Exploring masculinities in Barbie (2023) directed by Greta Gerwig

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ABSTRACT

"Barbie" (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig and co-written with Noah Baumbach, offers a satirical exploration of masculinity in the Barbie universe. This research paper employs Raewyn Connell's "Types of Masculinity" framework to analyze the male characters, particularly Ken, and their representation of different forms of masculinity within the fantastical world of Barbieland. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to uncover hidden beliefs and social commentary about masculinity expressed through language. The film presents a multifaceted exploration of masculinity, including hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized types, challenging and reinforcing conventional gender expectations and contributing to a broader discourse on gender representation in contemporary cinema.

Keywords: Barbie, Contemporary Cinema, Gender Representation, Greta Gerwig, Masculinity

INTRODUCTION

The 2023 film "Barbie," directed by Greta Gerwig and written by Gerwig and Noah Baumbach, presents an unconventional and satirical exploration of the iconic Barbie doll universe. This whimsical comedy-drama delves into the lives of Barbie and her male counterpart, Ken, offering a fresh perspective on the portrayal of masculinity within the context of a fantasy world. Drawing inspiration from Raewyn Connell's theoretical framework of "Types of Masculinity," this research paper aims to dissect the male characters in "Barbie (2023)" to identify and analyze the specific types of masculinity they represent or align with.

In Connell's framework (2005), masculinity is classified into four distinct categories: hegemony, complicity, subordination, and marginalization. These categories shed light on the multifaceted and interconnected dynamics of masculinity within society. By employing this theoretical lens, we seek to unravel the layers of masculinity as depicted in the film, exploring the complexities and nuances of male identity, power, and relationships.

In the fantastical world of Barbieland, where femininity reigns supreme, the character of Ken embarks on a transformative journey, driven by unrequited love, existential crisis, and a longing for purpose. Ken's evolution from a mere accessory in Barbie's dream life to a figure of authority in "Kendom" opens the door to an intriguing analysis of masculinity in the film. Ken's quest for identity, the influence of patriarchal ideals, and the ultimate resolution of his character provide a captivating narrative for the examination of masculinity types.

This research paper will delve into the character development of Ken and other male figures in "Barbie (2023)," analyzing their roles, behaviors, and interactions through the lens of Connell's masculinity categories. By scrutinizing the dynamics of power, identity, and relationships, we aim to uncover the underlying messages and social commentary embedded in the film's portrayal of masculinity.

The choice to analyze the film "Barbie" is justified by its extraordinary commercial success, grossing over $1 billion at the global box office in just three weeks (ABC news, 2023). This achievement is attributed to its "masterclass" marketing campaign and marks it as a cultural phenomenon. The film's production and direction by Margot Robbie and Greta Gerwig, the first female solo director to cross the billion-dollar box office mark, hold special significance, highlighting gender dynamics in the film industry. The film's influence is further demonstrated by the numerous memes and social media reactions it has generated, providing an abundant source for analysis. This research explores how "Barbie" portrays masculinity and its impact on traditional gender roles, offering insights into evolving gender representation in contemporary cinema and popular culture.

Previous studies have offered valuable insights into the representation and effects of masculinity in various media and cultural contexts. Amonyeze, Nwafor, and Agbo's study (2022) on Nollywood films explores the ornamentalization of masculinity in Nigerian cinema, emphasizing its role in perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes. Gómez R. 's analysis (2007) of masculinity in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" draws from R.W. Connell's theory dissected the portrayal of white and black masculinities during the antebellum period, revealing the distortions caused by romantic racialism in the text. K.L. H's research (2021) delves into the portrayal of toxic masculinity in children's films and its potential impact on shaping future generations, shedding light on the spontaneous and recurrent depiction of harmful masculinity in entertainment for children.

Finally, Naga Srinivas Vemuri's study (2017) on Bombay cinema, specifically analyzing Farhan Akhtar's "Lakshya," explores how Indian masculinities are represented and how they contribute to the construction of national identity, highlighting the shifts in masculinities in the 1990s and 2000s in both media and society. These prior investigations provide a foundation for understanding the portrayal and implications of masculinity in different cultural and cinematic contexts, setting the stage for our examination of masculinity in the 2023 film "Barbie."

As we venture into the whimsical world of Barbie and Ken, our exploration will not only illuminate the cinematic dimensions of these characters but also contribute to a

deeper understanding of how popular culture and storytelling can reflect and challenge prevailing notions of masculinity in our contemporary society. This research aims to explore what types of masculinities are found in the Barbie film. Through a detailed analysis of these characters, we seek to discern the nuanced ways in which various forms of masculinity are depicted within the film. Additionally, this study intends to investigate how the male characters in the film either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles. In pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the portrayal of masculinities in the Barbie film and their impact on traditional gender roles, our research endeavors to answer the following questions:

1) What types of masculinities are portrayed in the Barbie film, and how are they depicted?
2) How do the male characters in the film reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles, and in what ways do their actions reshape notions of masculinity and femininity within the narrative?

We will closely examine the interactions, actions, and behaviors of these characters to discern whether they adhere to conventional gender roles or if their roles and behaviors serve as vehicles for challenging and reshaping traditional notions of masculinity and femininity within the context of the narrative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In "Barbie" (2023), The story unfolds in Barbieland, a vibrant and harmonious matriarchal society where Barbie dolls lead fulfilling lives. The male dolls, called Kens, traditionally occupy secondary roles and are content with their supportive positions. Stereotypical Barbie, the central character, is content in this utopian environment. However, her life takes a turn when she gets an opportunity to travel to the real world, inhabited by humans. This experience exposes her to both the joys and challenges of living among humans.

Beach Ken, who has an unrequited crush on Stereotypical Barbie, embarks on a journey to make Stereotypical Barbie fall in love with him. While in the real world, the status quo is upended when Beach Ken, a charismatic and adventurous Ken, stumbles upon the concept of patriarchy. His ambition leads him to rename Barbieland to "Kendom" and introduces a new way of life based on patriarchal principles, challenging the existing order.

Under Ken's leadership, Kendom marks a radical transformation. The matriarchy is overthrown, and the Kens rise to power, with Ken as their leader. He goes so far as to rename Stereotypical Barbie's beloved Dreamhouse to the "Ken's Mojo Dojo Casa House." In a bold move, Ken also plans to amend the constitution to officially transform Barbieland into a patriarchal society, erasing the matriarchal heritage of the land.

Realizing the drastic shift in their once idyllic Barbieland, Stereotypical Barbie, along with Sasha and her mom, embarks on a mission to restore the balance. Their

objective is to manipulate the Kens, sowing the seeds of jealousy and division among them. The hope is that this internal strife will lead to questions about who is truly in charge and foster unity among the Barbies.

Tensions rise as factions form within the Kens, each faction supporting either Beach Ken or Pompadour Ken as their leader. A fierce battle ensues, but eventually, the Kens see the futility of their division. However, in the midst of their internal conflicts, they miss the crucial vote to amend the constitution.

As a result, Kendom is ultimately dissolved, and Barbieland is reinstated as the powerful, thriving matriarchy it once was. The Barbies regain their positions of authority and influence, and the land's original harmony is restored.

In the film's touching conclusion, Stereotypical Barbie approaches Beach Ken and extends a heartfelt apology for her previous treatment and neglect. She acknowledges her shortcomings and expresses her newfound appreciation for him. In turn, Beach Ken undergoes a transformative journey of self-discovery, learning to find his identity and purpose beyond being a mere accessory to Barbie. Inspired by his newfound sense of self, the other Kens follow suit.

Connell's Masculinities

Raewyn Connell is known for co-founding the field of masculinity studies and coining the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In her book "Masculinities", Connell argues that masculinity is not a fixed biological or psychological trait, but rather a social construct that varies across time and place. She also introduced the concept of "hegemonic masculinity", which refers to the dominant form of masculinity in a given society, and how it is used to maintain power relations between men and women.

Connell has also cited or referenced many other scholars in her work. For example, in "Masculinities", she draws on the work of feminist scholars such as Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir to argue that gender is a social construct rather than a biological given. She also cites sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman to explore how gender is performed and embodied in everyday life.

Connell's work on masculinities identifies four main types of masculinities:

1. Connell's model's first classification, hegemony, describes a cultural mechanism by which a specific male group retains a dominant position in society. Institutional power and society norms frequently elevate and legitimize this group (Connell, 2005, p. 77). the predominant manifestation of masculinity in a community, which establishes the norms for other males to abide by. Connell (2005) claims that hegemonic masculinity is defined by a collection of behaviors and standards like physical prowess, aggressiveness, and emotional restraint that are connected to domination and power. It is frequently linked to characteristics like heterosexuality, strength, anger, and competitiveness. It also gives permission for women and other men who don't fit its mold to be subjugated.

2. Complicity, as Connell (2005) explains, influences how various masculine displays interact with one another. This category includes the mutually beneficial expansion and institutional validation of a male power group. non-dominant masculinities that yet gain from the hierarchies of power established by hegemonic masculinity. It encompasses forms of masculinity that are submissive, obedient, or encourage the dominating masculinity. While they might not be directly involved in the oppression of women and other men, complicit masculinities do not oppose it either. As a result, a group decides on the methods by which subordination will be carried out. Hegemony is useless in the absence of a well-thought-out and well-executed plan for maintaining power. This emphasizes how important conspiracy is as a covert cooperation and how it plays a crucial role in the dynamics of masculinity. Intellectual plotting to establish supremacy over other groups is referred to as complicity.

3. Subordination, according to Connell (2005), is a state of political and cultural exclusion that includes a range of aggressive behaviors, including the use of the law to subjugate a group of men. Forms of masculinity associated with subordination are those that are marginalized or oppressed by the dominant masculinity. It encompasses masculinities perceived as aberrant, feminine, or homosexual. Men who identify as subordinated are frequently the targets of abuse, prejudice, and rejection from social networks.

4. Marginalization pertains to the interactions between masculinities in dominant and subordinated social classes or ethnic groups. This facet highlights the intricate dynamics and power relationships that evolve within societal hierarchies and structures, as elucidated by Connell (2005). It encompasses forms of masculinity that find themselves entirely excluded from prevailing power structures. Such masculinities are disadvantaged by factors such as class, race, ethnicity, disability, or age. Marginalized masculinities may encounter economic, social, or political obstacles that hinder their access to the privileges associated with hegemonic masculinity.

In short, hegemonic masculinity is the most dominant form of masculinity in a given society, while subordinated masculinity refers to forms of masculinity that are marginalized or oppressed. Complicit masculinity refers to forms of masculinity that are not dominant but still benefit from the power structures created by hegemonic masculinity. Marginalized masculinity refers to forms of masculinity that are excluded from power structures altogether.

RESEARCH METHOD

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) analyzes different types of material with a loose set of tools to describe the language and grammatical choices (Hansen & Machin. 2019) in order to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized through language use and discourses (Wodak & Mayer, 2009, p., 10). What makes CDA is that it is not necessarily focused on a linguistic unit but rather the social phenomena (Wodak & Mayer, 2009, p., 2), which in the case of this study means

masculinity and the way it is portrayed by Greta Gerwig in the film. It is important to remember that CDA aims to capture the more hidden and everyday beliefs which are often disguised as conceptual metaphors and analogies (Wodak & Meyer 2009, p,.8).

For the purpose of this research, the primary data collection method involved a meticulous examination of the film "Barbie," directed by Greta Gerwig. The process began with a comprehensive viewing of the film, during which a keen emphasis was placed on capturing dialogues and interactions involving male characters or men in general. These dialogues were meticulously transcribed into a comprehensive transcript. This transcript serves as the foundational source of textual data to be subjected to critical discourse analysis.

Following the identification and classification of data, the investigator directed attention towards delineating various manifestations of masculinities, drawing from Connell's (2005) theoretical framework. This scrutiny, grounded in the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2004), systematically investigates the interpretative dimensions inherent in the dialogue among characters within the cinematic narrative of Barbie. Several methodological steps were undertaken in the data analysis process:

1) Scrutinized the underlined dialogues, monologues, and utterances within the film script to extract pertinent information and establish an overarching understanding.

2) Systematically organized the scrutinized data into distinct categories, subsequently aligning them with thematic constructs pertinent to the objectives of this study.

Presented the findings, with a specific focus on elucidating the various typologies of masculinities evident within the cinematic narrative of Barbie. This endeavor aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the nuanced manifestations of masculinity within the studied film context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the fantastical realm of Barbieland, where femininity reigns supreme, the concept of masculinity takes center stage in the animated feature 'Barbie (2023).' Within this matriarchal society, the male characters, collectively known as the Kens, find themselves in a peculiar position, subordinated by the omnipotent Barbies. However, beneath the surface of this seemingly harmonious world lies a complex hierarchy of masculinity that mirrors the broader societal structures. This intricate dynamic among the Kens becomes all the more apparent when Beach Ken seizes power and transforms Barbieland into 'Kendom,' showcasing the interplay of masculinities within the film. In this exploration, we delve into the nuanced portrayal of masculinity through the characters, shedding light on how Connell's masculinity categories find resonance within the narrative.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Beach Ken, central to the film's narrative, consistently seeks Stereotypical Barbie's attention. His entire sense of self-worth hinges on her approval and affection.

> *[narrator] Barbie has a great day every day, but Ken only has a great day if Barbie looks at him.*

This fixation on being the focal point of Stereotypical Barbie's attention aligns with the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as competitiveness and the need for recognition.

> *Pompadour Ken: [laughs] Looks like this beach was a little too much beach for you, Ken.*
> *Beach Ken: If I wasn't severely injured, I would beach you off right now, Ken.*
> *Pompadour Ken: I'll beach off with you any day, Ken. Hold my ice cream, Ken. All right, Ken, you're on. Let's beach off.*
> *Tall Ken: Anyone who wants to beach him off has to beach me off first.*
> *Pompadour Ken: I will beach both of you off at the same time.*

Beach Ken's jealousy and desire for Barbie's attention align with the traditional portrayal of masculinity, where a man's worth is often tied to his ability to win the approval or affection of a woman. The interactions between Pompadour Ken and Beach Ken highlight the competitive aspect of masculinity, with the two Kens trying to one-up each other in a somewhat humorous manner.

When Beach Ken arrives in the real world with Stereotypical Barbie, he discovers patriarchy. An instance of this is when they are at the beach, Stereotypical Barbie and Beach Ken experience different reactions to the attention they receive.

> *Stereotypical Barbie: What's going on?*
> *[man] Give us a smile, blondie.*
> *Stereotypical Barbie: Why are these men looking at me?*
> *Beach Ken: Yeah, they're also staring at me.*
> *Stereotypical Barbie: I feel kind of ill at ease. Like… I don't know the word for it, but I'm…*
> *[man 1] Nice leotard.*
> *Stereotypical Barbie: Conscious, but it's myself that I'm conscious of.*
> *Beach Ken: I'm not getting any of that. I feel what could only be described as admired.*
> *[man 2] Damn, girl!*
> *Beach Ken: But not ogled.*
> *[man 3] You're hot.*
> *Beach Ken: And there's no undertone of violence.*
> *Stereotypical Barbie: Mine very much has an undertone of violence.*

Beach Ken's contrasting response, where he feels admired and not ogled, highlights how traditional masculinity often associates attention with validation and positive affirmation. It also points to how men may perceive attention differently than women,

given societal gender norms. Beach Ken's reaction to the attention, describing it as feeling admired, reflects a desire for validation and recognition that is often associated with traditional masculinity. This aligns with the notion that men may seek approval or attention to affirm their masculine identity.

Pompadour Ken, while not as overt as Beach Ken, similarly seeks Stereotypical Barbie's favor. He participates in the rivalry for her attention, indirectly perpetuating the competition and contributing to the maintenance of the dominant masculine norms. Pompadour Ken's actions are suggestive of complicit masculinity as he partakes in this contest, even though he does not actively challenge the status quo.

> *Pompadour Ken: I guess she's going without you.*
> *Beach Ken: You're so lost, Ken. [laughs] She literally asked me. And I was like, "I prefer to stay here."*
> *Pompadour Ken: Why? Are you scared?*
> *Beach Ken: No.*
> *Pompadour Ken: [laughs] I bet you're scared. And I bet she doesn't even want you to go.*
> *Beach Ken: Well, you bet both those things incorrectly, and I bet in the opposite direction.*

Pompadour Ken's teasing and mocking of Beach Ken can be seen as an example of how some men engage in playful banter and one-upmanship to assert their masculinity. It's a common dynamic where men may challenge each other to prove their physical prowess or dominance.

However, the establishment of Kendom, led by Beach Ken, marks a significant turning point. With the introduction of the concept of patriarchy, the Kendom is defined by a shift in power dynamics. In this transformation, Pompadour Ken aligns himself with Beach Ken's vision, showcasing how complicit masculinity can evolve into hegemonic masculinity under specific circumstances. Pompadour Ken recognizes that supporting Beach Ken's plan benefits him personally and extends the power of the Kens as a collective.

> *Beach Ken: At first I thought the Real World was run by men. And then there was a minute where I thought it was run by horses. But then I realized that horses are just men extenders.*
> *Kens: Oh!*
> *Pompadour Ken: Hmm?*

Beach Ken's initial perception that the Real World is run by men aligns with elements of hegemonic masculinity. It reflects the traditional association of power and authority with men in society.

In this dialogue between Stereotypical Barbie and Beach Ken, there is a clear shift in power dynamics and a transformation in the character of Beach Ken.

> *Stereotypical barbie: Ken? What have you done? What are you wearing?*
> *Beach ken: Don't question it. Just roll with it, tiny baby.*

Tall Ken: Tiny baby.
Stereotypical barbie: Don't call me baby.
Beach ken: What about mini-baby? Like this mini-fridge. [Kens laugh]
Stereotypical barbie: No, Ken. This is my Dreamhouse. It is my Dreamhouse!
It's mine!
Beach ken: No, this is no longer Barbie's Dreamhouse. This shall henceforth
be known as Ken's Mojo Dojo Casa House.

Beach Ken's change in appearance and his new, assertive attitude signify a shift towards hegemonic masculinity. He is attempting to establish himself as the dominant figure not only amongst the Kens but overall the Barbies. Calling women "baby" or other pet names without their consent can be considered demeaning and disrespectful. It is a behavior that reflects aspects of traditional hegemonic masculinity where men may assert dominance and control over women. Such language and behavior can contribute to reinforcing gender stereotypes and power imbalances.

As the film progresses, we witness the consequences of this power shift. When the Barbies endeavor to reclaim Kendom, the Kens become divided into 2 faction; those who support Beach Ken and those who back Pompadour Ken, against one another, leveraging jealousy and competition. The division among the Kens reflects the complexity of hegemonic masculinity, where maintaining power and the alpha position becomes a source of tension and conflict.

In essence, the dynamics between Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken embody hegemonic masculinities, highlighting the struggle for dominance, the pursuit of Stereotypical Barbie's favor, and the willingness to manipulate structures to sustain or attain power, all of which are key characteristics of this particular form of masculinity.

Complicit Masculinity

In the fantastical world of Barbieland, where the battle for power and dominance unfolds, Tall Ken personifies complicit masculinities. Throughout the film, Tall Ken consistently aligns himself with Beach Ken's agenda and actions, highlighting a passive endorsement of the power dynamics that are at play.

From the outset, Tall Ken positions himself as an ally and close confidant of Beach Ken. This support and camaraderie with Beach Ken signifies his willingness to comply with the emerging hegemonic masculinity, especially as Beach Ken seeks to take a leading role in Barbieland. Tall Ken's passive involvement mirrors the characteristics of complicit masculinity, as he is not the driving force behind the power shifts but rather endorses and supports Beach Ken's vision.

Tall Ken's loyalty becomes even more evident when Pompadour Ken, seeking to challenge Beach Ken's authority, attempts to "beach off." In this crucial moment, Tall Ken firmly stands by Beach Ken's side, demonstrating his complicity in maintaining the status quo. His readiness to support Beach Ken in the face of a direct challenge is emblematic of those who uphold and sustain the existing power structures.

Pompadour Ken: [laughs] Looks like this beach was a little too much beach for you, Ken.
Beach Ken: If I wasn't severely injured, I would beach you off right now, Ken.
Pompadour Ken: I'll beach off with you any day, Ken. Hold my ice cream, Ken. All right, Ken, you're on. Let's beach off.
Tall Ken: Anyone who wants to beach him off has to beach me off first.
Pompadour Ken: I will beach both of you off at the same time.

Furthermore, when Beach Ken explains the concept of Kendom and the introduction of patriarchy to Stereotypical Barbie, Tall Ken remains a steadfast supporter, affirming Beach Ken's statements. He does not question or challenge the emerging norms, reinforcing his complicit stance within the male power group.

Beach Ken: You know, now that you Barbies aren't around to run everything, we can do our hair however we like.
Tall Ken: I have hats.

Tall Ken's comment about having hats can be interpreted as a form of complicit masculinity. He seems to accept the new roles and changes in the absence of the Barbies and embraces a role that may not challenge the dominance of the female characters.

Beach Ken: I'm so blotto-faced day-drunk right now.
Tall Ken: [laughs] Ditto same-same that.

The phrase "ditto same-same that" used by Tall Ken in response to Beach Ken's statement reinforces Tall Ken's complicit masculinity. By echoing Beach Ken's words, Tall Ken not only affirms his alignment with Beach Ken's actions and attitudes but also demonstrates his support for the domination of Beach Ken.

When the rivalry between Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken escalates into a physical confrontation, Tall Ken's choice to side with Beach Ken once again underlines his compliance with the shifting power dynamics. His support of Beach Ken in this conflict underscores the complicit nature of his masculinity, as he actively participates in endorsing the hegemonic masculinity embodied by Beach Ken.

Tall Ken's character thus serves as a compelling representation of complicit masculinities, encapsulating the dynamic of support for the emerging power structure. His loyalty to Beach Ken and alignment with the prevailing masculine norms underscore the importance of complicity in the dynamics of masculinity portrayed in the film.

Subordinate Masculinities

Allan's character in the film exhibits characteristics of subordinated masculinities. Throughout the story, Allan is depicted as a quiet and introverted figure who doesn't

actively challenge the established power dynamics within Barbieland. He initially goes along with the social order dominated by the Barbies without resistance or protest, making him a prime example of subordination.

> *Barbie: Oh, hi, Allan. [narrator]*
> *There are no multiples of Allan. He's just Allan.*
> *Allan: Yeah, I'm, I... confused about that.*

In the matriarchal society of Barbieland, where the Barbies hold all the power and authority, the Kens, including Allan, are relegated to roles of passivity and compliance. They do not actively participate in oppressing the female characters, but they also don't challenge the existing power structure. Allan's reluctance to engage in any overt displays of masculinity or resistance to the Barbies' rule aligns with subordinated masculinities, as he faces exclusion from the dominant positions held by the female characters.

> *Doctor barbie: I like being a helpful decoration.*
> *Nobel Prize Barbie: And Allan likes to help me give all the Kens foot massages. Allan: No, I don't, I don't like that.*

Allan's desire to escape Kendom, fueled by his aversion to the confines of this world and the repetitive, mundane lifestyle led by the Kens, underscores his subordination masculinities.

> *Allan: Don't tell the Kens. I'm trying to escape. I cannot sit on one more leather couch. It's gonna break my spirit. As soon as they figure out how to build that wall sideways and not just up, no one is gonna be able to get in or out. So if we want to leave, we better make a run for it.*
> *Sasha's mom: No, Allan. You can't go. Having a Barbie in the Real World is what caused all these problems in the first place.*
> *Allan: Not one person would care if Allan was in the Real World. In fact, it's happened before.*

His reluctance to conform to the existing power structure and the willingness to break free from the traditional roles assigned to the Kens align with the characteristics of subordination masculinities. Allan seeks to distance himself from the subjugated position and the confines of the Kendom, highlighting his resistance to dominant masculinities, which are exerted by the Kens in this fantastical realm. This desire for freedom represents a form of resistance to the established power dynamics within the narrative.

Allan's role in helping the Barbies overthrow the Kendom further exemplifies his subordination masculinities. By not participating in the power struggle between Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken, and instead, assisting the Barbies in toppling the Kendom, he demonstrates his reluctance to be complicit in the power dynamics of the Kens. His actions align with subordination masculinities, as he chooses not to engage in the dominant masculine contestation but supports those subjugated or oppressed by the dominant group.

Marginalized Masculinity

In the film "Barbie (2023)," the characters Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken embody marginalized masculinities, representing those who are excluded from power structures and face economic, social, or political barriers. They exist on the fringes of Barbieland, largely ignored and excluded from the dominant social order, which is primarily controlled by the Barbie at the start of the film, and by The Kens, towards the end of the film.

Their exclusion is due to their discontinued status, which reflects real-world dynamics of how certain groups or individuals may be marginalized or pushed to the fringes of society, whether it's due to age, changing norms, or other factors. Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken are no longer part of the mainstream power structure in Barbieland, and they have detached themselves from the dominant social order. This detachment and exclusion highlight their status as marginalized masculinities within the story.

> *Sasha's Mom: [gasps] That's Sugar Daddy Ken. And Earring Magic Ken. Mattel discontinued them.*
> *Sasha: Sugar Daddy?*
> *Sugar Daddy Ken.: No, no, no. I'm not a sugar daddy. This is Sugar, and I'm her daddy.*
> *Magic Earring Ken: And I have an earring. A magic earring.*
> *Sasha's Mom: These were actual Kens.*

The portrayal of Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken as marginalized figures underscores the complex power dynamics and hierarchies within the fantastical world. Their existence serves as a commentary on how certain individuals or groups may be marginalized and excluded from positions of power and influence within a society, mirroring real-world dynamics related to class, age, or other factors that can contribute to the marginalization of certain masculinity.

The 2023 film "Barbie" explores four types of masculinities: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized. The male characters in the film can be categorized as follows:

a. Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken represent hegemonic masculinities as they vie for stereotypical Barbie's attention, compete for dominance, and introduce patriarchal structures.

b. Tall Ken embodies complicit masculinity by supporting Beach Ken and aligning with the dominant form of masculinity within the narrative.

c. Allan represents subordinate masculinity as he is quiet, passive, and complies with the dominant forces but attempts to escape later.

d. Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken exemplify marginalized masculinities, existing on the periphery of the story and detached from the central power structure.

The male characters in the 2023 film "Barbie" both reinforce and challenge traditional gender roles in nuanced ways:

a. Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken reinforce traditional roles by competing for stereotypical Barbie's affection, trying to assert dominance, and introducing patriarchal norms. Their struggle for power aligns with traditional masculinity traits.

b. Tall Ken, while supporting Beach Ken's dominance, reflects the complicated nature of masculinity, showing how men can uphold the power structure without actively seeking to dominate or challenge it.

c. Allan, as a subordinate character, challenges traditional gender roles through his passive, quiet nature, reluctance to conform to the dominant masculinity, and his eventual attempt to escape.

d. Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken challenge traditional roles by existing on the fringe of the story, not participating in the central power dynamic, and highlighting alternative expressions of masculinity that deviate from the norm. They serve as a contrast to the dominant masculinities within the narrative.

These portrayals offer a complex view of how various forms of masculinity interact within the film, contributing to a broader exploration of gender roles and their reinforcement or subversion in contemporary cinema.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 2023 film "Barbie" presents a multifaceted exploration of masculinity, encompassing hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized forms. The male characters in the film embody these types in diverse ways, reflecting the complex dynamics of masculinity in the contemporary cultural landscape. These characters engage in intricate power struggles, uphold traditional gender norms, or deviate from them, contributing to a rich narrative that challenges and reinforces conventional expectations of masculinity. Beach Ken and Pompadour Ken's embodiment of hegemonic masculinity mirrors their quest for dominance and the introduction of patriarchal structures into Barbieland. Adir Ken's complicit masculinity highlights how men can support and perpetuate the dominant power structure without actively seeking to dominate themselves. Allan's subordinate masculinity stands as a subtle challenge to traditional gender roles, as his quiet and passive nature eventually leads him to attempt an escape from the oppressive system. Sugar Daddy Ken and Magic Earring Ken provide a counterpoint to the dominant masculinities, existing on the margins and showcasing alternative expressions of masculinity.

For future research, scholars could delve further into the film's impact on gender perceptions and societal norms. Additionally, a deeper analysis of the role of female characters in shaping masculinities and the interconnectedness of male and female characters in redefining gender dynamics could provide an intriguing research focus.

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