

As many film-lovers know, comedy is not the place one looks to for deeper meaning. Some movies are not expected to be works of sophisticated filmmaking, however even these films can reveal interesting aspects of contemporary pop culture. Every film makes statements about societal elements, such as gender, sexuality, and social issues, whether they intend to or not, and therefore every film is worth studying. At first glance Mike Szymanski's *Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates*, starring Anna Kendrick and Aubrey Plaza, looks like a raunchy, low-plot romp that relies on slapstick humor, profanity, and sexually charged situations to attract audiences. However, the depiction of both the male and female characters is significant for the way that they disrupt the binary gender roles in our society, as well as the way the film depicts young people pursuing romantic attachment.

*Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates* did not receive favorable reviews. Despite the main actresses being revered for their performances, many critics did not love the film overall. This came in disparity with audience reviews, which raved about the laugh out loud moments that came through the female performances, not at their expense. Female-led comedies are overwhelmingly poorly regarded, with only the "remake" style of film garnering public attention. Film studio executives do not trust original female-led movies to pull in substantial audiences; therefore they remake established brands to remedy this. While this method is framed as a progressive way to bring females to the big screen, a recent example being "*Ghostbusters*, but now with women!" it takes away opportunity for original comedic stories about women to be told. By taking a male-written character, with jokes regarding their gender and how they should behave, but "switching it up" with a woman, the new joke becomes her gender. The fact that she is a woman is a stunt to bring in male audiences with a brand and female audiences with the promise of funny women. The female characters in *Mike and Dave*, however, are original characters all on their own. The jokes are funny not in spite of the fact they are women, but they are not at their gender's expense either. A happy medium is achieved with Kendrick and Plaza's characters that simply make them funny people, regardless of gender.

Despite the fact that these women are not inherently "feminist" characters, the likes of whom typically seem empowered, strong, and actively fighting for their place to celebrate their gender, the fact that they are allowed to exist in a big-budget film is feminist itself. While the characters are raunchy, sexually explicit, and not the most morally sound, they are no different from the classic male characters that have been a stereotype for decades. If the male party animals of *Animal House* are able to garner laughs, why can't this behavior be applied to women and earn the same reaction? These people, whether mainstream media wants to acknowledge it or not, exist in everyday life. Women in film don't always have to be two-dimensional "strong" women, nor passive feminine women. Complex women are needed now more than ever in the media, and *Mike and Dave* achieves this better than any comedy that's been released in the past decade. The women of this film are raunchy and sloppy, but they're also sexually liberated, feminine while having masculine traits, bossy, emotional, and everything in between. Their female friendship is the foundation of the movie's arc, and therefore this comedy film should not be written off as a silly act of empty comedy. *Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates* perfectly exemplifies why comedies can be trailblazers of the film medium, and how the necessity for original, complex female characters can be achieved while still making successful art.