

Negotiating Traditional Masculinity in *A Man Called Otto* (2022)

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ABSTRACT

Traditional Masculinity has long been upheld as a dominant ideal, often associated with traits such as independence, emotional restraint, and social withdrawal. In the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), the character Otto serves as a compelling representation of this ideal. This study aims to explore how Otto embodies and gradually renegotiates traditional masculinity. Drawing on R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity (2005), the analysis focuses on Otto's transformation, particularly through his growing relationship with Marisol, a warm and empathetic neighbor whose presence disrupts his rigid worldview. Their interactions slowly chip away at Otto's emotional walls, introducing values like interdependence, togetherness, and emotional connection. This transformation unfolds not in grand gestures but in small, meaningful moments, simple conversations, acts of kindness, and shared vulnerability that lead Otto to reexamine his place in the world and his relationship with others. The findings of this study suggest that masculinity is not a fixed identity but one that can shift through personal experiences and social bonds. Otto's journey illustrates how a man rooted in hegemonic norms can evolve toward a more relational, emotionally expressive sense of self, one that embraces connection without compromising authenticity.

Keywords: Traditional Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Character Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Masculinity refers to the culturally ingrained expectations that men should be dominant, emotionally restrained, and physically strong. Although this concept appears across various societies and continues to influence male behavior, it has increasingly been challenged for its psychological and relational consequences. Studies have shown that adherence to rigid masculine norms often results in emotional suppression, loneliness, and poor mental health outcomes (Mahalik et al., 2003; Courtenay, 2000). The pressure to conform to traditional masculinity can lead men to mask their vulnerability, fostering a disconnection between their inner experiences and outward behaviors. Despite changing social dynamics, masculinity remains a powerful framework that continues to shape identity and social interactions in complex ways (Kilmartin, 2005). One notable context where this complexity becomes evident is in portrayals of aging men in Western society, particularly those who struggle to maintain traditional masculine ideals in the face of grief, retirement, and loneliness. Cultural expectations often discourage older men from expressing vulnerability or seeking emotional support. This dynamic is especially visible in contemporary narratives that place order male characters at the center of emotional transformation.

The emotional tension between societal ideals and personal experiences creates space for examining how masculinity can be renegotiated later in life. *A Man Called Otto* was released in the United States on December 29, 2022, and distributed by Sony Pictures. As a cinematic adaptation of Fredrik Backman's novel *A Man Called Ove* (2012), the film follows an earlier Swedish adaptation of the same name. Notably, *A Man Called Otto* (2022) received a series of awards and nominations, including the Christopher Award for Best Picture in 2023 and several nominations from prestigious bodies such as the GLAAD Media Awards, Golden Rooster Awards, Imagen Awards, and AARP Movies for Grownups Awards. The film's critical reception and emotional resonance, combined with Tom Hanks' widely praised performance, have made it a relevant and widely discussed piece in contemporary cinema. A compelling illustration of the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), directed by Marc Foster and starring Tom Hanks as the titular character. The film was released globally by Sony Pictures Releasing and is a remake of the 2015 Swedish film *A Man Called Ove* (2012), based on the novel by Fredrik Backman. The story follows Otto Anderson, a 60-year-old widower living in a suburban neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Having lost both his wife and his purpose in life, Otto lives in isolation, rigidly enforcing neighborhood rules and pushing others away. The film gained critical acclaim for its emotional depth and portrayal of mental health in older men, positioning it as an important cultural text in discussions of masculinity and aging.

The film tells the story of Otto Anderson, a man in his 60s grappling with overwhelming grief after the death of his wife, Sonya. Resigned to a lonely existence, Otto repeatedly attempts to take his own life, only to have each effort interrupted by the arrival of his new neighbors. A vibrant young family, including Marisol, whose warmth and persistence slowly pull him back into life. Through his evolving relationship with Marisol, Otto embarks on a profound emotional journey that challenges his rigid worldview and traditional masculine ideals. His story becomes one of reluctant transformation, as he begins to rediscover meaning through vulnerability, emotional connection, and community. Several academic discussions on masculinity in media have predominantly focused on younger male protagonists, often emphasizing action-driven plots and heroic identities. However, there remains a noticeable gap in the representation and analysis of older male characters who experience emotional and psychological development. While *A Man Called Otto* (2022) has been widely discussed in popular media for its heartwarming narrative and portrayal of second chances, scholarly analyses tend to overlook the film's exploration of masculinity. Particularly, how the main character navigates internal conflict between societal expectations and personal transformation.

A number of academic studies have selected *A Man Called Otto* (2022) as their primary subject of analysis. These studies generally rely on the film's script and visual storytelling, allowing for thematic exploration through dialogue and character development. Hawasi & Miftahatul (2023) examined Otto's dominant personality traits, concluding that he is strong-willed, decisive, and self-sufficient, characteristics closely tied to traditional masculine ideals. In another study, Tias, Sakkay, and Rosainah (2024) conducted a thematic analysis exploring how chronic illness and social relationships shape Otto's values and behavior. These studies collectively shed light on various psychological and moral dimensions of the film, but do not yet focus on masculinity as the central theme. The review of these studies reveals a clear research gap. While *A Man Called Otto* (2022) has been explored, there is an absence of detailed literary analysis centered on traditional masculinity as embodied by Otto. Specifically, no research to date has thoroughly examined how Otto's personal experience and cultural

identity as an aging American male intersect with hegemonic masculine norms. This underscores the need for a focused investigation into masculinity, not only as a side theme but as a core lens for understanding Otto's emotional journey and identity conflict.

The study applies R.W. Connell's (1995, 2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity, which defines a dominant form of masculinity that legitimizes male authority and suppresses alternative expressions of manhood. This framework is particularly relevant to Otto's character, who exemplifies the psychological burden of conforming to masculine ideals. The study also considers the concept of gender role conflict, in which individuals experience tension between internal desires and external expectations related to gender roles. Otto's transformation from isolation to connection offers a poignant example of how masculinity can be challenged, disrupted, and redefined. Although hegemonic masculinity is a widely used framework in literary and media studies, few have applied it directly to *A Man Called Otto* (2022). However, the framework has been employed in other studies exploring traditional masculinity in various narratives. For instance, Diana (2022) analyzed the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity in the *Peaky Blinders* series, illustrating how male characters like Thomas and Arthur Shelby perform traditional masculine behaviors such as violence, stoicism, and dominance rooted in family and cultural legacy. Using a more critical and postmodern lens, Dikmen Yakali (2024) analyzed *Barbie* (2023), focusing on Ken's character as a reflection and deconstruction of hypermasculine ideals. The study illustrates how Ken's transformation from submissive to hypermasculine, to self-aware reveals the performatives and unstable nature of gender roles under patriarchal systems. This study aims to analyze how traditional masculinity is portrayed in the character of Otto and to examine how his interactions with Marisol allow him to renegotiate his masculine identity. Through the lens of hegemonic masculinity of key scenes and dialogues in this film, the analysis reveals the psychological cost of rigid masculinity and the emotional possibilities that emerge through vulnerability and interpersonal connection. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on gender, identity, and masculinity in film while highlighting the importance of reimagining masculine norms in contemporary narratives.

METHOD

This study employs the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity as developed by R.W. Connell (1995) and later refined in collaboration with James W. Messerschmidt (2005). In its original formulation, hegemonic masculinity describes the dominant form of masculinity that upholds male superiority and legitimizes the subordination of women and alternative masculinities. It is characterized by traits such as independence, emotional restraint, and a tendency towards loneliness, shaping social expectations of how men should behave. These theoretical insights are used to analyze the character of Otto in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), directed by Marc Forster. The film is selected as the primary source of data because it presents a rich and nuanced portrayal of masculinity. Otto Anderson serves as a compelling case study for exploring how hegemonic masculinity operates in later life and how it may be challenged through emotional connection and personal transformation.

Data were collected through repeated close viewings of the film. Selected scenes and dialogues that reflect traditional masculine traits, emotional suppression, and evolving interpersonal dynamics were transcribed and categorized. The TEEL (Topic, Explanation, Elaborate, and Link back) method was employed to structure the analysis. By applying both

the original (1995) and revised (2005) concepts of hegemonic masculinity, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of how Otto navigates the pressures of traditional masculinity and how his identity evolves in response to human connection and emotional openness. The final section of the research presents a well-supported conclusion that answers the research questions and reflects on the broader implications of masculinity in the film.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines how the main character challenges the traditional masculinity within *A Man Called Otto* (2022). It highlights the transformation of Otto's adherence to conventional masculine norms such as independence and self-reliance, emotional restraint, and loneliness. The analysis uses R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, a gender theory that addresses how dominant masculine ideals are constructed and maintained in society. Hegemonic masculinity, which reinforces ideals of toughness and emotional suppression, stands in contrast to Otto's eventual openness to interdependence, emotional connection, and togetherness.

NAVIGATING INDEPENDENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Independence is a key feature of hegemonic masculinity as described by R.W. Connell (1995). In the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), this independence is evident in Otto's belief that a man should handle his problems without relying on anyone else. Otto portrays himself as someone who can do everything on his own, which aligns with Connell's idea that strength and self-sufficiency are central to traditional masculinity. This independence not only highlights his commitment to conventional masculine ideals but also reveals the emotional walls he builds to avoid showing vulnerability. Otto's insistence on managing everything by himself ultimately showcases the complexities and challenges of adhering to a strict masculine identity, illustrating how it can lead to both strength and deep feelings of loneliness. In one particular scene, Otto's independence is clearly illustrated through his interaction with the Hardware Clerk. When the clerk offers assistance, Otto quickly declines and questions the assumption that he can't do the task himself. His response shows a strong need to prove that he is capable and not weak. By rejecting help, Otto aims to maintain a strong masculine image, which is a core aspect of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2005) points out that hegemonic masculinity often involves the subordination of women and other forms of masculinity, indicating that Otto's behavior is rooted in a desire to conform to traditional masculine ideals. The following dialogue captures this moment in *A Man Called Otto* (2022).

- Hardware Clerk* : "Can I help you with that, Sir?"
- Otto* : "You think I don't know how to cut rope?"
- Hardware Clerk* : "No, it's just that we usually do that for you."
- Otto* : "I'm not an invalid!"
- Hardware Clerk* : "No, I-I didn't think you were."

Otto : “Are you worried I’m going to cut myself? Bleed all over your floor, then sue you for it?”

Hardware Clerk : “No.”

Otto : “Well, then –“

(Time code 00:02:01 - 00:02:23)

This exchange highlights that Otto’s assertion of independence aligns closely with R.W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity. When the Hardware Clerk offers assistance, Otto promptly declines and challenges the assumption that he cannot handle the task on his own. His response underscores a strong declaration of independence, as he feels compelled to demonstrate that he is neither weak nor incapable. Otto’s refusal of help illustrates his desire to uphold a robust masculine identity, which is central to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2005) highlights that hegemonic masculinity is marked by the subordination of women and alternative expressions of masculinity, suggesting that Otto’s actions stem from a need to adhere to traditional masculine ideals. Furthermore, by questioning the Clerk’s concerns about potential injury, Otto expresses frustration with those who doubt his abilities. This dialogue not only showcases Otto’s self-reliance in physical tasks but also emphasizes how self-reliance is intricately woven into a man’s identity and self-worth. As Connell (2005) argues, masculinity is constructed relationally, indicating that men often define themselves in contrast to perceived weakness or vulnerability. Otto’s behavior exemplifies this relational aspect, as he strives to assert his strength and competence in response to external skepticism.

Beneath this veneer of independence, Otto grapples with his emotions. He is deeply affected by the loss of a loved one, which fosters feelings of isolation and makes it challenging for him to engage with others. Despite his attempts to project an image of strength, he finds himself torn between the urge to remain self-reliant and the necessity of acknowledging his vulnerabilities. This internal struggle breeds feelings of loneliness and frustration. Impeding his ability to form emotional connections with those around him. As Michael Kimmel (2008) notes, the societal pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms can lead to emotional suppression, illustrating how these expectations often prevent men from expressing their feelings. Otto’s emotional turmoil reflects the intricate nature of the human experience, particularly in the face of loss and hope, as well as how societal standards of masculinity frequently stifle emotional expression. In *A Man Called Otto* (2022), Otto’s model of self-reliance is evident when he declines assistance from others, reinforcing his belief that he must tackle his problems alone. This focus on self-sufficiency transitions into a broader theme of independence, as Otto embodies the notion that he should be entirely self-reliant.

Interdependence is a key aspect of hegemonic masculinity as articulated by R.W. Connell (1995). However, Otto’s character in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022) illustrates a transition towards interdependence, where he learns the importance of relying on others and accepting assistance. At first, Otto holds the belief that a man should handle his issues without depending on anyone else, reflecting his commitment to traditional masculine ideals. His interaction with his neighbor reveals that genuine strength is found not in solitude but in building connections and allowing others to support him. This change underscores the emotional barriers he starts to break down, demonstrating how embracing interdependence can

foster personal development, deeper relationships, and a sense of belonging. The following dialogues provide evidence of Otto's shift towards interdependence in *A Man Called Otto* (2022).

Otto : *"I need to use your phone."*

Marisol : *"Can't you use your own?"*

Otto : *"It's disconnected. For now."*

Marisol : *"Why, for God's sake?"*

Otto : *"It doesn't matter. I just need to use your phone, okay?"*

Marisol : *"No. You won't explain why your phone is disconnected, you won't tell me why you need to use it. You think your life is so tough and that everyone is an idiot, so you have to do everything alone – well, guess what? You can't. No one can. And you should appreciate that someone wanted to help you through a rough day, even if they are an idiot. So...."*

Otto : *"The real estate bastards are trying to force Reuben and Anita out of their home. That's why I need to use your phone."*

Marisol : *"I'll get my cell phone."*

(Time code 01:37:21 – 01:39:26)

In this exchange, Otto's progression towards interdependence is vividly depicted, reflecting R.W. Connell's theory of masculinity. At the outset, Otto exemplifies the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, marked by a pronounced sense of independence and an unwillingness to share his emotional struggles with others. Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity as a prevailing form of masculinity that prioritizes traits such as independence and self-reliance, often causing men to shy away from vulnerability. However, when Marisol declines his request to use her phone and voices her concerns for Otto's well-being, he begins to understand that isolation and apathy towards others will only exacerbate his circumstances. Marisol emphasizes that no one can navigate hardships alone and that accepting assistance from others is a sign of strength, not a weakness. This viewpoint resonates with Addis and Mahalik (2003), who contend that conventional masculine norms can impede men's willingness to seek help, but recognizing the importance of interdependence can promote emotional development.

As Otto ultimately discloses the reason for his need to use the phone, he illustrates that he is beginning to open up and acknowledge that he cannot manage all his issues independently. As O'Neil (2008) points out, men who adopt a more adaptable view of masculinity are better positioned to cultivate supportive relationships and navigate emotional challenges. Otto's journey towards interdependence not only signifies personal development but also contests the traditional concepts of masculinity that frequently isolate men in their struggles. By starting to

accept help from Marisol, he takes a significant step towards redefining his perception of strength and emotional resilience.

FINDING TOGETHERNESS BEYOND LONELINESS

Loneliness is a crucial element of hegemonic masculinity as articulated by R.W. Connell (1995). In the portrayal of Otto's character in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), this loneliness is prominently displayed through his difficulty in forming connections with others while adhering to conventional masculine ideals. Otto frequently isolates himself, convinced that a man should not exhibit vulnerability or seek assistance from others. His self-imposed solitude exemplifies Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, where emotional expression is often stifled, resulting in a profound sense of alienation. Despite projecting an image of strength and independence, Otto's loneliness underscores the emotional barriers he erects to avoid appearing weak. This internal struggle highlights the complexities of adhering to a rigid form of masculinity, demonstrating how the pursuit of traditional masculine ideals can create both a façade of strength and a deep-seated sense of loneliness as seen in the dialogue below.

Marisol : "Of course not! I'm trying to get some heat in this house!"

Otto : "No, no – stay out of my kitchen!"

Marisol : "Your counters are so low! These are perfect. Where did you get them?"

Otto : "I made them. For Sonya. My wife."

Marisol : "Okay, is she here or ...?"

Jimmy : "Sonya passed away. She was a great cook, I used to eat here all the time."

Marisol : "I'm sorry."

Otto : "Can we please get out of my kitchen now? I've got things to do."

(Otto shuts the door firmly behind them. He stands for a moment in silence, then turns, looking around his empty house, remembering...)

(Time code 00:53:21 – 00:54:10)

In this dialogue, Otto's perspective on loneliness can be examined through R.W. Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity. Otto exhibits a difficulty in emotionally connecting with Marisol and Jimmy, reflecting the traditional norms of masculinity that prioritize stoicism, self-sufficiency, and the avoidance of vulnerability. His refusal to let them into his kitchen and his stiff nod in response to their acknowledgement of his wife's death exemplify how he is confined by a masculine ideal that discourages emotional expression and seeking support. The moment he stands alone in his empty house after their departure underscores the profound loneliness and sense of loss that continue to plague him; he yearns for the connection and warmth he has lost. Otto's actions illustrate the tension between masculine ideals and the fundamental human need for relationships, ultimately intensifying the loneliness he endures. Psychologist John O'Neil (2008) notes that traditional male roles

frequently discourage men from seeking assistance or forming close bonds, resulting in emotional isolation. For example, Otto's interactions with his neighbors highlight his struggle with loneliness, as he initially distances himself from them.

Togetherness is a fundamental element of R.W. Connell's masculinity theory, which challenges conventional ideas of hegemonic masculinity. In the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), the character Otto experiences a significant transformation from being self-sufficient and emotionally distant to embracing the value of connection. At the outset, Otto holds the belief that a man should tackle his challenges alone, without depending on others. However, as the narrative progresses and he engages with Marisol and his neighbors, he begins to understand that genuine strength is found in fostering relationships and offering mutual support. The film's dialogue effectively illustrates Otto's gradual willingness to open up and accept assistance from those around him, leading to his personal development and a stronger sense of belonging. This evaluation emphasizes that by welcoming togetherness, Otto not only enhances his relationships but also uncovers new meaning in his life. Otto's showcasing how shared experiences and human connections gradually penetrate his isolation and encourage him to reconnect with life.

Otto : "Now, you listen to me. You've given birth to two children, three soon enough. You came here from another country, probably to get away from war and persecution and God knows what other kinds of hell. You learned a new language, you got yourself an education and a nitwit husband, and now you're holding that family together, so you will have no problem learning how to drive. I mean, we're not talking about brain surgery here. The world is full of complete idiots who've managed to figure it out. You are not a complete idiot. Now, drive."

Marisol : "Okay-okay... I'm there."

Otto : "Now turn sharply to the right and back up toward the curb... Good ... Once you've cleared that car's bumper, turn all the way left... Now straighten out....And stop."

(Time code 01:06:32 – 01:08:37)

In this dialogue, Otto's engagement with Marisol serves as a compelling illustration of how masculinity can express itself in both supportive and aggressive manners, highlighting the complexities of togetherness as outlined in R.W. Connell's theory. Otto feels compelled to assert his dominance to protect Marisol's concentration. As the conversation unfolds, Otto transitions into a more supportive and encouraging figure. This moment exemplifies a crucial aspect of togetherness, as Otto recognizes Marisol's potential and motivates her to overcome her self-doubt. Otto's approach reflects a combination of traditional masculine assertiveness and protection alongside a more contemporary understanding of support and encouragement. By assisting Marisol in navigating the challenges of learning to drive, he cultivates a sense of togetherness that goes beyond mere instruction. Connell (2005) notes that men can also participate in caring and supportive practices, and Otto exemplifies this by offering guidance and reassurance. His actions demonstrate that masculinity can encompass both strength and vulnerability, fostering a more nuanced understanding of male relationships.

EMBRACING EMOTIONAL BONDS

Emotional restraint is a key aspect of hegemonic masculinity as outlined by R.W. Connell (1995). In the portrayal of Otto in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), this emotional restraint manifests in his conviction that men should not openly show their feelings or vulnerabilities. Otto presents himself as someone who tightly controls his emotions, often concealing his true sentiments behind a façade of toughness and indifference. Aligning with Connell's notion that emotional stoicism is a fundamental trait of a gentleman, he refrains from discussing his grief and pain. This repression of emotions not only underscores his adherence to traditional masculine ideals but also highlights the internal conflict he experiences as he grapples with loss and loneliness. Otto's determination to suppress his feelings ultimately illustrates the complexities and difficulties associated with adhering to a rigid masculine identity, revealing how it can result in both displays of strength and profound isolation. Instances of Otto's emotional restraint in *A Man Called Otto* (2022) can be observed in the following dialogues.

Marisol : "Anyway, we wanted to introduce ourselves properly now that we're going to be neighbors."

Otto : "Okay. Bye."

Marisol : "My name is Marisol."

Tommy : "I'm Tommy."

Marisol : "Are you always this unfriendly?"

Otto : "I'm not unfriendly!"

Marisol : "No, I'd say you are a little unfriendly."

Otto : "I am not!"

Marisol : "No, you are right. Your every word is like a warm cuddle."

(Time code 00:18:15 – 00:19:47)

In the exchange between Tommy, Marisol, and Otto, Otto's emotional restraint is prominently displayed, aligning with R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, which highlights emotional stoicism, self-sufficiency, and the avoidance of vulnerability as prevailing ideals imposed on men (Connell, 2005). When Tommy and Marisol attempt to initiate a friendly introduction, Otto's defensive reaction reflects his hesitance to engage in social interaction, reinforcing how traditional masculine norms discourage emotional expressiveness and encourage detachment (Stearns, 1994). When Marisol playfully labels him as unfriendly, Otto promptly and firmly denies it, subtly revealing his sensitivity to external perceptions, particularly when they challenge his self-control or masculine identity. Although Marisol tries to ease the tension with sarcasm, Otto is unable to reciprocate, highlighting the extent of his emotional suppression. Connell posits that hegemonic masculinity is defined by emotional

inexpressiveness and the regulation of feelings (Connell, 2005), a concept that is vividly reflected in Otto's response.

Throughout *A Man Called Otto* (2022), Otto's journey illustrates a profound shift from emotional restraint to meaningful connection, challenging conventional norms of masculinity. However, as Marisol persistently breaks through his defenses with humor and care, Otto gradually lowers his guard. The pivotal moment occurs when, after years of isolation, he confides his pain about losing his wife, allowing vulnerability for the first time. This breakthrough echoes Connell's (2005) evolving view that masculinity can encompass emotional honesty, marking Otto's transformation. By embracing new friendships and supporting neighbors, he discovers that connection, not control.

Emotional connection is an essential element of the human experience that often stands in stark contrast to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity as articulated by R.W. Connell (1995). Within the framework of Otto's character in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), this emotional connection becomes increasingly important as he grapples with his grief and feelings of isolation. At first, Otto exemplifies the traditional masculine ideal of self-sufficiency, holding the belief that showing vulnerability equates to weakness. However, through his interactions with Marisol, he starts to appreciate the significance of emotional ties and the support they offer. Otto's gradual willingness to forge connections signifies a departure from the rigid standards of masculinity, demonstrating that genuine strength can emerge from vulnerability and shared experiences. His moment of joy in simple pleasures and his acknowledgement of the value of community reveal the transformative impact of emotional connection. This evolution not only enhances Otto's life but also challenges the perception that masculinity must be devoid of emotion. Evidence of Otto's developing emotional connections in *A Man Called Otto* (2022) is illustrated in the dialogues below, highlighting how these relationships facilitate his healing and help him rediscover a sense of purpose.

Otto : "This is semla- it's a Swedish éclair. Go ahead, try it."

Marisol : "My God! Amazing! How did you find this place?"

Otto : "Sonya found it. We used to come here every Saturday at one."

Marisol : "Then what?"

Otto : "Go home at two."

Marisol : "I would have liked her."

Otto : "She was a force of nature. Convinced the school to start a program for kids who needed extra help. A lot of them had problems at home, social anxieties. By the time she was done, they were reciting Shakespeare. I ran into one of her kids this morning – You want more cream or –?"

Marisol : "I'm good, thanks."

Otto : *“There used to be a forest up on that hill. Birches, mostly. That’s why they call it Birchwood. But then they started building condos, and they cut down all of the birches. They didn’t even realize what they’d done until Reuben and I told them.”*

Marisol : *“This was before the coup?”*

Otto : *“We were friends back then. But after that, all we could see were our differences. Years later, I heard Reuben’s son Chris took a job in Japan. I don’t think he’s visited since. He and Reuben never did get along. Automatic. I don’t know what happened to Reuben, but that’s when I knew I’d lost him. A man has to stand up for what he believes”*

Marisol : *“Did you and Sonya ever think about having children?”*

Otto : *“It’s two o’clock.”*

(Time code 01:08:57 – 01:13:54)

In this dialogue, Otto’s capacity for emotional connection becomes evident as he reminisces about his wife Sonya with Marisol. At first, Otto embodies the rigid traits of hegemonic masculinity, where he tends to suppress his emotions and prioritize independence. As defined by Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity represents the prevailing configuration of gender practices that legitimizes men’s dominant status in society while subordinating women, reflecting Otto’s initial conformity to these norms. However, as he recounts personal experiences, such as their shared visits to cafes and how Sonya infused color into his previously monochrome existence, he begins to open up. This marks a transition from traditional masculine ideals that stress resilience and emotional restraint to a deeper appreciation for the significance of emotional connection. By sharing anecdotes about Sonya and her influence on his life, Otto not only reveals his vulnerability but also strengthens his bond with Marisol.

As Kimmel (2008) points out, one of the most crucial steps men can take to transform the culture of masculinity is to cultivate relationships with both men and women, a realization that begins to dawn on Otto. He starts to recognize that expressing experiences and emotions can enrich his life and alleviate the loneliness he has been enduring. Through this interaction, Otto exemplifies how emotional connections can serve as a source of strength, aligning with Connell’s theory that masculinity can evolve through embracing vulnerability and valuing interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that masculinity is not a static identity but rather a collection of practices that can change over time, reinforcing the notion that Otto’s journey signifies a shift from isolated masculinity to a more comprehensive understanding of the strength found in connecting with others.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this analysis reveal that *A Man Called Otto* (2022) serves as a poignant exploration of the complexities and transformations associated with hegemonic masculinity through the character of Otto. Initially, he embodies the traits of traditional masculinity, including independence, emotional restraint, and a profound sense of loneliness. However, as

the narrative progresses, Otto gradually learns to embrace vulnerability and the importance of connection, illustrating that true strength is found not in isolation but in the relationships he builds with others. His journey challenges the rigid norms that narrowly define masculinity, advocating for a more inclusive and emotionally rich understanding of what it means to be a man. R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity provides a critical lens through which to analyze Otto's evolution. This theory highlights how dominant ideals of manhood are constructed and maintained within societal frameworks, emphasizing traits such as emotional stoicism and self-reliance. Otto's initial adherence to these ideals leads to emotional suppression and isolation, yet his gradual shift towards interdependence and emotional openness aligns with Connell's call for a more flexible masculinity. This transformation underscores the potential for men to redefine strength through vulnerability and connection, ultimately fostering healthier emotional lives and more fulfilling relationships.

Otto's journey from self-imposed isolation to meaningful connections, the movie illustrates how challenging traditional masculine norms can lead to personal growth and a deeper understanding of human relationships. Otto's story exemplifies the idea that embracing emotional bonds and interdependence not only enriches individual lives but also contributes to a broader redefinition of masculinity that values empathy, vulnerability, and emotional expression. In doing so, *A Man Called Otto* (2022) highlights the importance of moving beyond conventional masculine ideals to create a more compassionate and connected society. The insights from this analysis provide valuable guidance for future researchers examining masculinity in the movie. Based on the findings, it is recommended that scholars utilize R.W. Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity to explore the complexities of male identity, focusing on the experiences of male characters as a central aspect of their analysis. Moreover, future researchers analyzing masculinity in *A Man Called Otto* (2022) are encouraged to expand their perspectives by considering the viewpoints of other characters. This analysis serves as an important reference for future research in this field.

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