

'What if there were a butch Barbie?' Barbie's gender politics investigated

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The exclusion of butch representation in the Barbie movie limits its queer inclusivity, says a paper released in the year of the doll's 65th anniversary.

Dr. Clara Bradbury-Rance, Senior Lecturer in Gender and Sexuality Studies in the Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities, imagines how the film could be different if it featured a butch version of Barbie in the paper [published](#) in *Feminist Media Studies*.

"The film has many undeniable pleasures, including its celebration of [femininity](#), its shameless camp aesthetic, and the could-be-lesbian chemistry between its leads. But there are clearly still barriers to queer and trans representability. I wanted to imagine what if there were a Butch Barbie to play with some of those barriers," says Dr. Clara Bradbury-Rance, Senior Lecturer in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

While *Barbie* (2023) celebrates women and campness, Dr. Bradbury-Rance explores the movie's successful celebration of femininity alongside the limits of its gender politics, drawing on comparisons from queer cinema. She suggests that despite the film's camp aesthetic and LGBTQ+ cast, the lack of butch characters prevents the movie from successfully usurping traditional politics of gender and [sexuality](#).

The publication of "Butch Barbie" coincides with the 65th anniversary of Barbie, which was introduced in 1959.

More information: Clara Bradbury-Rance, *Butch Barbie*, *Feminist Media Studies* (2024). [DOI:10.1080/14680777.2024.2372015](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2024.2372015)

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