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**Gender and Cultural Stereotypes in a Selection of American
Movie Posters from the 21st Century. A Social and Cultural
Semiotic Analysis.**

Presented by:

AMZIANE Melissa

GAHAM Ourida

Supervised by: Dr. LARABI Sabeha

Co-supervised by: Ms. ADEM Karima

Board of examiners:

- **Chair:** Dr. BENAÏSSA Amel, MCA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O
- **Supervisor:** Dr. LARABI Sabeha, MCA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O
- **Co- Supervisor :** Ms. ADEM Karima, MAA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O
- **Examiner:** Mr. CHETOUANE Madjid, MAA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O

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Dedications

This work is dedicated to all the beautiful souls from parents, siblings, teachers, and friends who have been the guiding light in our learning journey.

Melissa and Ourida Alice.

In the memory of my grandparents who are and will always be in my heart.

Melissa.

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Abstract

This exploratory study aims to identify the way gender and cultural stereotypes are depicted in American movie posters of the 21st century. In order to reach the research aims, this study relies on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) *Reading Images* and Douglas Kellner (1995) *Media culture theories*, and on the qualitative research for data collection and analysis. For data collection procedure, secondary data is used including books, websites, and previous studies. Concerning the analysis of the gathered data, a Qualitative Multimodal Critical Discourse (QMCD) and thematic analysis are used to analyze and interpret the results of the qualitative data. The findings reveal that the American movie posters of the 21st century conduct global matters as gender and cultural stereotypes in their visual designs shaping the perception of the audience on gender roles within popular cultural. This research also highlights the importance of critical media literacy and encouraging seeking diversity of visual media advertising. In addition, it reveals that the visual media in the American movie industry conducts themes of women empowerment, challenging gender stereotypes, cultural and racial discrimination, and traditional gender roles.

Key Words: American, Cultural Stereotypes, Gender, Movie poster, visual analysis.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.

H: hypothesis.

Q: questions.

QMCA: Qualitative Multimodal Discourse Analysis.

NASA: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

M.M.U.T.O: Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou.

MDA: Multimodal Discourse Analysis.

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General Introduction

Statement of the problem

American cinema has always been an influential force in the movie industry. It covers a wide range of genres like science fiction, comedy, action, horror, and romance. This diversity of genres creates innovative and influential movie scripts that have enduring effect on cinema and society. Additionally, the variety of movie genres can either reinforce gender and cultural stereotypes through storylines and the visual representation of characters, or to challenge these stereotypes by sharing unique and different perspectives. Gender and cultural stereotypes can be represented on posters which are illustrations used to promote a movie. Moreover, these illustrative tools for American movie promotions of the 21st century perpetuate the misrepresentations of women through the reinforcement of gender and cultural stereotypes often depicted as minor characters with limited professional roles along with the perpetuation of narrow ethnic representations. Therefore, this can limit the audience perception of women's role in society and foster an underestimation of other ethnic groups.

Large body of research have commonly examined the representation of Gender in visual media. For example, in Algeria, mainly in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University; Hennad and Houssou (2024) have investigated the representation of women in movie posters by adopting the theory of '*Visual Grammar*'. In their dissertation entitled "A Semiotic Analysis of Movie Posters Representing Women Empowerment", they have investigated how women are visually represented in movie posters through semiotic analysis and what messages and meanings movie posters communicate about women empowerment. The main conclusion of their examination shows that visual media influences attitudes and beliefs about women's capabilities and contributions. On the other hand, In Indonesia, mainly in the department of communication science of Muhammadiyah Surakarta University; Wardah and Kusuma (2021) have conducted a study were their aim is to examine the representation of women. The main conclusion of the analysis shows that women are no

longer shown as inferiors oppressed by patriarchal culture, and the traditional gender concept is gradually being forgotten. However, the main focus of these studies is on the semiotic analysis of gender without making reference to the cultural stereotypes that assigns deep, associative, and variable meaning. That is why, our study aims to explore both of the semiotic and cultural stereotypes by examining eight American movie posters from the 21st century.

The aim and significance of the study

The overall aim of this research is to examine how gender and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters of the 21st century are represented. This study has two main objectives. The first one analyzes how women are semiotically represented on these movie posters. The second examines how different cultural identities and ethnic groups are portrayed on these visual elements that reflect biased feminist ideologies.

This study is significant because it gives an overview about the representation of gender and cultural stereotypes on media over time. Moreover, examining how women are depicted in movie posters can shed light on the expectations about women and their relations to cultural and gender stereotypes. Besides, the selected movie posters show whether these cultural stereotypes are being challenged or reinforced. The main motives behind selecting these posters are due to their popularity, serving exactly the aim of the study, and indicating the stereotypes that will be analyzed in this research.

Research questions and Hypotheses

The present study aims at answering the following questions:

Q1: How are white and minority women groups depicted in the American movie posters of the 21st century?

Q2: To what extent are these posters compliant with or resist gender and cultural stereotypes of the 21st century?

The following hypotheses are suggested as answers to the previously mentioned research questions:

H1: Women in American movie posters from the 21st century are depicted in more empowered positions comparing to the previous decades, mostly illustrating strength and independence.

H2: Some 21st century movie posters reflect stereotyped white American women while some others showcase empowered minority group women like blacks and Asians reflecting in this way what Douglas Kellner terms Critical Media Literacy among viewers.

Research Techniques and Methodology

The research methodology refers to the methods and techniques which are used to gather information about a given topic and analyze it in order to resolve an issue. It consists of following ordered procedures to obtain accurate data, and an appropriate and suitable research method which is pertinent to the subject.

In order to explain the research questions and hypotheses of the study, a qualitative research methodology is required. To perform the present investigation, two theoretical frameworks are used: the first one is Kress and Van Leeuwen's social semiotic approach known as '*Visual Grammar*' (2006) to analyze eight visuals depicting women in American movie posters of the 21st century. The second framework is Douglas Kellner '*Media Culture*' (1995) to analyze the cultural representation of women in the same movie posters.

The primary data of this investigation is gathered from American movie posters of the 21st century. The first selection consists of eight posters chosen to be representative of gender portrayals. The second selection, consist of the same eight posters to illustrate cultural stereotypes. Therefore, eight American movie posters are chosen to represent both gender and cultural stereotypes.

The structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation follows a simple traditional model, which consists of a general introduction, four chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction consists of the statement of the problem, the aim and significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, research methodology, and the structure of the dissertation. The first chapter is entitled 'Review of The Literature'. It is a demonstration of the main theoretical concepts related to our study. The second chapter is called Research Design and Methodology. It provides an overall explanation about the data collection and analysis procedure that have been implemented during the study. The third chapter is 'The Presentation of the Findings' where it covers all the results revealed from the data collection and analysis tools. The fourth chapter that is 'The Discussion of the findings', deals with the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the research, and provides explicit answers to the research questions. Finally, the research concludes with a recapitulation of its key findings and a suggestion for future research.

Chapter One
Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter is a review of the literature that aims at analyzing how gender and cultural stereotypes are portrayed in American movie posters of the 21st century. It is structured into four primary sections. Initially, it provides an overview of semiotics and explains its relationship with visual media. Subsequently, it deals with the definition and history of movie posters, their types, and characteristics. Additionally, the third section is a visual portrayal of white, black and Asian women identities in 21st century film posters. The fourth section is devoted to the theoretical framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen in *Grammar Visual Design* (2006) and the guiding framework of Kellner *Media culture* (1995).

1. Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is a branch that ranks under the field of semiotics (the study of signs and meaning making) which is centered on the representation or significance of signs in certain social, historical, political and cultural contexts. It is particularly evident in visual designs and mass media, allowing an easy access to people worldwide nowadays.

It is defined by Kress and Hodge (1988) as the approach that registers signs and messages within context of social relations and procedures, arguing that meaning is not static but framed in power, ideologies, class, race and gender, making semiotics a dynamic and socially integrated practice through periods of time. In other words, social semiotics are not only abstract signs, rather they represent how different elements work together within a social environment to advertise for a certain idea and communicate implicit memoranda through multiple designs such as colors, images, texts, gestures, and placements.

1.1. Colors

The color palette that is chosen in a certain visual design reveals a lot about the message that the image wants to communicate which is discussed by Wolfgang von Goethe

(1810), saying that colors have psychological effects on the human brain or state of feeling, illustrating as the use of the color red that represents aggression, passion, revenge, war, danger. Moreover, the color yellow is commonly associated with concepts such as optimism, brightness, and energy. Conversely, the color grey often signifies a more negative emotional state, typically representing dullness or a depressing atmosphere.

1.2 Texts

The texts that are used in a given visual element are carefully written and typed, either in bold or thin characters. The bold written texts strike the attention to a serious topic, whereas a playful font suggests fun topics. Also the size and contrast of the characters create a visual hierarchy to emphasize key messages such as racism, violence and other possible themes (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006).

1.3 Gestures

It is known that gestures evoke some sort of point of views when presented on certain visual designs, because open gestures invite the audience to interpret and interact directly with the elements, but closed gestures may indicate disengagement, allowing the viewers to concentrate more on other elements on the image. Gestures can also influence the whole atmosphere of the presented topic such as open arms which indicate fun and happiness on the image, whereas crossed arms indicate a more serious situation (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). Gestures and movements of participants can evoke a specific atmosphere and influence the viewer's perception of the visual. At this view, Kendon (2004, p.7) states that: 'gestures are not just movements of the hands and arms, but are communicative acts that are integrated with speech and contribute to the expression and interpretation of meaning'.

1.4 Placements

The place where certain elements and participants are positioned on an image reveals much about the message it wants to transmit to the public. For instance, a character who is

placed at the centre of the visual indicates the importance of their role and signals that the story mainly revolves around them. Also bigger sized characters that dominate the whole visual results in foreshadowing other elements, leading viewers to ignore them. Additionally, the left placed participants are associated with familiarity and common roles such as heroes, but the right placed participants suggest novelty and opposition like villains. In this view, Lidwell,et.al (2010,p.196) state that, “ Elements that are close together are perceived to be more related, than elements that are spaced farther apart proximity overrides similarity of color, shape, and other factors that might differentiate a group of objects”.

2. Movie Posters

2.1 The definition and Evolution of movie posters

Movie posters are images used to promote a movie. They include visual aspects such as the title, the name of the main actors, the release date and other pertinent details to inform prospective viewers about the movie. They can be found in theaters, street walls, stores or online websites and platforms. Moreover, they convey meaning to the audience for different purposes like generating awareness, communicating genre and tone, evoking emotions, creating desire, and attracting attention. To further clarify this concept, Pooranalingam (2024, P.2) states that:

Not only are film posters used as promotional materials, but they can also serve as visual art. Many people display film posters in their personal spaces and surroundings, acting as decorative objects that hold meaning and significance. A film poster may include the title of the film, the names of actors and actresses, the names of directors and producers, and possibly a quote or tagline. These elements are usually essential to include on a film poster, but some designers may choose to display these elements in visually interesting ways. Film posters also include visual aspects, most often these are displayed as characters and settings from the film.

These visual images appeared in the late 1800s with the start of public films to draw people to movies. They first appeared in simple designs and film information, but later became the most powerful tool for advertising a movie. To further clarify the previous information, the evolution of Hollywood movie posters has begun in the early 19th century with paper prints and lithography, leading to cinematic advertisements. The late 19th century has witnessed the development of the first movie scene depicted on a poster and the standardization of the one-sheet format. The 20th century witnessed the rise of poster art, influenced by figures like Jules Chéret and prominent American illustrators. Recent design are shaped by Bill Gold, followed by legendary artists such as Saul Bass with his minimalist style, Bob Peak's dynamic illustrations, Richard Amsel's sophisticated designs, Drew Struzan's photorealism, and John Alvin's atmospheric creations, before a later shift towards photography using digital technology (Smith ,2018). In essence, the transformation of movie posters in the 21st century is diversified, dynamic and strategic. Poster designers create visually attractive designs to captivate the attention of the audience and promote it. In regards of this, Karo (2021, P.9) states that, ‘... the recent progression of traditional design to new media has developed to new territories, unique collaborations, and specializations in the intermediate new areas’.

2.2 Types of Movie posters

Movie posters come in different styles, each reflecting a unique vibe and purpose in promoting a film. To begin with, double-sided posters were first printed as an experiment by Disney in 1988. Both sides present the same image; however, one side was printed in lighter shades. These types of posters, including those for popular films like Avatar, are often used for special editions. In contrast, single-sided posters, which have a white back, have been historically favored due to their less expensive production and clarity, making them the most universal choice for general advertising and information. Moreover, teaser posters are typically released before the official movie debut and contain basic details, such as the title, themes, and

a release timeline like “coming soon.” These posters are commonly used for expensive films; meanwhile films with smaller budgets may use a one-sheet and more classic poster. Furthermore, main or final posters come after teaser posters and provide more detailed information, including actor names, taglines, and release dates, and may have numerous designs based on a film's financing (Poster collector,2016).

Another type is character posters, which illuminate personalities of principle characters through dynamic imagery and expressive poses, highlighting the unique traits of each figure. Award posters are typically released after a film has attained recognition at prestigious events such as the Golden Globes or the Oscars, with an example being *‘Everything Everywhere All at Once’* (2023), which has won the Academy Award for Best Picture. In addition to the previous types, limited edition posters are rare, often premium prints produced in small quantities, making them particularly priceless to collectors, and a key example is the Art Deco-inspired Metropolis poster. Beyond this, large text on face posters emphasize a character’s sentiments through close-up images, with a visually prominent text that can include the title of the film or mood, allowing the audience to connect deeply with the characters. Finally, poster styles, with several variations created for the same film, permit studios to test different designs and aesthetics to observe audience reaction and emotional connection. Each type of posters play a divergent role in enhancing the popularity of a film and ensuring that it reaches its audience effectively. In the present study, different types of posters are used including single sided poster, character poster, and poster styles.

2.3 Characteristics of Movie Posters

Movie posters play a crucial role in the American cinematic experience, serving as visual artifacts that attract and captivate viewers. These posters communicate the concept of a film through various elements such as the title and tagline, cast and crew information, genre indication, release date, mood and tone, and eye-catching imagery. The title, being the most

important and recognizable piece of information, is prominently displayed on the poster, and often accompanied by an enticing tagline to give the audience a glimpse into the story of the film. In addition, the inclusion of the cast and crew, particularly the names of leading actors or a renowned director, adds credibility and creates excitement among the audience, helping to generate anticipation for the film. Additionally, movie posters also convey the genre of the film through visual cues, such as specific color schemes or images, like spaceships for science fiction or a “based on a true story” phrase for dramas, immediately signaling the film's category to viewers. The release date is another important aspect, as it informs the audience of when the film will be available, allowing them to plan accordingly while also building anticipation and credibility around the film's release strategy. Furthermore, the mood and tone of the movie are conveyed through design choices, including the color palette, character expressions, and lighting. These elements help portray the tonality of the film, effectively shaping the emotional expectations of the viewer. Lastly, eye-catching imagery plays a pivotal role in drawing attention, using unique artistic styles, vivid colors, and symbolic or iconic depictions to captivate the audience and make the poster memorable. Together, these characteristics ensure that movie posters effectively promote the film and engage potential viewers (King,2023).

3. Gender and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters

Stereotypes are oversimplified and generalized beliefs about groups of people, disregarding individual differences Blum (2004). When these stereotypes are based specifically on perceived sex, they are known as gender stereotypes, dictating expected characteristics, roles, and behaviors for men and women. When these generalizations are based on cultural affiliations like ethnicity, nationality or religion, they are known as cultural stereotypes. To further clarify cultural stereotypes, Buzinova et.al (2023) explain that any nation has unique characteristics that help to differentiate ethnic cultures. This categorization may be the reason of the cultural stereotypes appearance. Ethnic stereotypes are how one ethnic group portrays

itself. In the field of modern linguistics, the idea of ethnic stereotypes comes from the way one group judges the basic human qualities of another. In this regard, Wood (1999) states that, to be feminine in the United States is to be attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships.

3.1 The Representation of women in Hollywood

In contradiction to the 21st century, the depiction of women in American movie posters of the 20th century is inequitable. As Dehchenari (2014) explains:

Gender imbalance can be translated through some most outstanding makers in terms of typical masculine and feminine traits. White male supremacy is advertised in Hollywood movies. Heroic roles are more consistent with male characters and fixed portrayals of female characters are culturally encouraged. They have to be thin, sexy and have an attractively packed figure. In common movie narratives, female leads tend to have romantic relationships, and in their love-seeker role, are shown as one dimensional lovers.

In many instances, woman are shown as dependent on men, weak, unenlightened, aid requiring, and conforming to stereotypes of beauty and femininity. As Lacoff (1973) states:

So a girl is damned if she does, damned if she doesn't. If she refuses to talk like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine; if she does learn, she is ridiculed as unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion: in some sense, as less than fully human.

However, in the 21st century, women roles are more recognized. Women have become more prominent and dominant in posters, mainly in chief roles. At the present time posters support the idea of showing multiple female characters alongside male characters with both an equal visual importance and diverse roles. As Kidwai et.al (2016) state, some of the major cinemas in the world represent female characters in a better way than a few decades ago and the portrayal of strong leading women helps in shaping the personalities of millions of women around the world. By portraying diverse gender identities and different characters, films can challenge societal expectations, foster inclusivity, and refute traditional gender norms and stereotypes. In addition, the 21st century presents women who take control of their own images,

and stars like Jennifer Lawrence in *'The Hunger Game'*(2013) , Meryl Streep in *'The Iron Lady'*(2011), Regina King in *'If Beale Street Could Talk'*(2018), and Rachel Chu in *'Crazy Rich Asians'*(2018). Women have defied these stereotypes of the previous Eras. As it is evidenced in the research of Dehchenari (2014), minor female characters are generally depicted as ordinary citizens lacking significant occupational prominence. By contrast, contemporary Hollywood often reserves more notable positions for women in supporting roles. By virtue of this, they save Hollywood from the depression and bring a light to the people and to the American cinema. For such a long lived phenomenon, it is extremely important in both cinema and feminist history.

3.2 The representation of Asian Women in movie posters

When considering the depiction of Asian women in Hollywood, many of them have been stereotyped negatively. However, in the 21st century movies like *'Everything Everyone all at once'* (2022) defied societal expectations celebrating the strength and resilience of Asian women. As it is stated by Sinuraya et.al (2025), numerous films depict the struggles, diligent labor, success, and resilience of women. For instance, the movie *'Always Be My Maybe'* (2019) depicts the story of a successful and empowered chef who builds her career through hard work, talent, and confidence challenging the perception of women as limited ambition.

3.3 The presentation of African-American women in Hollywood

The history of African American women's portrayal in film goes back to the time of slavery. During this period, black women were maltreated by their white owners for reproduction and entertainment. They were treated as objects of amusement for white owners and their guests. Hollywood movies have often stereotyped black women as the "Mammy", which is a desexualized, overweight, and fiercely loyal domestic servant, frequently serving as a nurturing figure for white families. To explain this concept, Estrada (2017) states that, The Mammy stereotype has changed since its highly exaggerated portrayal in the nineteenth

century, which artists created to show their idea of an enslaved person. In 1939, the American movie *'Gone with The Wind'* produced by David O.Selzinck is a better illustration for the previously mentioned archetype. However, the 21st century has witnessed a positive push for more authentic representations of black women in American Cinema. More narratives portray black women as leaders, showcasing their resilience and intelligence. To further clarify this, Mayo (2010) states

Several of the interviewees mentioned that in cases where Blacks in films and television shows created by blacks, the images were more positive. Specifically, interviewees named Tyler Perry as a producer and creator that depicts Blacks and more specifically Black women in positive roles.

To exemplify the previous point, cinematic works like *'The Woman King'* (2022) directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood and *'Till'* (2022) directed by Chinonye Chukwu challenges these established stereotypes. Oki (2023) explains that *'The Woman King'* is part of a larger movement within contemporary cinema to diversify storytelling.'

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Kress and van Leeuwen's Reading Images: Grammar of Visual Design

Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2006) are prominent figures in discourse analysis, particularly known for developing Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Their work extends the scope of traditional discourse analysis to encompass diverse semiotic modalities relevant to modern communications meaning construction, which is different from one period and location to another. This theory, which is introduced in 2006, includes patterns of representation, interaction and composition.

4.1.1 Representational metafunction

They are the participants that are represented in the visual tool or image like people, objects, and animals forming a visual syntax of a given image by connecting those participants to each other. In addition, these visuals structures of representation can be either narrative or conceptual.

4.1.1.1 Narrative Representation

This process is indicated through a vector which is literal or implied lines that indicate the actions, events, actors, and moments that are happening in the image causing a subsequent response stemming directly from the initial reaction.

Example: A boy kicking a ball is a narrative representation.

4.1.1.2 Conceptual Representation

This representation fits in three processes. First, the classification process, that shows numbers belonging to a category. Second, analytical process showing parts of a whole including diagrams. Third, the symbolic process shows identity and meaning.

4.1.2 Interactional metafunction

They are referred to what the image is presenting to the viewer, inviting them to interpret and interact with the story or perspective of the image. Moreover, this can be achieved through various visual elements consisting in gaze, social distance, and angle of interaction.

4.1.2.1 Gaze

It is the element that indicates if the participants initiate a direct or a passive look to the viewer. Each can create a connection and a sense of unease or evoke feelings of introspection and isolation.

4.1.2.2 Social distance

In visual design, this concept refers to perceived distance between the audience, the viewer and the participants in an image. According to Kress and Leeuwen(2006), the social distance between the participants and the viewer falls under the following four different types and meanings as the intimate distance is defined by a close up shot in which the face is the only thing that is shown, indicating personal closeness and intimacy, whereas the personal distance is defined by a medium close up shot, showing the head and the shoulders of characters indicating a personal interaction. Then there is the social type with a medium shot that shows the waste up to the head, to indicate a polite or professional distance. Lastly comes the interpersonal type of social distance defined by a long shot, showing the whole figure or more to indicate detachment and objectivity. The distinguished types of social distances matter to communicate a certain and structured relationship with the audience.

4.1.2.3 Angle of presentation

It is also called the point of view, which consists in the position from which the participants are positioned in the visual design and it is divided into two angles: the horizontal and vertical angle. The horizontal angle of representation to the orientation of the viewer in relation to the captured subject in a frontal or oblique point of view indicating detachment or

attachment, creating a sense of balance and stability when elements aligned in frontal point of view, it also creates a sense of movement when elements are aligned in oblique point of view. However the vertical angle of representation refers to the orientation of elements and the viewers who observe the participants from high, low or eye to eye vertical angles that convey power and dominance, vulnerability or equality.

4.1.3 Compositional metafunction

In visual semiotics, compositional patterns refer to the systematic organization of visual elements according to the following three fundamental metafunctional systems: information value, salience, and framing. To further clarify these terms, the specific arrangement of these systems within a visual text serves to construct and convey meaning.

4.1.3.1 Information value

In this instance, elements are given importance based on their placement in the composition also it is divided into left versus right, top versus bottom and centre versus margin. Starting with left versus right in which the elements placed on the left of the image are the ones that are disregarded by the receiver because they look familiar or culturally accepted by the receiver. Unless elements placed on the right mean or enhance which strikes the attention of the receiver. Next, the top versus bottom, while the top portion of the image is associated with ideals like emotions ideas, hopes and imaginations. However, in the bottom portion, everything is related to reality like facts, information and details. Lastly, centre versus margin in which the elements in the centre serve as the most important elements that transfer the meaning of the visual. Therefore, they are surrounded by the elements on the margin which are considered second place and supportive to the ones in the centre.

4.1.3.2 Salience

Salience plays a crucial role when it comes to shape the audience's interpretation and understanding of the visual image. It is achieved through various visual means such as size,

color, foreground and background placements, contrast and focus, in other words salience is basically about drawing attention to certain elements in order to stand out and attract the viewers' attention on specific arrangements rather than the others as larger elements and higher contrast between light and dark are perceived more essential, Kress and Leeuwen (2006, P.212).

4.1.3.3 Framing

This part describes how visual elements in an image are connected or separated, by which it influences how viewers understand the relationships between different parts. This connection or separation happens through the presence or absence of framing devices like breaks, lines and vectors, as well as through similarities in color and shape, and the use of empty space. These factors determine how linked or distinct the elements appear to the viewer. Kress and Leeuwen (2006, p.214-218).

4.2 Kellner's Media Culture

Media Culture theory examines how Media shape social values, beliefs and behaviors. This concept is introduced by Douglas Kellner, who is an American Professor in the department of Education, Gender studies and Germanic Languages during the 1990's. Later on, this theory has been published in his book entitled "Media Culture: Cultural studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and Postmodern " in 1995. Likewise, Kellner argues that media culture is shaping our identities and understanding of the world in contemporary society. Furthermore, it is a tool that inclines hidden messages that are applied to everyday life, politics, society and culture. To illustrate his vision, Kellner breaks his idea into the following aspects:

4.2.1 Identity Construction

In certain media tools, the identity construction of some characters is depicted in a specific way depending on their patterns of dressing, positions, sizes and colors to form a well

detailed and defined identity to exhibit. This exhibition of identity shapes perception and interpretation of the viewers on the role of the character or the plot in general.

4.2.2 Ideological Critique

When it comes to the detection of over generalized ideals and stereotypical images that are embedded in pictorial content, Kellner emphasized on the ideological critiques. These latter aim to expose how they reflect and reproduce as well as reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies identified through power classes, race, traditional gender roles and promoting beauty ideas. Also, this includes who is behind the production of the images and for which purpose, because it is estimated that visuals or texts are neither objective nor neutral, in fact they are shaped by the people who work behind the scenes, therefore it is all a set of calculated work to present a specific information that influences the targeted audiences.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews the social construction of women representation in the American cinema of the 21st century. It is structured into four primary sections. The initial section discussed the evolution and foundations of Semiotics along with social Semiotics. The second section delved into movie posters, examining their evolution, types and characteristics. The third section dealt with the portrayal of women of white, Black, and Asian in American movie posters produced in the 21st century. The fourth and final section dealt with the theoretical Framework of Kress and Leeuwen's Reading images (2006) and Kellner's Media culture (1995).

Chapter Two

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to the methodology adopted for this study aiming to semiotically analyze gender and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters of the 21st century. The chapter is composed of three main sections. The first section presents the research methods. The second section explains the data collection procedure, followed by the corpus and rationale and a detailed description of the corpus. The third section deals with the data analysis along with the explanation of the Qualitative Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and the Thematic Analysis.

1 Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative multimodal critical discourse analysis since the aim of this work is to examine how visual elements in American movie posters of the 21st century construct and communicate gender and cultural stereotypes. The findings are then interpreted through the lenses of Kellner's (1995) *Media culture* and Kress and Leeuwen (2006), *Reading Images Theory*. This research adopts a qualitative approach combining visual and thematic analysis to investigate gender and cultural stereotypes of the 21st century American movies. This paired method fosters a well understood examination of both visual elements and chronic themes, delivering a gradual comprehension of how these stereotypes are composed and communicated. Starting with the visual analysis which is guided through Kress and Leeuwen *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006) that consists of representation, interaction, and composition forming a comprehensive system in which representation portrays the participants and actions on the poster, followed by interactive elements where the gaze indicates the interaction of the participants and the viewers, in addition to the social distance and the angles that convey the power dynamics and involvement. Lastly, the composition level, which is the element that studies layouts, colors,

salience, and framing guiding the viewer attention on specific details and influencing their perception.

2 Data Collection procedure

In qualitative research, data collection methods aim to explore complex topics by assembling multiple ideas, information, and theories rather than focusing on statistics and numbers. To collect such data, researchers use various ways such as interviews, journals, e-books, focus groups, observations, case studies, and other ways to gather as much as reliable information to include in their research.

This research adopts secondary data collection procedure to analyze the selected movie posters such as previous studies, books, and websites involving a critical analysis and interpretation of these procedures to identify gaps and justify the research questions.

2.1 Corpus and Rationale

The corpus of the present research study includes 08 movie posters depicting different themes such as: drama, comedy, history, thriller, Action and romance which are allied to gender and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters of the 21st century. Precisely, the corpus includes the following movies:

Legally Blonde (2001) - Comedy/Romance

Barbie (2023) - Comedy

Little women (2019) - Romance/Drama

The princess Diaries (2001) - Comedy

Selma (2014) - Historical Drama

The Help (2011) - Historical Drama

Hidden Figures (2016) - Historical/Drama/Comedy

Mulan (2020) - Action/ Adventure

More information is found in Appendix A.

The previously mentioned eight movie posters have been selected as the main data to this research for the following reasons. First, the movies shown by these posters are much known in the American movie industry. Each poster describes the main idea and theme of that movie. Thus, the semiotic analysis of gender and cultural stereotypes is easily understood by a wide range of people. Second, the selection of eight posters reveals the diversity and variation of different genres like (drama, romance, comedy, historical drama and thriller). In addition to the cultural and ethnic representations of social classes, nationalities, and race. Also, it clarifies gender representation and more specifically women, and expose the different visual styles. Moreover, the 21st century is a very remarkable period in the American movie industry. Therefore, analyzing eight movie posters of that period is helpful to explain the semiotic meaning behind these visual elements. Finally, the popularity of these movies breaks the viewing record; consequently, different perspectives are created by the viewers. These eight movies provide valuable insights into the way in which visual media can shape society's perception towards gender and cultural stereotypes of the 21st century.

2.2 Description of the corpus

The corpus of this research comprising eight American movie posters from the 21st century is selected to explore gender and cultural stereotypes across a range of cinematic themes. These themes include: drama, comedy, history, thriller, action, and romance are visually represented in posters through imagery and color palettes. For example, posters like *Selma*, *Little Women*, *Mulan*, and *Hidden Figures* employs dark tones that suggest that the film holds a dark and mysterious atmosphere that evokes the viewer's curiosity and emotional

expectations. Conversely, posters utilizing light and vivid colors with eye catching images are likely to convey a joyous and playful tone. Movies like *Barbie*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Help*, and *The Princess Diaries* are a better illustration of it.

3. Data Analysis

Movie posters on Gender and Cultural stereotypes in a selection of American movie posters from the 21st century are investigated using a social and cultural semiotic approach. In order to analyze the gathered data we use Kress and Van Leeuwen *Reading Images Theory* and Kellner's *Media Culture*. This procedure involved a critical analysis and interpretation to systematically decode the visual components including imagery and color palettes. For example, posters like *Selma*, *Little Women*, *Mulan*, and *Hidden Figures* employ dark tones which suggest that the movie holds dark and mysterious atmosphere that evokes the curiosity of the viewers and emotional expectations. Conversely, posters utilizing light and vivid colors with eye catching images are likely to convey a joyous and playful tone and movies like *Barbie*, *Legally Blonde*, *the Help*, and *The Princess Diaries* are a better illustration of it.

3.1 Qualitative Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis QMCDA

This study employs a qualitative multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine how gender and cultural stereotypes are visually and textually represented in American movie posters of the 21st century. This analysis systematically adopting the framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen(2006) which provides the analytical tools for discussing the visual grammar of posters and explore the semiotic resources like gaze, composition, salience and the representation of social vector through which the portrayal of gender is conducted. This detailed visual analysis then feeds into the critical lens provided by Kellner's media culture theory (1995) which emphasizes the role of media texts in providing and circulating dominant ideologies in shaping identity. For instance, by consistently showcasing particular types of

characters, lifestyles, and values as ideal or normal, dominant ideologies become ingrained in the collective consciousness.

3.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is another method used in this research to explicate the implicit meaning behind visual designs, making it effectively aligned with Kellner's (1995) media culture framework that focuses on the promotion of dominant ideologies on media and its role in shaping public opinion encouraging audiences to be aware of the communicated messages. Also, his emphasis on questioning the presented visuals. This shows that Kellner's points are well positioned with thematic analysis considering that it is functional to deconstruct the multiple layers of media texts allowing researchers to depict the surface level themes and highlight the social and cultural illustrations embedded in media and identify the recurrent images and archetypes such as race, gender, and power dynamics within visual texts like movie posters. This combination fosters a deep and meaningful examination of the ideologies, cultural significance, and the way they reinforce or break social norms.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology acquired to analyze the movie posters. It is structured into three initial sections, along with their corresponding sub-sections. The first section discusses the research method adopted in this study. The second section presents the data collection procedure followed by a corpus and a comprehensive description of it. The third section examines the data analysis procedure preceded by an explanation of the Qualitative Multimodal Discourse Analysis (QMCA) and the thematic analysis.

Chapter Three

Presentation of the findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis concerning gender and cultural stereotypes within a corpus of 8 movie posters that depict the notion of gender and cultural stereotypes of the American cinema in the 21st century. These visuals are analyzed through the use of two frameworks. The first includes Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of Grammar of visual design under the principles of three metafunctions: The representational, the interactional, and the compositional levels. The second framework is the one of Douglas Kellner (1995) Media culture theory, which considers the broader social, cultural, and ideological contexts in which these posters are produced.

1. The Semiotic Analysis of Women in American movie posters of the 21st century

1.1 The Representational Metafunction

Movie Posters	Types of Participants	Description
Legally Blonde	conceptual	Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) smiles and directs her gaze away from the viewer. Indirectly inviting the viewer to engage with the overall story.
Barbie	Interactive	The poster presents the character off Barbie and ken looking straight at the viewers. Barbie is carried by ken while showing expressions of happiness and joy suggesting a narrative of adventure and amusement.
Little women	Conceptual	The poster presents the four March sisters looking from the window to the outside world which creates a lack of eye contact with the viewers. Also, there is no body movement and this gives it a conceptual meaning.
The Princess Diaries	Conceptual And Interactive	The poster depicts two characters, the queen Clarisse who contributes a direct interaction with the viewers whereas Mia is disengaged with the viewer making the representation both interactive and conceptual.
Selma	Conceptual	The poster depicts the main character of Martin Luther king Junior with other secondary character directing their gazes away from the viewers.
Hidden Figures	Interactive	The poster depicts three African- American women who are represented in a self assurance pose directing their gaze towards the viewer.
The Help	Conceptual And Interactive	The poster portrays two black and two white women .Each pair placed far from the other. The black women are dressed in gray colored maid uniforms standing up close to each other and whispering something, contrary to the white women who

		are wearing light pink floral dresses which transmits the message of social structures adopted in a conceptual representation which is also supported by the concepts of maids and privileged women, yet one of the white woman is directing her gaze towards the viewers creating an interactive representation.
Mulan	Conceptual	The poster depicts the character of Mulan as the central figure holding a sword. She is shown in a position where she is ready to take action directing her gaze toward the right of the poster avoiding any direct interaction. Consequently, it is a conceptual representation.

Table 1: Type of participants in movie posters of the 21st century.

Table one analyzes eight movie posters based on whether the participants are interactive or conceptual, providing a description for each. As it is specified in this presentation, posters like *Legally Blonde*, *Barbie*, and *Hidden Figures* are classified as interactive participants due to the direct gaze towards the viewers. Conversely, *Little Women*, *Selma*, and *Mulan* showcase conceptual participants through directing their gazes away from the viewers. *The Princess Diaries* incorporates both of conceptual and interactive elements. To explain this, Mia avoids eye contact. Thus it is a conceptual representation. The interactive element is shown through the queen Clarisse gaze. Lastly, *The Help* is another unique poster including both of interactive and conceptual elements. While the two black women and the white women are showcasing avoidance in body language, the white woman is facing the viewers inviting them to be part of the poster.

1.2 Interactive Metafunction

Movie posters	Social Distance	Point of view		Gaze
		Horizontal	Vertical	
<i>Legally Blonde</i>	Long Shot	Frontal	High vertical angle	Demand
<i>Barbie</i>	Medium Shot	Frontal	Eye-level	Demand
<i>Little women</i>	Medium Shot	Oblique	Eye-level	Offer
<i>The Princess Diaries</i>	Long- Shot	Frontal And Oblique	Eye-level	Demand and offer

Selma	Close Shot	Oblique	High vertical angle	Offer
Hidden Figures	Long-Shot	Frontal	Eye level	Demand
The Help	Long-Shot	Oblique	Eye level	Demand and Offer
Mulan	Long Shot	Oblique	High vertical angle	Offer

Table 2: Social distance: point of view, and gaze of women in American movie posters of the 21st century.

Table 2 analyzes distinct approaches to social distance, point of view, and gaze. Posters like *Legally Blonde* and *Hidden figures* apply a long shot social distance with an eye-level providing equality with the viewers and create a demand gaze where characters directly engage the viewer. Similarly, the poster of *Barbie* employs a medium shot with a frontal point of view and establishes a demand gaze to foster direct interaction with the viewer. Conversely, the four other posters like *Mulan*, *Little Women*, *The Help*, and *Selma* are depicted in oblique angles with different social distances of medium, close, and long shots. They as well feature an offer gaze as they do not demand attention or a direct response from the audience. Finally, the princess diaries movie poster is represented in uniqueness and depth because it includes both of an offer and demand images along with a frontal and oblique point of view without forgetting to mention that it is a long-shot social distance.

1.3 Compositional Metafunction

MOVIE POSTERS	Information value	Saliency	Framing
Legally Blonde	The character “Elle” is placed at the centre of the poster. This indicates that she is the principle element conveying the main information	The size and the bright pink colors make Elle the most salient element that immediately draws the viewer’s attention along with the title.	Despite the absence of frame, the compositional arrangement of elements within the <i>Legally Blonde</i> poster subtly establishes a degree

			of visual detachment around the central figure with the background.
Barbie	Looking at how the poster is arranged, Barbie's placement at a high and central position establishes her as the most prominent character within the movie's visual narrative. However, Ken's position at the bottom of the poster indicates a less dominant stance in the visual.	Barbie's bright clothes and pose also make her more visible to the viewers. Additionally, the prominent display of the title "Barbie" serves to attract the viewer's attention and establish the film's main focus.	the way they are positioned with the colorful background and the words around them makes it well framed
Little women	The eldest sister placement at the right of the poster represent the ideas that the viewer might already be aware of. Whereas, the younger sister placement at the left side of the poster represents the new ideas that the viewers will discover in the future. The center of the poster depicting the March sisters with their sense of love and unity.	The characters are further enhancing their salience against the more muted background.	The four depicted women are well combined together.
The Princess Diaries	The title "THE PRINCESS DIARIES" at the top represents the ideal theme. The positioning might subtly contrast a more traditional representation of royalty with a modern element. Both women are centrally placed, signifying their	The two women are salient through visual prominence of the crowns and accessories.	The soft background serves to draw attention at the subjects, and the proximity of the figures visually frames their relationship.

	importance.		
Selma	The top includes Martin Luther King's face and the American flag in the background representing identity and vision especially with his gaze that reinforces an outlook for a dream or a goal.	The elements are well complemented in dark colors, serious expressions and elegant clothes along with their wondering eyes which hide some unspoken words. MLK firm posture communicates his role of leadership as he is the most salient element. Additionally to other vectors as the red title SELMA which creates a color contrast with the rest of the elements suggesting the historical event.	All of the elements are presented in unity; every piece is well linked with the other forming a visual cohesion and highlighting solidarity and a shared purpose.
Hidden Figures	The women positioned in the centre of the poster are more prominent. They are also put from left to right aligning with Western Reading conventions in order to unveil the hidden contributions behind the launching rocket.	The salience of the participants is indicated through their grayish professional uniforms which create a contrast with the bright sky making the attention go to the women along with their strong postures that connect with the rocket to establish a meaning of achievement.	The participants demonstrate a close connection among them, there are no clues of separation featuring unity
The Help	The top presents the title " The Help" along with the vector 'change begins with a whisper' as ideal concepts illustrating support and service during a period of time where help was ideal , whereas the bottom reflects the maids and the white women representing the reality of the racial conflicts as they are distanced from each other .	The color choice of purple and yellow as complimentary colors on tie color palette draws the attention of the audience, in addition to the contrast of clothing style where the maids are wearing pale colored uniforms and the whites wearing light feminine dresses showcasing a visual hierarchy and cultural inequality supported by the maids standing and the white women sitting on the bench.	The image of all four women who are placed against the same yellow background, says that they are all interlinked.

Mulan	Mulan is positioned almost in the center of the poster, showcasing her as the core of the story. The sky in the background occupies an ideal world of aspiration whereas the battle field or the earth occupies the real world that is illustrated in the weapons and the ground Mulan stands on.	Mulan is the most salient participant, due to her central place, her dynamic stand, the contrast between her red traditional clothes , her armor , her dark hair creating and the bright sky behind her all along with the sword that is pointed to the ground to lead the viewer's eyes to the bottom part .	The elements are well connected.

Table 3: Information value, salience, and framing of women in American movie posters of the 21st century.

Table 3 distinct approaches to information value, salience, and framing. This table discusses that most of characters positioned in the poster are considered as the main focus of the movie. Moreover, the element of salience that helps in capturing the viewers attention is mainly recognized through larger size, catchy colors, and positioning. Finally, most of the posters elements like Barbie, Little Women, the Princess Diaries, Selma, Hidden Figures, The Help, and Mulan are connected together and this is known as group identity. However, the poster of Legally Blonde stands for individuality and differentiation due to the discontinuities of colors.

2 The cultural Analysis of women in American movie posters according to Kellner’s Media culture

According to Kellner’s Media Culture, visual elements conduct certain identities and ideologies to either explicitly or implicitly transfer to the target audience. The following table is a convenient illustration for the depiction of identity and ideological critique.

2.1 The representation of identity and the ideological critique

Movie posters	The representation of identity	The ideological critique
Legally Blonde	The Legally Blonde poster constructs the Identity of the stereotypical «Dumb blonde " as she is portrayed in a whole pink outfit from head to toe perceived as feminine , pleasant and beautiful yet not as professional nor intelligent only dumb. It is also identified in contrast with the participants in the background who are wearing more formal looks in mostly trousers indicating her opposite character to the male dominated field, and her carrying books to prove that she actually holds knowledge regardless of her hyper feminine stereotypical picture makes a clear sign that her identity was marked only by her appearance.	The poster portrays traditional gender stereotypes where women care more about physical beauty or appearance while men care about academic and Rational goals, clearly showcased in their contradictory clothing (bright pink versus dark colors as blue). This also reveals the Western beauty standards by looking slim, being Blonde and fashionable to be more ideal and desirable to society. Moving to the position of Elle as confident, bigger and far away from the group and the background, reinforcing her individuality yet it indicates empowerment while she stands in the centre of male dominant areas making her seem as an outsider in a legal field having to carry a remarkable number of books to prove that she also can make it in what is stereotypically belongs to men professional ground .
Barbie	The identity of Barbie is related to the traditional stereotypical female and feminine beauty such as blonde hair and fair skin. Meanwhile Ken aligns with traditional masculine identity of a protector and provider. The contrast of blue and pink suggest the stereotypical of masculinity and femininity.	The muscular presentation of Ken and the glamorous representation of Barbie uncover the feminist message of the film which seems fun and aesthetic rather than political. Meanwhile the tagline she is everything he is just Ken, subverts traditional gender hierarchies adding to the appearance of Barbie that ties female empowerment to looks and consumption.
Little women	The poster constructs identity through the illustration of four little women in a setting of a past period. These women are close proximity sharing one gaze at the same window, dressing in the same style which identifies their familial bond and unity and shared experiences reinforcing an identity	By analyzing the poster , the Ideological critique that is expected is the tension between tradition and personal aspiration , where the women are all pictured together in traditional dresses while they are facing the light that comes from the outside of the window . This communicates

	<p>distribution through sisterhood and mutual support. Their dresses belong to a historical period of time which suggests the traditional female archetype of that era, also alluring to their struggles and aspirations which also help build their identities</p>	<p>women suppression and restraining their freedom inside a closed space. These Ideologies highlight the fact that cultural norms limit women's independence and empowerment.</p>
The Princess Diaries	<p>The Identity construction of characters on this poster is built through appearance, etiquette and social status suggesting that Identity is shaped through what you are rather than who you are in case of this ordinary girl who suddenly became a princess . The visual elements such as jewellery, dresses and make up, communicate the idea that femininity and beauty is something achieved through wealth and being part of a higher class since now the character is a princess and royal like her grandmother.</p>	<p>This poster falls under traditional femininity and class hierarchy Ideologies. It makes royalty look glamorous and something to dream about; also it transfers the message of being royal since birth makes the individual powerful rather than the challenges of being part of society. In addition to this, Mia one of the main characters on the poster had to go through a makeover in order to fit royalty standards in which translates into the pressure that a woman has to go through to change herself to fit societal expectations and play the role that is meant for her instead of questioning the rules , so she only adjusts her appearance to give a performance. Yet on this poster Mia smiles playfully and shows a naked neck and wears fun looking sunglasses to prove that no matter what she is she can still be herself and still be royal .</p>
Selma	<p>The identity that is represented in the poster is mainly the one of Martin Luther King Jr. as the core representative of the collective civil rights movement along side with other characters like his wife and other white political figures . He is not a solitary politician, he is a leader with cause, and he strives to lead his people to stand together against injustice and racism. His identity lays in being the hope and aspiration for freedom and gaining the justice that him and his supporters look for .</p>	<p>The Ideological critique of Selma poster lays in the representation of struggle and tension that an African American leader with a cause has to go through in order to fight for the freedom and rights of his people, as African Americans could not practice their right of voting in 1960s in the USA which makes the mission of a black activist or political figure an impossible goal to achieve in such ideals .</p>
Hidden Figures	<p>The Identity construction covers three African American women in professional uniforms walking ok</p>	<p>The poster is Ideologically critical to systematic racism and sexism for marginalising African</p>

	the NASA logo, forming an identity of strength and confidence and performing an essential role in unattainable domains like the space race in America . They are the demonstration of resilience and power that challenges and refuses the stereotypical identity of women incapacity of belonging in highly intelligence required fields.	American women contribution in the success at technological and scientific fields. The Ideological message promotes women empowerment and anti -racist revisionist narrative and a calk of collectivism in which every person regardless of race or gender have the complete ability to excel in intellectual domains.
The Help	The poster identifies two black maiden uniforms and two nicely dressed white women. The maids appearance is modest and passive while the White's depicted is more playfulness and relaxed atmosphere. There is clear inequality division of power among the black and white.	The four women positioning in the poster reinforces a historical racial hierarchy, where the black ones are standing and the white ones are relaxing on the bench. The Ideology highlights the white people dominance over the African American tribe. The bright atmosphere overshadows the racial and cultural discrimination and drifts away the focus on racism and class hierarchy as a serious matter.
Mulan	The identity of Mulan is portrayed as a strong, courageous, fearless warrior in a red traditional Chinese armor that is suited for men. She is heroic as any man in the battle field. Her identity challenges the Chinese cultural beliefs and even broadly across the world.	Mulan breaks gender stereotypes by challenging traditional roles for women. She is standing confidently symbolizing independence and empowerment. She is also destroying the Chinese traditional cultural norms. She is more embracing of the inclusive vision of heroism that goes beyond traditional and gender boundaries.

Table 4: The representation of identity and the ideological critique.

Table 4 analyzes how identity and ideological critique is represented in eight American movie posters. These movie posters considering Legally Blonde, Barbie, Little Women, The Princess Diaries, Selma, Hidden Figures, The Help, and Mulan construct character identities through clothing, visual cues, and societal roles. Moreover, the ideological messages of these movie posters highlight issues of beauty standards, gender stereotypes,

beauty standards, social hierarchy, empowerment or disempowerment and racial discrimination.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, this chapter has summoned the presentation of the 8 chosen posters as following: Legally Blonde, Princess Diaries, Little Women, Barbie, Selma, Hidden Figures, The Help, and Mulan which are analyzed according to Kress and Leeuwen (2006) *Reading Images Theory: Grammar of Visual Design* (2006) based on 3 key aspects: Representational, Interactional and Compositional metafunctions, in order to break down the visual elements of the posters step by step hand in hand with a thematic analysis that is complemented by Kellner's (1995) *Media Culture* framework which call upon the viewers, researchers and diverse audiences to easily depict the themes and concepts which are in these analyzed posters revolve around women empowerment, gender stereotypes, racial inequality, social and cultural ideologies in addition to the resistance to all of these universal phenomenon in the American movie industry explicitly communicated through media outlets.

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the present study. It is divided into three parts. First, it discusses the findings of the social semiotic analysis of the eight selected American movie posters of the 21st century. Second, it discusses the results of the cultural perspective analysis. Third, it discusses the themes of the selected American movie posters. This chapter aims at providing answers to the research questions postulated in the introduction and at checking the validity of the advanced hypotheses.

1. Discussion of the Results Obtained from the Visual Analysis of American movie posters from the 21st century.

The first metafunction highlighting ‘**Visual Grammar**’ is the representational metafunction that combines major processes namely the narrative and conceptual process that gather the analysis of participants’ actions, events, process of change, and transitory spatial arrangements. The second is the interactional metafunction which covers the way relationships between the participants depicted in the visual and the interactive ones are made. The interactive meaning according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) has three dimensions: the gaze, the social distance and the point of view. The final metafunction in ‘Visual Grammar’ is the compositional. As (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006) suggests in their book, the compositional metafunction is the way in which the representational and interactive elements are related to each other or the way they form a meaningful whole. The compositional metafunction consists of three interrelated systems: information value, salience, and framing.

1.1 Visual Analysis of Legally Blonde Poster

Regarding the representation metafunction, the gaze of “Elle Wood” towards the right side of the poster, contributes significantly to a conceptual representation. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of “Elle Woods” is an offer, which piques the curiosity of the viewers. Moreover, the gaze of background figures is directed towards “Elle”

emphasizing her dominant aura, confident disposition and intellectual capacity. Furthermore, social distance is conveyed through a full-body-shot, which fosters a sense of involvement and facilitates the analyses of the personality of the character. The central figure of “Elle” Woods is positioned from the front, and the background elements are presented from a relatively straight-on perspective. Consequently, the horizontal angle of “Elle” and the participants is captured from a frontal point of view. Additionally, the high vertical angle of “Elle” indicates her power and dominance over the participants. Whereas, the background characters are represented at an eye level with the viewers where equality is established. At the compositional level, the position of the title *‘Legally Blonde’* and the tagline *‘This Summer Go Blonde’* are positioned at the top, representing the ideal message of the film. The central positioning of ‘Elle’ indicates her important and prominent role in the narrative. In terms of salience, the vibrant pink colors provides a stark contrast against the subdued background tones, and despite the absence of frame, the compositional arrangement of elements within the legally blonde poster isolates the central figure from the background.

1.2 Visual Analysis of Barbie

Regarding of the representation metafunction, the visual arrangement suggest a narrative of adventure and amusement due to the direct gaze. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of Barbie and Ken is demand gaze which indicates a strong sense of invitation that directly engages the viewer to watch the movie. Furthermore, social distance is conveyed through a medium-body-shot for Ken to an almost a full –body- shot for Barbie who gives a sense of approachability and connection, enabling the viewer to perceive the characters emotions along with their immediate surroundings. The central figures are positioned from the front, creating a sense of direct engagement. Additionally, the prominent position of Barbie suggests a level of equality with the viewers. Whereas, the position of Ken at the bottom of the poster indicates a less dominant stance in the visual. At the

compositional level, the left side of the poster often represents given information of palm trees establishes the location and tone. However, the right side represents the new information of the release date, where the viewer is supposed to focus on. The names of the characters and the tagline are the ideal, which designates the main units of the visual having the lead role. On the other hand, the bottom of the poster represents Ken as a character with a minor role. The character of Barbie and the title are placed at the centre, indicating their importance. In addition, the color palette of *Barbie* movie poster includes interesting shades of blue and pink. As it is stated by (Ode, 2023), ‘The blue color on the poster depicts the meaning of loyalty and trust in the characters in the Barbie movie. The color pink here has a pleasant connotation and it is associated with feelings of joy and happiness’. In terms of salience, the vibrant shades of pink represented in the title, the dress, accessories and the highly noticeable size of Barbie make her the most salient element. Finally, the position of Barbie and Ken are along with the colorful background makes it visually linked and well framed. To further explain this Anggraheni et al. (2024) states that, ‘Barbie’s distinctive pink is frequently paired with blue as a complementing hue’.

1.3 Visual Analysis of Little Women

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual analysis of *Little Women* is a conceptual representation. The March sisters are looking towards the window with no body movement. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of the characters is not directing the viewers, significantly making it an offer image. Furthermore, social distance is conveyed through a medium –shot that enables the viewers to analyze the characters’ facial expressions along with the environment surrounding them. Additionally, the vertical angle is at an eye level, suggesting equality between the viewers and the characters. The figures of the March sisters are presented from an oblique angle. At the compositional level, the eldest sister placement at the right of the poster represent the starting point of the movie and the ideas that

the viewer might be aware of. Whereas the younger sister placement at the left side of the poster represents the new information that the viewer will discover in the coming events. The green plants and white flowers represented at the top of the poster suggest freedom and hope. However, the bottom of the poster represents the title which is the real or prominent detail of the poster. The center of the poster focuses on the March sisters showcasing their strong bond and unity. In terms of salience, the characters are further enhancing their salience against the muted background. Finally, the position of the March sisters with the background makes it visually linked and well framed.

1.4 Visual Analysis of the Princess Diaries

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual analysis of *The Princess Diaries* represents both of a conceptual and interactive representation. To explain this, the conceptual representation is shown in the glasses which are considered as a barrier to a direct contact with the viewers, whereas the narrative representation is represented through the queen Clarisse direct contact and interaction with the viewers. From the interactional metafunction, the queen Clarisse directs her gaze towards the viewer which makes it a demand image that invites audience interaction to engage with the narrative of the movie. However, the gaze of the character 'Mia' is an offer and this is represented through the glasses that break the connection with the audience. Furthermore, social distance is conveyed through long-shot, which helps for a clear observation of their facial expressions. Additionally, the eye-level angle promotes a sense of equality. The queen Clarisse is represented from an oblique point of view, whereas 'Mia' is represented at a frontal one. The eye-level angle promotes a sense of equality. At the compositional level, the title at the top of the poster represents the ideal theme. Both of the two women are centrally placed, signifying their importance. In terms of salience, it is achieved through the close framing of the characters along with their attire, accessories and attire. Finally, the soft background serves to

focus attention on the subjects and the proximity of the figures visually frames their relationship.

1.5 Visual Analysis of Selma

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual Analysis of *Selma* represents is conceptual. The poster is rather complex and versatile collecting multiple participants but shapes ‘Martin Luther King’ as the main participant gradually followed by Coretta Scott King, Annie Lee Cooper, President Lyndon B. Johnson and James Bevel as secondary characters. Also, the marchers who surround the small figure of ‘Martin Luther King’ and the U.S.A flag in the background showcasing a historical significance to the country. From the interactional metafunction, the participants on the poster give an offer gaze, leading the viewers to observe, analyze and reflect on the image inviting them to witness instead of interact. Furthermore, the social distance is a close-up shot because ‘Martin Luther King’ is placed near the viewer comparing to the other participants who are gradually far placed, and this creates an intimate distance. The figures are presented from an oblique and frontal point of view. The marches placed a low angle creates a representative scene and ‘Martin Luther King’ placement at a high level on the poster indicates his symbolic role when leading the marches. At the compositional level, the top of the poster includes the face of Martin Luther King. The American flag is at the background of the poster, representing identity and a sense of belonging. When it comes to salience, the elements are well complemented in dark colors, serious expressions and formal attire. Martin Luther King’s posture communicates his role of leadership as he is the most salient element with the red title which creates a color contrast with the rest of the elements suggesting the historical events of the movie. Finally, all of the elements are presented in unity and every piece is well linked with the other forming a visual cohesion and highlighting solidarity and shared purpose.

1.6 Visual Analysis of *The Help*

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual arrangement of this poster depicts four women, two African-American maids and two white women. Only one white woman is facing the audience, inviting them to interact with the viewers, whereas the other women are directing their gazes away from the viewers, creating balance between both of a conceptual and interactive representation. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of the two African-American maids along with Mrs. Hilly is an offer, allowing the viewers to observe rather than directly engage with the viewers. On the other hand, Mrs. Skeeter establishes a demand gaze looking straight at the viewer inviting them to engage with the story similarly to her role as the writer of the story. Furthermore, the social distance is a long-shot. To further explain this, the poster allows the viewers to see the characters from head to their feet, including the physical appearance and clothing. Additionally, the vertical angle is at an eye-level, fostering equality between the participants and the viewers. The figure of the four depicted women are presented from a frontal angle. At the compositional level, the top of the poster presents the title "*The Help*" along with the vector "*change begins with a whisper*" as ideal concepts illustrating support and service during a period where help was ideal, whereas the bottom reflects the maids and the white women representing the reality of the racial conflicts as they are distanced from each other. In terms of salience, the color choice of purple and yellow are complimentary colors that draw the attention of the audience, in addition to the contrast of clothing style where the maids are wearing light feminine dresses showcasing a visual hierarchy and cultural inequality supported by the maids standing and the white women sitting on the bench. Finally, despite the social division, the image of all four women who are placed against the same yellow background, says that they are all interlinked and share the same story, same issue, and same living atmosphere.

1.7 Visual Analysis of Hidden Figures

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual arrangement of this poster depicts three African-American women with poised postures and commanding gazes indicating empowerment and self-assurance, contributing significantly to an interactive representation. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of the three women is a demand, inviting the viewers to engage with the narrative of the story. Furthermore, the social distance is a long-shot, enabling the viewer to analyze the characters and connect with them. The figures of the women are at a frontal point of view, and the vertical angle is at an eye-level, creating equality with the viewers. At the compositional level, the women in the center of the poster are the most prominent in the poster along with the title. The sentence 'based on a true story' written at the top of the poster is considered as the ideal or main unit of the visual. However, the bottom of the poster represents the real or practical information having a subservient role including the date of release and the NASA logo. In terms of salience, it is portrayed through the color palette of grey, blue, and green which create a contrast with the background. Finally, the participants demonstrate a close connection between them featuring power and unity.

1.8 Visual Analysis of Mulan

Regarding the representation metafunction, the visual arrangement of Mulan in a battlefield directing her gaze away from the viewers, contributing significantly to a conceptual representation. From the interactional metafunction, the gaze of Mulan is an offer, which creates a sense of curiosity and initiates observation reinforcing her character and inviting the viewer to analyze her action rather than immediately engage with her. Furthermore, social distance is conveyed through a long-shot, which allows the viewers to connect with the heroic figure of the character. The figure of Mulan is positioned from an oblique point of view.

Additionally, the high vertical angle of Mulan indicates her power and dominance leading the viewer to perceive her strong character. At the compositional level, Mulan is positioned almost in the center of the poster, showcasing her as the core of the story. The sky in the background occupies an ideal world of aspiration while the battle field occupies the real world that is illustrated in the ground that Mulan stands on. In terms of salience, Mulan is the most salient participant due to the contrast between her dynamic stand, red traditional clothes, armor, and long dark hair. Finally, the elements are well connected. The battle atmosphere, the spread arrows, and the solid ground embrace Mulan, signifying her belonging and attachment to the earth she is fighting for.

2. Discussion of the Results obtained from the Cultural Analysis of American movie posters from the 21st Century

This part discusses the results of the cultural analysis of eight American movie posters from the 21st century, considering gender and cultural stereotypes, using the framework of '*Media culture*' introduced by Douglas Kellner (1995).

2.1 Cultural stereotypes in *Legally Blonde* (2001)

Legally Blonde is a reflection of the gender stereotype questioning the intellectual abilities of American blonde females in the American judicial system. The female protagonist Elle is featured as a beautiful blonde, who struggles to be accepted in the Harvard Law School, referred to as a male dominated field. In modern American society, beautiful, fashionable, and attractive females like Elle are stereotyped with stupidity as 'girly girls'. Meanwhile, male characters are more often portrayed with a macho, muscular, and serious physical appearance and intellectual capacities. This stereotype suggests that women are more often seen as sexual objects, and their physical beauty is valued more than their abilities in other areas.

Along with Elle, other Blonde female characters in *Legally Blonde*, are depicted with interests and activities that are culturally stereotypical for women such as shopping, going to the hair salon, and dressing up. Meanwhile, male characters are often portrayed with interests and activities that are stereotypical for men, such as physical sports, intellectual activities and heavy administrative careers. These stereotypes show that women are perceived as weak creatures that are less serious in performing activities that are considered important like justice and law as depicted in the movie.

Moreover, *Legally Blonde* stereotypically showcases, female characters as talkative, low-pitched while speaking, while male characters are more often depicted with a firm, authoritative, and masculine way of talk. This stereotype suggests that women are seen as not serious and lack leadership skills. According to Xiaoyu (2025, p.49) 'male discourse tends to be more direct, concise and authoritative, while female discourse nuances and euphemistic vocabulary'. Also, the way men and women speak can influence people's perception of gender abilities and leadership. In many situations, men are seen as more assertive, confident, and authoritative, while women are perceived as more emotional, less serious, and less capable of leadership. Like Elle Woods, modern American blonde women are considered too ambitious; therefore, they are often stigmatized and negatively judged from society, especially in professional settings. According to Lore et al. (2025) 'women in male-dominated industries face pervasive stereotypes such as being seen as less capable leaders'. Women who dare to pursue successful careers are often seen as "unfeminine" or "too aggressive" and are overlooked in the workplace. Elle's character, which is the opposite, makes her even more underestimated. However, in the end, Elle managed to change their perception of her and proved that women can also succeed in the field of law without having to lose their feminine qualities. By challenging these stereotypes, *Legally Blonde* encourages viewers to see blonde women beyond their physical appearance or social roles. As Lore et al. (2025) states, 'Elle's

evolution from a fashion – Centric socialite to a proficient attorney challenges these stereotypes, establishing *Legally Blonde* as a critique of the interplay between gender, intellect, and professional efficacy’.

2.2 Cultural Stereotypes in Barbie (2023)

Barbie epitomizes a conventionally attractive white woman: fair-skinned, long glamorous blond hair, blue eyes, and a slim figure. For many generations, the doll symbolizes what society expects girls to aspire to but also highlights what they are not. *Barbie* movie culturally stereotypes other minority groups women like Blacks, Asians, Latin Americans and others. The movie stereotypes offer also a limited representation of women that historically excluded non-white, working-class, and marginalized groups. In Kellner’s words, *Barbie* movie as a doll ‘is compliant with or reinforces gender stereotypes’ through her reliance on traditionally feminine markers, pink and bright colors, beauty, and sisterhood constantly reinforcing gender norms. Yet *Barbie* seeks to reinterpret her iconic legacy through a more positive and inclusive perspective of “doing gender” (Lorber, 1994) by showcasing not only one *Barbie* but a ‘feminist’ world of Barbies. The movie attempts to break down the unrealistic expectations tied to *Barbie* as an ‘ideal woman.’ It critiques how patriarchy, society, and capitalism have historically transformed *Barbie* from an inspirational figure for young girls into a tool for reinforcing racist beauty standards and restrictive social norms. Instead, *Barbie* strives to reclaim her as a symbol of empowerment, raising debate about whether its feminist narrative resonates beyond American audience and adequately. Written primarily for white, upper- and middle-class audiences, the movie neglects the experiences of marginalized groups, such as Arab and working-class women. For example, the absence of Black or Asian female characters representing these identities perpetuates their invisibility in stereotypical feminist and cultural discourses. This exclusion reinforces critiques of ‘white

feminism' and highlights the need for more inclusive and empowering approaches to women of all races and ethnicities.

2.3 Cultural Stereotypes in Little Women (2019)

Little Women is one of the movie posters that demonstrates cultural and gender stereotype with reference to patriarchy. This movie is an adaptation of Little Women novel by Louisa May Alcott, who used her experience in the American Civil War and her life in her household as her inspiration to write this literature (Desmawati, 2018). Therefore, its story takes place in the Victorian conservative period during the American Civil War, in which almost every aspect of women's ability and character was dictated and determined by their biologically based gender. Moreover, during the American Civil War, women faced a variety of problems, including violence and dominance due to rigid conservative values. American society had a prejudged belief that women were weak, and that they could only work a little and were unable to work as hard as men, therefore their roles were limited to the household, serving the males in the family and child bearing. Little Women's story focuses on the March sisters, Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy, who live with their mother. They have to struggle to survive while their father is in the American Civil War. The movie challenges the traditional stereotypical roles of American women by portraying the lives of Jo, who wants to be a writer, Meg who marries a poor teacher, Beth who gets scarlet fever, and Amy who wants to become an artist and represents the family's best chance at a happy marriage. There are many stereotypes that these four girls have to face during their lifetime, such as being a lady, marriage, career, and social class. The female protagonist, Jo does not want to follow the tradition and comply with the stereotypes. However, since most people in society do not accept different conducts, she has a lot of difficulty living while doing what she really wants. The movie clearly reflects women's lives in one of America's most conservative periods, when women had to be strict with their traditional gender stereotypes in almost every aspect

of their lives, such as occupations, behaviors, appearance, and personalities. According to (Tjahjono, p.7) “for years, women have been stereotyped as primarily skilled in chores like house cooking, cleaning...etc.”

2.4 Cultural Stereotypes in The Princess Diaries (2001)

Princess Diaries questions the gender and cultural stereotype of white women's royalty and leadership through media in a patriarchal male dominated setting. It demonstrates white women leaders' struggles with self-confidence and actualization through Princess Mia's breaking of the norms of ideal femininity, and the role model impact that she has on young women. The movie breaks the traditional royal stereotype of female obedience and dependence by showcasing Mia's confidence and her quest for self-realisation. One basic cultural stereotype *Princess Diaries* critiques is the classic princess narrative, where the beautiful princess is sitting around and waiting for her Prince. Some critics assume *Princess Diaries* is a tribute to Princess Diana's ground breaking away from the British Royal family and her vindication of her right for freedom and self-realisation. From a literary standpoint, *The princess Diaries* is an example of a Bildungsroman, or a coming-of-age narrative Cart (2016). It traces the journey of Mia Thermopolis from a “messed up looking” and insecure teenager to a confident adult Trites (2000). This focus on identity formation, body image, and social pressures places the book squarely within young Adult(YA) literature, which scholars like Cart and Trites identify as key themes in the genre. Also, the novel and film offer a feminist view of stereotypical princess stories Rowe (1979). Rather than being saved by a man, Mia must find her own power and voice and this aligns with third wave feminist themes Stover (2013). It challenges beauty standards and royal expectations and traditions while still celebrating femininity McRobbie(2008).

2.5 Cultural Stereotypes in *The Help* (2011)

In *The Help*, black women's identities are tied to domestic work, and their roles outside of this context (as mothers, thinkers, individuals) are underdeveloped. They are portrayed as obedient and self-sacrificing women devoted to white families. This stereotype has deep roots in American media and diminishes the complication of their identities reinforcing certain class-based stereotypes as that of black women as slaves or servants. In the movie, black women's redeemer or liberator a white intellectual woman presented as a powerful woman able to publish and give voice to the stories of these black women. By so doing, the movie corrects the stereotype of white women as racist, but it is compliant with the stereotype of black women as dependent and inferior.

2.6 Cultural Stereotypes in the movie *Hidden Figures* (2016)

Hidden Figures showcases the stereotype that Black women's exclusion from working places and from scientific or technical advancements. The female characters in the movie suffer from racial segregation in their work for the NASA, shown through their use of separate, inferior quality bathrooms, coffee pots, and even toilettes. Challenging the idea that progress was smooth or inclusive. However, as concerns gender stereotype, the movie corrects the image of black women by featuring three black women as mathematically brilliant, professional, and composed, countering the stereotype of women being emotionally obsessed or unfit for intelligence jobs. Like in *The Help* movie, *Hidden Figures* is compliant with the stereotype of the white man as liberator, by showcasing the head of the NASA breaking the toilets set aside for black women only. The cultural stereotype about that is that the movie empowers three women only by a white male figure, but it dismisses the collective struggle of black people against racism.

2.7 Cultural Stereotypes in the movie *Selma* (2014)

Critics of the movie *Selma* argue that the movie challenges stereotypes of black males' inferiority by portraying Black people not just as victims of racism, but as planners, organizers, and political thinkers. However, the movie is compliant with the stereotype of black women as second class, serving the patriarch that is the black male figure. The movie centers basically on black male figures, while powerful females remain segregated even by the black males themselves. The movie under represents even Black Civil Rights Movement Martin Luther King's wife Coretta Scott King by representing her not as a political activist but mainly as the supportive and obedient wife. According to Ngcobo (2023) "Selma (2014) by Ava Duvernay centers on the protagonist, Martin Luther King as well as black women who played a significant role during the march." Culturally, *Selma* does not feature any white figure redeemer or liberator, however it empowers the gender stereotype of black males' segregation to black women even those who are politically strong. To further explain this, characters like Martin Luther King Jr. are the main focus of the movie poster. Despite the fact that women like Diane Nash or Amelia Boyton have a powerful impact as leaders and activists, the movie poster reinforces the gender stereotype that women are only the backbone and not the main leaders.

2.8 Cultural Stereotypes in the movie *Mulan* (2020)

The movie *Mulan* Asian mythical values of the ancestral reverence and adulation of martial arts as male –made by showcasing a female exotic hero with male traits to entertain for Western audiences. In other words, *Mulan* desacralizes what is Asian and feminine what ought to be masculine. Culturally, the movie caricatures Chinese culture and diminishes of its value. While some may think that *Mulan* breaks the gender stereotype of Chinese women as weak, emotional, incapable of fighting. Instead, the movie sets another stereotype of these same women as brave, clever, and self-sufficient but without any feminine traits just like

entertaining objects or toys. Mulan the heroine is not a beautiful female but rather "good as a man", suggesting that strength standards are defined by men. To further explain this, the value of Mulan is found in the masculine qualities that she earns honor by being a strong soldier which is a role reserved for men. However, the character Mulan is subjected to discrimination when she goes to war by claiming her identity as a woman. As it is stated by (Fajrina and Candraningrum, 2024, p.7) "... Mulan received discrimination from royal soldiers where there were differences in treatment between men and women."

3. Themes that were discussed based on the selected American movie posters of the 21st century

Themes analysis of movie posters is important because movie posters are not only promotional tools, but also visual elements to communicate deep social and cultural messages to audiences in a short period. Through analyzing the selected American movie posters of the 21st century, as stated along their research namely: Hidden Figures, Legally Blonde, Barbie, Mulan, The Help, Selma, Little Women and The Princess Diaries, it has been revealed how ongoing themes such as gender stereotypes, cultural and racial discrimination, women empowerment, traditional gender roles and the challenge of these stereotypes is represented and reinforced in American visual media.

These themes are essential because they reflect recurring contemporary social issues about identity, equality, human rights and racism. The way they are represented in the posters does not only serve to promote for the movies, but they also influence the public perception, personal and cultural beliefs. This part has conducted the analysis in which each theme is portrayed through the selected posters.

3.1 Women Empowerment and Challenging Gender Stereotypes

The story of these following movies centers around the women who defeated social norms by challenging boundaries and claiming their power. In *Hidden Figures*, the African-American female mathematicians are illustrated in confident postures, strong demand gazes professional stylish uniforms and elegant hair and makeup of that period, as well as positioning them in the centre of the poster in a historically male-dominated field. Additionally, in *Legally Blonde*, where Elle Woods challenged the "dumb blonde" stereotype by succeeding in law school, the visual has used bright pink color and confident body posture and made her the centre and frontal element in the poster to make her appear brighter than the background participants. In *The Princess Diaries* poster, despite her make over, Mia does not follow the role of the stereotypical image of a princess. She carries a naked neck, wears funky sunglasses and a wide smile on her face. The character "Mia" embraces her identity and responsibility which communicates her confidence in herself. Lastly, Barbie's poster fosters her dominance of the space, raising her hand and wearing a wide smile commanding attention also being held by Ken as a second figure. She claims unapologetic femininity by complementing the Barbie title with her pink dress. These movie posters reflect the way 21st-century feminism seeks equality and support woman to choose her career and her identity. The idea of identity as free and flexible and gender as performative, not an essence, has become one of the foundations of queer theory (Cirkic and Maj, 2020, p.13).

3.2 Cultural and Racial Discrimination

These movie posters confront issues of racial and social division as in the posters of *Hidden Figures*, The African American female protagonists have experienced institutional racism for being underestimated at the NASA. The visuals reinforce their struggle to finally be treated as hidden the figures behind the success of the mission. On the other hand, in *The*

Help poster, the set of the elements of the poster has clearly showcased the racial inequality. The African American women are marginalized, dressed in grey maid uniforms, facing the ground. Meanwhile the white women are sitting on the bench with colorful dresses. This depicts the Black segregation and racial inequality. Lastly, the poster of **Selma** illustrates the black activists, with the lead of MLK on Selma marches for civil rights. The theme focuses on the African American people fight for their civil rights like an honored citizen and against racial discrimination which were the key matter in the 1965 of American History.

3.3 Traditional Gender Roles and Stereotypes

The following movie posters have showcased and subverted traditional expectation of women's roles in society. Starting with the visual image of 'Mulan' a Chinese woman in the battlefield which is unusual to Asian- Chinese traditions. She is trying to prove her abilities to fight and defend her country just like men, since it was not a feminine thing to be a warrior; femininity is to be an obedient daughter and a feminine woman according to societal standards. Secondly, *Little Women* poster illustrates March sisters in a mostly dark room, looking at the dim of the light that comes out of the window. They are dressed in traditional dull colored dresses of that era and little to no makeup on their faces. These sisters faced societal pressure to be a stay home woman and to serve the man, while their gazes are focused on the light outside the window, confirming their restrictions of the traditional role of being a woman. Lastly, the *Legally Blonde* poster fosters the stereotypical image of the dumb blonde , as Elle Woods needed to carry a lot of books to prove that is she smart and worthy of attending Harvard Law School, unlike the other dark haired women in the background who carry Little to no book and perceived as intelligent. This poster processes the traditional image of blonde haired women at being dumb.

Conclusion

This chapter has first discussed the main results collected from the analysis of gender and the cultural representation of eight movie posters from the 21st century, lighting on the *'Visual Grammar'* by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and *'Media Culture'* by Douglas Kellner (1995). Second, it has discussed the themes that were analyzed based on the selected American movie posters of the 21st century including women empowerment and challenging gender stereotypes, cultural and racial discrimination, and traditional gender roles.

General Conclusion

The present study has investigated the semiotic representation of women and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters of the 21st century. The analysis is conducted based on two analytical frameworks. The first is a social semiotic approach known as visual grammar, it is proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) in their work '*Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*'. The second is *Media Culture* by Douglas Kellner (1995) to analyze the ideologies and identities of women and minority groups in visual media. In the light of these theories, the study aims to reveal how women are semiotically represented on these movie posters and examines how different cultural identities and ethnic groups are portrayed on these visual elements that reflect biased feminist ideologies.

The research has stated two main objectives. The first analyzes how women are semiotically represented on these movie posters by using the three semiotic metafunctions (representation, interaction, and composition) of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) framework. The second examines how different cultural identities and ethnic groups are portrayed on these visual elements that reflect biased feminist ideologies. In other words, to demonstrate how certain ideologies, identities, and cultural stereotypes in American movie posters from the 21st century are portrayed. In order to check the hypothesis and answer the research questions that were mentioned in the General introduction of this study, the Qualitative Multimodal Discourse analysis has been adopted in the process of data analysis, which allows us to interpret the results that were obtained from the social semiotic and critique analysis of the 21st century American movie posters. The data consists of eight movie posters, the first range contains two posters about women stereotypes and the second range contains six posters about cultural or racial stereotypes.

The discussion of the visual findings has revealed that the American movie posters of the 21st century are mostly conceptual at the level of the representational metafunction, since they are based on the static state of the participants and their lack of direct interaction with the

viewers. Moreover, it is pertinent to highlight that there were a few interactive participants on the other remained posters. Concerning the interactional metafunction, the results show that most of the participants are presented with a long shot to promote the context, atmosphere or the worlds of the characters, whereas the few close shot ones aim to focus on the identity, the importance and the emotional state of the characters. Then, there is the equal distribution on the high vertical angles and the eye level angle of viewpoints which emphasizes observation and surveillance as well as highlighting on equality between the characters on the poster and the viewers. When it comes to the gaze, there is also an even distribution of both demand and offer gaze to directly invite the viewers to engage with the participants or shift their focus on the overall environment. Regarding the compositional metafunction, the findings of the study have revealed that the participants on the posters are most of the time the centre of the image, or take on most of the space of poster to indicate that they are the most important elements. Regarding salience, elements such as vectors, objects and characters are remarkably the salient elements. The framing of the posters is clearly harmonious and well arranged and composed yet it important to mention that only few posters shed light on specific elements.

This work also analyzed the ideologies and identities that have been portrayed on the American movie posters of the 21st century. The main stereotypical identities were about women empowerment in American movie posters, both reflecting the typical image of beauty and femininity, whereas the remained posters reflect gender, cultural and racial stereotypes where the identity construction has been a challenge for these stereotypical images, when it comes to ideologies then the messages were clearly transmitted to the social and perception of worldwide matters such as beauty standards, traditional gender roles, racial inequality and hierarchicy, which in this study were well defined and explained.

This study has also revealed that the American movie posters of the 21st century evoke the themes of women empowerment, traditional gender roles, stereotypes, and cultural and racial discrimination.

Overall, guided by the framework mentioned in the review of literature, primarily the stereotypical, ideological and identity aspects, the conclusion was accomplished accordingly. The results of the social semiotic analysis of the selected American movie posters of the 21st century prove that through visual media , global topics like familiar gender stereotypes and cultural symbols as well challenging and redefining traditional gender roles, recognizing marginalized groups are indeed presented and actively involved in the American movie industry of the 21st century.

It is anticipated that this study has contributed to the field of social semiotic and media culture studies concerning visual media analysis, specifically movie posters of the American production. This work then may set the stage for future researchers to look at the current movie posters or visual media in order to build a critical perception and a careful reception of information and ideologies that include gender and cultural stereotypes. Furthermore, it is worth noting that as a research study, the aspiring researchers may explore the semiotic analysis in global media and cross -cultural miscommunication.

Despite the fact that this research offers valuable insights into gender and cultural stereotypes, the researchers have encountered certain challenges that impose to a primary limitations on its scope. First, this research focuses on the American production. Thus, it is challenging to identify what is innovative or new since there is no comparison to other productions. Second, the findings are time limited to the 21st century. Consequently, an influential history of cinema is neglected, and a huge cultural impact of movies from that period is dismissed on account of this temporal constraint.

In this study, the first hypothesis that is confirmed through the adopted frameworks is the prominence and visibility of the white woman illustration on posters and the under-representation and racialized symbolism of minority women groups (NASA, Civil rights, War armor). Then the second hypothesis is confirmed also through the posters that are compliant to gender and cultural stereotypes such as Legally Blonde at prioritizing beauty, glamour and ideal representation of femininity, whereas some posters like Mulan and Hidden Figures resist the ideal feminist archetype, illustrated as leaders and strong activists .

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List of Appendices

Appendix A.

Movie posters on Gender and Cultural Stereotypes



