

Feminist Multimodal Analysis of the Dancing Scenes of *Barbie* 2023: Recontextualization as the 1960s and Female Self-Directed Individualism

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ABSTRACT

This paper conducts a feminist multimodal analysis of the dancing scene of Barbie, a movie released in 2023, within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, to explore effective feminist discourses recontextualized as in the 1960s with Barbie introduced to the world alongside second-wave feminism (SWF) as a critical context contributing to feminist discourses. This paper examines the audio aspect, the song Dance the Night, and the visuals i.e., relations between characters and viewers, and interaction among characters in dancing. With van Leeuwen's Visual Representation of Social Actors, this paper leverages grounded theory to initiate inductive content coding for the multimodality. The findings are multifold. Visually, viewing Barbies with more close shots from the frontal angles at the eye level from signifies equality, focus and empowerment in self-directedness. Interaction among characters incorporates inclusiveness by Barbies' diversity in races, body figures and conditions, etc., and their internal exclusive dancing with their own autonomous agency exercised. Kens mostly function as facilitators of Barbies' centralization and uniqueness symbolizing SWF's universal womanhood. The 1960s witnessed females' anxiety against traditional norms. In the audio aspect, therefore, the lyrical discourse reinforces female independence by emphasizing "dancing the anxiety away" and "taking risks to be her own self".

1. Introduction

This paper would like to implement an audio-visual multimodal content analysis of a movie released in 2023, Barbie, from the feminist perspective. Specifically, the feminist perspective is centered upon second-wave feminism (SWF hereafter) in the 1960s for two reasons. Firstly, Barbies emerged in the world in the 1960s. Secondly, during the same decade, SWF, which was a socio-political movement with emphasis put on greater intellectual, financial independence and equal opportunities for and among women, emerged. These are the reasons for the recontextualization of the social and cultural setting of the movie to get closer to the heart of the birth of SWF and Barbie centered on feminist discourses. Across multifarious scenes of the movie, this paper is particularly interested in the dancing scene of Barbie-land

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from which this paper analyzes the dancing movements and interaction of different sexes, i.e., Barbies (female dancers) and Kens (male dancers), as the visual aspect, and the background music, Dance the Night, as the audio aspect. The two aspects are analyzed within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, alongside postmodernism and poststructuralism, which this paper endorses in its analysis while taking SWF as the cultural and social background with feminist ideologies at the macro-level of CDA, and visual and audio texts from the dancing scene at the micro-level. In the analysis, the visual aspect will be analyzed by use of the support from Van Leeuwen (2008)'s categorical concepts from his Representation and Viewer Network and Visual Social Actor Network, and the audio aspect will be explored through thematic analysis of the song. These are in attempts to satisfy the objective (1) to manifest feminist discursive patterns through dancers-viewers relations and dancers (Barbies' and Kens') internal interaction in the dancing scene, and (2) to unveil how the lyrical discourse of the song contributes to alleviation of Barbies' (women's) worries and anxiety against traditional patriarchy hegemony in their self-directed dancing in the feminist fashion. The objectives are expected to have the feminist discourses reflect feminist contexts from SWF across the 1960s that incorporated liberal feminism that emphasized equalities with men and radical feminism that attempted to exclude men.

2. Literature Review: From Barbie with Second-wave Feminism to Ambivalent Female Representations with Internal Struggles

2.1. Contextualization: Brief History of Barbie in the 1960s

This part serves to deliver background information of Barbie in the 1960s as part of the contextualization work for this research. Barbie as a plastic doll assimilating to the figure of a woman was introduced to the world in 1959 by Mattel, Inc., which was a southern California toy company (Lord, 1995). Following the passionate demand from consumers, the company implemented the introduction of the male version of Barbie, Ken (Gerber, 2009: 142), and the subsequent years of the decade witnessed the introduction of Barbies' friend and siblings (BillyBoy, 1987: 53), before the colored Barbie doll was born in 1968 (Lord, 1995). Over the past few decades, Barbie has become the unsurpassed dominator in the toy industry. With an indispensable link between Barbie and females, Barbie can be regarded as an essential discursive site in the wake of second-wave feminism (SWF) and amidst the ideological clashes between SWF and patriarchy endorsing traditional femininity. The brief history of how Barbie was activated in the world provides an insightful lens into how such "activation" serves as a behavioral text in relation to and reflecting second-wave feminism (SWF) as the broader social and cultural contextual background of the U.S.A.

2.2. Contextualization: Second-wave Feminism of the 1960s and Barbie with Feminism

The 1960s, which witnessed the rise of Barbie, also witnessed several phases of SWF coming into being, exhibiting the birth of varying feminist ideologies, the translation of personal demands into political realms, and radicalization of feminist activation, which was conspicuous in the end of the decade. SWF was seemingly a single social movement, but not an exclusive one, since it merged with a wide range of other social movements including but not limited to the Civil Rights Movement, the establishment of President Commission on the Status of Women and the passage of Title VII, which mutually influenced one another such that SWF came into being (Davis, 1991: 55). The initial phase of the early 1960s SWF led by liberal feminists, with Betty Friedan being one of the salient examples, realized as the consciousness-raising stage, experienced several colossal happenings that contributed to the trigger of SWF,

with a liberal feminist, Friedan's publication of The Feminine Mystique (1963) which significantly raised the awareness of women's male-assigned and identified roles (Goodman, 2019; Rosen, 2008: 8). Contextually, liberal feminists strove for equal opportunities as men did and had in existing social, economic, political systems and education against sexual biases (Gardiner, 2005; Pease, 2000). Admittedly, "shifting gender boundaries, and more women participating in social activities and work" led to economic individualism with "many of the jobs created in fields such as health care, education, child care, clerical work [.....] [that] constituted extension¹s of the traditional role of housewife" (Davis, 1991: 55; Evans, 1994: 392). This could be reflected by the wide-ranging occupations that Barbie has taken up through the transformations from being just a household name and stewardess and being teenage models as fashion and style pointers (Rogers, 1999) in the 1960s, to, being astronauts in 1986, doctors in 1988 and pilots in 1989 (Mandeville, 1996). On the other hand, alongside the occupational transformations from the 1960s onwards, 1963 brought Barbie her own Dream House where she lives alone as "a happily unmarried woman" (Lord, 1995: 51), which was suggested being the "undercover radical and subversive heroine, defying the feminine mystique to represent freedom, fun and the single years" (Rogers, 1999: 39). Admittedly, one ought not to conceive of any instant occupational transformations of Barbie or women in the real world just because of the rise of SWF. A discourse takes time to get shaped. Even with the emergence of professional career options in the 1980s, social movements, particularly SWF in the 1960s, undeniably laid a solid foundation for the success of Barbie and women in general in later years. The success of Barbie and improvement of women's lives can admittedly be attributed to not only the critical consciousness-raising stage of SWF, but also the action-based stage of SWF initiated by liberal feminists' "organized beginning" (Bibby, 2017: 139) of the first feminist organization, National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 (Ferree & Hess, 1994). Not only the establishment of NOW, but also the organization of radical feminism in 1967 embodied the strengthening influence of SWF which strove to define masculinity as essentially overarching oppressive (Gardiner, 2002: 3; Redstockings, 1969) and eliminate male supremacy (Giardina, 2010; Martins, 2019), through various confirmative social actions including but not limited to protests, lawsuits, sit-ins, conferences, lobbying and electoral campaigns (Goodman, 2019) through wide-ranging channels to disseminate feminist ideas against patriarchy, such as "books, films, articles, and television shows" (Davis, 1991: 52). These would be the relatively conspicuous illustrations of how intensifying SWF throughout the 1960s shaped the successful transformations of Barbie and women in feminist interpretations. Equally important is it to note that the feminist progression in general throughout the decade does not totally wipe out femininity of women and does not lead us to ignore women's mental struggles and eventually ambivalent women presentations.

2.3. Women's Mental Struggles and Ambivalent Women Representations of Barbie

Be that as it may, the rise of SWF was by no means one-sided with being purely feminist in various life aspects of women and Barbie since the resistance to SWF by the general society and patriarchal parties was well witnessed. As a result, not only were there social struggles between feminism and patriarchy, women's personal mental struggles in the face of patriarchy

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¹ "She does, after all, hold jobs, drive cars, garden, take vacations, own homes, and perform many other chores adults need to accomplish. And her jobs aren't only traditional female ones such as being a nurse or a stewardess. Now a young girl may go 'looking for dinosaurs with Paleontologist Barbie'. In her perky khaki shorts with matching hat and her coordinating pink scarf and pink canteen. Barbie isn't exactly as rough-and-tumble Indiana Jones, but at least her work is less stereotypical than teaching first-graders. The same Career Collection also includes Pilot Barbie and Dentist Barbie. If these careers seem too tame, NASCAR Barbie (introduced in 1998) has a career as a racecar driver. Barbie allows young girls to explore a number of careers and, more important, suggests that such careers are perfectly acceptable for girls and women" (Inness 1999: 178-179).

of noting throughout the SWF of the 1960s, especially worthy consciousness/awareness-raising stage. As it suggests itself, was mostly "awakening" the public's (not merely females') attention to existing gender inequality and traditional assignments of ossified roles to the two genders, when social resistance to SWF was on the rise. Women's mental struggles were mostly constituted by two sides, with the positive side that a mounting number of women had found the conventional domestic role less fulfilling and more tedious, and the increasing disaffection with domesticity resulted from the tedium (Rhode, 1989: 53). On the other hand, the negative side, which displays the social resistance to SWF at that time, includes occupational segregation in low-paid jobs and gender pay gaps (Rhode, 1989), the court ignorance of the passage of the Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Ferree & Hess, 1994), as well as failure to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in support of women's rights (Davis, 1991; Heale & Heale, 2001). Therefore, women experienced ideological dilemmas between "pushed out of the home" for gainful employment and "pulled back into it" — home where women were supposedly to stay — due to lack of social support and to social resistance (Evans, 1994: 393). A mild solution to this dilemma seems to lie in the efforts of NOW (liberal feminism) to encourage women to take up both roles being housewives and professional people (Evans, 1994; Moran, 2004), which, ironically, made women find it harder to totally get "out of home" due to the existing femininity of being housewives, which tremendously exerted much more burden on women. Therefore, the occupational transformation of Barbie with a wide range of career options available for her/them plausibly seems to a success in the role of females' transformation, albeit in a slow process due to the fear for and the pressure from challenging the existing patriarchal institutions.

The slow process of the transformation involved women's mental struggles which Barbie probably "experienced". As emphasized, Barbie was far from an entirely feminist cultural representation, but has carried dual but dilemmatic roles in somewhere between traditional femininity and feminism against traditionalism in her own representations (Tulinski, 2017) at least in her 1960s. Same as women in the real world, Barbie was regarded as or accused of maintaining traditional femininity from the perspective of her appearance and beauty that Barbie reinforced stereotypical ideals of feminine beauty (Douglas, 1995) "in the lust of Marilyn Monroe with her long blonde hair, fashionable clothing style, high heels, red lipstick and well-proportioned physique" (Uncu, 2019), and the perspective of earlier and sooner (harmful) sexualization of girls² (Bess, 1969; Shupp, 1963). The male gaze at Barbie as the objectivized symbol usually and mainly falls in the portrayal of her feminine, thin figure with make-up, pink outfits and glittery heels, which feature hyper-femininity that refers to the exaggeration of traditionally feminine traits (Goodhand, 2023). As a result, women and Barbie possessing these traits tend(ed) to be less likely to be taken seriously (Hudson, 1984). On the contrary, it cannot be denied that Barbie was "a force to be reckoned with [.....] [and was] freer from constraints than our mothers" (Douglas, 1995: 25), since Barbie herself did possess a threatening potential in patriarchal institutions and a transformative potential to allow for negotiation of the feminine ideal to surpass the boundaries between what was an acceptable feminine discourse and what was not, through the feminist resistance (Tulinski, 2017). For instance, while Ken was invented as Barbie's boyfriend in the 1961 (before the rise of SWF) as a sign of readiness for marriage as expected as the ritual of traditional femininity, Barbie has never married him, as "not a kept woman" (Cordes, 1992) and as a single independent woman. Another instance comes down to failure to fulfil the feminine responsibilities of motherhood, with Barbie being an older sister or a baby sitter, but not being a mother of a baby on her own

² "Girls today are spurning the traditional pudgy infant dolls for the very popular new doll which boasts a ripe bosom, long, shapely legs and, of course—for this is the core of the doll's symbolic value—her own boyfriend doll" (Shupp, 1963: 12)

with Ken (Milton, 1963). These illustrations suffice to explain how Barbie failed to adhere to the accurate "rules" of femininity or the feminine ideal (Tulinski, 2017).

Douglas (1995) suggests that Barbie epitomized the above-mentioned dual image which girls received in the 1950s and 1960s as someone between femininity and feminism. Such an intermediate status of Barbie is not how she was deliberately designed to be, but is a socially developmental and existential reflection of women's and Barbie's mental struggles in general. The breakthrough of Barbie, be it in career, marriage, and motherhood, made her face streams of social backlash against her feminist empowerment:

"Barbie was 'not the kind of woman that nice little girls grew to be.' [......] My sister and I didn't know the word for it, but we could tell from the reaction of our parents that Barbie was a slut. Nobody ever told me I 'had to look like Barbie,' as feminists often claim. Instead, the message came through loud and clear that I was never to show up anywhere looking like Barbie" (Scott, 2002: 155), and "[She] may serve to integrate children prematurely into the adolescent subculture and minimize preparation for later adult performances [......]" (Ball, 1967: 457).

Social backlash was possibly one of the major factors that contributed to women's fear for adopting feminist approaches and challenging patriarchy. Douglas (1995) presented that by the 1960s, the contradictions of what women were like grew wider and more obvious, with images and messages regarding women's representations imbued with shifting and inconsistent gender codes, "riven with generational antagonisms, schizophrenic about female sexuality, relentless in their assaults on the imperfections of the female face and body". Moreover, Douglas (1995) suggests that society was determined to straddle the widening gap between on the one hand traditional womanhood (responsible women as mothers taking care of every domestic issue obediently) and on the other hand modern rebellious girls as a source of trouble, regarded as "young, hip, modern chick", or what Tulinski (2017) calls as "profane". The society's patriarchal resistance against emancipation of women (Fraterrigo, 2009) resulted from how men viewed women in the 1960s with "the intrusion and growing dominance of women in the workplace and other spaces in the city", and men pinned masculine representations in popular American culture and media to dominate femininity (Heale & Heale, 2001: 153; Patton, 2020: 97; Wylie, 1958: 52). In addition to Barbie, one example was a popular TV series, Bewitched (starting from 1964) where a female character, a witch, "not [as] a murderous old hag but [as] an attractive young housewife", was possessing supernatural powers, and the fusion between being a housewife and being a person having powers symbolizes the social and cultural acknowledgement of "the impending release of female and political energy" (Douglas, 1995). However, the image of women with power was uglified by containing "it technologically, through images of levitation, twitching noses, and poofs of fake smoke." This illustrates the social double standard regarding women that society was not willing to admit the truth of women with power (Douglas, 1995). This instance indicates that women's power, be it brought by feminism or not, was simultaneously glorified and diluted by elements of traditional femininity (Eldridge, 2017). Even in early feminist organizations of the 1960s, women were relegated by male members to handle inferior work such as coffee-making and secretarial work, and found sexual double standards that male activist slept around with female activists (Shulman, 1980). In short, it is plausible to suggest that representations of Barbie were corresponding to the ambivalent representations of women in the 1960s where women experienced anxiety in their lives in the wake of SWF and the feminist consciousness.

The above-mentioned patriarchal oppression and resistance to women's emancipation contributed to women's mental struggles and anxiety about their feminist way of life, which in return stimulated the rise of radical feminism in the late 1960s as the further action-based stage

of SWF with New Left (Evans, 1994) to take the lead to develop a revolutionary womanhood and the shared universal fate among all women to combat on the inherent oppression as males' inner nature (Heale & Heale, 2001; Goose, 2005; Rhode, 1989). Part of the feminist agenda of radical feminism lied in inclusion of the Black's voices, unlike that of liberal feminism in the early 1960s mainly with "overwhelmingly young, white, college educated, heterosexual, and drawn from the post-Second World War middle class" (Epstein, 2001). In early liberal SWF, there were few women of colour in the leadership along with the perception that SWF did not address the Black's specific needs (de Lange, 2007; Mills, 1998). In the times of New Left, state women's commissions established in 1967 included black women's voices and participation in the social network (Baxandall & Gordon, 2002) with African American and Chicana feminisms (Goose, 2005: 165). Besides, there was the establishment of a Black Women's Liberation Committee from young females' SNCC to confront white supremacy and sexism in 1968 (Goose 2005). Possibly reflecting the wider and broader social context including the Black, almost at the same time, 1968 witnessed the inclusion of Barbie's first black friend, Christie (Forrest, 1989).

2.4. Studies on Dance of the 1960s and the Dance of Barbie/Barbie 2023

Such ambivalent and dilemmatic constraints on women hegemony could be witnessed in other life aspects during the 1960s as well, reflecting some females' anxiety amidst the struggles between on the one hand individualism and independence, and on the other hand the pulling power of traditional norms regulating female dependence on men, and such anxiety is what this paper would like to manifest in the findings through the feminist discourse. Go-go dance and twist are compelling examples in the 1960s dance. Before the Second World War, partner dancing was carried out as a norm involving close physical contact initiated by men rather than women, as a token of traditional courtship ritual, whereas the 1960s had witnessed the emergence of go-go dance in a solo form, that allowed women to dance individually, free of men's lead, and that witnessed individualism, growing emancipation and self-direction among women (Gregory, 2018). Highly similar to go-go dance is The Twist that permitted "little group interaction or individual variation" to bar interaction between male leaders and female followers (Denisoff & Romanowski, 1991: 11; Ehrenreich, 2007: 122). As Gregory (2018) puts it, The Twist was one of the first "modern" dances to keep the traditional formal steps and partner holds at bay. The above introduction of the two conspicuous dances, which were different from their dance predecessors, characterized a strong connection between female individualism and independence on one hand, and dancing on the other in the 1960s. Contextually, if research is conducted on Barbie and dancing, Barbie which rose in the 1960s is plausibly linked to the 1960s dances that encouraged females to be free from traditional constraints. Despite the introduction of the dances in favor of women's own styles, however, women in the 1960s experienced anxiety about their future. Despite the fact that individualism and freedom were embraced by women, women "lack[ed] the stability and security of knowing where they were going" when being disassociated from the long-lasting "all-important" tradition alongside the emphasis on marriage and families (Gregory, 2018). Such a concern and anxiety of and among women will possibly be discussed and reflected in the analysis of Barbie 2023's dancing scene of the current paper.

There has not been much research on Barbie's dancing because of two reasons. For one, Barbie used to be treated as plastic static and still toys (objects) in discussion of its relation to society. Even the discussion of Barbie in dancing clothes projects Barbie as still and static objects; for instance, Ballerina Barbie, some of which are "modelled off of real dancers: American Ballet Theatre's Misty Copeland (2016) and San Francisco Ballet's Yuan Yuan Tan (2018)" (Bennett, 2020), is a case in point. However, dancing itself among Barbie can be a dynamic event, which

is yet to be discussed in the established literature. Another reason for the scant resources on Barbie's dynamic dancing is that Barbie 2023 has been relatively a new movie, and logically speaking, much research on it has not been circulated widely, while, albeit published, papers on Barbie 2023 may not be directly related to dancing scenes. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that the current paper on Barbie 2023's dancing scene is probably an original one on the topic. Albeit with mentions of Barbie's dance or dancing, the main focus is placed on other themes rather than dancing. Some examples are as follows.

"One day, on a whim, Barbie flew off to Paris in her private shoe box jet with Ken [Barbie's boyfriend]. **They danced** under the stars after a dinner of, ooh lala, snails and French frieds and napoleons. Even so, she broke up with Ken for dozens of different reasons, then reconciled with him for the sake of passion – the sort that any doll or human is hardpressed to resist" (Berg, 1999: 144).

"In a doll domain with 96 eligible females and Ken, unusual pairings were common. Sometimes, skippers and Scooter slept in the guest room shoe box with Casey. One night, I found the Malibu Barbie trio in my desk drawer on top of cousin Francie. It was O.K. by me – as long as they followed one rule: Everyone shares clothes. And since afternoon teas and **disco dances** were hard to attend if you had a child to look after, each Little Kiddle was assigned nine mothers who rotated child care responsibilities" (Shapiro, 1994: 84).

Apart from the static representations of Barbie's dancing, a dynamic representation has also been discussed, albeit by scant literature. The most common one goes to a DVD entitled "The 12 Dancing Princesses" in 2006, which features interactive Dance Mat, "which allow girls to learn ballet and ballroom dance using a television with an interactive, plug-and-play dance mat" (Business Wire, 2006). A short article (Dow Jones & Company Inc., 2009) analyzes a dance video of Barbie, featuring "The Barbie" dance by JaQuel Knight, a famed choreographer, which added color to the 90s hit song, "Barbie Girl". The article briefly mentions that the dance comprises doll-like moves initiated freely and individually, and ends with a signature Point, Twist, Snap. The brief mention of the Barbie dance is worthy of being treated as an inspiration that the Barbie dance, or the dance for Barbie, seems to possess certain qualities and characteristics. Admittedly, the dancing scene which this paper would like to address would be different from that of the video, and thus, this paper conducts a discourse analysis to unveil not only the underlying social ideologies in the Barbieland, but also the qualities, characteristics and structures of a dance exclusive to Barbie.

Apart from papers on Barbie in the past, there have recently been few research papers accurately on topics or themes of Barbie 2023. A frequent one goes to gender equality in the film in general by use of descriptive analysis approach (Alviyanti & Siraj, 2023). The paper mentions the dance scene, but it is not the prominent focus in the paper since the dance scene merely serves as a platform and site out of which and from which Barbie experiences existential crisis by asserting a proposition about death, which is a taboo to the Barbieland (Alviyanti & Siraj, 2023). Simply put, the dancing scene in Barbie 2023 is usually treated as a place to demonstrate the existential change and development, while the movement and interaction among dancers of different genders and races in various costumes are often ignored in terms of the underlying feminist messages to be unveiled.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The design of the current research is recontextualized as in the 1960s based on the literature review revealing the strong historical and cultural relation between Barbie and the decade during which SWF emerged to exercise influences on the negotiation with traditional patriarchal ideologies and norms. The recontextualization makes sense of the reliance on critical discourse analysis as the theoretical framework for this paper.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA hereafter) sheds light on the interconnectedness between two elements, namely the text and context. The two elements can be discussed under the framework of Gee (2005)'s "Big D" Discourse and little d" discourse. The "Big D" Discourse denotes Whos — including Barbie — doing Whats in the context of SWF and patriarchal norms of the 1960s, to discursively perform and enact their socially-constructed gender (Swann, 2002) to be reproduced by discourse participants (Whos)'s combined and integrated completeness of not only language, but also "clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, symbols, tools, technologies [......] [dancing of Barbie], values, attitudes, beliefs, [......] as well as 'right' places and times" (Gee, 2005: 7). This gave rise to "what SWF/patriarchy was like" to construct what was the acceptable/unacceptable discursive practice as a more general, wider and broader Discourse and social contextual atmosphere of patriarchy and SWF during the 1960s, which are at the macro-level of CDA regarding social contexts. From and out of the Big Discourse, one of the "little d" discourse comes down to dancing as a text, which is at the micro-level of CDA, which this paper focuses on.

Based on the above, a Discourse is historical and contextual (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 271-280), and it pre-exists and precedes discourse participants, including Barbie characters, and is shaped by material and social structures (Gee, 2005; Sunderland, 2004). Hence, how a text, be it a language in-use or dancing, is produced by discourse members with a common ground and shared knowledge of the acknowledged and recognized discourse structures (van Dijk, 2008), and what a text produces, largely depends on the existing social and cultural context, be it SWF and/or patriarchy. On the other hand, a "little d" discourse, a text in-use e.g., language or dancing, contributes to where and how social realities and identities emerge (Sunderland, 2004); that is, a text being (1) reproduced as usual, or (2) resisted and then reproduced — "repeatedly performing particular acts" (Butler, 1990: 33; Cameron, 1999: 444) — contributes to the construction and formation of certain world views and reality, society and culture, and ways of thinking (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). For a long period of time, discourse members perform discursive practices to enact their social identities — "whether they are patriarchal or feminist" — as part of realities (Sunderland & Sunderland, 2004). Therefore, according to the view of social construction, gender is "the product of social practice" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 5) instead of a person's biological sex (Cameron, 2005).

Acknowledging the interconnectedness between texts and contexts, CDA explores ways of viewing a world brimming with "social power abuse, dominance, and inequality", while one of the main projects is gender (in)equality since "feminist work has become paradigmatic for much discourse analysis" (van Dijk, 2001: 358-359). To deal with gender inequality, CDA is responsible for treating a gender Discourse at its root by analyzing texts as a "little d" discourse in the way similar to handling language-in-use (Fairclough, 2001), for a "little d" discourse, as mentioned above, is responsible for constituting such-and-such social realities with inequality through reproduction, and thus CDA is resisting them eventually (van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, based on the macro-level of CDA, patriarchy and SWF as the social and cultural contexts, CDA delves into recurrent textual patterns which are possibly "familiar and instantly recognizable"

(Sunderland & Sunderland, 2004: 7) to uncover underlying social ideologies (Fairclough, 1995) that constitute gender inequality, and demystify power relations (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) so that the disadvantaged can finally be empowered.

3.2. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of a Feminist Audio-Visual Content

On top of CDA, feminist principles are an important element to be taken into consideration since it endorses the analysis of a divisive social order that divides people into two extreme groups in the us-them conflicts, namely the privileged male group and excluded female group, which are to be critiqued of the power asymmetries between the two groups, for the sake of radical emancipation and social change (Lazar, 2018). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) endorses the and encourages critical reflexivity and the deconstructionist approach to analyzing a text form, dancing by revealing not only what is there to be explicitly seen, but also what is hidden, implicit or missing (Irigaray, 1995; Leavy, 2007). In this way, by revealing what may be missing from the vulnerable side (e.g., women), FCDA asks for active production of social identities and relationships which open up "possibilities for both women and men as human beings" (Lazar, 2008: 90).

For the analysis of an audio-visual content/texts as "multiple fields" (Rose, 2000) which this paper focuses on, FCDA, meanwhile, brings in "a feminist lens and feminist concerns such as women's status, equality, and social justice to the study of material culture (products) and symbolic culture (multimedium images and representations)" in the content analysis of "movie screens" (Leavy, 2007) along with music lyrics from a song, *Dance the Night*, with the two forms being distinct but interrelated (Rose, 2000). The dancing scene of Barbie 2023 alongside the background music is where the "the interplay or fusion of visual, sound and textual components" can be seen and analyzed (Leavy, 2007). There are a number of research questions to reflect on when analyzing an audio-visual content from a feminist perspective, such as "how are girls and women portrayed?" and "what do visual shots, the motion of the camera, the camera angle, and the dialogue imply about females versus male characters?" (Leavy, 2007). Leavy (2007) informs us of the importance of having no one-fits-all method for the analysis, "but some standards include scene change and camera change" of how females and males are filmed. The design of the methodology will be as follows.

The above-mentioned critical concepts and theories including CDA and FCDA will be incorporated in the discussion of the methodology below.

4. Methodology

4.1. Multimodality in Films for Data Collection

The abovementioned "scene/camera change" is essential to develop a framework for the analysis of films by providing various levels and demarcations of a scene into different units/scenes so that the analyst can draw on the data from them. The framework is provided by Iedema (2001: 189)'s level of analysis for television and film genres where the levels of a film range from a frame, a shot, a scene, a sequence, to a generic stage and the work as a whole. The levels are on a continuum and thus interconnected, and thus it is unnecessary to deliberately choose particular levels to collect the visual data for the analysis, as long as the interrelated levels of the dancing scene converge to provide as many perspectives and viewpoints on male and female actors representations (which will be discussed below), as possible to reveal feminist messages. Apart from the visual data, the audio data, the lyrics from the background music, will lie at the level of a work as a whole.

4.2. Analytical Framework

4.2.1. Visual Data

Based on the above information from Leavy (2007)'s study on a feminist an audio-visual content, the current study would like to leverage Van Leeuwen (2008)'s approach of the visual representation of social actors, which carries the scene change and camera change to let the audience see how females and males are portrayed in the dancing scene, called *Dance The Night* scene, alongside the song, *Dance the Night*, as the background music lasting for approximately 4 minutes in the movie.

There are two analytical sessions under this analytical framework, namely "The image and the viewer" to reveal how important female and male actors are to the audience, and "Depicting people" to reveal whether actors are excluded or included in their interaction on the dance floor. The details are as follows.

There are three dimensions in the first session, "The image and the viewer", namely (1) social distance, (2) social relation and (3) social interaction between depicted people and the viewers (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 138). Social distance (1) implies "closeness, literally and figuratively, of our relationships", with "close-up" to include the actors as "part of us", and with being distant to exclude them as strangers (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 138). Social relation (2) concerns the angles from which the audience sees the actors on screen, including vertical angles to see the actors from above (looking down upon them who are below us), at the eye level (having equal positions and relations with them), or from below (looking up to them who are above us), and horizontal angles to see them either face to face (involvement) or from a slide (detachment) (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 139). Social interaction (3) concerns whether actors look at and address the audience or not by facial expressions, gestures and so on, to indicate whether actors are to interact with or to be scrutinized as objects (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 140-141).

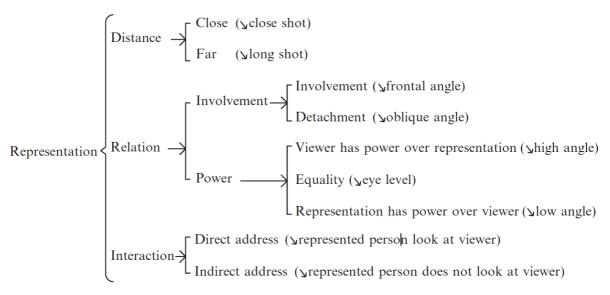


Figure 1. Representation and Viewer Network

The second session, "Depicting people", comprises (1) Exclusion that does not acknowledge the existence of certain actors in a scene, and (2) Inclusion that includes a diverse variety of actors, as the first-level categories. From and out of (2) Inclusion, we can see Involvement of actors in actions in the way either they are agentialized to perform certain acts with willingness and determination or they as patients are done onto with certain actions (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 142). Another second-level categories come down to Specification and Genericization where

the former concerns specific focuses on certain actors' identities and unique existence while the latter relates to general and unimportant existence of particular actors with cultural or biological sameness (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 143). The third second-level categories are Individualization and Group (Collectivization) concerning whether actors can be identified as unique individuals with differences or homogenized as all the same (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 144).

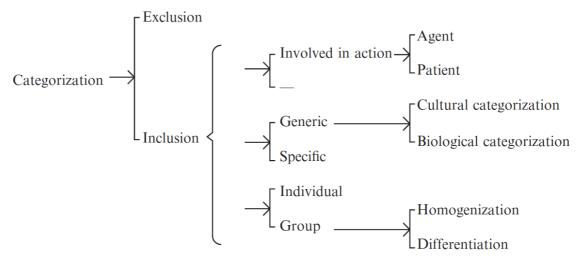


Figure 2. Visual Social Actor Network

4.2.2. Audio Data

Against the dancing scene is the background music, *Dance the Night* by Dua Lipa (2023), as the audio data which provides lyrical messages in relation to the visual discourses. Linguistic texts are found to contextualize images, and the two, visual and linguistic, can essentially be in a harmonious relationship (Paltridge, 2021). For the analysis of the song lyrics, the current study would like to leverage thematic analysis to unveil the core themes from the song. Since currently there is only one song as the sample in the corpus, I do not suggest referring to any specific analytical toolkits similar to the above-mentioned Networks from Van Leeuwen (2008), the scale and scope of which for the visual data which involves much more wideranging elements including but not limited to dance movements, races, bodily figures and conditions, agency/patient representations, and costumes in all the shots/frames of various scenes, is much larger than that of lyrics. On the contrary, lyrics of a single song usually consist of one to two themes. Therefore, comparatively, due to the simplicity in treating lyrics, thematic analysis will be leveraged.

4.3. Grounded Theory in Content Coding Processing

The above-mentioned critical concepts and theories including CDA and FCDA will be incorporated in the discussion below of the methodology for both visual and audio data, which are analyzed consistently technically through content coding processing. The coding processing will be made compatible with grounded theory as the inductive approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for the sake for fulfilling the principles of deconstructionism of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) in favour of unveiling what is possibly missing, silenced and absent from not only women's side but also men's from the afore-discussed visual and audio data as texts as the micro-level of CDA based on second-wave feminism as the macro-level of CDA. In this way, possible patterns, themes and categories naturally come and emerge from the data, without (many) presuppositions (Patton, 1980). In this way, certain themes from the lyrics can be uncovered to reveal how the lyrics contextualize the visual part.

4.4. Analytical Procedures – Coding by Using Van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Categories

There are visual and audio-linguistic text forms. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018: 197-198), generally, coding visuals is similar to coding linguistic texts. The whole coding procedures commences with manual labour on initial coding to generate basic codes for better manipulation and edition before having coded items moved to Nvivo³ to proceed with subsequent coding. The very first step is to transcribe the whole film into visual and audiolinguistic texts. For the visual data concerning Representation and Viewer Network and Visual Social Actor Network, I will take screen frames and shots (pictures) of each scene concerning Barbies and Kens' dance, which demonstrates close/long shots, frontal/oblique angels, levelling (eye, high or low), (in)direct addresses, action agency, genericized/specificized items, individualised and homogenised items, and so on. The gathered screen frames/shots will be initially and preliminarily classified into two different focused contents, i.e., focus on Barbies and the focus on Kens for later multimodal discourse comparison. For the audio data concerning the lyrical linguistics of the song, Dance the Night as the background music, the audio texts will be transcribed into linguistic texts to be coded. After that, the coding steps for both types of texts are as follows according to Creswell & Creswell (2018: 197-198).

- 1. Code the text by tagging the visual and linguistic area and assigning code labels based on the categories from the afore-mentioned Networks (Van Leeuwen, 2008).
- 2. Compile all of the codes for the texts on separate sheets for (1) Representation and Viewer Network. (2) Visual Social Actor Network, (3) thematic contents of the lyrical discourse.
- 3. Review the codes to eliminate redundancy and overlap. This step can help reduce the number of the codes to potential themes.
- 4. Group codes into (sub)categories before themes based on common and similar ideas and properties (Saldana, 2009: 11-13). Subgroups (subthemes) exist underneath the umbrella of themes until the final theme is highlighted in the analysis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Saldana, 2009: 11-13).
- 5. Conduct similarity cross-checking of the categorization of codes between two coders to ensure rigorousness.
- 6. Write the narrative for each generated theme that will proceed to the finding section or for a general summary.
- 7. Conduct comparative analysis of the generated themes from the sides of Barbie dancers and Ken dancers.

5. Findings

The findings will be discussed, in the same way, in the two sessions, "The image and the viewer", and "Depicting people".

5.1. The Image and the Viewer: Representation and Viewer Network (Figure 1)

5.1.1. Close and Far Distances

Throughout the 4-min dancing scene of Barbie 2023, female dancers outnumber male counterparts radically, but the camera is able to focus on women in a foregrounding manner between females and the audience to enhance their uniqueness and importance. Through the whole dance scene, Barbies tend to receive more spotlight on themselves alternately with close

³ NVivo is a qualitative data management, coding and markup tool. It is designed to organize, analyze and create a better understanding of unstructured or qualitative data such as interviews, survey responses, articles, social media or other types of online material.

shots (social distance) on each of them as shown in Figures 3-5 below. On the contrary, Kens are generally shown in "long shots" (Figures 6-7 below), while there are few "close shots" for Kens as shown in Figures 8-9 below. There is no absolute measurement of closeness in the shots, and it can be measured in a relative sense. Comparatively, "close shots" for Kens mostly feature their internal competition, aggressiveness and jealousy, which are common features of masculinity, and this is different from Barbies' sublime level that brings in pure enjoyment and self-indulgence at the moment of being "herself". The stronger closeness between viewer, and Barbie and Kens indicates the tendency towards including Barbies and towards excluding Kens in the dance, with the strategy of distanciation (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 141).



Figure 3. Barbie's close shot at the eye level WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 4. Barbie's close shot at the eye level (2) WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 5. Barbie's close shot at the eye level (4) WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 6. Ken's long shot (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 7. Ken's long shot (2) WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 8. Ken's close shot (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Figure 9. Ken's close shot (2) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

5.1.2. Involvement and Power

From the vertical angles, Barbies tend to be framed in shots from the frontal angles (Figures 3-5 above), while Kens have the tendency towards being framed from the oblique/side angles (Figures 6-7 above), especially when they are conversing and arguing in the masculine. However, when Kens join Barbies' group dance, they tend to receive the same "treatment" of being frontally shot, but in the backgrounding way. Comparatively speaking, Kens are treated as specific individuals mostly from the oblige/side angles that speak for their detachment from the dance, but they are treated as backgrounded beings with Barbies foregrounded from the frontal angles. This highlights Barbies' foregrounded involvement in the dance which backgrounds Kens. On the other hand, from the horizontal angles, Barbies are mostly viewed at the eye level which represents equality (Figures 3-5 above), while Kens, when conversing, arguing, getting jealous and dancing with Barbie, are sometimes viewed at the same level (Figures 7-8 above, 11-12 below), but some other times are viewed from the perspective of another Ken due to their internal arguments and jealousy (Figure 9 above), but not from the viewers' perspective. There are two interpretations and important themes for these. Firstly, the eye level for Kens and Barbies dancing together represents gender equality and gender empowerment, and for the secondly, the perspective from another Ken instead of the audience seems to fail to explain power for Kens who get jealous of one another and arguing, which do not stand out, with the strategy of disempowerment (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 141).



Figure 11. Barbie and Ken at the eye level (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Figure 12. Barbie's and Ken's at the eye level (4) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

5.1.3. Direct and Indirect Address

When it comes to social interaction between the audience and actors, even with Kens sometimes viewed at the eye level, unlike Barbies, they mostly do not address the audience with eye contact or other non-verbal communication tools (Figure 8 above), except when dancing with Barbies as a group (Figures 11-12 above). Conversely, Barbies carry out non-verbal communication with the audience more frequently when dancing individually (Figures

3-5 above) and when dancing with Kens as a group. Apart from eye contact, Barbies proactively utilize hand gestures to address the audience (Figure 13 below). On the contrary, Kens' high frequency of looking else tends to make Kens become objectivated (to be seen and scrutinized as objects). This reflects how Barbies and Kens are viewed, as communicators or as objects.



Figure 13. Barbie addressing the audience (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

5.2. Depicting People (Figure 2)

The second session concerns how Barbies and Kens are treated internally and how they interact with each other on the dance floor, and the discussion commences from Exclusion and Inclusion. The details are as follows.

5.2.1. Inclusion vs Exclusion

As to Inclusion for Kens and Barbies, races, white, black and Asian (yellow) are included, but on the side of Barbies, the inclusiveness is even stronger. For instance, apart from races, Barbies include a pregnant one (Figure 15 below), those with different body shapes (Figure 4 above), and the one with a physical disability (Figure 14 below). Comparatively, much more emphasis is put on Barbies' inclusiveness and social cohesion than on Kens'. As for Exclusion upon close scrutiny, in the final dance scene, Barbies join hands to form a circle, which excludes Kens (Figure 16 below).



Figure 14. Barbie's inclusiveness (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES



Figure 15. Barbie's inclusiveness (2) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

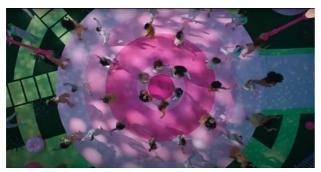


Figure 16. Internal cohesion and exclusion of Kens (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

5.2.2. Involvement in Action (Agent/ Patient)

Inclusion is another part to expound on. From the perspective Involvement in Action (Agent/Patient), at the beginning of the dance was Barbies' dance and craze, regardless of engagement and involvement of Kens who are standing aside. This suffices to be indicative of Barbies' full agentialization to act on her own instead of being encouraged. Another example to illustrate how Barbies lead the whole dance for both sexes is reflected by Figure 20 below where a Barbie is actively taking up a DJ's job, and all dance in response to the music adjusted. Comparatively, Kens seem to be passivated and placed in a Patient role. Another example depicting Kens as Patients comes from Figures 6 and 8 above where Kens are excited by Barbies' dance (Figures 11-12 above) and by the jealousy of another Ken's enjoyment with Barbies in the dance. The following engagement in the dance is not completely out of Kens' willingness. What is more, Kens dance in the way that suits Barbies' styles by following suit to be background dancers to support Barbies, as reflected by Figure 11-12 above. This part illustrates Barbies' activeness and agency in the dance without Kens' lead.



Figure 20. Barbie's lead (1) WARNER BROS. PICTURES

5.2.3. Genericization and Specification

Comparatively, in terms of focus and concentration, Barbies receive "close shots" in the camera to let each of the Barbie individuals stand out in their dance when dancing in the foregrounding manner (Figures 3-5 above). When dancing with Kens, Specification is particularly highlighted with Kens serving as background dancers to let Barbies stand out from the crowd (Figures 11-12 above). Even when Kens are in line with Barbies in the dance, Barbies are still centralized by being surrounded by Kens to stand out for the display of uniqueness and importance. Figure 16 above is much more conspicuous. This part emphasizes Barbies' distinctiveness and reception of focus while Kens are generally backgrounded without much focus.

5.2.4. Individualization and Homogenization

Furthermore, Kens tend to be homogenized, while Barbies individualized and differentiated. Apart from races mentioned in the Exclusion part, Kens' hairdo and dress codes (Figure 12 above) are less diverse than those of Barbies (Figures 3-5 above), and this reflects Kens' homogenization. For instance, Barbies' dancing dress are in diverse colors including gold, silver, white and yellow alongside various accessories, while Kens' costumes are mostly in white (Figure 12 above). As mentioned earlier, Barbies outnumber Kens radically in the dance, but the larger Barbies group does not make them homogenized, but differentiated and individualized to display their uniqueness.

5.3. Lyrics of Dance the Night

Upon coding processing on the lyrics, there are several findings to be discussed. The singer, Dua Lipa, renders the first-person pronouns e.g., "I", "me", etc., the female persona as the main character in the lyrics. The content from this person's perspective sheds light on the female's individualistic approach to tackle life problems through dance and her encouragement given to other dancers.

One of the main themes emphasized is "taking risks to be her own self" comprising lyrics, the bold ones in particular, in the following.

"Lately, I've been movin' close to the edge Still be lookin' my best I stay on the beat, you can count on me I ain't missin' no steps" "When my heart breaks (they never see it, never see it)

When my world shakes (I feel alive, I feel alive)

I don't play it safe (ooh)

Don't you know about me? (Uh-huh)
I could dance, I could dance"

Another main theme highlighted is "dancing the anxiety away" with the lyrics in the following.

"'Cause every **romance shakes and it bends** Don't give a damn When **the night's here, I don't do tears** Baby, no chance

I could dance, I could dance, I could dance"

"Even when **the tears are flowin'** like diamonds on my face

I'll still **keep the party goin'**, not one hair out of place (yes, I can)"

"Watch me dance, dance the night away

My heart could be burnin', but you won't see it on my face Watch me dance, dance the night away (uh-huh) I'll still keep the party runnin', not one hair out of place"

The above two main themes assume the existence of the danger of challenging and resisting patriarchal society and institutions, reflected by the changing world "my world shakes", and the painstaking process "the tears are flowin" and "my heart breaks", which constitute the anxiety of females, which has to be "danced away". Apart from the two main themes, there is one minor theme to be discussed, namely "encouraging others to dance" from the lyrics as follows.

"Baby, you can find me under the lights Diamonds under my eyes Turn the rhythm up, don't you wanna just Come along for the ride?" "I stay on the beat, you can count on me I ain't missin' no steps" The genders of the pronoun, "you", are not specified, but the intimate marker, "Baby", seems to fall on females. Thus, it is plausible to argue that the encouragement circulates among a group of females to "take risks to be her own self" and "dance the anxiety away".

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The above analysis, by leveraging van Leeuwen's (2008) Representation and Viewer Network and Depicting People for the dance scene in the visual form, has revealed a conclusive discursive pattern reflecting feminist spirits and ideologies through the interaction between Barbies, Kens and the audience. In the Representation and Viewer Network, Barbies tend to receive more close shots from the frontal angles than Kens do, and these enhance Barbies' highlights, importance and involvement in the dance — and most importantly, in being themselves with self-indulgence —, with the strategy of distanciation and foregroundedness. Power-wise, Barbies in their own shots are mostly viewed at the eye level which represents equality in relation to and from the perspective of the audience, while Kens, from the eye-level perspective of the audience, are mostly seen arguing and getting jealous, which suffices to reflect Kens' naivety — albeit masculinity — different from Barbies' strong focus on their dance. Admittedly, the eye-level with Kens and Barbies together reinforces the gender equality between men and women, yet Kens are sometimes exclusively viewed from the high and low angles from another Ken's perspective, which fails to explain the power with the strategy of disempowerment. Different from Kens, Barbies carry out eye contact with the audience as the non-verbal communication tools to strengthen interaction with the audience, even by using hand gestures to address viewers. This objectivates Kens and humanizes Barbies as authentic beings to communicate with. Based on the above, Barbies are viewed from the perspective peppered with equality, respect, focus, and empowerment in the dance which strongly feature self-directedness in females' dance similar to the go-go dance and Twist in the 1960s.

As for depicting the characters, Inclusion for Barbies is enhanced by their races, body figures, physical disability, and pregnancy, while Kens tend to be excluded more with Barbies sometimes forming stronger cohesion among themselves only in the dance. The social cohesion, contextually speaking, can be explained by the slogan of the 1960s that "The personal is political", especially in the late 1960s with New Left leading radical feminism recruiting personal networks to form stronger sisterhood and womanhood against men and patriarchy. Such agency and autonomy can be realized by Barbies Involvement in actions through agentialization by, for instance, dancing themselves without men's lead, and taking up a DJ's role which was supposed to be of men, while Kens are in the passive state and their dance is aroused by their jealousy. In the active, self-directed dance among Barbies, they are strongly specified through highlighting their individuality in terms of diverse hairdo, dancing costumes — and races, particularly Black, which embodied the inclusion of black women's voices in the women's movement in the period of radical feminism — and through dancing centralization in the central position surrounded by Kens, which emphasize Barbies' leadership and importance, and in circles which, to a certain extent, exclude Kens from their own space.

It is understandable that the 1960s had witnessed women's anxiety and struggles against patriarchal institutions — though the late 1960s brought in radical feminism with a brand-new consciousness of men's essential oppression on women. In view of this, the lyrical discourse of the song, Dance the Night (by Dua Lipa), highlights two main themes, i.e., "taking risks to be her own self" and "dancing the anxiety away", which serve as facilitators to wipe out anxiety and encourage women to embrace their authentic self in not only dances but also other life aspects. This imperatively actualizes the intertextuality and interdiscursivity between the visual

dance discourse and the lyrical discourse to generate an encouraging feminist message in reflection of a wider and broader feminist Discourse and SWF in the 1960s — and even today.

This research endeavors to make a contribution to Barbie research from the multimodal perspective involving both visual and audio-linguistic texts on dancing, whose dynamic characteristics in relation to other dancers, demographic information, background music, viewing perspectives and the audience in reflection of a broader feminist Discourse have not been discussed in the established literature regarding Barbie studies. To handle the analysis of the multimodality of Barbie, this paper took this movie, Barbie, as the source of data to embrace the preliminary attempt to build up the literature on Barbie, dance and feminism. Such establishment is believed to be beneficial to future studies on Barbie and feminist media studies from the multimodal perspective. Should readers and scholars make use of Van Leeuwen's (2008) multimodal analytical Networks, I believe that film analysis will be broadened by encompassing more emphasis on critical gender discourses which may possibly constitute unfair or sided representations for or against either of the sexes perhaps in the foregrounding and backgrounding fashion in films such as not only Barbie but also DC and Marvel that feature male and female heroes.

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