

---

**Film Review: *Don't Worry Darling* by Olivia Wilde**

---

*Christina Mary Ramirez*

*Department of Sociology*

*California State University, Los Angeles*

## INTRODUCTION

The film *Don't Worry Darling* (2022) depicts unhappiness with married life, toxic masculinity, and the fight for gender equality. Seemingly set in the 1950s, several couples live in a pretentious, thriving community that shelters successful couples under an experiment. Everyone in the town of Victory lives in a simulation initiated by a character named Frank. In the actual present day, throughout the film, Frank is portrayed as a cult leader. In this experimentation he is leading, Frank has motivated and swayed men to give him their money to exist in a virtual-reality stimulation similar to life during the 1950s. This voluntarily paid experiment transfers them mentally into another dimension, leaving their failed lives behind for the make-believe lifestyle they choose. The new life entails a successful career for the husband, a luxurious lifestyle, and joy, while the wives stay home cleaning, cooking, exercising, and living up to what the perfect woman entails. The film represents a vision of femininity that relies on essentialist assumptions about what it means to be a woman; it also underscores the risks of ignoring those who don't perfectly align with this image.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURES EXAMINED

The movie describes our society's obsession with a perfect world. It demonstrates the pressure on individuals to live a 'perfect life,' to the point of violence against women. In its most straightforward explanation, *Don't Worry Darling* challenges its spectators to test our typical and traditional social structure by the story narrative of characters falsifying and creating a new world shaped to their liking by disassembling the social structures forced onto them.

In the present day, it is revealed that Alice and Jack, the main characters, are both working-class individuals. Alice maintains her occupation while her partner Jack has growing feelings of hopelessness in his search for a job. For Jack to become

a man in his own eyes, he chooses an independent route that affects Alice's entire life. While he may have had the option of ending their relationship and pursuing his new life goal, he chooses to bring her along without her knowing. Jack had an unrealistic view of what society he wants to be a part of, which is one where he has more of an impact as a man than any of the women. Although Jack ultimately wanted a better life for himself and Alice, he took a path that affects others without their consent.

On the other hand, Alice opposes this lifestyle once she learns she's been living in a technologically controlled community called Victory. The experiment manipulates the participants into believing that having the men assume the role of breadwinner allows them to be in charge of everything while their wives will be left at ease not by having to worry about working or any personal obligations or own ambitions other than to be a regular housewife. Despite the life of luxury and comfort Victory provides, Alice wants more in life. She wanted no part of this; she prefers a society which encourages gender equality. The film illustrates a battle for change. By refusing to be a part of this community, Alice is violently putting her life at risk, possibly even death. Even in her inferior position within the simulation, she keeps fighting to end the experiment and make the world better through gender equality.

## CONCLUSION

This film meets the audience with curiosity, confusion, mystery, thrilling, and even controversial observations. Director Olivia Wilde brings the viewers on an appealing adventure full of deceit. Wilde's ability to represent the inequalities and predetermined gender roles put into society is magnificent. The story speaks on women's rights issues, especially the shared role in strengthening equality as opposed to patriarchy. In the development of the movie *Don't Worry Darling*, Wilde focuses on preventing a biased portrayal, trying to steer clear of defining men as characteristically bad and women as characteristically good. Additionally, she investigates to which level individuals acknowledge their contribution in a system that belittles them. However, the story fails to account for the experiences of lower-class women, women of color, and people living non-

heteronormative lifestyles. There's an economic privilege that the film doesn't acknowledge. It assumes that all members of the two depicted genders have shared experiences and that the struggles or successes middle-class white women go through are the same for all other women. Nevertheless, this film is for anyone who wants to experience a challenging and different view of society and gender roles.

## REFERENCES

Wilde, Olivia. 2022. *Don't Worry Darling*. Los Angeles, CA: New Line Cinema; Vertigo Entertainment.

**Christina Mary Ramirez** (She/Her) is a sociology M.A. student at Cal State University, Los Angeles and will be graduating in the spring of 2024. Her interest is in intergenerational solidarity, children's psychological well-being, and family dynamics. She believes exploring these topics is vital for society because the family may be the first to serve as a foundational source of love, companionship, and understanding. She is in the process of completing her thesis, studying the effects parent-child conflict has on children's depression, especially while enduring a traumatic experience like divorce. Christina is grateful for the opportunity she has been given to explore her writing in sociological areas and to be able to work alongside brilliant, goal-orientated students and faculty.