

Gerwig's Color of Feminism; Analyzing White Feminism in Greta Gerwig Films

AP Research

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Abstract

Greta Gerwig, an acclaimed female film director, is renowned for her progressive strides in representing feminist themes in cinema. With Hollywood's evolving landscape of gender inclusivity, Gerwig's contributions have obtained both praise and criticism for their portrayal of feminism, particularly concerning the issue of white feminism. The release of the live-action Barbie movie in 2023 sparked intense debates within popular culture surrounding feminism and its intersectionality with race. While existing research has explored the racial and gender aspects of Gerwig's films separately, the intersectionality of both concepts remains relatively unexplored. Therefore, through adopting a qualitative descriptive design, this study analyzes how the dialogues of Gerwig's three most attention-drawn films—Lady Bird (2017), Little Women (2019), and Barbie (2023)—contribute to the perpetuation of white feminism, or the universalization of white perspectives in feminist thought. Through initial library research, three themes demonstrating such perpetuation—exclusion, generalization, and reductionism—were identified. The paper's findings and analysis revealed the dynamics of white feminism in Gerwig's films and how the dialogue and narrative structures of the selected films often portrayed these themes. However, the paper's findings also challenged the hypothesis that the selected films would only portray notions of white feminism, as instances were found where the dialogue challenged these themes, thus challenging white feminism. Fundamentally, the study concludes that while the three films predominantly skew the portrayal of feminism through a white perspective, there are instances where other narrative structures and plot lines offer more nuanced perspectives. Overall, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how race is being portrayed in Gerwig films that represent feminist themes. Further research should explore how race is portrayed in movies that address feminism from different time periods or cultural backgrounds.

1. Introduction

Since the #MeToo movement that was sparked in 2006, there has been a discernible shift in Hollywood and the media industry toward greater gender inclusivity. Hollywood, as numerous filmmakers have actively embraced themes centered around feminism and female empowerment (Stubbs-Richardson, 2023). One noteworthy director in this movement is American actress, playwright, screenwriter, and director Greta Gerwig, whose contributions have significantly shaped the evolving landscape of gender representation in the film industry (IMDb, n.d.). With an impressive total of 263 nominations, including 3 esteemed Oscar nominations, and 84 victories in various accolades, Gerwig has undeniably cemented her status as a prominent figure in the realm of progressive cinema (IMDb, n.d.).

In 2023, Greta Gerwig was truly brought into the limelight with her release of the live action *Barbie* movie. Breaking box office records and surpassing successes of any other Warner Bros. movie, the release of *Barbie* had become a heavy topic of conversation in Pop Culture, sparking debates around feminism even before its release (Nowakowski, 2023). While many viewers and Gerwig herself have long emphasized that the purpose of *Barbie* was to serve as a feminist push forward by representing the harmful reality of the patriarchy towards women, others have viewed the film as an oversimplification of feminism, disaccounting for race and other aspects that also influence the feminist movement (Searles, 2023). This concept, where there is a representation of feminism in the

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form of media or other mediums without incorporating other races in the movement, is known as white feminism.

White feminism is defined as “any feminism which comes from a white perspective and universalizes it” (Borah et al., 2023). Given the apparent controversy surrounding Gerwig films with its portrayal of white feminism in the media, and the vast success and influence of the Barbie (2023) movie, it is imperative that the connection between Greta Gerwig films and its portrayal of white feminism norms is understood. As a result, this study aims to analyze how and whether Greta Gerwig films reinforce notions of white feminism.

2. Literature Review

Greta Gerwig, an acclaimed female director, has long been praised for her movies’ focus on sharing authentic female perspectives and shedding light on contemporary feminism (Warner, 2023). However, despite this praise, existing literature displays that Gerwig witnessed a rise of controversy due to her film’s emphasis on white feminism. For this paper, white feminism is defined as “any feminism that comes from a white perspective and universalizes it” (Borah et.al., 2023). This literature review will focus on two of three Gerwig’s films analyzed in this study: *Little Women* (2019) and *Lady Bird* (2017).

A large body of existing literature on Greta Gerwig centers around the issue of solely focusing on the white perspective in her movies. The criticism surrounding *Little Women*, as asserted by Media Studies Student Lola Vos, highlights Gerwig’s failure to “break with Hollywood’s tradition of white movies” (Vos, 2022). Vos extracts a quote that describes one of the male characters, and expresses how this character could have been depicted by a non-white actor, thus, increasing the cast’s racial diversity (Vos, 2022). Likewise in *Lady Bird*, Helen Warner contends that “the voices of

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white women were centered and their stories universalised” which thus causes an “amplification of white voices...not only silenc[ing] other minorities peoples but also creat[ing] a script that all must follow, therefore plac[ing] limits on everyone” (Warner, 2023). With regard to *Lady Bird*, Warner articulates that the movie “reveals the way in which [such] exclusionary practices are so entrenched within film culture” (Warner, 2023). The conclusions of both these studies are similarly aligned, as both communicate the pattern of predominantly white representation in Gerwig films, a concept that is in line with the aforementioned definition of white feminism. Despite this, neither study truly develops a focused scope into white feminism specifically, and rather criticizes Gerwig’s movies for its lack of diverse representation and perspectives.

Despite this criticism regarding lack of racial representation, there is also a wave of support channeled towards Gerwig’s movies for their steps towards progressive feminism. For instance, Media Studies Professor Mary Harrod affirms that the dialogues written in the *Little Women* script have connotations of modern feminism, progressing from the feminism that was presented in the original novel (Harrod, 2021). A paper by Yanti Rosalinah categorize the different sects of feminism that appear in *Little Women*, ranging from radical feminism which is “based on the fact that gender inequality is the basis of inequality and oppression” to postcolonial feminism which “seeks to account for the ways that racism and the cultural effects of colonialism affect non-white women” (Rosalinah et al., 2022). These categories are implicated on *Little Women* through a paper by Nurmala Dewi and Tatia Medina who analyze dialogue from *Little Women*, substantiating how these dialogues depict strands of feminism defined by the categories that Rosalinah addresses (Dewi & Medina, 2021). Through Dewi and Medina’s study, it appears that the feminism displayed in *Little Women* more so aligns with the definition under ‘radical feminism’, however, my paper will look more into postcolonial feminism, an area not yet studied in Gerwig films.

As for *Lady Bird*, a paper co-authored by Yunair Fatmasari and Aniq Kanafillah highlights the various kinds of resistance done by the film's main character Christine, otherwise known as Lady Bird (Fatmasari & Kanafillah, 2018). The paper substantiates how the characterization of Christine shows an alternative way of seeing women through challenging gender norms, which in essence is a portrayal of progressive feminism (Fatmasari & Kanafillah, 2018). However, though existing literature provides how *Lady Bird* depicts strands of progressive feminism, it neglects to address the intersectionality of race within this feminism.

To conclude, while existing literature draws conclusions on both white representation and progressive feminism portrayals in both *Little Women* and *Lady Bird*, there is a gap in the convergence between both concepts. In other words, there are no studies aimed towards discussing both feminism and white representation in Gerwig movies together, rather the studies mostly focus on one concept or the other. The existing literature also primarily draws conclusions from two of Gerwig's movies, *Little Women* and *Lady Bird*, however, my research will also extend to Gerwig's newest *Barbie* (2023) movie which has not yet been studied. Therefore, the following research question guided my study: *through a qualitative descriptive analysis approach, how does the dialogue of Greta Gerwig films, specifically Lady Bird (2017), Little Women (2019), and Barbie (2023), portray white feminism?*

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Descriptive Research & Library Research

The selected method for this study was qualitative descriptive research. With regard to this paper's research question, I intend to examine how white feminism is portrayed in the dialogue of three Greta Gerwig films. Through this method, I plan to utilize textual data for analysis in the form of the three films themselves and the film's respective scripts. The study will be conducted through a two-pronged approach that incorporates the collection of both primary and secondary data (Dewi &

Medina, 2021). The methodology begins with library research, and is followed by qualitative descriptive analysis.

Library research is conducted through “interacting with library materials, such as journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, etc” (Muslimah, 2013). For this paper, the library research approach involved reading any literature relating to white feminism, and utilizing the gathered materials from the literature to form categories based on the white feminism theory (Dewi & Medina, 2021). These categories were collected as secondary data, and used to interpret how white feminism could be portrayed in the films. The three categories I derived from the library research were 1) Exclusion, 2) Generalization, and 3) Reductionism (McFadden, 2011; Sutherland & Feltey, 2016). These categories will be defined and discussed in the results sections.

Secondly, the goal of qualitative descriptive research, unlike most other qualitative research methods, “is a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals” (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). For the qualitative descriptive component of my methodology, I collected primary data in the form of coding words and phrases derived from dialogues within the movie. Having conducted library research, I utilized the definitions and interpretations of the three categories to code the dialogue. In other words, if I collected a dialogue I felt portrayed white feminism, I would note down which of the three categories the dialogue was portrayed by (see Appendix A, B, C). As a result, I was able to group the primary data under the three categories which would then demonstrate the varying ways of how white feminism was portrayed in Gerwig films.

3.2. Film Selection

This section will outline the process of film selection for this study. Given the purpose of my study is to reveal how Greta Gerwig portrays white feminism in her films, I first needed to justify that all the films I analyzed were classified as ‘feminist films’. According to a theory developed by Press and Liebes-Plesner, a film qualifies as feminist if it identifies these key features: 1) women play a central role in the film, 2) inclusion of women in professional or power roles they were excluded from before, or 3) the film highlights issues concerning women (Press & Libes-Plesner, 2004). Having watched the films prior as well as through examining existing literature, the three Greta Gerwig films I selected to analyze were *Lady Bird* (2017), *Little Women* (2019), and *Barbie* (2023).

I concluded that the three selected films qualified as feminist because for *Lady Bird* and *Little Women*, the existing literature conducted on both these movies respectively had shown discussion on feminism themes within the film (Dewi & Medina, 2021; Fatmasari & Kanafillah, 2018). The only discrepancy I identified, based on the existing literature, was that *Little Women* didn't necessarily adhere to the second feature (inclusion of women in professional or power roles) of Press and Liebes-Plesner's theory. Nevertheless, I still chose this movie because the only reason it didn't fit was because it was an adaptation of a 19th-century novel, and Dewi and Medina's study depicts the other ways feminism was shown in the film (Dewi & Medina, 2021). As for *Barbie* (2023), even though there are currently no existing academic studies conducted on this film for feminism, the discussion in pop culture regarding feminism which informed the significance of this paper makes it an appropriate selection (Searles, 2023).

3.3. Assumption

The main assumption of this paper is that gender will be viewed on a binary scale with only male and female given that feminism within this context is limited to biological females as the characters portrayed in the three Gerwig films are as such.

3.4. Limitations

The primary limitation in my methodology is subjective bias. The purpose of this subsection is to overview this limitation and how I plan to mitigate the risk of cherry-picking and misleading results. Because the findings of my paper will come from my own coding of the film, this could be considered subjective. Therefore, to attempt to avoid deepening this bias, I selected a 19 year old male partner to code the film alongside myself. I intentionally chose a partner that was the opposite gender of myself, a female, given that our worldviews and perspectives have been shaped differently based on our gender. This was particularly important given the crux of my research is related to feminism, a topic that can be viewed in many different lights based on one's background.

In addition, my partner and I had both gone into this research utilizing a method known as 'reflexivity in qualitative research'. This concept is having "transparency about the researcher's position and potential biases and assumptions...in judging accounts of qualitative research and the authenticity of findings" (Reid et al., 2018). In accordance with this, my partner and I both discussed our preconceived biases stemming from socio-cultural and environmental factors regarding feminism and race to be completely transparent with one another, respecting the research process as well (see Appendix D). This allowed both of us to be actively conscious about our biases, acknowledging them prior to coding and conducting the study.

Finally, my partner and I had both established the same definitions and interpretations for the existing categories that I derived from my initial library research as part of my methodology.

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Through having this consistent and mutual understanding, my partner and I both had equal knowledge on what we were analyzing prior to conducting the study. While the limitations of this study can not be completely eradicated given that a level of subjectivity will remain, the extent of subjective bias is slightly limited through having a coding partner.

3.5. Hypothesis

Having examined the existing literature, my hypothesis is as follows: the dialogue for each of the three films will portray white feminism through all three (exclusion, generalization, and reductionism) categories.

4. Results & Findings

As previously mentioned, after analyzing the literature through library research I drew three main categories that indicate three ways white feminism can be portrayed (sorted alphabetically): (1) Exclusion, (2) Generalization, (3) Reductionism. In coding the three films, I utilized these categories to group the primary data in the form of dialogues. While the three categories have some overlap with one another, I sorted them independently as they all have distinct definitions and interpretations.

4.1: Category 1 - Exclusion

The exclusion category refers to the absence or "complacency in the omission of nonwhite women's voices in feminist thought" (McFadden, 2011). In other words, exclusion would be indicated through a topic of feminism being discussed by only white women.

The first data is from *Little Women* (Gerwig, 2019):

"Yes women being taught at home is much more proper I believe"

Meg: "Only because the schools for women are so poor"

Amy: "I wish all the girls would leave his school and that he would die"

Mom: "My girls have a way of getting into mischief"

This dialogue is between two of the March sisters (Amy and Meg) as well as their mom. After Amy March had gotten into trouble in school, this conversation followed, showcasing Amy and Meg March's perspective on education opportunities for women and how it is 'poor'. Given the movie takes place during the Civil War in the 1860s, this dialogue sheds light on the broader feminist issue regarding lack of equal educational opportunity at the time. However, this conversation didn't include the perspective, or even reference the struggle of Black women during this time, who were further oppressed and not granted even 'poor' education opportunities. This dialogue also overlaps with the generalization category as a result of this exclusion, considering how the lack of Black female perspective generalizes the issue of educational opportunity to all women, regardless of race during this time, which is untrue.

The next data is from *Barbie* (Gerwig, 2023):

Gloria: I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman

tie herself into knots so that people will like us. And if all of that is also true

for a doll just representing a woman, then I don't even know.

This dialogue takes place when the leading protagonist, known as stereotypical Barbie, returns from the real world (Los Angeles) back to her fictional world (Barbieland). Barbieland was formally politically and socially run by the females (Barbies), but when stereotypical Barbie returned to her Barbieland alongside two humans (Gloria and her daughter Sasha), the Kens (males) of the world transformed it into a patriarchal society with men being on top of the social hierarchy.

Upon finding this out, stereotypical Barbie struggles to accept this reality and breaks down. In this dialogue, Gloria, a latin-American middle-aged female, attempts to console stereotypical Barbie by addressing the feminist issue of women having to try extra hard for people to like them. Gloria relates the issue to herself, as well as extends this issue to every other woman. Given she is a non-white voice sharing her perspective and weighing her voice in on a feminist issue, this dialogue actually confronts and challenges the exclusion category rather than portraying it. Essentially, this dialogue displays an instance of inclusion, instead of exclusion, challenging white feminism through the exclusion category.

The third dialogue under this category is from *Lady Bird* (Gerwig, 2017).

Guest Speaker: I am that baby that [my mom] decided not to abort. That could've been me. That could've been my fate.

Ladybird (to friend): Just because something looks ugly doesn't mean it's morally wrong

Guest Speaker (to Ladybird): What was that Ma'am?

Ladybird: I..said just because something looks ugly doesn't mean it's morally wrong.

Guest Speaker: You think dead children aren't morally wrong?

Ladybird: Listen if your mother had had the abortion, we wouldn't have to sit through this stupid assembly.

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During this dialogue, there was a guest speaker at Ladybird's school who was giving a speech about abortion. Given Ladybird's school is predominantly Christian, the speaker intended to spark anti-abortion sentiment through sharing how she would be dead if her mother went through with an abortion. Ladybird was irritated and unsurprised hearing this, which leads her to speak out calling the assembly 'stupid' and how abortion 'isn't morally wrong'.

The feminist conflict within this dialogue is abortion, but more specifically, speaking out against adversity. Being able to vocalize opinions on controversial feminist issues such as abortion, as well as outwardly demonstrate resistance to such norms, is a privilege not every woman has. However, given only a white woman is speaking out on abortion in this situation, it displays an instance of excluding women of color.

4.2. Category 2 - Generalization

White feminism, portrayed through the generalization category, is the assumption that the perspectives of white women are the same for all women through generalizing that the lives, experiences, and needs of all women are the same (McFadden, 2011).

The first data reflected in this category is from *Little Women* (Gerwig, 2019):

Jo: "He volunteered for the Union Army, I wanted to go fight with him.

I can't get over my disappointment in being a girl"

Within the context of this scene, one of the March sisters, Jo, is at a dance talking to Laurie, a white male who, at this point, is Jo's romantic interest. Jo expresses frustration at being a girl, as it prevents her from joining the Union war effort like her father. The underlying feminist conflict is

the gender disparity in the military force, and how it impacts young girls who are barred from participating solely because they're a girl. However, Jo overlooks her own privilege in being a white female during the Civil War era, contrasting with the challenges faced by Black females under discriminatory practices such as black codes. Therefore, while her frustrations are valid within the context of white women's experiences, it fails to account for the broader intersectional realities of gender and race during that time. although this issue is exclusive to white women during this time frame, her disappointment is generalized to all girls who do not face this issue by any means.

The second dialogue under this category is from *Barbie* (Gerwig, 2023):

Gloria: You have to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman but also always be looking out for other people.

In the context of this dialogue, stereotypical Barbie goes through an inner crisis about herself and her identity. Prior to this dialogue, stereotypical Barbie expressed how she didn't feel 'pretty enough' or 'smart enough' to the latino-female character Gloria, who is seeking to console her in this dialogue. Gloria takes the experience of stereotypical Barbie who, as previously mentioned, is a white blonde female character, and extends it to all women. She goes into identifying the double standards that society places on women, and how such double standards impact women like stereotypical Barbie. However, directing the experiences of all women towards just one white female assumes that all these issues are the same across the table for all women. Despite Gloria's Latina

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identity, the message is tailored towards the white Barbie character, generalizing the female experience to all races.

4.3. Category 3 - Reductionism

Reductionism, with regard to white feminism, is defined as reducing oppression to one or two fundamental causes, but fails to acknowledge racism as a cause (McFadden, 2011). In other words, reductionism is an oversimplification of oppression and neglecting the intersectionality of factors leading to oppression. The difference between reductionism and generalization is that generalization wrongfully assumes white women face the same issues as all women, whereas reductionism addresses issues impacting a wide range of women, but oversimplifies the issue through neglecting intersectionality.

The first data reflected under this category is from *Barbie* (Gerwig, 2023):

Ken: Madam President, please, may the Kens have one supreme court justice?

President Barbie: Oh, I can't do that. But maybe a lower circuit court judgeship.

Narrator: Well, the Kens have to start somewhere. And one day the Kens will have as much power and influence in Barbieland as women have in the real world.

This dialogue takes place towards the end of the film, where the Barbies regain their original authority before the Kens had restructured the society. However, with this alteration to Barbieland, the Barbies allow the Kens to be included in the political landscape, even if it is a lower position with not as much power as Supreme Court Justice. The film's narrator then compares the power of Kens in Barbieland to women in the real world, which based on context means that women have limited

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power in the real world in comparison to men. While gender discrepancies of power in society is certainly an issue impacting many women, the dialogue simplifies the issue to only males and females. In the real world, males aren't the only reason for societal power imbalances as there are more factors such as class and race that also contribute to such imbalances in society which the dialogue neglects to acknowledge.

The second data under this category is derived from *Little Women* (Gerwig, 2019):

Amy: "Well I'm not a poet, I'm just a woman, and and as a woman there's no way for me to make my own money. Not enough to earn a living or to support my family. And if I had my own money which I don't, that money would belong to my husband the moment we got married. And if we had children, they would be his, not mine."

This dialogue takes place when the youngest of the four March sisters (Amy March), talks to the white male character Lauri who plays the love interest of both Amy and Jo March at separate points in the film. The two discuss marriage, and Amy discusses marriage from the perspective of a woman. She had previously articulated how marriage is an 'economic proposition' because women don't make enough money in society, also bringing up the broader issues of marriage roles and women being viewed as inferior in society which causes them to make less than men. Amy also says how if she did have money it would belong to her husband, which was a typical marriage dynamic in the 19th century.

However, though these sexist roles were prevalent during this period which leaves less opportunities for women, the dialogue simplifies the impact of these roles to only white women.

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Every marriage dynamic, regardless of race or class, at this time likely yielded such gender roles, but the economic challenges for women were vastly different for white women and black women. The crux of the issue faced by Amy was how her money wouldn't belong to her husband instead of her, however, a black women during this time period are doubly oppressed by both sexist and racist systems which would further restrict their access to economic opportunities.

The third dialogue under this category is from *Lady Bird* (Gerwig, 2017):

Ladybird (Christine): "Why can't I look like the girls in the magazine?"

The context of this dialogue is that Ladybird was trying on dresses with her mom for her upcoming school dance. However, as Ladybird looks in the mirror, she makes this comment about how she can't look like 'girls in the magazine' who are presumably girls fitting the beauty standard. Still, while feeling not beautiful enough due to the beauty standards is common among many girls, traditional beauty standards also favor the white, euro-centric look. Thus, this dialogue simplifies this feminist conflict to only white girls, while neglecting how the beauty standards have a worsened impact on women of color.

5. Discussion

For the three movies, there were instances where the dialogue fell under at least two of the three identified categories: 1) exclusion, 2) generalization, 3) reductionism. Within this discussion, I will first draw conclusions for each of the three films and their respective relations to the categories. Next, I will summarize the overarching conclusion and how the findings compare to my initial

hypothesis and body of literature. Finally, I will outline the limitations of the paper's findings and the broader implications resulting from the findings.

5.1. Lady Bird

The paper's first conclusion emerged from this film: Lady Bird's dialogue demonstrated no instance of generalization, however, did for the reductionism and exclusion categories

After analyzing Gerwig's Lady Bird (2017) film, it appeared that the purpose of this film was to display the college journey and love life of a white female high schooler (named Christine but known as 'Ladybird') in a coming-of-age genre. Based upon my analysis, the key aspect which classified the film as 'feminist' was the resistance of Ladybird to traditional gender norms given her strong-minded nature and ability to freely speak her mind. This feminist conflict aligned with the resistance identified in Fatmasari and Kanafillah's study, and how "Lady Bird puts up a fight against the grips", displaying resistance (Fatmasari & Kanafillah, 2018). This conclusion added to the literature by asserting how Ladybird's race played a key role in being able to achieve such feminist resistance, a privilege not every race has.

5.2. Little Women (2019)

With regard to the Little Women (2019) film, each of the categories in the findings section were displayed in one instance of dialogue respectively. Therefore, the second conclusion emerged which was that the film's dialogue in Little Women portrayed white feminism in terms of the exclusion, generalization, and reductionism categories.

As previously mentioned, Little Women was set in the Civil War era, and the plotline predominantly centered around the four March sisters and how they were navigating their

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relationships with one another as well as their love lives. My study highlighted how the film addresses feminist concerns including marriage roles and dynamics, women's exclusion from wartime participation, and unequal economic opportunities for females. These conflicts align with the principles of liberal feminism, which is a strand of feminism identified by Dewi and Medina's study and is defined as "the elimination of inequality between women and men in the legal, political, social, workplace and educational settings" (Dewi & Medina, 2021). While Dewi and Medina's study found instances in *Little Women* that portray notions of liberal feminism with similar conflicts as the ones identified in my study, my findings add to the literature by adding a lens on how these feminist conflicts intersect with the characters' race. More specifically, my study adds how *Little Women* excludes, generalizes or simplifies the role Black women played during the Civil War era.

5.3. *Barbie* (2023)

The third and final key conclusion emerged from the Barbie film which was that white feminism was portrayed in the Barbie film through the generalization and reductionism category, however, the film challenged the exclusion category.

While there aren't any existing studies on the Barbie film given its recent release, these findings align with the findings of existing literature surrounding Barbie dolls and white feminism. Through analysis of the doll and brand's progression over the years, a study by Hannah Tulinski concludes that "the contention around her representation, particular within the sphere of race...is likely to influence subsequent releases" (Tulinski, 2017). In essence, existing literature affirms how consumer's reaction to the doll leads to Mattel increasing racial diversity in the dolls they create which aligns with the emergence of the inclusion category within my study. Though the film

introduced two Latin-American women (Gloria and Sasha), the main purpose of their characters was to prop up the storyline of stereotypical Barbie. For instance, when stereotypical Barbie was facing her own conflict, Gloria extended Barbie's problem to all women regardless of race. However, when Gloria voiced feminist issues and personalized it to herself, this displayed an inclusion of a nonwhite voice which inadvertently challenged the exclusion category. Therefore, the portrayal of white feminism within the Barbie film was nuanced

5.4. Summary

Only the conclusion made for Little Women aligned with my initial hypothesis that Greta Gerwig films would portray white feminism through all three categories. The dialogue *Lady Bird* portrayed white feminism through the reductionism and exclusion categories but not generalization, and *Barbie's* dialogue portrayed it through reductionism and generalization categories, however, challenged white feminism through the exclusion category. Essentially, the findings showcase that there were instances of dialogue for all three Greta Gerwig films portraying white feminism through the reductionism category. Further, the portrayal of white feminism varied from film to film which is largely dependent on the time setting, context, and characters of the film.

There are two limitations to my findings: subjective bias and unaccounted for changes in producers and writers. Despite having a male coding partner, any qualitative coding process will be subjective to an extent and that is a limitation which can only be slightly mitigated but not altogether eliminated. Secondly, because the film selection criterion of the paper required it to be directed by Greta Gerwig and a 'feminist film', I didn't account for changes in producers and writers which, if accounted for, may have had an impact on the findings.

Nevertheless, the paper fills a gap in the literature through addressing the intersectionality of race and feminism within Greta Gerwig films. Further, this paper provides how the three categories (exclusion, generalization, reductionism) can be applied in film research especially when looking at intersectionality. These conclusions could be implicated through spreading awareness to our community as well as directors on how white feminism can be subtly portrayed in film and how such portrayals can hurt women of color through excluding, oversimplifying, or generalizing their experiences by only showcasing that of white women.

6. Conclusion

To summarize, white feminism was portrayed in Greta Gerwig's three films (Lady Bird, Little Women, and Barbie) through the reductionism category. However, the portrayal varied from film to film, primarily due to differences in character, setting, and plot.

I would recommend future research look into other cultural backgrounds of 'feminist' films such as Bollywood as well as those directed by directors other than Gerwig and how the findings differ with regard to intersectionality or white feminism. Hopefully future research in this regard inspires directors and filmmakers to incorporate diversity into the strong, empowered, female characters they create. Therefore, this could hopefully enable every young girl, regardless of race, to see their strength and potential on the screen.

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