

The Barbie Movie and the Psychological Experience of Gender Inequality

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“Who am I?”. It is not rare that this question is asked throughout an individual’s lifetime. It is not rare to find ourselves confused about who we are outside of what society expects of us. Social norms and roles can sway us so much that we don’t stop to realize we have more choices than what is expected. Each culture and society are founded upon social norms, expectations, and stereotypes (Ellemers, 2018). Through these social factors, individuals feel as though society is orderly and ‘as it should be’ (Ellemers, 2018). However, this creates static when a group of people stand up against a norm or stereotype (Ellemers, 2018). Those who do not conform to a gender binary are often cast aside, or treated poorly. This reinforces our idea that we must adhere to societal norms and rules (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). It is key, however, to understand that these norms can be harmful, and plainly wrong. Questioning these norms can open access to new perspectives and ideas that evolve society, rather than remaining stagnant.

One of the most significant ways society tells us who to be and how to act, is through gender. Societal expectations of gender function through the western constructs of masculinity and femininity (Ellemers, 2018). In western society, women are feminine, and men are masculine, and there is a clear difference between the two (Ellemers, 2018). This idea has functioned in the United States for centuries, creating a war of inequality (Zhu & Change, 2019). Women are seen as naturally submissive, weak, and emotional, whereas men are seen as naturally dominant, tough, and emotionless (Ellemers, 2018). Women have historically struggled with inequality in areas like employment, education, health, violence, house roles, and legal rights (Adisa et al. 2021). When looking at the historical events that makeup the women’s rights movement, gender inequality has been obvious. Now, gender inequality is still prevalent, but it is more difficult to note. Gender inequality is not often seen, and when it occurs, it is dismissed.

This makes analyzing media that focus on gender inequality essential to addressing the problem of western gender inequality. As small actions often fly under our understanding, it is important to take a moment and listen to stories about the impact of gender inequality and how gender inequality thrives and functions out of sight.

An important precursor to this paper is the differentiation between sex and gender. Sex and gender are not synonymous terms (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Sex refers to the biological make up of the body, including chromosomes, reproductive organs, and hormones (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Gender refers to a personal expression of femininity, masculinity, neither, or more (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Neither of these terms are dichotomous, and both fall on a spectrum (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Throughout this paper, when referencing 'women', this is referencing the group of people that have been systematically disadvantaged due to a patriarchal society. When referencing, 'men', this is referencing the group of people that are systematically advantaged due to a patriarchal society. Making this distinction matters, because gender is not solely 'man' or 'woman', however, societal norms have created a false gender dichotomy nonetheless (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). In order to address and break down the false dichotomy of gender in western society, we must start the conversation on their terms. By starting the conversation about gender inequality through the lens of 'women' and 'men', we can then acknowledge the inequalities of a false gender dichotomy (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). I address that society's expectation and social construct of a 'woman' creates a society where anyone falling outside the category of a 'masculine man', is disadvantaged and treated worse.

Addressing gender inequality in the west is difficult, as it is often dismissed and treated as, 'not a big deal'. This is due to the context of historical standpoints, in which western society is doing well in regards to gender equality (Zhu & Change, 2019). However, the applications of

a gender hierarchy are still in place, and reinforced through society's belief that men are dominant and superior (Ellemers, 2018). The subject of this paper is an analysis of the 2023 movie, *Barbie*. *Barbie* exemplifies the social and psychological reality of how small actions, beliefs, and stereotypes lead to immense harm on both sides of the gender hierarchy. Throughout the analysis of the *Barbie* movie, the scenes will be summarized, explained symbolically, and explained psychologically. The summary of the scene will include important events, the symbolic explanation will include what the actions in the scene mean and how they relate to gender inequality, and the psychological explanation will include empirical evidence to understand the effect of the gender hierarchy in the scene.

The *Barbie* movie will be divided into 10 scenes titled: *The Reality of Barbie land*, *The Definition of 'Imperfect'*, *Entering the Real World*, *Barbie's First Tear on the Bench*, *Barbie's Interaction with the Girls*, *Mattel's Expectations and Meeting Ruth*, *The New Kenland*, *Gloria's Monologue and Taking Back Barbie Land*, *Ken's Regret and Reflection*, and *Barbie Becomes Human*. After analyzing each of these scenes, I will explain three self-created art pieces that are the culmination of my thoughts and reflections about the *Barbie* movie, and what it has taught me about gender inequality.

Movie Analysis

The Reality of Barbie Land

The Reality of Barbie Land is the opening scene of the *Barbie* movie. It sets up the scene for how gender norms are constructed between the Barbies and Kens. In Barbie Land, there is a reversal of power, making it a matriarchy. Everyday, the Barbies wake up to their perfect world, where they have a good day, every day. However, Ken only has a good day when Barbie acknowledges he exists. In Barbie Land, Barbie can be anything, while the Kens hold only a few

roles, such as ‘beach’ (Gerwig, 2023). The purpose and meaning of this scene is to point out the strangeness of a matriarchal society, in order to acknowledge the strangeness of a patriarchal society. As a society, we are used to the idea of patriarchy, so we do not see it as weird. By creating a scenario that represents the opposite, we can understand why both systems are strange and disadvantaged.

A gender hierarchy causes harm to all dimensions of the pyramid. When we get introduced to Barbie Land, we learn that Barbie does not view highly of Ken, and Ken does not view highly of himself. There is an over exaggeration of the importance of Barbies, and Kens are only important in the context of Barbie. This mimics how in a patriarchy, women are seen as highlighting men, and are not viewed as capable (Ellemers, 2018). A gender hierarchy creates gender stereotypes, which causes each dimension of the hierarchy to underestimate the potential of others, solely based on their gender (Ellemers, 2018). These stereotypes create expectations, which reinforce perceived boundaries between men and women (Ellemers, 2018). This is why there is a stark difference between being ‘Barbie’ and being ‘Ken’. Gender expectations and conformity are often internalized due to societal pressure, which makes it more likely for groups of people to engage in hierarchy affirming behaviors (Wood & Eagly, 2015). This explains why a hierarchy maintains effectiveness, and why Kens are desperate for Barbie’s attention, as that is what they are told affirms them as a Ken. An individual’s behavior and beliefs are influenced by gender stereotypes, which explains why Barbie’s always saw themselves as better and more capable than the Kens. This is similar to men in the patriarchy of western society.

The Definition of ‘Imperfect’

After we see a day in a perfect Barbie Land, Stereotypical Barbie, played by Margot Robbie, starts to become ‘imperfect’. This starts with thoughts of death, bad breath, bad hair, and

flat feet. Barbie goes to find help from 'Weird Barbie' who tells her that she will start developing cellulose. The other Barbies panic over the idea of these imperfections (Gerwig, 2023). This scene alludes to the body standards that women are expected to upkeep to be 'perfect'. It symbolizes how bodily perfection is the standard for women. It also symbolizes how a gender hierarchy harms both the people it favors, and the people it does not. A hierarchy expects the 'primary' gender to be the perfect in their existence, and they expect the 'secondary' gender to stay submissive and obedient.

The idea of being perfect exemplifies the pressure to conform to gender expectations. When you are unable to conform, or you choose not to conform, it causes distress because of the way society treats outliers of the binary. However, a gender binary is false, and it is harmful (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Gender is an act of expression, and often, individuals feel the need to 'perform' their gender to fit into categories (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). This explains why Barbies feel the need to be perfect, because 'Barbie', symbolizing women, are how they are expected to be. The expectation to be perfect as a woman also reinforces how we view and judge women (Ellemers, 2018). It creates stereotypes on how women are to perform, and we judge them based on their capability to do so (Ellemers, 2018). The history of gender has created a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which we know we are expected to act a certain way, so we are more likely to act in the confines of a false gender binary (Wood & Eagly, 2015). This is why the Barbies expect to be perfect, because that is what a Barbie is. This also is supported by the concept of social categorization, where gender identity is constructed in a way that represents a collective identity, and it tells society how to sort into groups (Wood & Eagly, 2015). The Barbies are one collective identity, they are expected to be perfect, and they can not ever fall out of perfection.

Entering the Real World

After Barbie visits 'Weird Barbie', she is instructed to go to the real world, and find the girl that is making her imperfect, and restore the separation of Barbie Land and the real world. This culminates into a scene where Barbie and Ken transition to the real world, and the gender hierarchy is flipped. Upon entering the real world, immediately, men begin staring and catcalling at Barbie, while they praise and flatter Ken. Barbie starts to feel insecure, and does not know how to name it. Barbie is sexualized as soon as she reaches the real world and begins to feel emotions such as self consciousness and insecurity (Gerwig, 2023). The purpose of this scene is to show the stark differences between a society that empowers women, versus one that sexualizes and diminishes women. It is to show the impact sexualization has on women.

When transitioning between a society that empowers women, to one that sexualizes women, Barbie began to feel insecure. Women in reality balance their views on their body between empowerment and sexualization, where they are told to empower themselves through sexualization, but then are blamed for poor treatment (Frazier, 2020). It stems from the belief that a woman's body is to blame for violence, and it has been shown that men and women both often feel that if a woman dresses and behaves correctly, she will not be the victim of violence (Frazier, 2020). However, this is plainly untrue; due to the gender hierarchy, women are blamed for how they are treated, but it is the hierarchy that is reinforcing the views that men can do no wrong (Frazier, 2020). Barbie always felt empowered in Barbie Land, however, the threat of a woman who is confident goes against the beliefs of a binary system, causing people to react aggressively (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). The switch in feelings and behavior from Barbie Land to reality is also explained through research that shows women are more sexualized than men, and are still treated as sexual objects (McKenney & Bigler, 2014). When a group of people are

inherently more sexualized, it causes different treatment, and harms self confidence, just as seen in Barbie when walking through the real world.

The historical foundation of gender roles in western society is the implementation of a dominance-based hierarchy (Zhu & Change, 2019). This means that in western society, men are seen as dominant, making them the leaders of the gender hierarchy. This contributes to the treatment and sexualization of women, which is another reason why there was such a difference in Barbie's experience. Men see anything that lies outside of submissiveness as a threat, and women see being dominant as a threat to their safety (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). The female body has become a course of debate, and women are continuously blamed for 'not dressing right' when they experience harm (Rudman & Glick, 2021). However, even when Barbie changed her clothes, she was still a victim of violence, which shows that no matter what you are wearing women are often subject to gender-based violence as a result of gender inequality.

Barbie's First Tear on the Bench

After Barbie experiences her first interactions with gender discrimination, she sits down on a bench to try and feel where the girl she needs to find is. She is feeling overwhelmed by the real world, and asks Ken to leave. She begins to see the memories of a woman and her daughter growing up. She sees joy, love, and anger. Barbie then opens her eyes and cries her first tear. She looks around and sees all kinds of relationships such as fighting, dating, and parenting. She sees an elderly woman sitting next to her, takes a moment, and says, "You're so beautiful", and the woman responds with, "I know it" (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes the beauty of life even with imperfections. This foreshadows Barbie's desire to be human and to feel the highs and lows of life. Calling the elderly woman beautiful, after observing life in action, symbolizes that life is beautiful. The woman was the physical manifestation of life and experience, and that is beautiful.

Barbie was overwhelmed at the beginning of this scene, and it is due to the challenge of transitioning to a patriarchy. When women try to stand out in patriarchal systems, they are met with ostracization, impaired relationships, and feelings of loneliness (Adisa et al. 2021). It also increases judgment from men, and women are treated aggressively because people do not believe they have a place to stand out in a patriarchy (Adisa et al. 2021). Barbie was treated aggressively and sexually after entering a man's world confidently and secure. Women are more likely to experience these negative social interactions because men seek dominance as a means to status (Zhu & Chang, 2019). After experiencing this shift, she had to sit down, and understand the ebbs and flows of an imperfect reality.

Barbie's Interaction with the Girls

Barbie sets out to find the girl in the memories she saw, and goes to a local school. Barbie notices the group of girls, and excitedly, she runs to talk to them. She is expecting to be their hero, as she is under the impression that Barbie has solved all issues of gender inequality. Barbie was greeted aggressively with the young teens, attacking her for what Barbie has done to society. They tell Barbie that she only gave society unrealistic expectations of perfection. They tell Barbie that she created a body image that girls cannot attain, and she sexualized capitalism. Barbie doesn't understand, and tells the girls that she was supposed to solve all those problems. She runs out and begins to cry again (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes that even when we try to create something to empower young girls, it is twisted in a way to keep women sexualized and submissive. It also symbolizes how the media is heavily sexualized, and exposure to this type of media harms girls from a young age. It creates expectations for young girls on how to look, how to act, and what to want.

This scene is also explained with the effects of women fighting the battle on balancing the views on their body between empowerment and sexualization (Frazier, 2020). Although Barbie was made to empower women, her image was twisted to sexualize young girls and women even further. Sexualization is often blamed on women to keep women fighting each other instead of fighting together (Frazier, 2020). This explains why the young girls blamed Barbie for increasing the expectations men have for women, instead of blaming the patriarchy for twisting the meaning of Barbie. The female body is portrayed in a way that is sexualized, and this sexualization causes adverse impacts on children and their views of themselves and their purpose (Frazier, 2020). This caused the girls anger towards Barbie, because they are living with expectations that are unfair and damaging. Exposure to hypersexualized material also leads young girls to internalize it, and it leads to young girls growing up to want to please men more, while experiencing higher thoughts of body shame (McKenney & Bigler, 2014). Early adolescent girls are the most vulnerable to forming sexualized identities based on hypersexualized material (McKenney & Bigler, 2014). This explains why the girls were sensitive to the presence of Barbie, because of the damages to their adolescence.

Mattel's Expectations and Meeting Ruth

After her encounter with the girls, Barbie's manufacturing company, *Mattel*, brings her back to their headquarters. Barbie is immediately concerned that there are no women in the head office, and asks where the person in charge is. Offended, the CEO retorts with sexist remarks such as the fact that they all know and love women. One worker, the intern, even asks, "I am a man with no power, does that make me a woman?". They proceed to tell Barbie she must get back in the box and return to Barbie Land. They tell her not to worry about anything, and that she has to go back and be 'Stereotypical Barbie'. Barbie nearly gets back into the box, and then

panics and tries to escape. She comes across a room that appears like a kitchen with an elderly woman sitting at a table. Barbie sits down and she offers her tea. Barbie responds with yes, and also says, “I’m sorry, normally, I look perfect”, and the woman responds with, “No, you look just right” (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes how men often take it upon themselves to tell women who they are and what they must do, which is part of what makes the patriarchy function. It symbolizes that when women don’t listen, and step out of a stereotype, there is upset and consequence. It symbolizes how those in power enjoy remaining in power, and are ignorant and dismissive to the experience of those who are not. When Barbie meets the woman in the kitchen, Ruth, it symbolizes understanding and empathy between women for trying their best. It represents listening to those who find themselves without a voice.

Mattel represents the concept of ‘privilege invisibility’. Men are more likely to underestimate the importance of women’s experiences when talking about inequality (Hansen & Dolan, 2022). Women are also more likely to have one-sided feelings on harassment and oppression, called privilege invisibility (Hansen & Dolan, 2022). When Barbie attempted to share what she was worried about, they told her not to worry about it and return to her box. Privilege invisibility happens because men remain ignorant because they enjoy the power that they have, and can not see anything wrong with it (Hansen & Dolan, 2022). Mattel refused to understand the issues of a lack of female presence in a company that was created to uplift women. They even made a remark that a man with no power was questioning if he was a woman. This implies the existence of privilege invisibility. Mattel held Barbie up to the stereotype of being perfect and submissive, expecting her to go back to Barbie land and ignore any issue that may arise, implying she is not capable of handling these issues. These gender stereotypes cause harm, and cause men and women to underestimate each other (Ellemers, 2018). This is why they

underestimated Barbie's ability to choose for herself and escape. When Barbie did escape, Mattel chased her down. When individuals do not perform gender 'correctly' according to society, they are often met with consequences and punishment (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). The idea of performing gender goes beyond those who go against it, but it also exacerbates the problems of violence and misogyny (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Men see women who go against their stereotypes as a threat to their status and power (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). This explains why Mattel was offended by Barbie's remarks that implied something was wrong with not having a female leader. It also explains why Mattel was chasing Barbie down to get her to conform to their expectations of her.

The New Kenland

After finding the woman who Barbie was connected to, Gloria, they decide to go to Barbie Land to see the positive way women can be portrayed. When they return to Barbie Land, they are shocked to find that it does not look like Barbie Land anymore. Ken ended up returning to Barbie Land earlier, after discovering the patriarchy. He decided to implement all the ideals of a patriarchy, with the Barbies doting on the Kens. Barbies' new jobs were maids and cheerleaders. When Barbie asked Ken what was going on, he was dismissive of her, alike to when Barbie was dismissive of Ken. He says to her, "You failed me, out there, I was somebody, people respected me". After kicking her out, Barbie cries and says, "You're either brainwashed or you're weird and ugly, there is no in between" (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes how both sides of a hierarchy are harmful, and how if you cannot perform for the hierarchy you are cast aside.

This scene presents the historical evolution of gender roles. Gender roles have been thought to stem from evolutionary processes and social competition (Zhu & Chang, 2019). Ken

changed Barbie Land in order to be able to be noticed and adored by Barbie. Gender roles have also been thought to stem from the belief that dominance is a means to stature (Zhu & Chang, 2019). The Kens believe that if they are controlling enough, they will win the hearts of their Barbies. The gender hierarchy is maintained through thousands of small and large behaviors (Rudman & Glick, 2021). One of these behaviors is casting those aside who do not conform, explaining why Barbie believes that you either are brainwashed into the hierarchy or you are deemed ugly.

Gloria's Monologue and Consequences

After Barbie spends some time crying and feeling unattractive, unwanted, and not good enough, Gloria, her person, sits down next to her and sighs. She starts talking about how it is impossible to be a woman. She starts talking about how women can never be good enough, and women are either too much or too little of something. She includes statements such as, “You always have to be extraordinary, but we always do it wrong,” and, “You are responsible for men’s bad behavior, but if you point it out you are complaining”. After she stops her monologue, one of the Barbie’s who was brainwashed by the new patriarchy, snaps out of it. This leads to Barbie's realizing that by addressing the cognitive dissonance of being a woman under the patriarchy, it no longer holds its power. They make a plan together to help all the brainwashed Barbies remember their old selves by addressing the impossibilities of the patriarchy. They successfully snap all of the Barbies out of the brainwash, and decide to help each other to restore Barbie Land (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes the power of women coming together and fighting with each other, instead of fighting against each other. By recognizing that the patriarchal system of standards are impossible to meet, it helps women take the first step to empathizing with each other, and challenging the patriarchy.

When women try to step out of their gender expectations, they are met with consequences such as ostracization and loneliness (Adisa et al. 2021). However, even when they try to meet their gender expectations, they are never achieving it well enough (Adisa et al. 2021). There is a problematic view of women never being feminine enough, but also never being masculine enough (Adisa et al. 2021). This is why Gloria said all of the impossible expectations of the patriarchy, because it is a hopeless endeavor to be ‘good enough’ as a woman. When women are exposed to gender discrimination, and it is pointed out, they are more likely to contribute to movements for gender equality (Ulüg et al. 2022). Witnessing gender discrimination increases belief for collective action (Ulüg et al. 2022). This is why it was so important that Gloria named the dissonance in the patriarchy, so that the Barbies could understand what was happening, and work together. Their collective experience of discrimination from the Kens, and their consequent support from each other, helped them to regain their personal autonomy.

Ken’s Regret and Reflection

Once the Barbies regain their autonomy and sense of self, Ken panics and begins to cry. He tells Barbie that all he wanted was to impress her, and he didn’t actually like patriarchy once he found out it wasn’t all about horses. Ken tells Barbie that he wants to be her Ken. Ken expresses that he feels he is ‘just Ken’ and always second choice. Barbie tells Ken that it needs to be ‘Barbie’, and ‘Ken’, realizing that both Barbies and Kens deserve a sense of identity, and a chance to find out who they are without the other. Ken then sports a sweater that says, “I am Kenough”. Even under a patriarchy, Ken was only living it to appeal to Barbie, and to seem ‘manly enough’. Because of the matriarchy, he felt that he only existed in Barbie’s gaze, and he wanted to do anything and everything to feel enough (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes how much a gender hierarchy, patriarchal or matriarchal, is damaging. It symbolizes how a gender

hierarchy makes people feel that they are not enough without appealing the majority. It symbolizes being enough by yourself, outside of what a hierarchy that you feel you belong to.

Gender stereotypes cause us to underestimate the potential of others, and they also reinforce perceived boundaries between men and women (Ellemers, 2018). This is seen when in a matriarchy, Barbies underestimated Ken, and in a patriarchy, Kens underestimated Barbies. It also explains why there is such a divide between the Barbies and the Kens, they both have very strict ideas of how they are supposed to act and behave, and what they are capable of doing. Stereotype threat is when an individual fulfills a stereotype because they internalize societal expectations of behavior (Ellemers, 2018). This is seen in Ken always feeling like he wasn't enough, and never letting himself have his own sense of identity in a matriarchy. The conceptualization of gender is not static, and is constantly changing (Wood & Eagly, 2015). Society holds the false belief that gender is static, and so did Ken in the matriarchy. However, both Barbie and Ken realized, after collectively experiencing discrimination from the other, that they are more than what they are to each other, and they can find who they are outside of the hierarchy.

Barbie Becomes Human

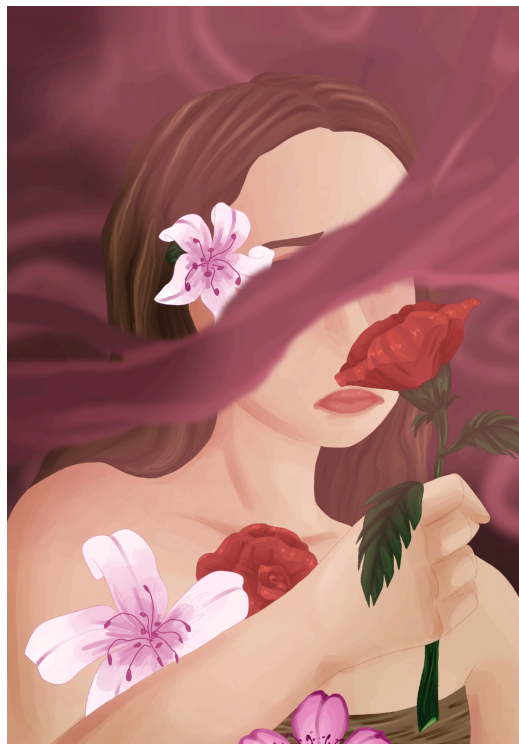
After aiding the restoration of the matriarchy in Barbie Land, Barbie realizes she does not feel like she belongs. Ruth reenters Barbie Land, and asks Barbie to take a walk with her, and Barbie says goodbye to her friends. Ruth tells Barbie that being human is uncomfortable, and that it is not easy. She also tells her that she can not let Barbie become human without showing her what it is like. Ruth asks Barbie to take her hands, close her eyes, and feel. We see a montage of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and aging; of life in general. We see a montage of joy, sadness, anger, love, and pain. When Barbie opens her eyes, she knows that she wants the

imperfections of living a human life (Gerwig, 2023). This scene symbolizes the imperfections of life, but the experience of love and joy is something worth living for.

The gender hierarchy in the western hemisphere is not perfect. It impacts and harms everyone. However, the beauty of life is that there is a chance to stand together and make things better. Witnessing gender inequality and discrimination will increase the likelihood an individual stands up against it in the future (Ulüg et al. 2022). This explains part of Barbie's experience of wanting to be human to continue to empower others.

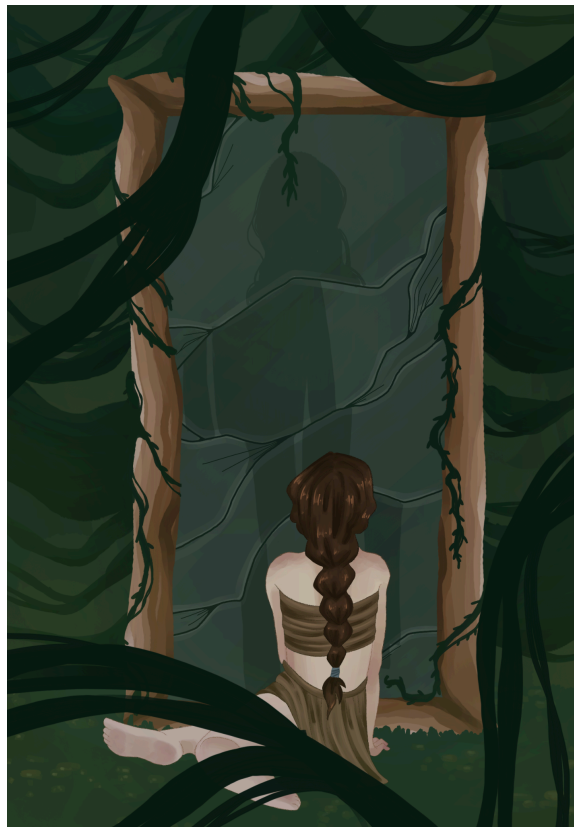
Artistic Reflection

To reflect on the meaning of the Barbie movie, and the psychological understanding of gender inequality, I created 3 art pieces that can be categorized into the three main themes of the movie. The first art piece symbolizes the expectations of a gendered society, the second art piece symbolizes the consequences of a gendered society, and the third art piece symbolizes accepting that oneself exists outside a gendered system.

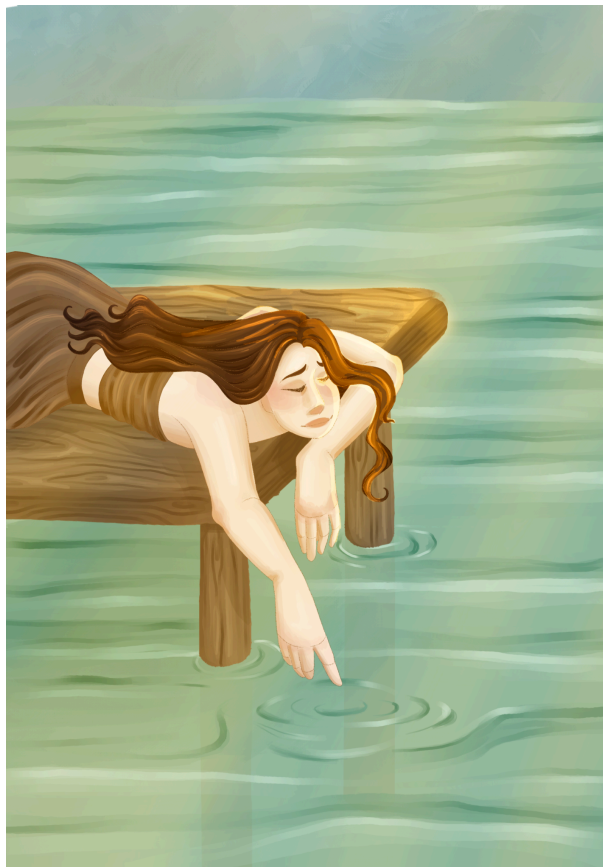


Expectations of a Gendered Society

The Barbie movie is a piece about gender norms and gender expectations. This piece is of a woman looking at a rose and covered in lilies and azaleas, which are common symbols of femininity. The piece represents the cognitive dissonance between what one is expected to do, and what one wants to do. The expectations are clear, but the desire to conform is not. This is why her eyes are covered, she is unable to see herself in the conforms of gender. I found myself reflecting on the expectations to be 'perfectly feminine' in order to be appealing to society. I also found myself realizing that it is impossible to be 'perfectly feminine'. I reflected a lot on how I naturally follow gender expectations, and wondering if that is because I enjoy my gendered role, or if I have conformed to it.

*The Consequences of a Gendered Society*

Barbie is a movie about not understanding who you are without the expectations of those around you. Barbie, once imperfect, did not feel she belonged, and Ken did not feel like he belonged without Barbie. This piece symbolizes how a gendered society does not allow for the opportunity to see oneself and experience a true self. The art is composed of a woman sitting in front of a cracked mirror, with vines overgrowing it. The cracked mirror and the vines represent a version of oneself that the self cannot see anymore, due to the constructs of society. I reflected on the consequences of strict gender norms in my own life, and found that I feel expected to be submissive in many situations, however, I am a very passionate person. It causes me to stay quieter than I wish I was. The Barbie movie helped me reflect on how strict gender roles constrict the true self.



Accepting that Oneself Exists Outside a Gendered System

Barbie is a movie about accepting that you exist outside of what others expect of you. I reflected on how far western society has come with gender. Although there are still strict gender expectations, there is still freedom to see yourself for who you are. Although there is still harm in stepping outside the false dichotomy of gender, you do not owe it to anyone to remain in a role that does not define you. This piece is a woman laying down by a body of water, watching her reflection and reaching out to it. This represents being able to see one's true self, and recognizing that identity is full of change, that gender is fluid. It represents the freedom to define yourself, just like Ken got at the end of the movie.

Creating these pieces was a highlight of this process. I have been on the short end of gender discrimination, and I have mostly kept to myself about these experiences. I find that when I have spoken out, I get criticized, and I learned to accept it. However, recently, I am understanding the importance of speaking about our experiences, and calling attention to the negative experiences of a gender hierarchy. I also reflected on my own experiences of expression, and was able to convey those in art pieces. I thought a lot about the *Barbie* movie, how on the surface, it's a humorous, cute movie, but when you truly take a moment to listen to the movie, it tells a story about gender discrimination and the imperfections of life. However, it also talks about the beauties of an imperfect life, and that progress is something worth living for. Overall, creating these pieces was a special experience, and the perfect way to reflect on material that dives into the psychological experience of gender inequality.

Conclusion

The Barbie movie is a beautiful movie, filled with humor, but most importantly, it conveys the realities and consequences of gender inequality. The scenes are constructed in a way

that aligns with the psychological experiences of gender inequality and the social psychology of gender.

It is important to analyze media that brings important issues to light such as gender inequality. If we can name these inequalities, we are more likely to be able to make a change. Understanding the Barbie movie with the help of this paper, will help you know about the current experiences of gender inequality. It is important not to cast the Barbie movie aside as a humorous movie and nothing else, it is essential that we see the underlying themes, and how they are applicable in the everyday human experience.

From now on, the media should be analyzed and understood when it presents topics such as inequality. The ways inequalities still exist today are less obvious, so it is important to enjoy media such as the Barbie movie, and reflect about what it means in the context of society. It also provides everyone an opportunity to reflect on your own experiences, and make a decision on how to move forward. As *Barbie* suggests, the journey toward gender equality is complex and ongoing. By comforting our preconceived notions and embracing diverse perspectives, we can work towards a society where individuals are free to define their own identities without the constraints of traditional gender roles.

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