



EVOLVING MASCULINITIES IN THE LANGUAGE OF WHY WOMEN KILL (2019): FROM PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION TO ADAPTIVE IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how evolving masculinities are constructed through language in *Why Women Kill* (2019), focusing on the male characters Rob, Karl, and Eli. Employing a qualitative approach, the study uses dialogue transcripts and selected scenes from all ten episodes of the first season as the primary data. The analysis is conducted through coding, interpretation, and conclusion drawing, guided by Raewyn Connell's theory of masculinity, particularly the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and crisis tendencies. The findings demonstrate that the characters' language reflects three distinct forms of masculinity across the historical settings of 1963, 1984, and 2019. Rob's language reinforces hegemonic masculinity through patriarchal authority, control, and gender hierarchy. Karl's language reflects subordinate masculinity by negotiating social expectations and challenging heteronormative ideals. Meanwhile, Eli's language represents adaptive masculinity through emotional openness, egalitarian communication, and mutual care. The study further reveals that crisis tendencies in power relations, production relations, and cathexis are linguistically expressed through the characters' interactions, illustrating the transformation of masculine identities in response to changing social and cultural contexts. This research contributes to the fields of language, gender, and masculinity studies by demonstrating how language functions as a medium for constructing, maintaining, and transforming masculine identities in media discourse. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the evolution of masculinity through linguistic representation in *Why Women Kill* (2019), an aspect that has received limited scholarly attention compared with previous studies that primarily emphasize female characters and feminist perspectives.

Keywords: *evolving masculinities; language; hegemonic masculinity; crisis tendencies; Why Women Kill (2019).*

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary texts and visual media function not only as reflections of social reality but also as ideological sites where gender identities are constructed, negotiated, and transformed through language. As Gata (2025) argues, media actively shape and reproduce dominant gender discourses, while

recurring linguistic expressions, symbols, and narrative patterns reinforce particular understandings of masculinity (Gürkan, 2022; Romadon et al., 2024). Consequently, language in media serves as a powerful instrument for constructing masculine identities, legitimizing social norms, and

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reflecting changing cultural values. Rather than merely representing existing beliefs, media discourse also influences how audiences interpret gender roles and masculine behavior across different historical and social contexts (Jaya et al., 2025; Fadilah et al., 2023).

One television series that illustrates this linguistic construction of masculinity is *Why Women Kill* (2019). Set in the same house in Pasadena, California, the series follows three families living in different periods 1963, 1984, and 2019. While the narrative primarily centers on women's experiences, it also presents contrasting forms of masculinity through the language of its three principal male characters: Rob, Karl, and Eli. Their dialogues, speech patterns, and interpersonal interactions reveal different masculine identities that correspond to the gender expectations of their respective eras. Through these linguistic representations, the series demonstrates how masculinity evolves from patriarchal domination toward more adaptive and egalitarian forms of identity.

Page and Connel (2020) conceptualizes masculinity as a socially constructed practice that emerges from gender relations and is continuously shaped by historical and cultural conditions. Masculinity is therefore not a fixed or universal identity but a dynamic process that changes alongside transformations in social values, institutions, and power relations. Connell further explains that shifts in gender relations often generate crisis tendencies, prompting men to renegotiate their identities in response to changing expectations and social structures (Muttaqin, 2022; Kusuma, 2023; Alwan, 2023). In *Why Women Kill*, these processes are reflected through the language of Rob, Karl, and Eli, whose verbal interactions reveal different ways of expressing authority, vulnerability, intimacy, and equality within their respective historical settings.

Based on these perspectives, this study investigates the evolution of masculinity through the language used by Rob, Karl, and Eli in *Why Women Kill* (2019). Specifically, the study addresses three research questions: (1) how masculinity is linguistically represented through the dialogues of the three male characters; (2) how their language reflects Connell's concept of crisis tendencies in gender relations; and (3) how these linguistic representations illustrate the evolution of masculinity from patriarchal domination to adaptive identity across the periods of 1963, 1984, and 2019. By examining language as a medium of gender construction, this study contributes to the fields of language and gender studies, demonstrating how media discourse reflects and shapes the transformation of masculine identities in response to broader social and cultural change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Masculinity

Masculinity is understood as a set of social practices that shape and are shaped by the body, personality, and culture (Farida, 2019; Hopkins, 2009; Golban & Fidan, 2018). Rather than being a fixed characteristic possessed by men, masculinity is produced through everyday actions, interactions, and social relations. Although masculinity is commonly associated with men, it is best understood as a social practice that operates within a broader gender order.

Connell (2020) argues that masculinity can only be understood in relation to femininity. Gender identities are constructed through social relations that distinguish masculine and feminine positions and organize them within a hierarchical structure. Consequently, masculinity is not a singular or universal form but consists of multiple

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configurations that occupy different positions within the gender hierarchy.

The form of masculinity that holds the highest cultural authority is referred to as hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (2020), hegemonic masculinity represents the dominant ideal of manhood that legitimizes men's authority within the existing gender order. However, not all men embody this ideal. Some forms of masculinity occupy subordinate positions, particularly those associated with traits, behaviors, or identities that challenge dominant masculine norms. Subordinate masculinity therefore represents forms of masculinity that are socially devalued in relation to hegemonic masculinity (R. Connell, 2005).

Gender relations are constantly changing; masculinity is never stable. R. Connell (2005) introduces the concept of crisis tendencies to explain the tensions and contradictions that emerge within the gender order. Crisis tendencies arise when existing gender arrangements are challenged by social transformations, including shifts in power relations, production relations, and cathexis. Changes such as the expansion of gender equality movements, women's increasing participation in paid work, and evolving norms surrounding sexuality and intimate relationships can destabilize established forms of masculinity. As a result, men may respond by defending, negotiating, or reconstructing their masculine identities to adapt to changing social conditions.

This study employs Connell's concepts of hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, and crisis tendencies to examine how masculinity is represented and transformed in *Why Women Kill* (2019). These concepts provide a framework for analyzing how male characters negotiate changing gender relations across different historical periods.

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method focusing on the dialogues of the main male characters: Creswell and Creswell (2018), Tisdell et al. (2025) and Patton (2020) across all episodes of the first season of *Why Women Kill* (2019), obtained from subtitled transcripts. Dialogue was selected as the primary data because it provides direct evidence of how masculinity is represented, negotiated, and expressed by the characters. Relevant scenes were also examined to support the interpretation of dialogue within its narrative context. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Connell's theory of masculinity.

Data were collected by watching all ten episodes of *Why Women Kill* (2019), identifying relevant dialogues and scenes, and organizing the data according to the three narrative timelines (1963, 1984, and 2019). Data analysis was conducted through three stages: coding, interpretation, and conclusion. Dialogues and scenes were first coded based on emerging themes of masculinity. The data were then interpreted using Connell's theory of masculinity. Finally, patterns of masculinity representation, crisis tendencies, and shifts in masculine practices across different historical periods were identified.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**4.1. Representation of Masculinity in *Why Women Kill*****4.1.1. Rob's Masculinity in 1963**

The 1963 timeline in *Why Women Kill* presents a form of masculinity shaped by patriarchal values, where men hold authority in the family while women are expected to perform domestic duties. Rob's role as the family's breadwinner becomes an important source of his authority. Beth expresses her admiration for him by saying:

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Figure 1. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:09:24
Beth: "Rob is such a wonderful provider. I consider it an honor to take care of him."



Figure 2. Why Women Kill, Episode 2, 00:13:12
Rob stays focused on work at dinner

This statement shows that Rob's position as provider is accepted as natural within the household. Allen (2025), male dominance is maintained when society views men's authority as normal and legitimate. In Rob's case, his economic role gives him authority in family life, as seen in his tendency to prioritize work over spending time with Beth

Rob's authority is also visible in everyday interactions. In one scene, he taps his finger on an empty cup, and Beth immediately pours him tea without being asked.



Figure 3. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:07:33–00:08:29

Rob tapped his finger on an empty cup, and Beth immediately poured him tea without him having to ask.

This moment shows how Rob's authority has become part of the household routine. According to Listyani et al. (2024), such everyday practices help maintain hegemonic masculinity by making male dominance appear normal.

The unequal division of gender roles is further shown when Rob asks Beth to bring him an olive for his martini while she is playing the piano:



Figure 4. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:41:31

Rob: "Honey, I need an olive for my martini"

The request shows that Beth is expected to always be ready to meet Rob's needs, even while doing her own activities. This scene illustrates how the domestic space is centered on male needs and reinforces Rob's dominant position in the household.

Dominance is also seen in how he limits Beth's desires indirectly. When Beth wants something more in life, Rob immediately connects the desire with the task of cooking, which suggests that he still sees Beth as a figure in charge of household affairs.



Figure 5. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:31:56–00:32:11

Beth: "I need something more."

Rob: "This something more, will it keep you from making me a delicious dinner?"

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This scene illustrates how the role of women in the family is limited by patriarchal views that place them on domestic duties (Lubis, 2022; Palimbunga, 2024). The reaction also suggests that masculine authority works through the limitation of women's actualizing space. Beth begins to show a desire to break out of the domestic boundaries, but Rob pulls her back on household duties.

Rob also downplays Beth's dream of becoming a pianist. When Beth expresses her desire to have a recital, Rob laughs at her and doubts her abilities.



Figure 6. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:32:08-00:32:22

Beth: "... I made the mistake of telling him I wanted to give a recital, and he just laughed. He said I wasn't as good as I thought I was..."

This attitude shows how Rob uses judgment and ridicule to limit Beth's confidence as well as maintain her position in the relationship. Pratami & Hasiholan (2020) mention that men maintain dominance through symbols, language, and judgment of the other party.

Rob's representation of masculinity in the 1963 timeline shows hegemonic masculinity built through his role as the primary breadwinner and authority holder in the family. This dominance can be seen from Beth's expectation that she must take care of and prioritize domestic needs. In addition, Rob also limits Beth's aspirations, thereby strengthening patriarchal gender relations that place men in dominant positions and women in subordinate positions.

4. 1. 2. Karl's Masculinity in 1984

Karl's identity as a homosexual male became a pivotal point in the transformation of masculinity in the 1984 timeline. Karl Grove actually presents a

more complex form of masculinity because his sexual identity does not conform to heteronormative standards.



Figure 7. Why Women Kill, Episode 5, 00:44:57

Karl: "Darling, I'm gay"

In Connell's theory, homosexual masculinity is often placed in a subordinate masculinity position because it is considered to be under hegemonic masculinity that prioritizes heterosexuality, domination, and control over women (R. Connell, 2005). Karl's confession to Simone reveals an identity that had long been hidden and highlights his position within the gender hierarchy.

Unlike hegemonic masculinity, Karl does not build his masculine identity through dominance over women. When recalling his first meeting with Simone, he admires her confidence, elegance, and appearance rather than her ability to perform domestic roles.



Figure 8. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:01:29-00:01:40.

Karl: "... the entrance she made. Designer gown, dripping in diamonds. You could tell from the way she walked, she knew she was fabulous."

The quote suggests that Karl viewed Simone as a woman of social and personal appeal. Karl did not make female subordination the basis of his masculine identity. This reflects the idea that

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masculinity is a social practice that can change according to the relational context (Messerschmidt, 2019).

Karl's masculinity is also reflected in his strong interest in fashion and appearance. For example, he asks Simone for advice about which suit he should wear for a date with his male partner.



Figure 9. Why Women Kill, Episode 7, 00:15:42

Karl: "Which do you prefer?"

Karl's ability to recognize luxury jewellery brands in just one look demonstrates his closeness to the world of fashion and aesthetics.

Karl also knows the term facial treatment used by a woman at a party.



Figure 10. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:16:07.

Karl: "It's called a chemical peel."

These moments show that Karl is comfortable with interests that are often associated with femininity. Unlike hegemonic masculinity, which frequently distances itself from feminine traits (Schippers, 2007), Karl does not see femininity as something inferior. Instead, he demonstrates a more flexible and expressive form of masculinity.

Karl's masculinity also differs from patriarchal masculinity in that he can be present as a source of emotional support for Simone. Simone describes Karl as a

husband who makes her feel beautiful, accepted, and entertained. This form of masculinity is not built through domination, but through the ability to provide emotional validation.



Figure 11. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:36:42-00:36:57

Simone: "... He puts up with extravagance and utter nonsense. He tells me I'm beautiful when I need to hear it the most and he makes me laugh in a way that no one else can."

The quote shows that Karl exercised a masculine role through affective support. According to Wojnicka (2021) contemporary forms of masculinity increasingly emphasize emotional support and care rather than dominance and control. Karl reflects this caring form of masculinity, even though his sexual identity remains marginalized within the broader social structure.

Overall, Karl represents subordinate masculinity in Connell's gender hierarchy because of his homosexual identity (R. Connell, 2005). His masculinity is expressed through emotional support, appreciation of aesthetics, self-expression, and respect for others rather than authority or domination. The character reflects a more diverse and expressive form of masculinity in the 1984 timeline.

4. 1. 3. Eli's Masculinity in 2019

From the beginning, Eli was portrayed as a man who accepted women as public and political subjects. When she recounted her first encounter with Taylor, she was actually interested in Taylor when she was in the feminist political space. This suggests a more open form of masculinity towards women who are vocal and independent.

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Figure 12. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:01:41-00:01:53

Eli: "I first saw Taylor at a women's march..."

The quote suggests that Taylor was introduced as a woman active in social movements. This position shows that Eli and Taylor's relationship is built in the context of a more equal gender consciousness. Cuklanz & Erol (2021) explain that representations of masculinity evolve towards more relational forms and are open to the value of caring. Eli represents these tendencies through his relationship with Taylor.

Eli's adaptive masculinity is also evident from his acceptance of Taylor's sexual identity. Taylor initially reveals that she is bisexual, and Eli does not display any rejection or control reactions to her identity. This shows a major shift from masculinity, where patriarchy usually governs women's bodies and sexuality (Gupta et al., 2023)



Figure 13. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:01:59

El: Right away, Taylor told me she was bisexual"

The quote suggests that Taylor's bisexuality was present as an open part of their relationship. Eli does not force Taylor to hide her sexual identity. In this context, Why Women Kill shows that in 2019 Women's sexual identity can be more openly negotiated in romantic relationships.

Eli's acceptance of Taylor's sexuality becomes even more apparent when Taylor wants to reconsider their open marriage. Instead of welcoming it as an opportunity to control Taylor, Eli worries that Taylor will have to sacrifice an important part of her identity.



Figure 14. Why Women Kill, Episode 10, 00:19:20-00:19:49

Eli: "... your sexuality is really important. And I just don't want you to have to give any part of that up"

The quote shows that Eli views Taylor's sexuality as part of his identity that needs to be valued. According to Wojnicka (2021), masculinity in the context of social change can be realized through caring, support and attention to the needs of others. Eli's attitude reflects that form of masculinity as he gives Taylor the space to express his identity openly in their relationship.

Eli's supportive attitude is further evident when he insists that he does not want Taylor to lose any part of him. This statement shows Eli's concern for Taylor's identity and personal needs. When Eli said, *"I just don't want you to have to give any part of that up"*, shows that Eli gives Taylor space to understand and live her sexual identity. This attitude reflects appreciation for the partner's personal choices. According to Barreto & Doyle (2023), sexism often arises through restrictions on women's choices and bodies, while Eli and Taylor's relationship is portrayed as supporting individual freedom in relationships.

Emotional openness is one of the hallmarks of Eli's masculinity. When feeling Taylor may have feelings for Jade, he expresses his anxiety directly.

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Figure 15. Why Women Kill, Episode 2, 00:41:45

Eli: "You in love with her?"

The question shows that Eli is able to openly express his feelings of jealousy and uncertainty. According to Messerschmidt (2019), masculinity is a social practice that can change according to context, so the expression of emotions can be part of masculinity in contemporary relationships. This openness is also noticeable when Eli admits his insecurity to Taylor.



Figure 16. Why Women Kill, Episode 2, 00:43:04)

Eli: "I guess I have been feeling a little insecure lately"

The quote shows that Eli is able to verbally express his emotional vulnerability. Eli's emotional openness represents a shift in contemporary masculinity that no longer requires men to be stoic and suppress feelings. Connor et al. (2021) explain that contemporary masculinity is characterized by emotional intimacy, that is, the ability of men to share feelings, show emotions, and accept vulnerability as part of masculine identity. According to them, this form of masculinity is contrary to the norms of traditional masculinity, which require men to restrain their emotional expression.

Eli's adaptive masculinity is also evident in the way he responds to conflict situations. When Jade threatens with a knife,

Eli attempts to calm things down through communication.



Figure 17. Why Women Kill, Episode 10, 00:25:25

Eli: "Okay, you know what, let's just all settle down"

The quote shows that Eli is working to keep the situation stable and prevent tensions from escalating further. According to Wojnicka (2021), contemporary masculinity is increasingly associated with the practice of care and responsibility towards others. Eli's actions reflect this form of concern through his efforts to maintain the safety of all parties involved.

Eli's communicative approach was also evident when he decided to speak directly with Jade.



Figure 18. Why Women Kill, Episode 10, 00:27:16-00:27:26

Eli: "... let's just hold on a second... I'm gonna go talk to her...you've been through a lot, but you're not a bad person. Right? No, no, okay."

This statement suggests that Eli views conversation as a way to build understanding and resolve problems. Connor et al. (2021) explain that contemporary masculinity is characterized by emotional intimacy, which is the ability to build relationships through communication, emotional openness, and support. Eli's choice to dialogue reflects those characteristics.

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Eli's empathy is also evident as he tries to understand Jade's life experience. Eli pays attention to Jade's emotional state and tries to respond to it with understanding. Connor et al. (2021) explain that contemporary masculinity provides space for men to show empathy and emotional support. Eli's attitude is also in line with Wojnicka's (2021) view of placing caring as an important part of the practice of masculinity.

4. 2. Crisis Tendencies in Why Women Kill

4. 2. 1. Crisis Tendencies in Rob

Rob's crisis tendencies in power relations arise when Beth begins to question the subordinate position she has accepted as the ideal wife. This realization is seen when Beth questions her identity outside of marriage.



Figure 19. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:31:44–00:31:49

Beth: "But when you're not here anymore, who will I be?"

Rob: "My widow?"

Rob's response suggests that he interprets Beth's identity only through her relationship with him as a husband. Schippers (2007) explains that in the hegemonic gender order, femininity is constructed as a complement to masculinity so that women acquire social meaning through subordinate relationships with men. Rob's views reflect the assumption that women do not need an identity outside of marriage, while demonstrating the legitimacy of his dominant position in the household. However, when Beth begins to question the position, the stability of the power relationship that sustains Rob's masculinity begins to be compromised.

The crisis is further exposed when Beth expresses her desire to have a more meaningful life.



Figure 20. Why Women Kill, Episode 1, 00:31:56–00:32:11

Beth: "I need something more."

Rob: "This something more, will it keep you from making me delicious dinner"

Instead of supporting Beth's aspirations, Rob directly associates her with domestic obligations. This response demonstrates efforts to maintain traditional gender roles that place women as servants of domestic needs. According to R. Connell (2005), gender power relations are vulnerable to crisis when subordinate parties begin to reject existing dominance. In this context, a crisis arises as Beth begins to realize her identity and challenges the patriarchal structure that sustains Rob's authority.

Rob's crisis tendencies in production relations arose from the pressure to continue to maintain his image as a successful man and provider. The position gives him social legitimacy, but at the same time becomes a source of psychological burden. This is seen through the swan napkin metaphor, when Rob describes his life as something seemingly beautiful yet rigid, stressful, and exhausting to maintain.



Figure 21. Why Women Kill, Episode 4, 00:40:02

Rob: "My life feels like one of those stupid swan napkins... it's rigid, it's all tight folds and sharp"

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edges... People admire it, but it takes so much work... it's goddamned exhausting"

The quote suggests that Rob is aware of the pressures that come with the ideal masculine role he has been performing. Hearn & Hearn (2022) explain that the crisis of masculinity does not always arise due to the loss of power, but can also come from the burden of maintaining the position. In this context, the crisis tendencies of production relations in Rob can be seen from the tension between social expectations of the role of provider and the psychological fatigue he feels in meeting these demands.

The cathexis crisis in Rob stems from the grief and guilt he harbours after the death of his daughter Emily. After the incident, Rob never really talked about his feelings and tried to stay strong. According to Santoniccolo et al. (2023), men are often portrayed as having to restrain their emotions and not show weakness.



Figure 22. Why Women Kill, Episode 9, 00:25:58-00:26:28

Rob: "You didn't lock the gate..."

Beth: "I had to make dinner"

Rob: "That's no excuse. Our baby is dead"

Instead, Rob vents his emotional distress by blaming Beth for Emily's death.



Figure 23. Why Women Kill, Episode 10, 00:35:41-00:36:09

Beth: "Did anything happen that day you haven't told me?"

Rob: "No"

This crisis became more apparent when it was revealed that Rob had actually known the cause of Emily's death from the beginning, which was the involvement of his affair in the incident. However, he chose to hide that fact from Beth. Even when Beth asks directly, Rob still doesn't reveal the truth.

According to Starck & Luyt (2019), a masculinity crisis can occur when men continue to maintain the old ways of dealing with problems, even though those ways do not help resolve the emotional distress they feel. In Rob's case, he was unable to face his grief and guilt honestly. As a result, his emotional relationship with Beth is filled with lies, denial, and manipulation.

4. 2. 2. Crisis Tendencies in Karl

The cathexis crisis was the main crisis that happened to Karl. The crisis centers on the conflict between his sexual identity as a homosexual male and the social demands that require him to appear as a heterosexual male. In Connell's (2005) perspective, this position places Karl in subordinate masculinity because it does not conform to hegemonic masculinity standards. The pressure is seen when Karl overdoses after his homosexual identity is discovered by Simone. This action shows the emotional burden that arises from years of hiding his identity.

Social pressure was also evident when Karl used the threat of coming out as a negotiating tool in his marriage.



Figure 24. Why Women Kill, Episode 2, 00:22:17-00:22:45

Karl: "If you kick me to the curb, I'll have no reason not to come out"

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The dialogue shows that the disclosure of sexual identity is seen as a social risk that can damage reputation and status. Karl must continue to control himself in order to remain accepted by his surroundings.



Figure 25. Why Women Kill, Episode 6, 00:43:11-00:43:28

Karl: "I've spent my whole damn life controlling myself, hiding the central fact of my existence."

This recognition reveals the emotional exhaustion of living in an inauthentic identity. According to Hearn & Hearn (2022), masculinity crises often arise from the tension between personal identity and social demands. Karl's crisis intensified when he experienced social stigma due to homosexuality and HIV/AIDS, to the point of feeling excluded from his environment. Thus, Karl's cathexis crisis shows how the lack of social recognition of sexual identity can generate deep emotional distress and feelings of alienation from society.

4. 2. 3. Crisis Tendencies in Eli

Eli's power relation crisis comes when he feels unable to meet traditional standards of masculinity despite living in an egalitarian relationship with Taylor. According to Valsecchi et al. (2023), changes in the gender hierarchy can generate insecurity in men who still internalize traditional masculine norms.



Figure 26. Why Women Kill, Episode 4, 00:09:31.

Taylor helps Eli confront Duke

The insecurity more apparent when Taylor has to save him from Duke. This scene shows that Eli's crisis of power is rooted in the difficulty of fitting his masculine identity into more equal relationships. L. Wang & Keizer (2024) explain that modern men often support gender equality, but still want to feel strong, useful, and able to protect others. When these roles cannot be performed, tensions arise in their masculine identity.

Eli's crisis tendencies in production relations arose because he was unable to meet expectations as a productive and economically independent man. In his household, Taylor became the party to bear the financial needs because Eli failed to sell the script for two years.



Figure 27. Why Women Kill, Episode 4, 00:34:18

Eli: "For the last two years, I've been pathetic Eli who can't finish a screenplay, who can't help pay the bills. I get it. You're frustrated with me. Well guess what? I'm frustrated with me too"

This situation made Eli feel like he was losing his role as a provider. According to L. Wang & Keizer (2024), many modern men still associate masculine identity with the ability to make economic contributions. The tension is seen when Eli judges himself a failure. This statement suggests that Eli measures his self-esteem through productivity and financial ability. When he is not able to work and make money, his confidence decreases.

The pressure to get back to being productive is even more evident when Eli takes Jade's ADHD medication in order to complete the script.

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Figure 28. Why Women Kill, Episode 5, 00:32:47

Eli: "Fuck it, give me the pill"

The action shows Eli's efforts to restore the productivity he considers essential to his masculine identity. Thus, the crisis of production relations in Eli had to do not only with economic problems, but also with the loss of the sense of value and social recognition that he had associated with successful work.

The crisis tendencies in cathexis appear in a different context because he lives in a more modern and open relationship. Eli accepts an open marriage with Taylor, where the relationship is built on mutual consent, open communication, and negotiation, different from traditional monogamous patterns. In Eli and Taylor's relationship, authority is not determined unilaterally by men, but rather through rules and mutual communication. In this type of relationship, the main partner (primary partner) remains in a central position even though both parties may be in a sexual or romantic relationship with another person (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). The crisis arose not because Taylor had a sexual relationship with someone else, but because Taylor began to get emotionally involved with Jade. In Eli, the tension arises when he feels that he has lost his emotional position in his marriage.



Figure 29. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:35:29

Eli: "So I mean...do you want me to go?"

Taylor "No, Eli I love you"

Eli: "But you want her to stay. I mean...how does that even work?"

This situation gives rise to jealousy and insecurity because emotional attachment to a third party is often perceived as a threat to the relationship that is considered the most valuable. The quote reveals that Eli interprets Taylor and Jade's closeness as a sign that he is no longer enough for Taylor. The crisis is not just jealousy, but fear of becoming a burden in the relationship.

Eli then tries to renegotiate the shape of their relationship by proposing that Jade stay with them.



Figure 30. Why Women Kill, Episode 3, 00:38:57-00:39:07

Eli: "What if it doesn't have to end? What if you stayed? What if this was your home? Here with us"

This proposal suggests that Eli did not respond to the crisis with patriarchal control, but rather with the negotiation of relations. He tries to adjust to non-traditional forms of intimacy despite feeling emotionally threatened.

The crisis tendencies in cathexis play a role in shaping Eli's masculinity practices that are more oriented towards communication and emotional understanding. The experience prompted him to renegotiate the relationship with Taylor through communication and respect for the needs of each party. Social changes that strengthened the position of women as well as increased acceptance of sexual diversity made traditional models of masculinity lose legitimacy (Hearn & Hearn, 2022).

4.3. The Evolution of Masculinity in Why Women Kill

Based on the findings regarding representations of masculinity and crisis tendencies in the article, the evolution of masculinity in Why Women Kill can be

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understood as a shift from a masculinity rooted in patriarchal domination toward a masculinity that is more reflective, relational, and adaptive to changes in gender relations and social structures from 1963 to 2019. This change is evident through the characters of Rob, Karl, and Eli, who each represent the dominant form of masculinity in their respective eras.

In 1963, Rob represents hegemonic masculinity rooted in patriarchal values. His identity is built on his role as the primary breadwinner and family authority figure, while Beth occupies a subordinate domestic position. Within the social context of the 1960s, masculinity is legitimized through male dominance, making power central to masculine identity.

Rob's masculinity experiences crisis tendencies as patriarchal authority is challenged. Beth's growing awareness of her own identity creates a power crisis, while pressure to maintain the ideal provider role and unresolved grief over his daughter's death trigger crises in production relations and cathexis. Rather than adapting, Rob responds through control and denial, revealing the fragility of hegemonic masculinity when male dominance is questioned.

Karl represents a subordinate masculinity that challenges heteronormative norms. As a gay man, he constructs his identity through emotional support, appreciation of aesthetics, and respect for his partner rather than domination. His relationship with Simone reflects a more diverse and caring form of masculinity beyond traditional patriarchal models.

Karl's crisis centers on cathexis, arising from the conflict between his homosexual identity and heteronormative social expectations. The pressure to conceal his sexuality and the stigma surrounding homosexuality and HIV/AIDS reflect society's limited acceptance of non-hegemonic masculinities. His crisis reveals a struggle for self-recognition and marks a transitional stage in the evolution of masculinity.

In 2019, Eli represents adaptive masculinity shaped by a more egalitarian

society. His relationship with Taylor is based on equality, empathy, open communication, and respect for her autonomy. Unlike traditional masculine norms, Eli openly expresses jealousy, insecurity, and emotional vulnerability.

Eli also experiences crisis tendencies when he struggles to meet traditional expectations as a protector and breadwinner. However, unlike Rob, he responds through communication, self-reflection, and acceptance of vulnerability, adapting his identity to a more egalitarian social reality rather than restoring patriarchal dominance.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the language in *Why Women Kill* (2019) constructs masculinity as a dynamic social practice that evolves across different historical contexts. Through the dialogues of Rob, Karl, and Eli, the series presents three forms of masculinity: Rob's language reflects patriarchal domination and hegemonic authority, Karl's language challenges traditional masculine norms through emotional expression and non-heteronormative identity, and Eli's language represents adaptive masculinity characterized by equality, emotional openness, and mutual respect. These linguistic representations illustrate the transformation of masculinity from patriarchal domination to adaptive identity.

The findings also show that the characters' language reflects different forms of crisis in gender relations, which contribute to the reconstruction of masculine identities. While Rob attempts to preserve traditional masculine authority, Karl negotiates identity through self-expression, and Eli responds to changing gender expectations through communication and emotional vulnerability. Overall, the study highlights that language serves as a key medium through which evolving masculinities are constructed, negotiated, and transformed in response to broader social and cultural change.

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