

Transgender and stereotypical feminine traits

People



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Emily Johanson First Year Seminar Response Paper #4 Final Version due Monday, Nov. 12

Gender Roles in Transamerica

Transamerica is an example of how Hollywood portrays transgender people in film. The movie gets rolling when Huffman who portrays Bree a conservative pre-operative transsexual woman tells her therapist she discovered she had a son named Toby. She has to bail him out of jail in order for her therapist to allow her to have her procedure done in a week. The plot unfolds as they get to know each other driving back to California.

However, Toby doesn't know that Bree is his father. Transamerica reinforces a number of transgender stereotypes, and portrays both main characters with stereotypical feminine traits. Throughout the film, Bree reinforces stereotypical transgender behavior. We see this by her taking her hormone pills every day and just trying to blend into the world as a woman. Many people feel that being a transgender is a mental disorder. In the opening of the movie, Bree is in a meeting with her doctor to get her procedure signed off.

He is evaluating her to see if she has a mental disorder. Also, Bree's mom tried to commit her which led to her suicide attempt. When Joyce Murton came to talk to us, she said that many transgender people attempt suicide, so this was a stereotypical behavior. Also, Joyce told us that she didn't have a good relationship with her family. We also see this in the film. Bree's mom still sees her as her son Stanley. When they went out to dinner she even had Bree pull out her chair for her which is a stereotypical male behavior.

She also made her switch seats so Toby would be next to her. She is using Toby as her replacement son. When Bree told her she never had a son, she

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broke down in the restaurant. She feels as though she lost a member of her family. I think this is stereotypical for families of transgender people. Bree and Toby display stereotypically feminine traits. Bree may have been born male, but she acts exceedingly female; even her tastes in clothing and home decor are very feminine and old-fashioned.

On their drive back to California, Bree and Toby stop and camp out for the night. When Bree goes to the bathroom, she is worried about snakes. This is a typical female trait. Also, for being a guy most of her life, she is really good at talking to boys. For example, when she met Calvin she got him to buy her food and drive her to her parent's house. He ended up developing feelings for her. On the other hand, Toby's delicate prettiness underscores his vulnerability, as well as his femininity. Toby acts with his sexuality.

For example, when he realizes that he has become attached to Bree, he tells her, " I'll marry you if you want," even though she's given no indication of any romantic or sexual interest. After the car is stolen by the hitchhiker, he deals with it by finding a guy to do what he knows best. The way that Toby used his body to get money or to deal with his problems is a female characteristic. Most males would use their fists not their sexuality. The film *Transamerica* reinforces stereotypical transgender people, and portrays both Bree and Toby with stereotypical feminine traits.

This film really makes you think about how people react to transgender people. Most people would turn away from them and not hire them for a job. However, Toby shows you a different outlook. Instead of being mad at Bree for being a transgender, he was mad at her for lying to him. The other part didn't bother him. At the end of the film, he even went to Bree's house and

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wants to get to know her better. This was inspiring because it allows people to see that a transgender person is just like everyone else, and they shouldn't feel like they have to hide who they are.