AGONIC AND HEDONIC POWER:
THE PERFORMANCE OF GENDER BY YOUNG ADULTS ON HALLOWEEN

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Abstract
The performance of gender is explored through the images young adults project with their choices of Halloween costumes. Using triangulated methods involving observation, content analysis, survey and interviews, data collection teams canvassed a student neighborhood near the campus of a large state university. They recorded the types and numbers of costumes worn and coded the content and impression given by the costumes. A sample of masqueraders was interviewed. The young adults in this study drew upon a wide range of modern and historical imagery and symbols to construct alternate identities expressing a desire for power. These constructions differed dramatically by gender. Over 80% of women presented some form of sexual imagery combined with other cultural symbols in their costume choice. A computer-based survey was administered to a sample of college students to determine if this population interprets the imagery used in Halloween costumes in a consistent fashion. Data are analyzed in terms of the agonic or hedonic power expressed through the imagery employed in Halloween costumes.

Key words: costume, gender, young adults, performance, Halloween

Introduction

Halloween masquerading has become a significant fall event on college campuses across the United States over the course of the past fifteen years. The State Street Halloween Party in Madison, Wisconsin is one of the largest university campus events in the country. First held in 1979, the annual event gradually gained a national reputation for being "the place to be on

Halloween" for college students and young adults throughout the region. Rates of participation in the festival were estimated at between 60,000 and 70,000 from 2001 to 2003, growing to about 80,000 in 2004 and peaking in 2005 at 100,000. In 2006 the city of Madison took over the planning of the event from university student government due to rioting problems among student participants, many traveling in from outside the city, which led to lower participation rates (32,000 in 2006 and 34,000 in 2009) (Brousseau, 2009).

During this same time period the development and marketing of "Adult" Halloween costumes has become a major business in the United States. As Halloween events for college students have become increasingly popular at large and small campuses alike, temporary Halloween costume stores have opened in local malls to serve the college student shopper. Contents of these stores differ from other local retailers in that the costumes are directed primarily at older consumers, with sizes and thematic content matching the college shopper's needs and preferences. Online sales of adult costumes began in the late 1990s. Some more traditional web sites expanded to include what is referred to online as "Adult" costumes; in other cases new web sites emerged specializing in the young adult market. Currently mainstream children's retailers such as Toys R' Us include lines of what are termed "sexy adult costumes" including a sexy Goldilocks, a sexy Girl Scout selling cookies, and a black vinyl nursing uniform. Male adult costumes, while available, are not as intensely marketed online as "adult costumes." In marketing, it is typically pictures of women's costumes that are featured as examples of adult merchandise. As an illustration, Wondercostumes.com speaks directly to the female consumer in describing their Adult costume inventory:

> Spice it up, dress in a striking Sexy costume for this Halloween Costume party and be the center of attraction! Explore immaculate selection (sic) of Adult Halloween Costumes for Halloween Season 2010. You will also find wigs, masks, wings, hats and other costume jewelry to complete the makeup (sic). Disguise yourself in the magical world of costumes, have fun. (Wondercostumes.com, 2010)

While women's costumes are generally categorized as sexy, a survey of offerings of men's adult costumes results in several categories of "action figure" costumes including traditional

superheroes, bad guys, space fantasy characters, pirates, and slashers.

The purpose of our research was to explore this cultural trend on a single large university campus in order to tease out the meaning costume choice carries for young adults. In particular we were interested in how closely real college students would conform to the constructed gender identities marketed to them through Halloween costume web sites and retail environments. Of particular interest is the sometimes perceived dissonance between a student's typical behavior and how they project themselves on Halloween. During informal fieldwork preceding our more formal study one of the authors encountered a female student costumed for Halloween in a miniskirt, a low cut blouse, fishnet stockings, a police officers' hat, and carrying a night stick. Strategically placed over her left breast was a badge identifying her as "Officer McNaughty." This young woman was an academically strong student, very driven and professional in everything she did. Her normal mode of dress on campus was that of a young career woman. When asked why she chose to dress up so provocatively she emphatically denied dressing to attract a sexual partner, claiming that if she was trying to "hook up" she would have worn what she termed "regular street clothes." There was a dissonance between the provocative messages clearly articulated by her costume and her stated intentions. Key questions then become: How common are these gendered dress patterns? How many women choose to conform to a provocative ideal of sexuality for Halloween? How many men choose to conform to a definition of masculinity based on action figure strength and power? How aware are both male and female students of the messages communicated by their costumes? Finally, what do these costumes mean in terms of empowerment and current popular culture definitions of appropriate male and female behavior?

Theory and Literature Review

A range of related literature formed the foundation for our research. This literature review is divided into three sections: (1) studies focused on fantasy appearance, particularly Halloween costuming, (2) literature focused on the role of gender in determining the type of power expressed in fantasy dress, and (3) feminist scholarship exploring the power of the male

gaze to control or influence female sexual agency and dressed appearance.

Masquerade as Social Performance

Historically, masquerading has been connected in the research literature to expressions of social freedom. The function of masquerading during the Carnival season in Europe and the Caribbean has been theorized as a time when individuals could cross class boundaries and psychologically inhabit a social position other than their own for a night (Tseëlon, 2001). The king may become a pauper for the night, and a pauper a king. Masquerade was also a time of sexual freedom when the anonymity provided by the mask allowed people to engage in otherwise forbidden sexual behavior. This suggests that donning a costume is an inherently social act and one which brings with it a certain license to violate social norms and engage in deviant behavior in a gregarious setting.

When considering the use of masquerade for symbolic communication there are three schools of thought:
1. People choose imagery that express alternate selves they would like to be, but are not.
2. People choose imagery to express aspects of themselves which they keep hidden from others, but would like to display.
3. People choose imagery to express their social roles and statuses as part of the performance and presentation of self.

These modalities are modulated by gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnicity, as well as the audience the subject expects to encounter when in costume.

Although the first two perspectives are interesting views of communication about the self, the third approach is more sociological and suggests that costumes are a useful data source for capturing and understanding cultural symbolic language. Recent research and theory also suggests the third alternative is the most accurate, especially the work of Joanne Eicher (Eicher et al., 1991) and Candace West (West and Zimmerman, 1987; West and Fenstermaker, 1995).

While the work of Eicher and West focus on the presentation of self through clothing and other performance in everyday life, the study of presentation of self through Halloween costumes requires engaging a much wider array of imagery. The difficulty of making sense of symbols and intentions in an environment full of costumed persons is dramatized by Efrat Tseëlon's description of the essence of masquerades:

> Masquerade unsettles and disrupts the fantasy of coherent, unitary, stable, mutually exclusive divisions. It replaces clarity with ambiguity, certainty with reflexivity, and phantasmic constructions of containment and closure with constructions that in reality are more messy, diverse, impure and imperfect. The masquerade, in short, provides a paradigmatic challenge not only to dualistic differences between essence and appearance. It also challenges the whole discourse of difference that emerged with modernity. (Tseëlon, 2001: 3)

Tseëlon suggests two theoretical approaches to explaining the masquerade:

1. The "Mask" covers an "authentic self" which is assumed to exist.
2. The "Mask" reveals the "multiplicity of our identity."

Tseëlon views masquerading as dichotomous. In her words "(t)he fundamental questions are: Is there an essence to cover? Is a mask a real or ideal self? Does it hide or liberate the real self?" (Tseëlon, 2001: 3-4). Both sides of the dichotomy offer theoretical power. We believe this distinction is not dichotomous, but is part of a two-fold process of persona construction and expression. Both men and women employ the opportunity to engage in masquerade during the Halloween holiday to explore their sense of self as an adult by "playing" with these symbolic tensions. Tseëlon (2001: 28) supports this conjecture by suggesting that the primary underlying meaning in masquerading is freedom. This freedom may take many forms. In Europe, masquerades were historically associated with social freedom to escape class positions, psychological freedom to take on other personae, and sexual freedom to express and pursue one's sexuality which would otherwise be hidden and repressed. Miller et al. (1993) found that college students who wore costumes on Halloween were more likely to drink, smoke marijuana, and take other drugs. They also found a connection between masquerading in groups and smoking

marijuana. Clearly the riots associated with the State Street Halloween event in Madison, Wisconsin support the idea that license to break the rules comes with the Halloween Costume in the minds of many college students.

Gendered Differences in Presentation of Self through Costuming

Gregory Stone's (1965) research focused on the role of costume play among children in socialization to normative gender roles. This early research detected meaningful differences in the types of costumes typically worn by male and female children. Girls' costumed constructions of identity more often took the form of what Stone referred to as "anticipatory socialization," dressing up for future adult female roles such as nurses, mothers, and teachers. Stone believed this pattern continues forward into young adulthood where women adopt the styles of dress of their peer group much sooner than men. By doing so they become comfortable with the trappings of femininity they will be expected to display as they grow older and enter the social roles, statuses, and scripts of adult women.

According to Stone's research males are more likely to pursue "fantastic socialization" as children, adopting the costume of the cowboy, the police officer, or the firefighter, for example. Stone believes this type of socialization continues into adulthood with males, who pose in front of the mirror where "…the man may become for an instant a boxer, an Adonis, an operatic virtuoso" (Stone, 1965: 243). The traditionally masculine qualities of strength, aggression, and self-reliance can be experienced without the risks associated with stepping into the competitive, potentially violent, realm of the "manly man," before one actually has the physical and social attributes required to be successful in this world.

A range of scholars (Freedman, 1986; Kaiser, 1990; Lips, 1981; Morgan, 1972) have identified meaningful differences in how men and women are socialized to express and experience power. Males are socialized to an agonic ideal of power focused on physical expressions of power and accomplishment. Agonic power is overt and active. The power over others and the power to make decisions are central to this definition of accomplishment. In

contrast, women are socialized to attain power indirectly by attracting the attention of those in direct power. This hedonic power is covert and passive; it is used to attract attention. Hedonic power has been traditionally used by women, and is contrasted dramatically with the more direct agonic power men are socialized to both attain and expect.

The classic example of how these two forms of power are expressed and contrasted in dress is the football field (Kaiser, 1990). Football is a game of high drama where the players engage in acts of extreme athleticism to vanquish their opponent. Although a team sport, much of the activity of the game is in the form of man-to-man combat with individual linemen clashing and bashing against each other while the quarterback dodges the parries and thrusts of the oncoming defensive tackles to complete a pass to a receiver. The uniforms of the male players and the rituals associated with the game are war-like, drawing on the symbols and imagery of the warrior. The female counterparts in the spectacle of the game, the cheerleaders, also engage in acts of extreme athleticism, but with the goal of drawing in the crowd to "support the team." Their uniforms and adornment accentuate feminine sex characteristics and are designed to attract attention to their youth and attractiveness. In recent research on American men's dress, Arthur and Freson (2007) demonstrated that while hedonic power has traditionally been used by women, and adonic power by men, recently hedonic power is also being used by some men in their dress, in addition to the use of adonic power by most men.

Provocative Dress and Sexual Agency

Marxist and Foucauldian feminists both offer bodies of research and theory relevant to the analysis of the forms of provocative dress worn by women during Halloween. Bartky (1991), in an essay exploring the relationship of femininity, narcissism, and Marx's theory of alienation, argued that sexual objectification of women's bodies alienates women from their own sexuality, in a similar sense as workers, according to Marx, were alienated from their own humanity through capitalist production methods. Bartky, using the foundational work of Simone de Beauvoir, articulated the process of objectification, charting the separation of a young girl from her own body at adolescence, a time period when she learns to step out of herself and begins

seeing her body as a separate object of male gaze and desire. Feminine narcissism, the pampering of the physical body and resulting pleasure from seeing oneself as a reflection of male gaze, becomes, according to Bartky, a form of "repressed satisfaction" (Bartky, 1991: 42). This repressed satisfaction is what pulls women into the media beauty culture, a culture that gives women pleasure as they use dress and other beauty methods to better prepare themselves for male gaze and desire.

Bartky's arguments are supported by Johnston (1997) who cited the socialization of women as a problem in the construction of a healthy sexual identity:

> As she learns to view her body as an object to be viewed, adorned, controlled, and changed, a dichotomy develops between her mind and her body. As she is surveyed, she learns to survey everything she does and everything she is because how she appears to others is culturally linked to what is thought to be success in her life. Her own sense of self is supplanted by a sense of being viewed, evaluated, and appreciated as herself by another. (Johnston, 1997: 67)

In terms of the direct impact of this socialization and sexual objectification, Johnston goes on later to state:

> She learns to "be desired" is much more important than to "feel desire." As a client succinctly stated, "I never knew if I wanted men or not, but I sure knew that I wanted them to want me" (Johnston, 1997: 71).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) and Calogero (2004) used what they label objectification theory to argue that women self-objectify, imagining themselves as they will be seen by men, and in the process compromise their own lives and sexuality. This process of objectification- both by the self and others- results in a "two and only two" gender system which Betsy Lucal argued is "hetero-patriarchal" in its oppression (Lucal, 1999: 794).

The beautifying process, Bartky argued, although superficially pleasurable and a key part of female culture, in the end locks women more tightly into a patriarchal system as women focus

their attention and energy on preparing themselves to be objects of male gaze and desire. MacKinnon (1982) not only argued that provocative dress is locked to a patriarchal model, and therefore cannot be used to express sexual agency, but goes on to deny the existence of true female sexuality:

> A woman is a being who identifies and is identified as one whose sexuality exists for someone else, who is socially male. Women's sexuality is the capacity to arouse desire in that someone. If what is sexual about a woman is what the male point of view requires for excitement, have male requirements so usurped its terms as to have become them? Considering women's sexuality in this way forces confrontation with whether there is any such thing. (McKinnon, 1982: 515)

In contrast, Foucauldian feminists view power as productive, with women's as well as men's identities in flux, formulated over and over again in local social contexts through the exercise of power. Sawicki and others argued women "become" by virtue of interacting within "a hierarchal context of power relations at the microlevel of society" (Sawicki, 1991: 8). Social and personal relationships become political within the philosophy of Foucault (1980), as power is viewed as decentralized, with larger structures of domination fed by individual actions within unique microenvironments. Significantly, according to Foucault, the exercise of power in social and personal life, is most often a subconscious force enacted as women follow socially determined rules they seldom question or reflect upon.

The multi-dimensional and pluralistic nature of power as articulated by Foucault and argued by Sawicki (1991) leaves open possibilities for liberation as well as domination within a given social context. Thus, careful study of particular instances and individual experiences is necessary. With a goal of understanding invisible patterns of domination, a substantial thread of Foucauldian feminism focuses on the adherence of women to an invisible set of rules enacted on the micro level, creating through a related series of incremental steps a pattern of domination. Butler, citing Foucault, outlined the systematic barriers that remain as long as women work within a model of heterosexual male desire and gaze:

> To be sexed, for Foucault, is to be subjected to a set of social regulations, to have

the law that directs those regulations reside both as the formative principle of one's sex, gender, pleasures, and desires and as the hermeneutic principle of self-interpretation. The category of sex is thus inevitably regulative, and any analysis which makes that category presuppositional uncritically extends and further legitimates that regulative strategy as a power/knowledge regime. (Butler, 1999: 122)

For example, Sterling articulated that both modesty and sexual objectification express semiotic sexual meaning related to a system of domination based on the male gaze:

> The dynamic between modesty and objectification, like the dynamic between clothing and nudity, is a relationship of covering and uncovering. Modesty describes sexuality by concealing it; objectification describes sexuality by exposing it. (Sterling, 1995: 100)

Both modest and provocative versions of female appearance, according to Sterling, are locked into a male constructed gendered gaze, with women socialized to confine enacted appearances to fit male shaped reality. Sterling, along with Bordo (1991) and Haug (1987), questioned whether women are free to exercise choice within an imposed patriarchal system of modesty and sexual objectification. In the words of Sterling:

> [Bordo and Haug] lean toward the position that a complex and all-encompassing system of norms leaves no room for agency. The modesty and objectifying imperatives are patriarchal rules. To the extent that women choose, they choose among rules. The tension that results involves women in a balancing act that constraints their ability to rebel. A foray into rebellion deviates from the modesty norms and thereby approaches objectification; a woman who is totally objectified risks losing her economic stability, social status, and physical safety. A violation of modesty norms both exposes a woman to the dangers of being objectified and foils her rebellion. (Sterling, 1995: 102)

Feminist scholarship influenced by Foucault supporting the idea that appearance can be subversive stressed that women "create individual identities by putting together [their] own self-representations," and further that "mainstream fashion . . . continuously changes its own definitions of masculinity and femininity and plays with gender all the time"(Wilson, 1990: 69). Kennedy elaborated on this work in his semiotic definition of provocative dress, discussing what he refers to as "sexy dress subculture," a culture within which women's sexuality is celebrated through defiant and blatantly sexual dress styles, an experimentation that he argued results in agency, and transformation of gender:

> Why dismiss the vast amount of energy, imagination, and work that women put into the constant evolution of the repertoire of dress? This happens at the micro level, where there are an indefinite number of possible combinations of clothes and body, with distinguishable finely graded meanings in the language of sex. Women produce themselves as gendered artifacts using this vast repertoire— indeed they produce gender itself. (Kennedy, 1993: 169)

Similarly, Scott (1993) interpreted power and agency in beauty and sexy dress culture. In discussing cosmetic culture she argued that "advertisements call up competing ideas of beauty for readers to consider and negotiate" (Scott 1993: 132). Hite, in analyzing Madonna's enactment of flamboyant female desire, argued that the performance was subversive, and turned the passive object of desire into "a producer of meanings" (Hite, 1988: 121-122).

Riordan's (2001) analysis of Riot Grrrls, the young feminist movement emanating out of West Coast girl music culture of the 1990s, traced the transformative power of the early movement to its eventual commodification in the form of Spice Girls. She held that while the early movement based in punk girl bands "inspired a lot of young women to produce subversive culture," and we would add subversive appearance styles, the later manifestation as enacted by the Spice Girls diluted and changed the original subversive meaning of the movement to fit existing patriarchal patterns:

> Embedded in the Spice Girl's theme of girl power are conflicting messages about what empowerment means for girls. For the Spice Girls, scantily dressed, full-on

makeup, and a lot of body adornments, the apparent message was that empowerment came in the way one dresses, looks, and uses her sexuality for a heterosexual male gaze to get what she wants. . . .Although their song lyrics and interviews paid lip service to girls' taking charge and engendering change, their images contradicted this, suggesting similar patterns of women's oppression: the only way for girls to achieve power is by using one's sexuality and looks. (Riordan, 2001: 290)

Research on male sexuality supports the above research stressing gender differences in how sexuality is experienced. Ellis and Symons (1990) found that "men are more likely to view others as the objects of their sexual desires, whereas women are more likely to view themselves as the objects of sexual desire" (1990; 529). The fundamental tie between cultural construction of American masculinity and sexual objectification has been identified by multiple researchers. Brooks (1997) and Litewka (1974) identified primary elements of male sexuality including sexual objectification of women, voyeurism, and a tendency toward fixation on certain portions of female anatomy.

Summarization

The clear distinctions between the hedonic sexy costumes marketed to female students and the action figure agonic costumes marketed to male college students clearly links to the above review of literature. In keeping with the research literature on masquerading, both male and female college students are afforded the opportunity to cross over into some form of forbidden territory for the night. At least in terms of what is being offered in the market place, Halloween costuming conforms to the gendered patterns Stone detected in children's dress up behavior. Women are offered costumes that anticipate traditional female roles of hedonic attractiveness, while men's costumes are most often versions of fantastic socialization toward action heroes. The clear hedonic/agonic contrast in typical male and female adult costume offerings is very definitive. Finally, if the costumes offered online and in stores actually are worn into the streets on Halloween, then this masquerading event promotes as well as maintains the

existing patriarchal hetero-normative binary gender system.

Based on this theoretical framework, the key questions for this study were: 1) Does masquerading by both men and women support a patriarchal system focused on male experience and prioritizing male gaze? 2) Do male college students dress in conformance to the patterns of masculinity tied to expression of agonic power? 3) In contrast, do women dress in conformance to patterns of femininity tied to a focus on attracting the attention of the male gaze and soliciting male desire? 4) Are costumes used to subvert or to reify the normative two gender system? And finally, 5) How conscious and purposeful are the college students in terms of creating their costumes? Do they understand the symbolic messages conveyed by the costumes? If so, are they manipulating the messages to create discourse and new identities?

Research Methods and Context

This study utilized a triangulated methodology that involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Observation in public settings was combined with survey, interview and content analysis of images. Data for this study was collected on the Friday and Saturday nights immediately preceding Halloween and the night of October 31, 2005, 2006, and 2007. A total of 828 subjects were observed and the content of their costumes coded. Teams of data collectors gathered a convenience sample of costumed subjects in a neighborhood adjacent to a large state university campus. Data collectors stood on the sidewalk and as subjects walked past the content of the subject's costume was coded into predefined categories. Next, data collectors wrote down their first impressions as a description and any striking or important props that contributed to that perception. Data collectors picked a subset of subjects to interview at their discretion.

Data Collector Training

At a training session immediately preceding the fieldwork, the data collectors and the lead researcher on this project looked at photos of adult Halloween costumes as a group, coded the images on code sheets, compared notes, and then coded and discussed more difficult

examples to arrive at some consensus and consistency in coding. This also allowed the research team to think aloud about what they saw and why they coded the way that they did. After extensive discussion, the coders shared the same impressions from the photos, especially pertaining to sexualized, comical, and scary/macabre images. Inter-rater reliability was confirmed.

Coding

The coding system captured as much general information as possible based on the impression received by the coder. In essence, what were recorded were the impressions "given off" by the people in costume. If a costume struck the viewer as "sexy" or "scary" or "funny" without reflection, that is how it was coded. If time allowed before the subject traveled out of the coder's field of view, the specific attributes of the costume's content were also noted, such as the use of props and articles of clothing or adornment.

The most important variable was gender. A "sexy nurse" costume obviously gives off a very different impression depending on whether it is worn by a woman or a man, so cross-gender presentations were coded. Other demographic variables were recorded as well. Age is also important since the study was limited to college-age adults. This was done by instructing data collectors to not include anyone who was obviously not college age from the sample. In the field this turned out not to be an issue. A visual determination of race was also made. Because these variables were coded from impressions and not interviews these data were compared for their correspondence to United States Census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) for the neighborhood which indicates that 97.6% of neighborhood residents are 18 years old or older and only 11.2% are over 24 years of age. The demographic description of subjects shown in Table 1, closely match the U.S. Census data for the neighborhood in terms of gender and race giving us confidence that these data are also representative of the age distribution of the neighborhood.

Table 1. Race/ethnicity and sex of coded subjects

Sex	Race/Ethnicity					Total
	White	Black	Latino/a	Asian	Unknown	
Men	34%	2%	1%	0%	9%	46%
Women	37%	1%	1%	1%	9%	49%
Unknown	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	5%
Total	72%	3%	2%	1%	22%	100%

The categories for coding were broad, based on a widely-shared deep sense of how cultural symbols are categorized. The observations were captured as two parts; the overall impression - the adjectives; and the category of symbols conveyed- the type or noun. The coding categories decided on were "sexualized," "comical," "scary/macabre," "cultural," "animal," "object," "political," "historical," and "religious." Data collectors checked all categories that applied to the subject. This would allow for combinations like sexualized, scary/macabre, comical, and historical. Imagine a bikini-clad female zombie Viking with Groucho nose and glasses. It was decided that it would be hard to quickly record all of the various props that went into costumes, thus the focus was placed on the first impression response from the coders. It was decided to use the term "sexualized" on the data collection form and in the training, because the phenomenon here was not just about being "sexy" or "sexual"; it was about using imagery associated with sexuality in combination with other cultural symbols to capture the often male gaze of the viewer. The term also highlights the self-conscious construction of the appearance. At the moment the costume is worn, the subject is "sexualizing" something that may not be inherently sexual and they certainly are "sexualizing" themselves anticipating a viewer response, which is very different than simply trying to be "sexy."

The Interviews

Data collectors introduced themselves as graduate students at the local university and determined if the subject was over eighteen years of age. The subject was then asked:

1. "What are you?"
2. "Why did you choose this costume?", and
3. "Is there a particular impression you're hoping to make with this costume?"

The first question captured the content intended by the wearer, the second question inquired about the motivations behind the costume choice, and the third question was intended to reveal the presentation the wearer was hoping to present. The interview was constructed to lead the interviewee into increasingly intimate levels of self-expression in the hopes that the interviewee would engage in a process of self-interrogation- a process they may not have consciously engaged in during the construction of the costume. These questions not only provided the opportunity for corroborating the coding of data collectors to the self-identification of symbols and cultural types of the subjects, but also revealed the motivations and intentions behind those symbols.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows the composition of the coded categories by gender. More than three times as many men than women displayed a comical presentation. More than four times as many women than men displayed a sexualized presentation. More than three times as many men than women incorporated scary or macabre imagery into their costumes. More than twice as many women than men were animals.

These findings support related and conflicting theoretical predictions. The young men in this study tended to use humor and images of violence to construct their appearance. The types of characters portrayed included the fantastical roles expected by Stone in the form of super heroes and criminals. In men's costuming, displays of sexuality were most often combined with

images of strength and control. The men rarely engaged in anticipatory socialization through portrayals of traditional social roles such as occupations. In contrast, the young women in the study tended to present themselves as in sexualized work roles, with little use of humor as a constructive device. This supports Stone's arguments that that there are clear gender differences in dress up behaviors, with boys and men gravitating toward action, strength and fantasy; and girls dressing up in more in costumes linked to real social roles, often spiced up to attract sexual attention.

Table 2. Classification of costumes

Classification	Men	Women
Cross-Gender	3%	3%
Sexualized	18%	80%
Comical	43%	12%
Scary/Macabre	13%	4%
Occupation	23%	26%
Sports	10%	9%
Film/TV	36%	14%
Crime/Criminal	13%	9%
Violent	18%	7%
Animal	4%	11%
Object	4%	6%
Political	1%	1%
Historical	16%	15%
Religious	3%	4%

Table 3 shows these data as recoded by the categories "agonic" and "hedonic." Subjects were recoded as "agonic" if the data collector in the field had coded their costume as "scary/macabre," "crime or criminal," or "violent." Subjects were recoded as "hedonic" if the data collector in the field had coded their costume as either "sexualized" or "comical." In some

cases costuming displayed characteristics of both types of power, as indicated in the Table 3. All subjects were recoded for the categories "agonic," "hedonic," "both agonic and hedonic," or "neither agonic nor hedonic."

Table 3. Agonic/Hedonic categories by sex

Sex	Agonic	Hedonic	Both	Neither
Men	30.90%	53.80%	11.70%	27.00%
Women	16.10%	84.90%	13.40%	12.40%
Unknown	41.00%	82.00%	28.20%	18.80%

Note: Costume categories recoded as "Scary/macabre" OR "Crime/Criminal" OR "Violent" = "Agonic"; "Sexualized" OR "Comical" = "Hedonic"

As shown in Table 3, men were more likely than women to be coded as agonic and women were more likely to be coded as hedonic. These data suggest that a large percentage of men drew upon both agonic and hedonic forms of expression, a strategy some theorists believe is becoming more common in everyday self-presentation by men (Freson & Arthur, 2008) thus indicating that dressing to attract sexual attention is becoming more acceptable for men. In contrast costuming for women was almost exclusive concentrated in the hedonic area, with only 16% of women veering over to express direct agonic power. Thus power for women is more narrowly defined by the ability to attract sexual attention, while at the same time men are given a wider range of choice, with some men opting to express a combination of both direct agonic power and the ability to attract sexual attention from women or other men.

Table 4 presents the composition of the data for masquerading in groups, percent interviewed, and the wearing of masks. As described in earlier research, the subjects in this study tended to masquerade in groups (66%). The use of masks was not common (15%), especially amongst women (3%). This suggests that rather than desiring anonymity, particularly female college students want the audience to know their real identity. Thus dressing up sexy for the

night translates into their everyday lives, with men they may have met on Halloween remembering them as they looked on Halloween. Often these dressed-up sexy versions of self are posted on Facebook by the female students, creating a lasting sexy identity that continues to attract hedonic attention even after Halloween is over. Most young men also dress to be recognized marking the night as an evening of potential "hook-ups", not simply a dress up night of fantasy.

We conducted brief interviews with a small number of subjects selected from the street at the data collectors' discretion during data collection in 2005 and 2006 (N=34 men, 35 women). As predicted, subjects were most likely to deny any overt intention for communication through their costume choice, often citing easy access to materials or low financial investment in assembling the items used. Specifically, when asked if they were intending to make a particular impression with their costume the most popular answer for both sexes was "no." Men were more likely than women to attribute an intention to their choices which is again consistent with a preference for agonic expressions of power. Of women who offered more than one response to the question, some did acknowledge that they desired to look "sexy," consistent with a preference for hedonic expressions of power.

Table 4. Masquerading in groups, percent interviewed, and use of masks by sex.

Sex	Group	Interviewed	Mask
Men	30%	8%	9%
Women	35%	7%	3%
Unknown	1%	0%	4%
Total	66%	15%	16%

Interpretations of Dress and Sexual Behavior by Young Adults

Eicher et al. (1991) employed a three-fold typology to build upon Stone's symbolic interactionist foundations for connecting dress and the construction as well as expression of the self. Eicher identifies a public self, a private self, and a secret self. The public self is composed of the roles the individual plays out in the broad social world. The private self is composed of the roles played in the family and close friends. The secret self is limited to the realms of intimate interactions and fantasies. Amongst high school students in their study, Eicher et al. (1991) asked open-ended questions about dress and the intention of making impressions. They found subjects did not make as great of a distinction between their public and private selves in terms of dress. They also found subjects were ready to label others by their dress into social groups with strong impressions of the beliefs and behaviors of those groups. This would suggest that young adults do not fully appreciate the impacts the symbols and messages they are conveying have on their audience, while simultaneously seeming to be masters at reading intentions into other people's presentations. This duality is harder to explain in relation to costume choices, especially when the imagery is dramatically sexual, macabre or political.

In her explorations of the potential for using a symbolic interaction approach to research sexual behavior, Longmore (1998) defends the potential for the analysis of symbols and language to understand human sexuality. She also points out however, the difficulties of such approaches if every individual interprets symbols differently and if interpretations differ by context. This is exactly the problem for understanding the masquerading behaviors of college students on Halloween. Perhaps this is a holiday of "symbolic abandon" when anything can mean anything, and meanings can be combined, misconstrued, or experimented upon with no concern for the consequences of misunderstanding. Maybe it isn't possible to make sense out of costume choices because they aren't intended to make sense- quite the opposite, in fact. Perhaps the meanings of costume are not real meanings, but just "symbolic noise."

Addressing cultural symbolic noise, Tseëlon (1995) makes the connection between the inappropriateness of fashion trends like "heroin chic" and other publicly promoted imagery of a

negative, even macabre character, and a variety of violent phenomena in modern culture. She also points to imagery in fashion that blurs the lines between children and young women. People will decry the subordinate position of women in society yet tolerate all manner of representations of women as weak and objects to be victimized. People seem to be unable to make the connection between the uglier aspects of our society and the symbolic language which promotes those aspects. Perhaps it is easier to pretend to be in an earlier stage of development where one is not expected to fully understand symbolic content, thereby escaping any responsibility to take action in response to what is represented.

In a similar vein, Stone (1959) noticed the adoption of childhood behaviors by adolescents on Halloween. These subjects were reverting back to an earlier stage of their development when they were allowed a type of play on Halloween which was no longer age-appropriate. Interestingly, Stone's research also found that when children were pressed as to what they planned to do as a "trick" if a "treat" were not forthcoming 83.3% answered "I don't know." The respondents were so disconnected from their own agency as to be unprepared to follow through on their own ultimatums. Like Tseëlon, Stone points to the disguising of the identity of the individual as license for otherwise unacceptable behaviors. Stone's critique identifies Halloween as an empty exercise in consumerism, training youth to abdicate agency and accept the products of culture without question. Maybe young adults are not employing a symbolic language to express or experiment with constructions of self, but are instead consumers of symbols, their sole purpose only to buy the licentiousness these symbols provide through disguise. The presentation of self may be scary or sexual, but there is not a "trick" behind the threat, only the "treat" of being out of character for a night or to be the desired object of the male gaze.

Is there a detachment between sexual signaling and sexual intention in the current generation of young adults outside of the frame of Halloween? Some evidence suggests that there is less of a connection between sexual behaviors and bond formation for this group. "Hooking up" is the term in the current vernacular meaning to "agree to engage in some forms of sexual behavior for which there will likely be no future commitment" (Lambert et al., 2003). In

samples of college students from 2000 between 78% and 88% of both men and women reported "hooking up" at least once. Lambert points out that although casual sexual relations are not new, they now appear to have become normative.

Lambert's research (2003) demonstrated a pluralistic ignorance, or mutual misconception of the degree to which both men and women endorse a norm regarding the frequency and content of "hook ups." This same mechanism could explain lack of intention in symbol usage for both genders, especially women. People might create presentations of sexuality and power because they believe that others expect these qualities, although the subject themselves does not feel this about themselves or others.

One of the questions raised by many commentators on the self-presentation of women is the adoption of oppressive or demeaning types or imagery (Tseëlon, 1995; Steele, 1996; Steele, 2001). Goffman (1976) conducted an analysis of presentations of gender and implications of sexuality in magazine advertising in the 1970s. Many of the formal aspects of implied dominant roles and power differentials were adopted by the young women observed in the study. These presentations presumably have impacts on the lives people actually live. For instance, Kalish and McHugh (1982) decried the disrespect and disempowerment of the nursing profession by the dominance of portrayals of nurses as sex objects in major motion pictures. The presentation of the role of "nurse" has become conflated with female sexuality in the sphere of symbols, robbing some of the power and prestige the actual role should confer to the individual. Images and implications of patriarchal oppression support Foucault's interpretation of all controls on sexuality as reproductions of state power structures and class domination (1978). The symbolic machinery of Hollywood is obviously very influential in this process. Are costume choices purely the result of the oppressive hegemony of symbols or do people choose images from this symbol set to express the power they wish they had in society? Supporting the latter, McClegenhan (2003) points to the intense focus of popular magazines targeted toward young women on sexual content implying that sexual behavior is connected to independence and economic opportunity. Sexual imagery and portrayals of young women as sexual are mixed with messages about career opportunities and power, control, and influence in romantic relationships.

This connection between sex and power seems to have some symbolic currency if women are "gatekeepers" (Milhausen and Herold, 1999): controlling male access to pleasure, fulfillment, and, ultimately, mating success. This dynamic is also found in some forms of fetishism, also a form of masquerade (Steele, 1996).

Tackling the confusion of symbols connected to sexuality in modern times Steele (1996) explores the power, symbolism, and psychological underpinning of fetishism. Making the connection between fetishistic imagery and fashion she states that "high heels and negligees may…serve as insignia of power" (Steele, 1996: 184). She makes the argument that many styles of dress associated with being sexy or expressing sexuality are being adopted by women as ways of expressing power over men, who become helpless louts in the grip of their own libido. Conversely, there is evidence that young people "just don't get it." Steele (1996) quotes a S-M fetishist who has found young women in clubs sporting fetish clothing which conveys a very specific offer or request for sexual interaction to other fetishists. When questioned about their desires and motivations the women respond by saying "What?" (Steele, 1996: 194).

Although Halloween is a time when the imagination can run wild and people can engage in extreme forms of self-presentation, the young men and women in this study choose to address gender as opposed to other aspects of the construction of self such as placement in status hierarchies like the political, occupational, or religious symbol systems. Rather than revealing the desires of a conscious or unconscious secret self, masquerade was utilized to place the masquerader in relation to their already established societal roles as men and women. Holidays and other social frames which differ from the everyday in the license permitted to people for self-expression are not times when the individual escapes from the social location in relation to others, but instead are events that reify the social position of the individual in the context of their culture.

Computer-based Survey

Because of the tendency for our interview subjects to deny any intention in the assembling of their costumes we employed another method to investigate how college students interpret the symbolic language of Halloween costumes. A computer-based survey instrument was administered during 2007 and 2008 to 169 college students (N=50 men, 119 women) recruited from undergraduate sociology; psychology; and apparel merchandising, design, and textile courses. Subjects were presented with pictures of eight people in Halloween costumes (N= four male, four female) and asked to identify the person's costume, why the person choose that costume, and if the subject thought the person was trying to make a particular impression with that costume. The costumes presented to subjects were drawn from the most popular types observed in the field during data collection in 2005 and 2006. The male costumes were a caveman, a superhero, a pirate, and a cowboy. The female costumes were an angelic fairy (white lacy fabric, a tiara), a "Goth" fairy (black fabric, fishnet stockings), a pirate, and a cowgirl. The male and female images were matched as closely as possible in terms of the content of the costumes. There were no obvious matches for the caveman, superhero, angelic fairy, and goth fairy.

Responses to the three prompts were analyzed as a set and the overall impression the subject reported of the costume based on the three responses was coded as "agonic," "hedonic," both agonic and hedonic" or "neither" for each costume. This method would tell us if the subjects interpreted the impression of each costume consistently. If both male and female subjects interpret the male and female costumes as agonic for men and hedonic for women, this would suggest that college students do speak the same "symbolic language" even if they deny that they engage in this symbolic communication themselves.

In addition to the agonic/hedonic distinction, responses were coded for whether the subject correctly identified the costume type (do they see the caveman as a caveman, the pirate as a pirate, etc.). In the course of analyzing the survey data another pattern appeared. Respondents would often include derogatory or disparaging remarks about the people in the

costumes presented. An additional category for "disparaging" was added to the coding for subject responses taken as a whole. If subjects consistently speak disparagingly of members of the same sex while simultaneously recognizing the agonic or hedonic power expressed in the costume, this would further support the idea that college students are using and viewing Halloween costumes as expressions of power which are competitive. Both sexes will try to reduce the power of competitors through disparagement, even when the target of their disparagement is not a real person with whom they are directly competing for attention and status in a public arena.

Table 5. Perceptions of power in costumes by sex.

| | Male Costumes | | | | |
	Agonic	Hedonic	Agonic & Hedonic	Neither	Disparaging
Men	55%	32%	13%	26%	34%
Women	75%	35%	21%	11%	32%

| | Female Costumes | | | | |
	Agonic	Hedonic	Agonic & Hedonic	Neither	Disparaging
Men	30%	72%	19%	16%	15%
Women	39%	79%	28%	9%	16%

Results were consistent with the stated hypotheses, with the exception of disparagement. In 98% of the responses subjects correctly identified the type of costume presented. These data summarized in Table 5 show that both male and female subjects identified the male costumes as conveying predominantly agonic power and the female costumes as conveying predominantly hedonic power. Women were more likely than men to attribute agonic power to male costumes and hedonic power to female costumes. This is in part a result of men being more likely to attribute neither agonic nor hedonic power to the people in the costumes presented. Women were also more likely to attribute both agonic and hedonic power to the people in the costumes

presented. Consistent our hypothesis, men and women were equally disparaging in their comments. However, neither men nor women were more disparaging of their own sex than the other as would be predicted if subjects viewed other members of their same sex as competitors.

Conclusions

Men and women clearly employed different imagery in their Halloween costumes and these costumes were placed in a gendered societal context. Women relied much more heavily on sexual imagery in their self presentations, with most costuming directly linked to the hyper-sexualized costuming currently marketed to college-age women. The focus of these costumes was on soliciting both male gaze and male desire. With the strong tie to the American consumer market place this conformity to a version of female sexuality that courts male desire, reinforces rather than challenges patriarchal control of female sexuality. Male costuming relied more heavily on using humor, references to criminal activity, and violence to perform masculinity through their costumes. Similar to their female counterparts, male participants overall conformed to the expectations of the American marketing machine and its narrow "action packed" definition of masculinity. In terms of both visual symbolic content and survey results, both sexes indicated their knowledge of the gendering of appearance and in many cases the implications of those presentations in terms of agonic and hedonic power.

In conclusion, our research indicates the Halloween costuming worn on college campuses strongly reinforces a binary, male/female gender system, with women playing a hedonic role within a male controlled performance. A majority of men present themselves as agonic power symbols, with women, even of accomplishment and merit, dressing themselves to fit normative male expectations and desires. We found very little evidence in our interviews that students were conscious of or interested in the symbolic meaning of their costumes, with most attributing their choices to what was easiest to get and inexpensive. Our inventory reviews of costuming stores and on-line sites revealed a narrow band of choices, with women's costumes focused on "being sexy," and men's costumes most often agonic displays of action heroes. The passive acceptance of these college students of the models of gender available in the marketplace indicates the

strong binary underpinnings of gender as currently constructed and performed, with few challenges to the system even on the wildest dress-up night of the year, Halloween.

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