men, the fact that men would even need to take on stereotypical feminine traits has some males longing for the days when gender roles were simple and “men were men” (Tragos 2009).

The question at hand is whether more ambiguous gender roles are actually beneficial. In the quest for gender equality, there has been a backlash that has shown itself in the forms of very stereotypical masculine or feminine media (Tragos 2009). As one researcher put it, “TV has hung gender-specific signs on its networks to avoid any confusion in these ambiguous times” (Tragos 2009:546). Channels such as Lifetime and Spike are meant to attract feminine or masculine audiences (Tragos 2009; Byars and Meehan 2003), with shows like “Monster Garage,” “American Chopper,” and the very masculine “The Man Show” meant to help men reclaim their masculinity (Tragos 2009; Palmer 2009).

Since gender is used as a way to structure life, Lober (1994) argues that it is a requirement that males and females differ. Lober goes on to state “In the social construction of gender, it does not matter what men and women actually do; it does not even matter if they do exactly the same thing. The social institution of gender insists only that what they do is *perceived* as different” (pg 58). Perhaps women are not doing the same thing as men, it only appears that way. Regardless, there is little research on how people are actually perceiving and connecting to progressive displays of gender in media. The broad research questions driving this study are:

RQ1: Is it positive or negative to have women shown displaying stereotypically negative masculine traits?

RQ2: What do individuals think of women who display such traits in media?

## WOMEN AND COMEDY

One way to dive deeper into the above research questions is by focusing on gender depictions in media, specifically in comedic films. As discussed previously, there has been an increased amount of nontraditional gender role depictions in not only television but also film. Comedic films have proven an ideal setting for introducing new ideas (Neville 2009), as humor has the ability to make light of emerging social issues (Hall, Keeter and Williamson 1993). Humor is looked at as a “safe” way to communicate messages (Murnen 2000), as explained by Targos (2009) in his research of *The Man Show*. Although the hosts make what seem to be inappropriate and sexist comments throughout the show, because they present themselves as “laughable paragons of mediocrity” they are seen as harmless comics (Targos 2009). In film, romantic comedies have the ability to turn gender role violations into a laughable matter and in the process challenge conventional gender stereotypes (Gilmour 1998).

Despite the comedy genre’s flexibility with gender displays, comedies are seldom led by one lead female actress let alone a whole cast for fear that they will not appeal to mass audiences (Glascock 2001). There has been a long standing idea that women simply are not funny, or that comedy is not suited to women because of its aggressive nature (Bore 2010). Not only is there a lack of female leads in comedic films, but Hollywood is often hesitant to make comedies written by women for fear that men will not understand or relate to the plot (Bore 2010; Friend 2011). As Friend (2011:52) states, “studio executives believe that male moviegoers would rather prep for a colonoscopy than experience a woman’s point of view, particularly if that woman drinks or swears or has a great job or an orgasm.” Aggression by females in film has been steadily increasing

(Letendre 2007), but potty humor, foul language and sexual speech are things typically left to the men. In some ways, these negative presentations of self represent a “final frontier” for women in terms of broadened gender role portrayals. To be “one of the guys” even in humor is a place that women have typically not gone until quite recently. However, is it without cost? Perhaps by taking on more negative masculine traits, women are actually putting themselves at a disadvantage and exposing themselves to stigmatization as opposed to the gain typically associated with adopting the more valued masculine traits. One reviewer of the film *Bridesmaids* commented that the film had a “female perspective that’s a little too eager to please men” (Edelstein 2011). The C.E.O of DreamWorks Studio has said that neither men nor women find raunchy female behavior appealing (Friend 2011). Would the same sentiments have been voiced around the idea of women wearing pants on film? Something once not viewed as desirable by men or women but now taken for granted?

#### *KNOCKED UP AND BRIDESMAIDS*

For this study, the movies *Knocked Up* and *Bridesmaids* were used to gain an understanding of how college students interpret displays of nontraditional gender roles, specifically by women. As suggested by Mazur and Emmers-Sommer (2002) and Neville (2009), the viewing of nontraditional gender depictions in a comedy has the potential to allow viewers to become more accepting of the ideas presented.

The R rated *Bridesmaids* was released in May 2011 (imdb.com), and was marketed as the female response to such stereotypically masculine films as *The Hangover* and *Wedding Crashers*. *Bridesmaids* is a fairly self-descriptive title, as the movie deals with a group of women, formally strangers, coming together to celebrate Lillian’s (played

by Maya Rudolph) wedding. Not only did the movie have multiple lead females, but it was also written by two women, Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo, powerful successful women in the entertainment industry, which in itself is a rarity for comedic films (Bore 2010; Friend 2011).

The R rated *Knocked Up* was released in 2007 (imdb.com). The film follows a pot smoking, party guy, who impregnates a woman after a one-night stand. Although the film does not center on a female cast, nor does it set out to break any comedic stereotypes, it does portray the women taking on stereotypical masculine behaviors, such as being assertive and aggressive, as well as negative traits, such as using derogatory and foul language.

This study aims to fill a void in the literature by looking at whether people, specifically college students, are in favor or opposition to more nontraditional gender roles being displayed in American media, and whether or not these traits should be displayed in everyday life. Furthermore, whether these gender depictions are seen as positive or negative representations for women will also be examined. Many undergraduates begin to strengthen their own opinions in college, especially regarding gender (Kaufman 2005), and given how influential the media can be (Rouner, Slater and Domenech-Rodriquez 2003), it is important to understand how students are relating to the messages being presented. The following hypotheses, based on the aforementioned discussion on gender views and ideology, will be explored:

H1: Students who are more stereotypically masculine or feminine will be more likely to view the film clips as negative representations of women.

H2: Students who are more conservative and traditional in gender views will be more likely to view the film clips as negative representations of women.

H3: Female students will be more likely to be receptive to the nontraditional gender depictions in the clips.

## METHODS

### *PARTICIPANTS*

Participants were from a convenience sample of undergraduate students at a mid-size, Midwestern university in fall 2012. Out of a total of 723 students who started the survey, 601 cases were included in analyses, but only 410 completed every question. An analysis of the excluded cases revealed no systematic trends or biases. The majority of participants were freshman ( $n = 286$ ) or sophomores ( $n = 136$ ), although there were upper-classman that participated ( $n = 179$ ). Ages ranged from 18 to 64 ( $M = 20.40$ ,  $SD = 5.169$ ), and the bulk (74%) of respondents were female ( $n = 444$ ). The sample was 88% Caucasian ( $n = 531$ ), which was not surprising given the demographics of the institution.

### *PROCEDURE*

Email invitations were sent to every undergraduate student, and included a description of the study, IRB information, and link to the online survey, which was administered by Survey Monkey (see Appendix A for survey). Respondents first answered demographic questions, followed by sets of questions measuring religiosity, political ideology, gender role perceptions and gender views. Finally respondents were linked from the online survey to two film clips on YouTube, one from *Knocked Up*, and the other from *Bridesmaids*. After watching the clips respondents returned to the survey to answer follow up questions related to the clips.

## *MEASUREMENT*

### **Independent Variables**

To obtain a measurement of participants' gender ideology and gender role perceptions, shortened versions of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and Attitudes toward Women Scale (ATWS) were used:

*Bem Sex Role Inventory:* The original BSRI consisted of 60 attributes- 20 stereotypically masculine, 20 stereotypically feminine and 20 androgynous. Developed by Sandra Bem in the 1970s, the BSRI is designed to measure gender role perceptions (Holt and Ellis 1998). For this study, the shortened version of the BRSI was used, which consists of the first 30 traits from the original list; 10 feminine, 10 masculine and 10 androgynous (Hoffman and Borders 2001). Respondents had a 7-point likert scale after each trait on which to rank themselves, with responses ranging from 1 *never true* to 7 *always true*. Examples of attributes include "self reliant" "yielding" and "helpful." Although there has been some question of the validity of the BSRI since its formation in 1974, the shorter version is often viewed as more psychometrically sound (Hoffman and Borders 2001).

*Attitudes Toward Women Scale:* The ATWS scale was developed in the 1970s by Spence and Helmreich to measure attitudes about women's rights and roles in society (Loo and Thorpe 1998). The ATWS has been used in hundreds of studies since its development in the 1970s (Spence and Han 1997). The original scale had 55 items, but there is also a 25-item version as well as a 15-item version of the scale. For the present study, the 15-item version was used. This version has been highly correlated with the original 55-item scale (Spence and Hahn 1997), and since it is the shortest, it should have

taken less time for respondents to fill out. The 15 statements express different attitudes about women in society, such as “swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than of a man” and “women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together.” A four point response scale with options from 1 *agree strongly* to 4 *disagree strongly* accompanied each statement. Final scores indicate whether respondents are more egalitarian or traditional in their gender ideology.

*Religiosity:* Religiosity often predicts gender role attitudes, with increased religiosity coinciding with more traditional gender views (Morgan1987). In their study on career aspirations in Christian women, Warner Colaner and Warner (2005) found that women who were more egalitarian were more likely to adjust their lifestyle and have greater goals. Including a measure of religiosity may help explain why respondents are viewing non-traditional gender depictions positively or negatively. Religiosity variables were taken from a previous study by Bobkowski (2009) in which he studied religiosity among adolescents in relation to shows they watch on television. For the present study, respondents rated their level of religious salience, frequency of attendance, frequency of private prayer, and frequency of private scripture reading on likert scales. Religious salience was measured on a 5-point likert from 1 *not at all important* to 5 *very important*. The other three questions are measured on a 5-point likert from 1 *never* to 5 *more than once a week* (for frequency of attendance) or *more than once a day* (for frequency of private prayer and private scripture reading). Scores were added together and averaged into one religiosity score, where higher scores indicate a greater level of religiosity than lower scores.

*Political Ideology:* Democrats and republicans often take opposing views on public issues, such as women's concerns (contraceptives, abortion), education, health care and the environment (Winter 2010). Based on the issues political parties spotlight and endorse, respondent's political ideology should be related to respondent's gender ideology, and subsequently their views of the film clips. Two questions were asked to gauge respondent's political ideology. The first "I grew up in a household that was primarily:" and the second "If I had to vote in an election tomorrow, I would typically vote:" Answer choices for both questions were on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from 1 *Liberal* to 5 *Conservative*. Responses were combined to create one score for political ideology, with higher scores indicating more conservative beliefs.

### **Dependent Variables**

*Knocked Up and Bridesmaids:* Questions concerning both movies were asked before and after participants watched clips of the movie. As a control variable, prior to the clips, participants were asked if they have seen either movie as a simple yes or no question. In order to assess how students perceive non-traditional gender displays in media, two film clips were shown:

*Clip 1 from Knocked Up:* The first clip was 1 minute 35 seconds. In this clip, two female characters (played by Leslie Mann and Katherine Heigl) are outside of a club trying to get in. The bouncer does not let either woman in, and that leads to a verbal altercation between one of the women and the bouncer.

*Clip 2 from Bridesmaids:* The second and final clip is 46 seconds long and consists of Melissa McCarthy's character (Megan) telling Kristen Wiig's character (Annie) what she plans to do with the single men at the party.

After each clip was watched, respondents rated how the clip represented women on a likert scale, from 1 *Negative* to 4 *Positive*. There was also one open ended question after each clip. For each clip, “In the previous clip, what did you think of the women’s behavior? Specifically what was said?” These questions were purposely left fairly broad. If students were not thinking about gender when watching these clips, that was something to be noted. So instead of having more specific questions on how students felt about certain topics, respondents were able to express opinions on their own, without specific prompting.

### *DATA ANALYSIS*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were first run for all variables. T-tests were used to see if there was a gender difference regarding the representation of women in both clips. Race was recoded into a dichotomous variable with Caucasian as one category, and all other races combined into a minority category. Ordinary least squares regression was performed twice, once for each film clip. For both regressions, all variables were included in the initial model; however, year in school and whether or not a participant had seen either movie was excluded in the final models. All variables in the final models were tested for interaction effects.

The open ended responses were coded in multiple stages, based off Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory (1990). First, open coding was performed by reading all responses for each clip multiple times to formulate initial themes and general ideas, by comparing responses to each other. There were no preconceived words or phrases that were sought out in the initial readings. After making a comprehensive list for each film clip of every idea presented by respondents, axial coding was performed by condensing

and linking responses under more specific themes. For example, responses about curse words and sexually degrading language were condensed into language categories based on whether respondents wrote about the language in a positive, negative, or neutral manner. Responses regarding behavior were also categorized based on the positive, negative, or neutral tone of the response. The final stage was selective coding, which generated a small, specific list of over-arching ideas running throughout responses. These ideas centered on what are and are not appropriate behavior, language and overall presentation for men and women.

## RESULTS

This study focused on college students' views of nontraditional gender depictions in media, specifically in the comedic films *Knocked Up* and *Bridesmaids*. The analyses proceeded in multiple stages. First, responses to the four questions pertaining to religiosity were added together and averaged to create one score for religiosity ( $M = 2.68$ ;  $SD = 1.21$ ). Responses to the two political questions were also added and averaged to create one score for political ideology ( $M = 2.96$ ;  $SD = .86$ ). Overall, scores for both religiosity and political ideology were equal among men and women. The sample was fairly unreligious and overall they were moderate in their political views.

Scores on the Attitudes toward Women Scale (ATWS) and the BEM Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) were computed and recorded in the next phase of analysis. Of the fifteen items on the ATWS, seven items had to be reversed scored prior to analysis. Scores from all fifteen items were then added together, with lower scores indicating more traditional views ( $M = 35.90$ ;  $SD = 5.83$ ). The majority of female respondents scored closer to the egalitarian end of the scale, with 66% of females scoring above the mean.

For males, 41% scored above the mean, indicating that males in the study were slightly more traditional in their views than the females.

In order to analyze scores from the BSRI, femininity and masculinity scales were computed by summing the responses for each participant on certain questions. Based on a respondent's femininity and masculinity scores, they were then placed into one of four categories: Male sex typed (referred to as Masculine) ( $M = .10$ ,  $SD = .30$ ), female sex typed (referred to as Feminine) ( $M = .324$ ,  $SD = .468$ ), androgynous ( $M = .470$ ,  $SD = .50$ ), and undifferentiated ( $M = .110$ ,  $SD = .310$ ). The largest percent of both male (43%) and female (48%) students fell under the category of androgynous. For males, the remainder of participants divided almost evenly among the other three options. For females, 37% were labeled as feminine and the remaining 15% was split almost evenly among masculine and undifferentiated. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables.

Variable	Mean	S.D.
Age	20.32	(5.05)
Gender (Female)	.746	(.436)
Race (Minority)	.112	(.316)
Religiosity	2.70	(1.20)
Political	2.97	(.857)
BEM Score:		
Masculine	.100	(.300)
Feminine	.321	(.467)
Androgynous	.469	(.500)
Undifferentiated	.111	(.314)
ATWS Score	35.90	(5.83)
Clip 1 (Knocked Up) Representation	1.76	(.726)
Clip 2 (Bridesmaids) Representation	1.98	(.827)

For the film clips, respondents were asked whether they thought each clip provided a positive or negative representation of women. For the first clip, *Knocked Up* ( $M = 1.764$ ,  $SD = .726$ ), which portrayed two women being rejected from a club, and subsequently making a scene, 86% ( $n = 445$ ) of respondents found the clip negative or somewhat negative, and 14% ( $n = 74$ ) found the clip positive or somewhat positive. For the second clip, *Bridesmaids* ( $M = 1.98$ ;  $SD = .827$ ), where a female discusses the sexual things she wants to do with single men at a party, 74% ( $n = 376$ ) of respondents found the clip negative or somewhat negative, and 26% ( $n = 135$ ) found the clip positive or somewhat positive. See Table 2 and Table 3 for the aforementioned breakdown.

Table 2. Representation of Women in *Knocked Up*

	Males		Females		Combined	
Negative	45	34%	159	41%	204	39%
Somewhat Negative	64	50%	177	45%	241	46%
Somewhat Positive	18	14%	48	12%	66	13%
Positive	2	2%	6	2%	8	2%
<i>Total</i>	$n = 129$		$n = 390$		$N = 519$	

Table 3. Representation of Women in *Bridesmaids*

	Males		Females		Combined	
Negative	42	33%	118	31%	160	31%
Somewhat Negative	43	34%	173	45%	216	42%
Somewhat Positive	39	31%	78	20%	117	23%
Positive	3	2%	15	4%	18	4%
<i>Total</i>	$n = 127$		$n = 384$		$N = 511$	

In hypothesis one and two, I had predicted that students who are more stereotypically masculine or feminine, and/or students who are more conservative and

traditional in their gender views, would view the film clips as negative representations of women. In order to test these two hypotheses, linear regression was performed (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Results of OLS Regressions on Representation of Women: Clip 1 (*Knocked Up*)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Age	-.009	-.010
Gender (Ref: Male)	-.076	-.082
Race (Ref: White)	-.127	-.120
Religiosity	-.001	.019
Political Ideology	-.157 **	-.154 **
BEM Score <sup>b</sup> :		
Masculine		.379 **
Feminine		.131
Undifferentiated		.069
ATWS Score		.008
Constant	2.510	2.091
$R^2$	.025	.039

a. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

b. Androgynous was left out of the regression due to collinearity issues

Table 5. Results of OLS Regressions on Representation of Women: Clip 2 (*Bridesmaids*)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Age	.006	.001
Gender (Ref: Male)	.021	-.091
Race (Ref: White)	.068	.094
Religiosity	-.179 ***	-.135 ***
Political Ideology	-.167 ***	-.138 **
BEM Score <sup>b</sup> :		
Masculine		.063
Feminine		.008
Undifferentiated		-.123
ATWS Score		.025 ***
Constant	2.828	1.896
$R^2$	.119	.137

a. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

b. Androgynous was left out of the regression due to collinearity issues

Results of the regression models indicated that there was a link between students identified as masculine, and representation of women in the first clip for *Knocked Up*. Contrary to my hypothesis, students categorized as masculine were significantly more likely to see the film clip as a positive representation of women, and nothing significant was found among students categorized as feminine. It could be that respondents categorized as masculine identified more with the positive masculine behaviors in the clip, especially since some of the behaviors shown (defends own beliefs, willing to take a stand and assertiveness), were listed as desirable traits for oneself by both men and women in Auster and Ohm's (2000) study. However, although there were both men and women categorized as masculine, their open ended responses did not overwhelmingly speak positively of the film clip. Some respondents might have found the assertiveness as a positive representation of women, but perhaps disliked how it was displayed; or, as the qualitative data suggests, the aggressiveness and foul language used was an issue. Unlike gender role perceptions, for *Knocked Up*, students' gender views did not significantly predict how they rated women's representation.

For *Bridesmaids*, students' masculinity and femininity scores were not significant predictors of representation of women, while their gender ideology was. The more egalitarian a student was, the more likely they were to view the *Bridesmaids* clip as a positive representation of women. This is not surprising since egalitarian individuals typically endorse equality (Warner Colaner and Warner 2005); so for some respondents, a female displaying masculine traits (even negative ones) could be viewed as positive. This supports my second hypothesis, that more conservative students would see the clip

as a more negative representation of women. One male participant echoed this finding in his open-ended response:

“I am very conservative when it comes to sexual activities. I don’t want to hear about what some guy or girl is going to do with their lover or some random one night stand. The woman’s behavior is way over the top and something that anyone should keep to themselves. [...] I feel that sexual language and activities should be kept within the marriage and within the “bedroom” with your significant other.”

For both film clips, political identification was a significant factor in viewing the clips as positive representations of women, so that the more liberal an individual, the more likely they are to see the clips as positive. Religiosity did not play a significant role for the *Knocked Up* clip, but it was significant in the *Bridesmaids* clip. The more religious an individual, the more likely they saw the clip as a negative representation for women. As one participant stated:

“I feel like this was a negative representation of women, but I would also feel it would be a negative representation of men due to my beliefs and religion...”

My final hypothesis was that female participants would be more receptive to the nontraditional gender depictions in each film clip. The quantitative results regarding representation of women as positive or somewhat positive revealed only a 2% difference between male and female respondents for *Knocked Up*, while there was a larger difference (9%) in *Bridesmaids* between male and female respondents. However, the qualitative data did not reveal similar trends. After reading and coding over 400 open-ended responses for each clip, responses from male participants were not overwhelmingly

different than female responses, nor were they overwhelmingly negative for either clip, although there were slightly more differences in *Knocked Up*. It would appear that men are just as receptive to nontraditional gender depictions as women are, going against what I had hypothesized.

As suggested from the quantitative data, participants who are politically liberal, less religious, identify as masculine and are egalitarian in gender views are more likely to view nontraditional gender depictions in a favorable manor, although the combination of the above traits did differ for each clip as previously discussed. In order to better understand the differences between men and women regarding their views of nontraditional gender depictions, as well as identify what individuals think of women displaying such traits, a focus on the qualitative data will help fill in the gaps.

#### *KNOCKED UP*

In order to obtain a more accurate picture of responses, based off of the axial codes, I counted how many male and female respondents fell under each code. For example, one code was for respondents who saw the *Knocked Up* clip as a positive representation of women because the female character stood up for herself. Typical responses in that category included:

“Well, she did stand up for herself and friend. That was noble.”

“Woman is sticking up for herself, which is good.”

“Good for her! She deserves to stand up for herself and not let a man control her.”

Compared to men, women were more than twice as likely to fall under the above category and see the *Knocked Up* clip as positive since the character stood up for herself (11% compared to 5%). Men were more likely to disagree with the displayed behavior

all together (23% compared to 15%). The bulk of respondents fell into similar categories where respondents agreed with the female's reaction in the clip, citing that she was justified for her behavior. However, in a related category, more women than men (23% compared to 14%) added a qualifier to their responses, mentioning that although she was justified in her actions, she should not have over-reacted, used foul language, and/or handled the situation as she did. Comments included:

“She was acting a bit irrationally, she said she had just a right to be there as everyone else (which is great that she stuck up for herself) but calling him a fag was a little uncalled for even when being discriminated against.”

“She was justified in what she said, but was a bit over-zealous about it.”

“Her reasons for her actions were justified, but her actions themselves were immature and vindictive.”

### *BRIDESMAIDS*

For *Bridesmaids*, a similar process involving the main axial codes was conducted. Unlike *Knocked Up*, there was less difference between male and female participants on all codes. Roughly a quarter of both male and female respondents did not think the female character should have spoken or acted the way she did in the clip, with some participants also stating that the displayed behavior and language would be inappropriate for not only women, but men as well:

“I find the dialogue ridiculous. I don't believe that either a man or a women [sic] should behave in the way the women was talking about.”

“No person, man or woman, should talk that grossly about another human being.”

“It painted a picture of women as sex-craved animals. The same would have been true if the clip featured men. The behavior itself was on the edge of distasteful.”

There were respondents, 20% male, and 17% female, who felt the language and behavior exhibited in the clip was something that should be shown, and had had a more positive take on the clip:

“The women were speaking freely about their sexuality but I don’t think anything is wrong with that. If they want to talk about subjects like that in public it is their choice.”

“It shows a woman who is strong and knows what she wants.”

“Hey...Guys talk like that all the time. I see no problem with it. Freedom of speech.”

#### *GENERAL THEMES*

While a goal of the open-ended questions was to have participants focus on the negative masculine behaviors presented by the females, a large quantity of students expanded their responses to address the behaviors of men. This was especially true with the *Bridesmaids* clip, where responses pertaining to gender stereotypes were very common. While some participants felt women should be entitled to do and say anything men do and say, others adopted the idea that just because a man does something does not mean a woman should.

For several participants, females exhibiting negative masculine traits, such as speaking sexually about another person, were seen as empowering and a way to obtain an equal playing field with men. Since sexually degrading language has been associated

with men as a way to maintain power (Murnen 2000), it is not unexpected that women would find such language empowering:

“I just think it’s good to have depictions that present female promiscuity as being fine. Male promiscuity seems to get a better rap generally, so I think we need more balance. There’s no reason why it should be better for a man to sleep around than for a woman to sleep around.”

“She spoke like a guy would during a wedding where having sex is important. I think it’s funny when women speak like that because I feel like it takes some power away from men when a woman is honest about what she wants to do, sexually.”

“I appreciate a movie depicting a woman speaking graphically about her sexual desire for men, as this is incredibly rare, although more than half of all other films depict men lusting and preying upon women. It is empowering...”

For other participants, sexual objectification was seen as unacceptable for either sex, and if women do not want men doing it, then they should not be doing it themselves:

“I think that she was objectifying men and turning them into sex objects. I don’t think men or women should view the opposite (or same) sex in that way.”

“Sexual objectification is never okay. She’s creating a double standard by objectifying men. Just because men do it doesn’t make it okay. It doesn’t make her stronger than men, it makes her just as weak as them.”

“The women in this clip are disrespecting themselves and the men around them by viewing the men as sexual objects rather than individual people. [...] Instead of men (and everyone) learning to respect each other as individuals instead of

viewing each other as possible romantic/sexual encounters, women seem to think that there is some kind of liberation that comes along with sensualizing men as much as they tend to do with women. I think it's sad when reaching for equality and freedom means thinking about, talking about, and viewing people in a more sensualized manner instead of seeking to know people as unique individuals."

### *APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR*

One of my research questions was what individuals think of women who display stereotypically negative masculine traits in media. In regards to aggressive, and at times sexual, behavior, responses ranged from highly accepting to downright disgusted. One common thread for both clips centered on what is and is not appropriate behavior for men and women, especially in social settings. In both film clips the female protagonists are in public; one at a nightclub, and the other at an engagement party. Many students stated that the issue was not what was said but instead the public setting:

"It just bugs me when a person gets loud and confrontational in public, regardless of who that person is. It always strikes me as immature..."

"...I understand her being upset about being discriminated against for her looks/age, but I don't feel like anyone (male or female) should really act like that in public..."

"I believe a sexual conversation with your close friends is ok in private, however in public it's not ok for women or men to talk dirty if the people in the social setting aren't close friends as it should be considered sexual harassment to talk dirty about a stranger."

In the case of the *Knocked Up* clip, many participants justified the female character's outburst by citing the treatment she and her friend received from the bouncer. As aforementioned, aggression displayed by females in media is often used to showcase power (Letendre 2007). For some respondents in this study, instead of viewing the female's aggressive behavior negatively, the characters were seen as assertive and strong:

“I think it shows a strong woman because she is able to stand up for herself and what she believes is right.”

“I feel that the women acted appropriately because she had a male suppressor that she expressed her opinion about. I feel that women too much let other people control their lives and brush actions against them off. I feel that women should have the same right as anyone else to express their opinion in any way they see fit. If that woman wanted to use that type of language that is her choice not mine.”

Even though most respondents did not try to justify the behavior in *Bridesmaids*, (except in use of the justification, “if a man can, a woman can”), many students found the female depiction refreshing and a welcome change:

“...It shows that a woman can be aggressive and assertive even when it comes to sex – an area where women are usually viewed as submissive or reluctant.”

“She was honest and refreshing.”

“Having a woman in charge of and confident in her sexuality is very much a positive.”

“We know that women think about sex too. Just not as loudly and publicly as men. That's great that she wants to have sex all the time. Let her. It's her body,

she can do whatever she desires. Sex is a beautiful thing and everyone should stop treating it as such as taboo act. This kind of openness is wonderful.”

### *LANGUAGE*

While respondents were often split on whether they approved or disapproved of the behavior exhibited in both clips, the majority of responses echoed distaste for cursing and derogatory language, showing that in relation to my first research question, overall, it is not positive to depict women using foul language. With *Knocked Up*, in addition to using the F word repeatedly, the lead female also calls the bouncer a “fag.” While many students agreed that the characters had a right to be mad, there was often a conjunction added regarding the use of language:

“I didn’t like her use of language but completely understood her frustration on not being considered hot anymore.”

“She was acting a bit irrationally, she said she had just a right to be there as everyone else (which is great that she stuck up for herself) but calling him a fag was a little uncalled for even when being discriminated against.”

“She stood up for what she thought was right, but she used a lot of bad language that teaches girls it is okay to talk poorly. Degrades women and doesn’t show they have class.”

As reflected above, the language was also seen as inappropriate for women:

“There was a lot of cussing on her part and that made her look kind of trashy and not lady like.”

“...the language used was extremely inappropriate. I would never use that language myself and I would never date a woman who used that type of language.”

“I was told in school “pretty girls don’t look so pretty when ugly words come out of their mouths!” This is true! If a girl goes spouting out a bunch of curse words, you start to question whether or not she was raised with an awareness that society finds that unappealing. But men were never told that. Not that it’s encouraged, but it’s not looked down on for men to say “fuck” as much as this woman just did.”

The results from one of the question on the ATWS, “swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than of a man,” provided more insight into how respondents felt about appropriate language for women. The highest percentage of both males (58%) and females (65%) mildly to strongly disagreed that swearing and obscenities are more repulsive in the speech of woman than a man, indicating that respondents do not necessarily view foul language spoken by a woman as worse than foul language spoken by a man.

Though less cursing was shown in *Bridesmaids*, referring to men as “man salad” was not deemed appropriate, and the vulgarity of the language used in the clip was mentioned frequently:

“I do not believe in anyone using the kind of language the woman used in this clip.”

“No person, man or woman, should talk that grossly about another human being.”

“When women cuss it makes them look trashy and how they are talking it just leaves a negative impression.”

“Her derogatory tone and language was completely uncalled for and disrespectful toward the men in the room about whom she was talking.”

“I think that this woman’s use of language was disgusting. [...] Using language like the woman in the clip, to me, gives off the impression that you don’t care about yourself and are naïve. If you feel like you need to use ‘words’ like those she was using, there’s a bigger issue at hand. Referring to men as a ‘salad bar’ is just stupid and frankly, atrocious.”

As stated previously, sexually degrading language is linked to power, and as Murnen (2000) researched, among women, it is also linked to aggressiveness. It is plausible that participants disliked the language in both clips not only because they found the language offensive, but also because women who use such language are seen as more aggressive than men who use such language. If this is the case, portraying a woman speaking in a sexually degrading way on film might not be viewed positively by the majority of viewers.

### *IT’S JUST A MOVIE*

As previously stated, there has been some suggestion that viewing nontraditional gender depictions in a comedy would allow viewers to become more accepting of the ideas presented (Mazur and Emmers-Sommer 2002; Neville 2009). Furthermore, the more realistic and relatable the media, the more likely viewers are to adopt the messages presented (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008; Hoffner et al. 2008; Taylor 2005). In regards to comedy, the opposite effect occurred in this study. Although the majority of participants did not focus on the comedic nature of the clips, of the ones that did, they

often commented on how the portrayal meant nothing because it was a movie, with some responses specifically citing the clip's comical nature:

“Again, I think the language used and sexual references were intentionally written in to this comedy movie to cause laughter and possibly make the audience uncomfortable. Such words coming from a less attractive character than the previous clip helps with the comedy as well.”

“It's a comedy, nothing should be taken seriously.”

“I love the character of Melissa McCarthy so I have no negative thoughts towards this scene. I think it is completely humorous and meant to entertain, not actually show what women are like.”

The last quote in that block indicates that viewers disregard the socialization powers of the media which contradicts the research that shows that cultivation effects are real across genres. Compared to *Knocked Up*, responses for *Bridesmaids* included more comments directed toward the comedic nature of the film, actors, or movie genre in general. For *Knocked Up*, only 8% of respondents mentioned the fact that it was just a movie, or made comments about the characters, compared to 13% of respondents for *Bridesmaids*. It could be the *Knocked Up* clip was more realistic and relatable to participants than the *Bridesmaids* clip, thus why fewer respondents felt the need to directly identify the fact they were watching a film clip. For participants who commented on the realism of the clips, their comments included:

“This is also a false example of women's behavior. Never in my life have I heard a woman speak like that. It is very inappropriate and gives off a negative image for women, but it's still a movie. It's Hollywood.”

“I love the character of Melissa McCarthy so I have no negative thoughts towards the scene. I think it is completely humorous and meant to entertain, not actually show what women are like.”

“Leslie Mann’s character’s reaction to seeing the younger, scantily clad women would never be seen in real life but its comical, and it’s nice that she sticks up for herself instead of backing down.”

For the *Knocked Up* clip, as stated before regarding justifications, many respondents noted that the women were being discriminated against, and sighted how common this is in real life. Although I had hoped respondents would focus on the reaction to the discrimination more so the actual discrimination itself, the clip appeared to be more relatable than the *Bridesmaids* clip.

## CONCLUSION

While previous research would suggest that women are taking on more masculine attributes (Auster and Ohm 2000), less research has been done on the desirability or social consequences of said attributes, specifically those identified as negative for men. The complexity of gender roles in society, as expressed in film, was evident in this study. As articulated by Oliver, Sargent and Weaver (1998:46), “viewers’ responses to media entertainment likely reflect a complex combination of personality traits, social situations, and media-content characteristics.” In this case, the comedic nature of both films negatively affected willingness of viewers to interpret the actions as real. Furthermore, since it is unusual to see women acting and behaving as presented, some participants found the scenes unrealistic and non-relatable, especially in *Bridesmaids*.

My research questions had focused on whether nontraditional gender depictions in media were positive or negative for women, and what individuals think of such depictions. While not every participant identified with the clips, it is clear that not all students are opposed to shifting gender depictions, as some respondents associated the depictions of aggressiveness and derogatory language to positive portrayals of women. By standing up for their rights, and taking control of their sexuality, the female characters in both clips were seen as powerful, confident, and in some cases, gaining equality with men.

However, the majority of respondents were less accepting of the displayed language and behavior, especially if they were more religious and politically conservative. For students who did not approve, disapproval often expanded to men as well. Instead of the displayed language and behavior being inappropriate for women, numerous respondents disagreed with any person using foul language, sexually degrading another person, or acting in an aggressive manner. Furthermore, for some respondents, taking on negative masculine behaviors did not equate to power and equality with men, especially if respondents viewed men as the weaker sex to being with.

#### *LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH*

There are several limitations to this study. First, the location of the institution was a limitation, as there was a lack of diversity among respondents. Since different ethnicities/races and socio-economic statuses effect gender ideologies (Levant 2007), the results from this study are not generalizable. Secondly, there were 91 participants who were not included in regression analyses, due to missing responses on independent variables. Although these students were not identifiably different from those students

included in analyses, the findings would have been more comprehensive if they could have been included. Finally, because respondents were not interviewed, certain ideas presented in open-ended responses could not be elaborated on. Perhaps a clearer picture could have been presented if follow-up questions could have been asked.

Future research should continue to investigate how society is handling shifting gender roles, by going beyond college campuses. Since college students are typically more liberal in their views, studying different generations, as well as demographically diverse populations, would provide a better picture of changing gender roles and expectations in American society. Furthermore, future research should expand from film and general sitcoms into other media, such as reality TV, as there have been many recent depictions of women taking on negative masculine behaviors. Although it can be argued that there is a “lack of reality” in reality TV (Biressi and Nunn 2005), perhaps viewers would respond to nontraditional gender depictions differently if presented in a more “realistic” form. It might also be useful to include an actual measure of “perception of realism” to see how the lack of belief impacts the framing by the viewer.

While there is much to be explored regarding the multifaceted issue of appropriate gender behaviors, both on screen and off, this study has provided evidence that there is a shift occurring. Not all respondents viewed the film clips as negative representations of women, despite the female characters taking on negative masculine stereotypes. Responses clearly indicated that there are many factors affecting attitudes toward acceptable gender roles, and future research will be needed to understand the complexities.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY

(Page 1)

Description of study, IRB information, consent.

(Page 2)

1. What is your age in years?
2. What is your sex?  
(Male, Female)
3. What is your race/ethnicity?  
(White (non-Hispanic), African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Other)
4. What year are you in school?  
(Freshmen, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate Student)

(Page 3)

5. How important to you is your religion?  
Likert: 1 (Not at all important) to 5 (Extremely important)
6. How frequently do you attend religious services?  
Likert: 1 (Never) to 5 (More than once a week)
7. How frequently do you participate in private prayer?  
Likert: 1 (Never) to 5 (More than once a day)
8. How frequently do you read scriptures privately?  
Likert: 1 (Never) to 5 (More than once a day)
9. I grew up in a household that was primarily:  
Likert: 1 (Liberal) to 5 (Conservative)
10. If I had to vote in an election tomorrow, I would typically vote:  
Likert: 1 (Liberal) to 5 (Conservative)

(Page 4)

Please rate yourself on each item below using the following scale:

1 (Never) – 2 (Rarely) – 3 4 5 (Neutral) – 6 (Often) – 7 (Always)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Self Reliant        | 11. Affectionate       |
| 2. Loves Children      | 12. Theatrical         |
| 3. Helpful             | 13. Assertive          |
| 4. Defends own beliefs | 14. Compassionate      |
| 5. Cheerful            | 15. Happy              |
| 6. Moody               | 16. Strong personality |
| 7. Independent         | 17. Loyal              |
| 8. Shy                 | 18. Unpredictable      |
| 9. Conscientious       | 19. Forceful           |
| 10. Athletic           | 20. Feminine           |

21. Reliable
22. Analytical
23. Sympathetic
24. Jealous
25. Leadership ability

26. Sensitive to other's needs
27. Truthful
28. Willing to take risks
29. Understanding
30. Secretive

(Page 5)

The statements below describe attitudes toward the roles of women in society which different people have. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express your feelings about each statement by indicating whether you (A) agree strongly, (B) agree mildly, (C) disagree mildly, or (D) disagree strongly.

1. Swearing and obscenities are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than of a man.
2. Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside of the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.
3. It is insulting to women to have the "obey" clause remain in the marriage service.
4. A woman should be free as a man to propose marriage.
5. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.
6. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together.
7. Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men.
8. A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.
9. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters.
10. Women should be encouraged not to become sexually intimate with anyone before marriage, even their fiancés.
11. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children.
12. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men.
13. Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal femininity which has been set up by men.
14. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.
15. Telling dirty jokes should be mostly a masculine prerogative.

(Page 6)

1. Have you ever seen the 2007 movie *Knocked Up*? Yes/No
2. Have you ever seen the 2011 movie *Bridesmaids*? Yes/No

(Page 7)

You will now be asked to watch two short film clips and answer follow up questions. Please be honest in your responses. The video links will open a new browser window in which to watch the clips. Afterwards, click back on the survey to finish filling it out. If

you are unable to connect to the videos, please contact the researcher at [jstewart@bsu.edu](mailto:jstewart@bsu.edu).

\*If you accidentally close the survey window, all your responses will be lost!

The following link will take you to the first video to watch via You Tube: [Video Clip 1](#)

\*First 1 minute, 35 seconds only

*(Page 8)*

1. Does the previous clip show a positive or negative representation of women?

Likert: 1 (Negative) 2 (Somewhat Negative) 3 (Somewhat Positive) 4 (Positive)

2. In the previous clip, what are your thought on the women's behavior? Specifically what was said? (Open ended)

*(Page 9)*

The following link will take you to the second and final YouTube clip: [Video Clip 2](#)

*(Page 10)*

1. Does the previous clip show a positive or negative representation of women?

Likert: 1 (Negative) 2 (Somewhat Negative) 3 (Somewhat Positive) 4 (Positive)

2. In the previous clip, what are your thought on the women's behavior? Specifically what was said? (Open ended)

*(Page 11)*

You are finished! Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

(Contact info provided for counseling center, as well as for primary researcher and faculty supervisor)