Conference Proceedings of
THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN
LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE,
TRANSLATION AND CULTURE

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Visual Representation of Gender in Selected Animated Films

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Abstract

Animation films represent a popular medium of communication that serves several goals, e.g., entertainment, pedagogy and aesthetics. Academic interest in scrutinizing this medium increases due to its influence on its viewers of different ages and gender. Analysts have investigated gender representation in animation films deploying various theoretical and analytical approaches, e.g., content analysis, underlining how numerous messages are reproduced and reinforced in viewers' minds which consequently influence their perceptions of gender roles and affect their actual social behavior and attitudes. However, insufficient attention has been given to the scrutiny of visual depiction of gender in animated films. Visual analysis could yield valuable findings regarding the representation of gender in this medium. Therefore, this research attempts to examine the visual portrayal of female and male protagonists in two of the highest-grossing American computer animated films released in 2013 and featuring human characters, namely Frozen and Despicable Me 2. For the purpose of analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) visual grammar is employed in addition to certain concepts of cinematography, e.g., camera angle, close-ups, and composition

(Mascelli, 1998). Findings reveal the underlying gender messages delivered in the selected films highlighting implications for animated films viewers, animation producers and gender researchers.

Keywords: gender, animated films**,** visual representation, social semeiotic multimodality, cinematography

1. **Introduction**

The development of gender identity is a crucial feature of childhood that is influenced by media images and representations. Representations of gender in the media have long influenced social and cultural conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Berger, 1972; Beynon, 2002; Hall, 1997; Hirdman, 2004; Pollock, 1988). Nowadays, media plays a significant role in the gender socialization of children. Animation films represent a popular visual medium of communication that serves several goals, e.g., entertainment, pedagogy and aesthetics. Pollock (1988) suggests that visual media such as animated movies can (re)produce norms and expectations about gender, namely the roles and identities of women and men in the society. Moreover, Dill (2009) underlines the significant role of visual imagery in socialization "specifically in how we extract and apply meaning from everyday experience, and therefore in how we construct social realities" (p.96). Therefore, visual representations in films, e.g., animated films, do not merely reflect gender norms and ideas, but contribute in the construction of the society's values and ideologies (Hall 1997). This research attempts to examine the visual portrayal of female and male protagonists in two of the highest-grossing American computer animated films released in 2013 and featuring human characters, namely *Frozen* and *Despicable Me 2* by means of Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) visual grammar.

Numerous researchers have investigated gender messages present in film texts that aim to teach children how to be and act as boys or girls (Finklea, 2014). In animation productions, the process of 'gender coding' is established through characters' visual portrayal, i.e., physical features and appearance, and behavior (Rudloff, 2016). Filmmakers, animation artists and directors make particular choices about characters and plots. Thus, gender images,

behaviors, values and norms of the characters in children's animated films serve as standards of identification for young boys and girls to internalize, copy and model (Cohen, 2006). As suggested by social learning theory, children most likely observe and identify with social interactions and emotions of characters and internalize and model the behaviors shown in animated films (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, Hunteman & Morgan, 2001; Cited in Fischer, 2010). Bell (1995) drew attention to this fact in Disney animations by asserting that "nothing accidental or serendipitous occurs in animation as each *second* of action on screen is rendered in twenty-four different still paintings" (p. 108). Consequently, representations cannot be viewed as innocent reflections of reality but as the product of an active process of selection and presentation which creates meaning (Hall 1997).

Research has also indicated that animated movies have a socializing influence on children regarding their perceptions and attitudes toward stereotypical gender roles. Gender-role stereotypes are sets of gender-specific attributes or conventional norms that define what makes social behavior patterns typically feminine or typically masculine (Mayes & Valentine, 1979). As children grow, their knowledge and perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes develop in accordance with their exposure to gender images or representations in real life and through the different media, e.g., television, films, games and social media. These various media forms, including animated films, reinforce particular gender stereotypes that influence children's perceptions of gender roles (Witt, 2000). These films trigger forceful and compelling messages about socially approved gender roles (Witt, 2000, p.324). For example, according to gender stereotypes a women's place is in the home while the man's place is to provide for the family (Maity, 2014). Moreover, frequent representations of female images as subordinate, passive, and indecisive and male images as dominant, active, and assertive

are likely to establish biased gender stereotypes. These in turn mislead children to believe that these characteristics are socially appropriate for the female and male roles (Dill, 2009; Witt, 2000). Such stereotypical representations of gender in animated films are, in turn, reinforced by parents, friends, and school, contributing to the children's perceptions of female and male roles in society. This learned social behavior will be performed by young viewers as acquired from the media (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Due to its growing success, popularity and strong influence on children (Maity, 2014), Disney animation films and productions have been subject of scrutiny. Many analysts have criticized Disney's films for reinforcing gender stereotypes that perpetuate negative impacts on children (Bell, Hass & Sells, 1995; Giroux, 1999; Hoerrner 1996; Maity, 2014;Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund & Tanner, 2004; Wiersma, 2000). A multitude of gender bias and stereotyping messages are conveyed in Disney animated films teaching young viewers that they are expected to play certain roles as girls/women and boys/men in this patriarchal society. Accordingly, parents unknowingly harm their children by allowing them to indulge in such sexist fairytale fantasies (Maity, 2014). Nonetheless, other analysts have examined Disney's animated films and pointed out the progressive representation of the princesses and highlighted the positive messages rendered in these movies (Lueke, 2014). As computer animation continued to grow in popularity, Disney's hand-drawn animation eventually disappears and several competitors rise in the field including Pixar, which has gradually become a full-fledged member of the Disney family, DreamWorks and Warner Brothers (Price, 2008; Cited in Finklea, 2014). However, animated movies of Disney and Pixar have received almost all the attention of scholars whereas other animation productions have remained neglected.

Giroux (1999) stated that "entertainment is always an educational force" (p. 28 -29), and animated movies play a powerful role in teaching their viewers particularly children. These movies teach cultural and social values and ideals through their unique form of representation and their ever-growing presence (Giroux, 1999). Exploring the effect of entertainment media on children, Bryant and Bryant (2003) maintained how media serve as "potent agents of socialization" (p. 204), leading children to perceive the real world through the depicted images on the screen. Although it is important to understand how all animated characters in children's movies are represented, several studies have stressed that children are more likely to identify with heroic and leading characters, in turn, increasing the likelihood that they might imitate these characters' behaviors (e.g., Hoffner, 1996; Potter, 1997). This paper focuses on the visual construction of femininity and masculinity of the female and male leads in the selected two feature-length films with the highest grossing released by two different animation producers, namely Disney and Illumination Productions, in the year 2013 and featuring human characters: *Frozen* and *Despicable Me 2*.

2. Studies of Gender in Animation

Academic interest in scrutinizing animation programmes and films has increased due to its influence on its viewers of different ages and gender. Multiple studies explored gender representations and stereotyping in television cartoons stressing the impact such programmes have on young viewers (e.g., Baker & Raney, 2007; Leaper, Breed, Hoffman& Perlman, 2002; Thompson &Zerbinos, 1997). Content analyses of a wide span of television cartoons revealed stereotypical gender portrayal of female and male characters and superheroes (Baker & Raney, 2007; Leaper *et al*., 2002). Leaper *et al*. noted how male characters were strongly associated with physical aggression while female characters were traditionally portrayed

fearful, polite and romantic. Also, Baker and Raney (2007) concluded that to be a super-heroic character is necessarily portrayed with traditional masculine qualities, e.g., power and aggression, regardless of its gender. Thompson and Zerbinos' (1997) structured interviews with children have revealed to what extent they perceived cartoon characters' gendered stereotypes as violent boys and domestic girls.

Analysts have also investigated gender representation in animation films deploying various theoretical and analytical approaches underlining how numerous messages are reproduced and reinforced in viewers' minds which consequently influence their perceptions of gender roles and affect their actual social behavior and attitudes. Smith, Pieper, Granados and Choueiti (2010), for instance, examined gendered portrayal of characters in a selection of 101 top-grossing box office films released in USA and Canada from 1990 to 2005 using content analysis. Findings revealed that the male characters outnumber female characters. Also, representation of female demographics was stereotyped rendering females as young, beautiful, and good. In contrast, men were stereotypically represented stronger and funnier than women. In addition, women were depicted in traditional roles, e.g., as a parent or partner in a committed relationship. Conversely, examples of uncommitted single men were evident, sending mixed messages to viewers about social gender roles.

Similarly, Fischer (2010) offered an overview of gender representations in a selection of five animated films in the period from 2004 to 2008. Applying quantitative content analysis, Fischer examined the distribution and portrayal of female and male characters. The findings revealed some progress toward positive representations through reducing stereotypes of female and male characters. Although the female characters were still underrepresented which limited their roles and behaviors compared with male portrayals, they were rendered in diverse roles and less stereotypical images as

beautiful, in leadership roles, in careers, as angry, dominant, caring/ loving, independent, happy, scared, intelligent and crying/whining. Conversely, the male characters were overrepresented which offered a wide range of roles and various characteristics, including followers, with a career, as leaders, heroes, angry, happy, dominant, scared, rebellious, brave, caring/loving, fearful and dependent. These findings indicated how stereotypical gender images still occur in animated movies; however, they have progressed positively by portraying females in more powerful images and males in less traditional masculine images. Finally, Fischer concluded that gender representation in animated movies can indicate both images pretty and powerful instead of being confined to either of them.

Disney films in particular have been given much attention for its long history and popular production. For example, Wiersma (2000) conducted a content analysis of the themes and portrayal of gender and gender roles in a wide selection of Disney's animated films from 1937 to 1995. The findings indicated that there has been minor change in the stereotyped representation of male and female characters. Wiersma pointed out how male characters still outnumber female characters. Moreover, female characters performed more in-home labor, less out-of-home employment, and had minimal familial or societal power. Little changes were observed in the depiction of male and female characters' traits highlighting the continual stereotyping of gender portrayal in Disney's animated films. Male characters were portrayed as young, attractive, independent, physically strong and aggressive whereas female characters appeared young, attractive, good and dependent. In addition, themes of romance and heterosexual couplings were prevailing in the selected corpus. Wiersma concluded that Disney films contribute to the (re)production of stereotypical and patriarchal

gender roles.

Furthermore, England, Descartes and Collier-Meek (2011) investigated the portrayal of the characters of the prince and the princess, i.e., their behavioral characteristics and climactic outcomes, in nine selected Disney films. Content coding analyses of the early productions revealed how the prince and princess characters were depicted with stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics respectively. The Princesses were rendered traditionally affectionate, helpful, troublesome, fearful and tentative whereas the Princes were traditionally portrayed as physically strong, assertive, athletic and brave, although they rarely appeared. Over time, both male and female roles have in fact undergone some changes. The Princesses started to play stereotypically masculine roles such as conducting war and pursuing a career, e.g., Pocahontas and Mulan. The Princes' roles have developed as well into more complex rendering, showing more traditionally feminine traits such as naivety and incompetence than masculine ones. The study concluded that these movies still involved gender stereotyping and contradictory messages about gender.

Besides applying quantitative content analysis, other researchers approached Disney films form a qualitative perspective. Towbin *et al*. (2004), for instance, conducted a thematic analysis of 26 animated Disney films released between the years 1937 - 2000. Findings indicated that gender, racial and cultural stereotypes have persisted in Disney films. Regarding gender representation, female portrayals were associated with four major aspects: the physical appearance of girls/women were more valuable than their intelligence; they were dependent on male's help and protection; they were depicted in domestic roles and are most likely to marry; and women's overweight often indicated ugliness and menacing. On

the other hand, male characters were portrayed in relation to five main aspects: boys/ men relied on physical expression of emotions; they had no control of their sexuality; they were portrayed as strong and heroic; they did not occupy any domestic jobs; and overweight men had negative personal and behavioral traits, e.g., slow and sloppy. Therefore, Towbin *et al.* suggested that parents need to help their children recognize and understand the cultural, social and gender-based stereotypes that may be promoted by media sources including animated films.

In addition to examining gender representations of females and males in animated films, some scholars have shown particular interest in exploring the portrayal of the female protagonists. Disney's *Frozen* (2013), for instance, has received attention of multiple analysts (Heritage, 2014; Macaluso, 2016; and Rudloff, 2016). Heritage (2014), for instance, compared the culturally gendered linguistic features that contributed in the representation of the female protagonists in the three Disney films *Snow White* (1937), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *Frozen* (2013). Findings indicated that representation of the female protagonist, Anna, deviates from the stereotypical portrayal of a princess. She does not uphold to formal language and she tackles gender-neutral topics. Furthermore, Anna demonstrates some authority to accept or reject any advances by the opposite-gender, unlike the earlier stereotypically submissive princesses. This paper pointed out the development in female's language and representation that has occurred since Disney's early production in 1937.

From a cultural post-feminist perspective, Macaluso (2016) and Rudloff (2016) investigated the representation of the two female protagonists in *Frozen,* Elsa and Anna. Macaluso (2016) argued that portrayal of the female protagonists mainly attempted to display and establish postfeminist sentiments by replacing feminist ideals of

gender equality and women's liberation, with anti-feminist notions. Through the analysis of the film and the online discussions about its reception, Macaluso offered a postfeminist interpretation of the female representations of the two protagonists Elsa and Anna. Such representation associates feminism with feminine beauty and appearance which are essentially interrelated with emancipation and self-confidence (Macaluso, 2016). Focusing more on Elsa, Macaluso argued that her liberation from repression brings about her empowerment and asserts her sexualized feminine appearance and beauty. Macaluso also pointed out that both Elsa and Anna demonstrate the postfeminist notions of maintaining the ideal feminine body and achieving self-empowerment which allow them to join "a traditionally male-dominated field" (p.77) by taking initiatives and rescuing themselves and others. Furthermore, postfeminism is evident in the exclusive representation of Western White world (Butler, 2013, Cited in Macaluso, 2016) which has been criticized for lacking racial diversity and reinforcing the representation of white heterosexuality (Macaluso, 2016). The whole paper explored how (post)feminist themes contribute to (re)produce cultural ideals and personal identities offering significant pedagogical implications for the public receivers and the professional producers.

Adopting a textual analytical approach, Rudloff (2016) examined the representation of the female and male characters in *Frozen*. Findings suggested that the film sends seemingly contradictory messages reflecting the conflict between feminist, i.e., emancipating and empowering women, and post-feminist messages, i.e., maintaining stereotypical gendered looks and acts. Whereas the female protagonists, Elsa and Anna, have rendered autonomous and powerful personal qualities, they maintained their stereotypically feminine appearance and attractive look which have long characterized earlier Disney princesses (Do Rozario 2004; England

et al., 2011; Stover 2013; Towbin *et al*. 2004). Rudloff highlighted how the two princesses are portrayed in conventional long and tight dresses that reveal their small bodies, firm bosoms and slim limbs. Their exceptionally large eyes, red lips, and long hair and eyelashes exaggerate their feminine portrayal in contrast to the representation of the two male characters, Hans and Kristoff. Furthermore, female rendering also emphasized the postfeminist association between achievement and beautiful appearance. This is vividly illustrated by Anna who continuously pays attention to her look throughout the movie, e.g., in Elsa's coronation and during her adventure in the snow forest. Despite her occasional unruliness and clumsy acts which portrayed her as a "human" rather than a "picture-perfect, hyper feminine" princess (Rudloff, 2016), Anna's beauty and discipline are directly associated with her character development and eventual success as a mature and heroic princess. Nonetheless, the analytical framework adopted for the visual analysis is not well established.

Another evident gendered message about female and male portrayal in *Frozen* is heteronormativity. Particularly, Anna displays the traditional role of the "emotional, love-hungry, romance-seeking princess" (Rudloff, 2016, p.11) who continuously expresses need for the love and attention of the opposite gender (Cummins, 1995) and eventually attains it as illustrated in her relationship with Kristoff. However, the aspect of heterosexuality is represented from a post-feminist perspective underlining that it is a choice made by the liberated and empowered woman, Anna, rather than being the forceful decision of the family or the society (Rudloff, 2016). Instead of providing viewers with an alternative to the stereotypical romantic love story, *Frozen* reinforces the traditional heteronormative love trajectory of a princess aspiring for "Mr. Right" (p.12). In addition, Rudloff argued that this movie displayed an imbalanced

representation of gender as demonstrated in the portrayal of only two female protagonists in a male-dominated world. Thus, Rudloff's article has succeeded in discussing the paradoxes in gender representation in *Frozen*, claiming how it seems to promote feminist ideals and at the same time maintain restrictive post-feminist aspects such as self-discipline, and gendered looks and acts.

Despite the heavy concentration on examining female representation, many analysts have shown considerable interest in the representation and the development of males and masculinity in animated films. As pointed out above, particular interest has been given to Disney movie production (England *et al.*, 2011; Towbin *et al.*, 2003). These attempts have revealed the progress in male portrayals towards less stereotypical rendering. Another example is Jeffords's (1995) study of the Beast's behavior in *Beauty and the Beast*. Jeffords (1995) proposed that "masculinity has been betrayed by its own cultural imagery: what men thought they were supposed to be—strong, protective, powerful, commanding—has backfired" becoming a curse for men, and the only way to break it is for men "to be nurtured until their 'true' goodness arises" (p. 171). Trice and Holland (2001) concluded that *Beauty and the Beast* gave audiences unambiguous messages about masculinity: "Men should be kind, not selfish; they should be brave in defense of others, not gratuitously violent; and they should treat women with respect and as their intellectual equals, not as minions" (p. 188).

Analyzing male depictions in Disney films, Davis (2015) identified three broad categories of men. These are the category of the prince or hero who heroically rescues the princess, the boy who grows into a mature man through gaining knowledge and experience, and finally the category of villains that represent the hegemonic masculinity

model of dominating male. Macaluso (2018) added a fourth category, namely the post-feminist hero, who possesses features of both "hegemonic masculinity and the effeminate or absence of masculinity" (p.4). Examining several characters in the Disney films, *Incredibles*, Macaluso argued that these films were promoting a new model of postfeminist masculinity. That is of a man who experiences some type of crisis or vulnerability. The article concluded with an aspiration for a positive postfeminist representation of men and women pursuing common goals and desires.

Representation of males in Pixar's animated films has received some attention as well. Gillam and Wooden's (2008) study represents the earliest attempts to investigate portrayals of masculinity in Pixar animation productions. They noted change in the depiction of males and masculinity, arguing how male characters were rendered with both masculine and feminine traits. The portrayal of the so called "new male" involves males' acceptance of their "feminine aspects" (p. 2). Investigating the development of the representation of male leading characters in three Pixar movies, Gillam and Wooden (2008) found that male protagonists change from the image of the alpha-male characterized by strength, independence and assertiveness into vulnerable altruistic and emotional men which represent a new understanding of manhood (Gillam & Wooden, 2008). The new male image combines both masculine features such as bravery and intelligence and feminine features such as caring, nurturing and bonding with others. This concept of new male was also examined in Disney animations. For example, Jeffords (1995), using *Beauty and the Beast* as an example, argued that the Beast's story indicates that masculinity defined by strength, and power has become an "evil curse" (p. 171) upon males.

Furthermore, Finklea (2014) examined the representation of masculinities in Pixar's first 13 feature-length animated films.

Findings of the qualitative analyses of the male characters and narratives revealed six major themes about masculinities. These are that males are portrayed successful particularly when involved in teamwork; are naturally brave; are romantic and have heterosexual desires; and have the desire to be loved and/or needed. Also, male parents are fearful about the future, and male bosses are predominantly greedy. Moreover, the films presented the journey of male characters toward becoming "New Men" who can express their emotions. Heterosociality seemed to enable males be better husbands and fathers. Finklea concluded that Pixar's films mirrored societal shifts in masculinities during the 1990s and 2000s, including crises of masculine portrayal, identity and leadership.

Very little attention has been given to animated film produced by animation studios other than Disney and Pixar. This is illustrated by one study approaching the animated films, *Despicable Me (2010)* and *Despicable Me2 (2013)*, produced by Illumination entertainment. Khrebtan-Hörhager and Avant-Mier (2017) analyzed the representations of Russian and Mexican stereotypes from a critical (inter-)cultural perspective. In the two movies, the protagonist, Gru, is represented as a stereotypical Russian super-villain who is ruthless and tough. However, his character transforms from being a super-villain, who threatens the security of US people, into being a "super" father, partner, and hero through "de-masculinization and domesticity" (p.12). This is demonstrated by abandoning his past life as a villain for the sake of his daughters and accepting his new position as an anti-villain secret agent who benefits the US with his skills. In contrast to this positive transformation, the Mexican stereotype of the villain Al Macho maintains its evil portrayal as a threat to US. The study concludes that these movies are not innocent children's animation, but represent a powerful visual display of the historical portrayals of

"Russians and Mexicans others" in Hollywood as villains who threaten good Americans (Khrebtan-Hörhager& Avant-Mier, 2017).

Generally, these studies have exemplified the major interest in Disney and Pixar animated production whereas other animation studios productions have been overlooked, e.g., Illumination Entertainment. Also, heavy reliance on content, thematic and cultural analyses of animated films seems evident while insufficient attention has been given to the scrutiny of visual depiction of gender in animated films despite its potential contribution to the understanding of gender portrayal in animation films as a visual medium. To date, no study has examined the visual representation of female and male protagonists in the two animated films *Frozen* and *Despicable Me 2* applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic model of visual analysis. Hence, my study attempts to fill this gap in the literature contributing to the existing body of research on gender, animation and visual analysis.

3. **Aim of the Study**

Visual analysis could yield valuable findings regarding the representation of gender in the medium of animated films. Therefore, this research attempts to examine the visual portrayal of female and male protagonists in two of the highest-grossing American computer animated films released in 2013 and featuring human characters, namely *Frozen* and *Despicable Me 2*. This study aims to answer one main question and three sub-questions.

- How are the gender identities of the female and male protagonists represented visually?

  a) How are the gender identities of the female and male protagonists represented through processes and participant roles?

  b) How are the gender identities of the female and male protagonists represented through frame size and angling?

c) How are the gender identities of the female and male pro-tagonists represented through visual salience?

To answer the main and sub-questions, I conducted a qualitative study applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic model of visual analysis. The selected two movies were divided into scenes and shots; then into key frames. These frames were analyzed employing Kress and van Leeuwen's three-dimensional model of visual social semiotics in addition to certain concepts of cinematography, e.g., camera angle, close-ups, and composition (Mascelli, 1998).

4. **Analytical Framework**

Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) visual grammar stipulates three dimensions of any visual mode; Representational, Interactive and Compositional. Regarding the Representational dimension, analysis is concerned with the narrative representation of processes and participants' roles. That is how female and male protagonists play different roles, i.e., Actors, Goals, Reactors and Phenomena, within the various transactional and non-transactional processes. However, analysis is limited to processes that are identified visually, namely Action and Reaction processes. Verbal and mental processes are mainly represented in linguistic forms rather than through visual images; therefore, they lie beyond the scope of my analysis.

Moreover, the Interactive dimension mainly examines the viewers' position in relation to the protagonists, i.e., their social distance, degree of engagement, and attitude. The viewers' position is determined through the utilized frame size, i.e., long, medium and close-upshots, and angling, i.e., horizontal and vertical, through which the protagonists' gender identities, are illustrated. Long shots, as Mascelli (1998) pointed out, place viewers at a distance providing an inclusive picture of the characters' full body, their action(s) and the setting to appreciate the big picture. Close-ups, on the other

hand, reveal significant facial reactions, body part or movement of a character establishing personal relationships between viewers and characters as part of their own world. Mascelli (1998) also explained that medium shots place viewers at an intermediate distance from the characters which renders their actions and reactions clearly.

Intertwined with image size, angling is crucial for character depiction. Horizontal angles, which can be frontal, side or back, affect the viewer's involvement with the dramatic actions performed by the protagonists. For example, frontal angling engages viewers more in the depicted actions than do side or back angles. Vertical angles, which can be low, level or high, influence the viewers' attitude towards the characters. That is, low angling might indicate the character's power over the viewers and/or over the other characters in the scene whereas high angling reflects the character's powerlessness and the viewers' superiority. Thus, the integration of frame size and angle choice positions viewers in multiple ways that impact their perception and appreciation of the rendered characters and actions. For this, analysis highlights this integration and its effects on the viewers.

Finally, analysis of the compositional dimension explores female and male protagonists' visual salience in the different scenes and frames. That is, the analysis shows how a protagonist's relative size, placement and perspective might contribute to portraying them as visually salient. That is when a character is depicted visually salient it appears prominent character in the frame in contrast to other less prominent characters or objects which in turn indicates this character's dominance and power in the frame or shot.

5. **Analysis**

5.1 Visual representation of Anna in *Frozen*

In *Frozen*, Anna appears as a young woman who acts as a royal princess and a younger sister to Elsa. Visual analysis of key scenes

and frames has revealed how Anna's female identity is constructed through the processes in which she is involved and the participant roles she plays, image size and angling of her depiction, and visual salience employed in her representation. Visual analysis has revealed Anna's physical potential, personal attributes and emotional reactions that contribute to the construction of her roles as a princess, a sister and a woman.

Processes and roles

Anna's physical capacities and character traits are vividly represented through the multiple action and reaction processes she is involved in playing different participant roles, including Actor, Goal and Phenomenon. Anna demonstrates five major qualities that characterize her identity as a princess; these are enthusiasm, courtesy, clumsiness, dependent, and bravery. The first characteristic personal quality is enthusiasm. In other words, she is repeatedly depicted as a cheerful, excited and energetic young woman. For example, since her childhood as illustrated in Frames A1 (Appendix I), Anna is depicted jumping in excitement on snow as she plays with Elsa, running happily around the castle's hallways and rooms, standing playfully on a bike with one leg, and jumping and flipping in the air and on couches as she sings. Then as she grows up Anna maintains her vigorousness, as indicated in multiple frames. She is depicted riding her bike (Frame A3), flipping on a couch (Frame A5), running (Frame A6), sliding on the stair bars (Frame A7), dancing and jumping in the air in different positions (Frames A12 and A13) that manifest her excitement and magnificent physique. Moreover, she demonstrates an extent of physical strength as displayed in Frame A9 where she manages to pull herself up on the swing by the palace's window. These various action processes render Anna as an enthusiastic and energetic young woman.

The second characteristic trait of Anna is her courtesy. That is, she is rendered as a courteous and graceful princess through several action processes. The child Anna, as depicted in Frame A2, appears knocking on her sisters' door asking for permission to join her and play. Then as a young lady, she acts politely bowing in front of the queen showing respect to her majesty as illustrated in Frame A15 during the coronation ball. Also, at her first encounter with Prince Hans, as pictured in Frame A14, she curtsies to him as she introduces herself; and she waves goodbye as she leaves him. These action processes reflect Anna's courteous attitude as a graceful princess towards other female and male characters.

The third key quality of Anna's portrayal is her clumsiness as a child and a young adult. For example, she is rendered as a clumsy child who loses balance while riding her bike and falls down the stairs in the royal palace (Frame A4). As a young lady, Anna's excitement about Elsa's coronation ball makes her lose control over her actions. As illustrated in several Frames, she accidentally breaks off the arm of one of the knight armor statues in the palace (A8); she hits her face with tieback as she sings (A10); she stuffs chocolate in her mouth (A11); she runs into Prince Hans' horse at their first encounter and falls onto a fishing boat by the fjord (A29); she loses control of her horse and falls off it in the snow (A31); she slips on snow and falls into a freezing water stream (A47). In all these instances, Anna appears to be the Actor in several action processes that eventually cause some damage of surrounding objects or some physical pain to her. Anna's clumsiness is also illustrated by action processes that involve other characters as Goals. One example is Frame A16 which represents her accidental slap to Prince Hans' face during their friendly chat. All these action processes render Anna as

an impulsive and clumsy princess.

The fourth major quality of Anna is her dependence on male help and rescue on particular occasions. On such occasions, she is engaged in action processes where she appears to be the Goal that is assisted by a male character, mainly Kristoff and Prince Hans. Anna is assisted by Kristoff during her quest for Elsa in the snow forest. He drives her with his sleigh, lifts her up out of snow after escaping Elsa's ice monster (Frame A25), and helps her return to the royal palace after Elsa has struck her with her magical powers (Frame A26). On other occasions, Anna is assisted by Prince Hans who helps her stand up after her fall on a fishing boat (Frame A24) and carries her after she returns to the royal palace after being struck by Elsa's magic (Frame A27). Through all these action processes, Anna is depicted as the Goal of male characters' assistance and support.

Despite Anna's conventional portrayal as a courteous and clumsy princess who depends on male support, she demonstrates particularly two major unconventional qualities; these are bravery and intelligence. These two characteristics are recurrently indicated thorough Anna's action processes. For example, Anna's courageous initiative to explore the snow forest individually in search for Elsa, as illustrated in Frames A7 and A47, reflects her bravery. This feature is also represented when Anna decides to combat the wolves that have attacked her and Kristoff using his mandolin instrument (Frames A18 and A19). On several occasions, she manages to rescue herself and Kristoff's life. As depicted in Frames A19, A20, A21 and A23 she pulls him back up to the sleigh after he has been pulled down by the wolves; then she pulls him up when he is about to fall off a cliff; finally she uses Kristoff's pocket knife to cut the robe by which Elsa's snow monster holds them. In these action processes, Anna appears as the Actor demonstrating bravery and intelligence in facing dangers and

solving problems. Eventually, the most courageous action that Anna performs is self-sacrifice rescuing her sister from Prince Hans' attack, as displayed in Frame A28. This heroic act highlights Anna's bravery and altruism as a sister and a princess. Many of these processes also represent Anna's physical potential that is also demonstrated through her violent punch in the face of the evil Prince Hans (Frame A42) after she has discovered his wickedness. In such action processes Anna demonstrates some physical power that characterizes her as a powerful and brave princess.

Viewers' position

The use of different frame sizes, i.e., long, medium and close-up shots, and multiple horizontal and vertical angling in the depiction of Anna influences the viewers' relationship with, and attitude towards her character portrayal as a princess and a woman. Anna's visual representation involves long and medium shots that maintain the viewers at some distance from the protagonist to perceive and appreciate her physical appearance and key actions that contribute majorly to the construction of her female roles. Regarding Anna's physical appearance, several long shots depict her traditional clothing and conservative appearance. Throughout the movie, Anna appears in several outfits as a child and a young adult. Such outfits are pictured fully through long shots that emphasize Anna's elegance and conformity. As a child, Anna is portrayed in full-length dresses and white collant that cover her entire legs as displayed in Frame A45 where she lies on the floor and lifts both her legs up against a pendulum wall clock. Then as she grows up, Anna sustains her conservative clothing style as a royal princess. Long shots that depict her jumping and dancing across the hallways of the royal palace, as illustrated in Frame A13, represent her elegant full-length ball dress that covers almost all her body except for the shoulders

and arms. The use of long shots offers a full portrayal of Anna's underclothes, including drawers, which cover her entire lower part. Long shots also picture her winter clothing, as displayed in Frame A53, which consists of a full-length long-sleeved dress, a cape with a hood, gloves and boots. Finally, Anna's depiction in the end of the movie in a modest full-length long-sleeved dress maintains her conformist appearance as a royal princess. In fact, this portrayal has been reinforced through the recurrent use of long shots.

Anna's representation through long and medium shots also enhances viewers' perception of her major characteristics and personal qualities indicated through her actions. Since long shots distance viewers to recognize fully actions and circumstances, they enable viewers to perceive Anna's distinct roles as a courageous princess, loving sister, and a romantic woman. For example, Anna is depicted through long shots that picture the snow-covered forest and the nighttime through which she starts her quest bravely for her sister (Frames A46 and A47). Moreover, the use of long shots represents Anna's self-sacrifice to rescue Elsa and defeat Prince Hans (Frame A48). Using long shots provides the viewers with an inclusive representation of Anna's actions and circumstances which in turn contribute to her portrayal as a brave princess and a self-sacrificing sister. In addition, Anna's dances are depicted through several long shots that reflect her energetic movements and enthusiastic attitude that characterize her character as a cheerful and romantic woman. Also, medium shots place the viewers at an intermediate distance with the protagonist, depicting particular key actions and revealing certain qualities of Anna's characterization. These include Anna's enthusiasm, clumsiness, bravery, and romance. Frames A11, A16 and A28 clearly illustrate how such traits are rendered through medium shots placing the viewer in an intermediate position to

observe Anna's actions and emotional reactions.

In addition to the use of long and medium shots, close-up shots are majorly utilized for the depiction of Anna's various emotional reactions, establishing an intimate relationship with the viewers. Close-ups are used more often to depict Anna's facial reactions and emotional states creating an intimate connection between Anna and the viewers. Use of close-ups varies between medium close-ups (depicting Anna from the waist up), head and shoulder, and head shots. A variety of feelings are frequently displayed through close-up shots, including amazement (A33), happiness (A39), distress (A30), and fear (A31 and A34). On very few occasions, as exemplified by Frames A32 and A37, Anna expresses anger which is unconventional for a female character to show (Baker & Raney, 2007; England et al., 2011). Such a variety of emotional states contributes to the deep and complex portrayal of her character as a female protagonist.

Not only that the viewers are placed closely to Anna to recognize and share her emotional reactions, but they also have the same intimate relationship that is depicted between her and other female and male characters through close-up shots. For example, viewers are positioned closely to Anna and Elsa as they bond during the coronation ball, as rendered in Frame A39, and after Anna has rescued Elsa, as pictured in Frame A56. They are also placed intimately to Anna and Hans during their romantic singing and dancing, as depicted in Frame A40, in order to appreciate their intimate heterosexual connection. Eventually, the true love connection between Anna and Kristoff is represented through close-up shots (Frames A43 and A44) that enable the viewers to share their most intimate moment of kissing. In all these close-up shots, an intimate relationship between the protagonist and the viewers is established contributing to the construction of two of her essential characteristic roles, namely loving sister and romantic heterosexual princess.

Besides emotional states and social roles, close-ups enable the viewers to identify with particular actions and visual states that represent key features of Anna's character. As pictured in Frame A38, for instance, Anna's messy representation can appeal to many f the female viewers, since it reflects a realistic portrayal of a private status of a female figure waking up. She is portrayed drooling, with uncombed hair that sticks to her mouth and cheeks. This messy representation is not reinforced in the movie; on the contrary, Anna's neat hair style, elegant ball dress and modest winter clothing render her as a graceful princess, despite all the misfortunes she faces in her quest for Elsa in the snow forest. In addition, close-ups allow the viewers a close experience of Anna's essential qualities, namely bravery and physical strength. These are vividly depicted through numerous close-up Frames where she fights the wolves (A18), rescues Kristoff and Elsa (A23 and A28), and punches Prince Hans (A42). The viewers are brought close to Anna to appreciate and identify with her character qualities and roles as a heroic and powerful princess.

Furthermore, the viewers' perception and appreciation of Anna's representation as female protagonist are enhanced through the use of multiple horizontal and vertical angling. Intertwined with the use of frame size, the use of different angling influences viewers' degree of involvement with and their attitude towards Anna. That is, frontal and three-quarter angles are mainly utilized for the portrayal of Anna, which aim at maximizing the viewers' engagement in the depicted actions. Only few occasions of using side and back angling are identified. Besides horizontal angling, vertical angling varies affecting the viewers' attitude towards Anna. Repeatedly, Anna is portrayed through eye-level angling placing the viewers on an equal status with her. This is evident in shots that depict many of Anna's action processes depicted through long and medium shots as

illustrated by Frames A2, A6, A8- A16, and her close-ups reflecting her emotional reactions as indicated in Frames A30, A31, A38 - A41. In addition, high angling is employed in multiple shots representing Anna through the subjective point of view (p.o.v.) of other female and male characters. This can be illustrated by FrameA33 where she is portrayed through Elsa's p.o.v., Frame A35 which represents her through the perspective of Kristoff, and Frame A36 depicting her through Hans' perspective. In all such shots, Anna is looked down on, indicating her low-power status in contrast to Elsa's powerfulness as a queen who is gifted with magical powers and Hans' and Kristoff's male superiority. On few occasions, Anna is pictured through low angling indicating her occasional assertion and power that are evident in Frame A50 which depicts Anna putting Prince Hans in charge of the kingdom Arendelle in her absence, Frame A7 that represents Anna at the beginning of her quest for Elsa riding her horse bravely and autonomously, and finally in Frame A51 where Anna demands Kristoff to take her to the North Mountain to find Elsa. Although these occasions are infrequent, they contribute to the portrayal of Anna as an assertive and authoritative princess.

Composition

Besides the visual representation of Anna through processes and roles, frame size and angling, her social roles and personal qualities are rendered through the compositional element of visual salience. Anna does not appear as visually salient especially at the presence of male characters such as Prince Hans and Kristoff. This is illustrated in Frames which depict Anna with Prince Hans (A49 and A54) on some occasions and with Kristoff on other occasions (A52). Such frames represent how the male figures stand out grapping the attention of the viewers through their large body size, tall posture, better (frontal) angling, and foregrounding in contrast to Anna's small size, short height, oblique or back angling, and backgrounding. Visual

prominence in these frames indicates male power and dominance. On few occasions, Anna is rendered as visually salient indicating her prominence and power. Frame A50, for instance, pictures Anna exercising her power as a princess inputting Prince Hans in charge of Arendelle. Her high placement, on the back of her horse, makes her prominent visually in the frame. Also, Frame A51 represents another example of Anna's visual salience as she demands Kristoff to accompany her in her journey to find Elsa. Her standing position and frontal angling enforce her authoritative and assertive rendering in contrast to Kristoff's low position, i.e., sitting down on the floor, and back angling. Finally, as Anna is portrayed salient as she attempts to bring back Elsa as displayed in Frame A53 and rescues her life as depicted in Frames A55- A56. In these frames, Anna stands out due to employing color contrast, angling and high position, indicating her dominance as brave and heroic princess.

5.2 Visual representation of Gru in *Despicable Me 2*

In *Despicable Me 2*, Gru is depicted as an adult male whose life changes from being a super-villain to be an anti-villain hero because of his three adopted little daughters, Margo, Edith and Agnes. Analysis of his visual depiction renders his physical capacities, character traits and emotional states in the various situations and in relations to other female/male characters including his partner Lucy, his daughters, his friend Dr. Nefario and the villain Al Macho. This section examines the visual representation of different processes in which Gru engages; image size and angling of his depiction; and instances of his visual salience, which contribute to his visual portrayal as male protagonist.

Processes and roles

Gru's identity and characteristic traits as a male protagonist are represented through his roles in the various action and reaction processes. Six major personal qualities that characterize Gru's male

identity; these are bravery, aggression, skill in using weapons and gadgets, defenselessness against sudden attacks, commitment, and intimidation towards female figures. Such character traits characterize Gru's identity as an anti-villain hero, a parent and a heterosexual man. He demonstrates each of these qualities through appearing as an Actor or Goal in action processes and as a Reactor or Phenomenon in occasional reaction processes.

The first personal quality that characterizes Gru is bravery, portraying him as an anti-villain hero. Gru demonstrates bravery through his role as an Actor in numerous action processes as illustrated in his first attempt with his partner Lucy to break into the restaurant of the villain Al Macho, his second attempt to go through Al Macho's well-guarded secret gate, his courageous combat with the villain Al Macho and his army of transformed minions, and eventually his success to rescue the life of his partner Lucy. In all these transactional action processes, Gru is portrayed as an Actor who demonstrates courage and heroism. Moreover, these processes reflect Gru's physical fitness despite his relatively fat body shape. For example, as he attempts to go through Al Macho's secret gate, Gru is depicted performing a number of acrobatic moves to evade the fierce weapons that guard the gate. As pictured in Frame G11 (Appendix II below) he is leaning backwards on his arms and one leg and in Frame G12 he jumps up towards the secret gate after he has succeeded to open it. Gru also represents boldness and physical fitness, as illustrated in Frames G13 and G14,when jumps off Dr. Nefario's plane holding two large jelly guns and flips in the air shooting the transformed evil minions to rescue them and transfer them back to their original status.

The second distinct trait of Gru is aggression that involves female and male characters whether children or adults as Goals. Examples of aggressive action processes performed by Gru include hitting a

little girl on the forehead with a fairy's wand, as depicted in Frame G1, for asking him embarrassing questions at his daughter's birthday party. He also grabs Margo's boy friend, Antonio, by his clothes as represented in Frame G10, and prevents him from dancing with her. Moreover, Gru's hostility against adult women can be illustrated through several action processes. As pictured in Frame G2, he throws his annoying friend, Jillian, with water directly at her face using a water hose when she insists on setting him up for a blind date. Another example is illustrated by Frame G3 which represents Gru attacking AVL agent Lucy at their first encounter using his freeze gun. He also resorts to physical violence in his first meeting with the head of the AVL, Mr. Ramsbottom, as shown in Frame G4. He shoves him away with his shoulder expressing his anger about the way he has been kidnapped to the AVL and his rejection of Ramsbottom's job offer to be an AVL secret agent. Finally, Gru is depicted using a large fire gun to burn his home phone because he is unable to call Lucy and ask her on a date. All these action processes portray Gru as a hostile male figure who resorts to physical aggression using his hands or utilizing different circumstances of means.

The third characteristic quality of Gru's male identity is his skill of using of unique gadgets and guns to carry out most of his action processes. This is exemplified by his use of a digital safe opener to open Al Macho's restaurant safe as depicted in Frame G31. He also uses a laser gun, as revealed in Frame G32, to create a hole in the ceiling at Al Macho's restaurant to escape from him as he discovers Gru and Lucy's breaking and entering. Escaping from Al Macho, Gru uses a hook gun to climb from one floor to another in the mall. By the end of the movie, Gru cleverly uses Lucy's lipstick taser, as shown in Frame G29, to defeat Al Macho. In all these action processes, Gru's reliance on technological devices to solve his problematic situations renders

him as an intelligent, skillful and well-equipped anti-villain agent which represents one of his characteristic roles as a male protagonist.

The fourth feature of Gru's character is his defenselessness against sudden attacks. Despite his aggression and bravery, Gru seems incapable of defending himself against sudden attacks of others. In some action processes, Gru appears as a Goal of other female and male characters' unexpected physical assaults. This is illustrated in Frame 17 where he is tased by Lucy's lipstick taser that makes him unconscious and then is kidnapped to the AVL headquarter. He is also the Goal of children's intentional and unintentional aggressions. For example, He is kicked from the back, as depicted in Frame G19, by Margo's boyfriend, Antonio, because Gru has been disrupting their dance. Furthermore, Gru appears as the Goal in other action processes where the Actors are non-human, including animals and automated weapons. This can be illustrated by Frames G18, G37 and G38which depict how Gru is attacked and hurt badly by Al Macho's chicken guard and automated weapons, including an axe, fire flame tubes, a hammer with spikes, and thin pins. Gru is subjected to all these weapons during his attempt to break into Al Macho's secret entrance. In these action processes, he fails to protect himself against these attacks. On other occasions, Gru is represented vulnerable through his role as a Phenomenon in some reaction processes. As illustrated in Frame G 22, he is depicted lying down on his face after he has accidentally fallen off the stairs of the Mall where he works. His fall is witnessed by his three daughters who stand in front of him looking at him lying on the ground at their feet. Such action and reaction processes render Gru as susceptible to unexpected assaults and accidents.

The fifth quality of Gru is his commitment towards his daughters as a caring and responsible parent. His depiction through action processes renders him as a committed and loving parent. From the beginning of

the movie, Gru appears responsible for multiple tasks in his daughter's birthday, including blowing a huge unicorn balloon, grilling meat and chicken for the guests, performing an entertainment number in the costume of a fairy princesses for his daughters. Moreover, Gru carries his daughters to bed, as represented in Frame G5, and he kisses them goodnight, as illustrated in Frame G8. When he learns about his eldest daughter's, Margo, relationship with a boy, he tries by all means to separate them; preventing them to sit or dance together. These action processes portray Gru as a dedicated father which represents a crucial part of his male identity. In other action processes, Gru is depicted the Goal of his daughters' kisses and hugs that indicate their love towards their kind-hearted adoptive father. On other occasions, this father-daughters bond represents a Phenomenon observed by others, e.g., Lucy, as illustrated in Frames G22 and G23. Thus, action and reaction processes contribute to the depiction of Gru as loving and committed father which characterizes his male identity.

The sixth and final personal quality that Gru demonstrates is his intimidation towards female figures which is reflected through his occasional role as a Reactor in some reaction processes. In his childhood embarrassing memory, as rendered in Frames G6 and G7, Gru is bullied by other school mates for approaching a girl named Lisa whom he has liked. This childhood embarrassment created a complex towards dating women which has affected Gru's adult relationships with women. As illustrated in Frame G20, Gru seems discomfited by his date's physical exercising in a public restaurant. He does not intervene to stop her action; instead he sits back in embarrassment and watches her. His role as a Reactor in this processes reflects his intimidation. Another example of Gru's timid portrayal is rendered in Frame G21 which pictures Gru's looking in fear to his phone while hiding behind his desk after he fails to call Lucy to ask her on a date.

This reaction process indicates a critical aspect of Gru's portrayal, namely his anxiety to date women. Obviously, this contradicts his assertive and aggressive characterization.

Viewers' position

The representation of Gru's character traits and social roles as an anti-villain hero, a father and a heterosexual man, is enhanced through the use of frame size and angling which creates a certain social distance with the viewers and affect their degree of engagement and their attitude towards the protagonist. Regarding the use of frame size, Gru is equally depicted through long shots and close-up shots whereas medium shots are employed occasionally. On frequent occasions, the viewers are distanced through long shots to grasp fully aspects of Gru's physical appearance and significant actions that contribute to his depiction as a male protagonist. Gru constantly appears through long shots in a dark grey suit with a long scarf surrounding his neck. His consistency in costume choice reveals his lack of interest in varying his appearance as a male figure. The one exception for this consistency occurs at Agnes' birthday party when Gru dresses up as a fairy princess for the sake of his youngest daughter. This in turn, indicates his self-confidence and care for his daughters rather than care about his own appearance which manifests his portrayal as a committed and loving father.

In addition, long shots create an impersonal relationship, between the protagonist and the viewers, which renders him as an object of display detached from the viewers' world. However, these long shots allow the viewers a full grasp of Gru's actions and major traits. This is evident in long shots that represent Gru's action processes such as attacking others including his annoying friend Jillian (G2) and AVL agent Lucy (G3) which demonstrate his aggressive attitude towards

others. Moreover, Gru's combat against Al Macho's minions (G13and G14) illustrates his bravery and skill of using multiple gadgets and weapons which portray him as a courageous anti-villain hero.

Nonetheless, Gru is often represented through frequent close-up and medium shots that place the viewers close enough to share his emotional reactions reflected in his facial expressions. As indicated on multiple occasions, Gru displays stereotypically masculine emotional reactions including contempt (G25), anger (G35 and G36) and determination (G39) (Baker & Raney, 2007; Wiersma, 2001). However, on other occasions, Gru demonstrates fear (G26), shock (G34) and distress (G30 and G 35) which are conventionally feminine emotional aspects (England et al. 2011). The depiction of these multiple emotional reactions contributes to the portrayal of Gru as an emotional male protagonist; a quality that has been distinctive of female characters in animated films (England et al., 2011; Wiersma, 2001).

Another essential quality of Gru's identity as a male protagonist is his heterosexuality reflected in his admiration towards his partner Lucy and their eventual marriage. This intimate man-woman connection is recurrently depicted through close-ups and medium shots that place the viewers close enough to experience the feelings of admiration and love besides witnessing particular action processes including exchanging kisses on the lips as illustrated in Frame G40. These types of frames contribute to the portrayal of Gru as a loving heterosexual man which is a hegemonic masculine quality (Connell, 1987) that is reinforced in many animation films and productions (Finklea, 2014; Wiersma, 2001).

Moreover, viewers' degree of engagement with Gru's represented actions varies in relation to the use of horizontal angling, i.e., frontal,

side, and back angling. His recurrent depiction through frontal and three-quarter angling involves viewers highly in the depicted actions and reactions. This is evident in all close-up shots, particularly head and shoulder shots (Frames G4, G25, G34, G35) and head shots (Frames G 38 and G44),which represent full focus on his facial reactions and inner feelings that contribute to his portrayal as a fearful, determined, angry or distressed male figure. Frontal angling is also evident in medium and long shots to engage the viewers with Gru's body movements and physical actions that represent his bravery and powerfulness. Very few exceptional long shots picture Gru through side and back angling; however these frames do not contribute much to the portrayal of Gru's traits and roles.

Interaction between Gru and viewers is also accomplished through use of vertical angling that creates particular attitudes towards Gru. For example, he is mainly rendered as a powerful and assertive male figure, namely as a father, leader and hero. He is constantly pictured through low angling which gives him superiority and power over the viewers who consistently look up to him. This can be illustrated through the depictions of Gru's brave battle against the villain Al Macho (G13 and G14) and his heroic rescue of Lucy (G16). Depiction through low angling also indicates Gru's superiority in relation to other characters including his little daughters. Frame G27 is an example of the subjective depiction of Gru through the perspective of other characters who occupy inferior power status than his, namely his little daughters. Not in all instances that low angling is used to depict Gru's powerfulness. On the contrary, some frames depict Gru's vulnerability and defeat through low angling as indicated in Frames G18 and G37. This maintains Gru's superior position over the viewers no matter his actual powerful or powerless depicted status. Infrequently, high angling is used, particularly intertwined

with medium or close-up shots to reflect Gru's inner reactions such as sadness for Dr. Nefario's leaving (Frame G30) and physical pain for being attacked by sharp pins during his attempt to break into Al Macho's secret entrance (Frame G38). Furthermore, high angling is used with long shots to offer a top view of the represented settings. These instances do not contribute to the gender representation of Gru; they are mainly utilized for aesthetic functions.

In addition, Gru is portrayed through eye-level angling which puts him in an equal power status with viewers particularly in medium and close-up shots. These frames majorly depict Gru in two-shot frames with other characters, including Lucy and Mr. Ramsbottom, reflecting his neutral power position towards other characters as well as the viewers. In close-up shots taken from an eye-level angling, the viewers easily identifies with the Gru's emotional reactions rendered in the frames, such as Frame G25 where he appears in the film for the first time displaying an expression of disdain, Frame G26 where he expresses fear of the effect of the transmutation serum as shown to him the AVL Headquarter, and finally Frame G35 depicting his distress about the end of his mission with Lucy and her departure to Australia. In all these frames the use of eye-level angling within medium and close-up shots allows the viewers to identify with the protagonist's emotional states which in turn reveal his characteristic qualities as a male figure.

Composition

Analysis of visual composition of Gru reveals how visual salience contributes to the visual representation of Gru as male protagonist. He seems to stand out in the several scenes and frames indicating his dominance in several situations. Gru's visual salience is achieved frequently through using perspective, relative size and placement. An example of using perspective is Frame G43 where Gru is depicted

at the AVL after Lucy has kidnapped him to meet the Head of the AVL, Mr. Ramsbottom. He appears in the foreground with his tall and large body size, expressing discontent and anger whereas Lucy and two of his minions appear in their small sizes at the background. Use of foregrounding and body size, in other instances, makes Gru's vulnerability stand out in the frames. Frame G42 represents one example where Gru is pictured in the foreground lying unconsciously on the floor after agent Lucy, who appears in the background standing assertively on her feet, has tased and kidnapped him to meet the AVL Head, Mr. Ramsbottom. Another example is Frame G44 which foregrounds Gru's distress about Lucy's departure to Australia after he has discovered his love for her. Depiction of his miserable facial expressions covered in rain drops dominates the frame reflecting his heartbreak and depression whereas as his youngest daughter Agnes appear in the background holding an umbrella to protect him from the rain. In other frames, Gru appears visually salient due to his placement in relation to other characters in the frame. This is pictured in Frame G41 where he is centralized in the frame and surrounded by his minions. This composition renders Gru as the powerful leader of the minions. These examples indicate how visual salience is utilized to render Gru as a visually prominent figure as the male protagonist, regardless of his dramatic dominance and power status.

On other few occasions, other represented characters or objects have visual salience whereas Gru appears visually less significant. This is illustrated in Frame G20 which depicts Gru's date with Shannon in a fancy restaurant. As revealed, Shannon performs physical exercises in public which intimidate and embarrass Gru. The frames picture Shannon in the foreground, magnifying her stern face and body movement, indicating her dominance over the situation. In the background, Gru sits passively with looks of shock and anxiety on

his face. Another example is Frame G21 that represents Gru's failing attempt to call Lucy to ask her on a date. In this frame, Gru's phone is foregrounded whereas Gru's eyes and forehead appear in the background behind his desk where he is hiding. In these frames, the use of different perspectives renders Gru as a less significant visual component indicating his intimidation at the presence of women particularly on romantic dates, which in turn reveals a crucial side of Gru's character as a heterosexual man.

6 . Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to examine the visual depictions of the female and the male protagonists in the two animated films *Frozen* (2013) and *Despicable Me 2* (2013). The study addressed one main question and three sub-questions. The main question stipulates: How are the gender identities of the female and male protagonists (Anna and Gru) in the selected animated movies represented visually? To address this main question, three sub-questions were answered. Three sub-questions were about how Anna's and Gru's gender identities are represented through processes and reactions, frame size and angling, and visual salience. Some findings seem consistent with previously conducted analyses of female and male animated characters representations while other findings are not.

Regarding the first sub-question, Anna's female identity and Gru's male identity are represented mainly through various action processes and few reaction processes. The protagonists in the two movies are mainly depicted as Actors and rarely as Goals and Phenomenon. Each protagonist demonstrates both conventional and unconventional gender qualities; however, at different extents. That is, Anna basically represents a traditional rendering of an animation female princess. She is characterized by courtesy,

enthusiasm, clumsiness and heterosexuality, which are all regarded as stereotypically feminine qualities (England et al., 2011; Thomas & Zarbino, 1995; Wiersma, 2000). The only unconventional trait demonstrated by Anna is bravery which is a conventionally masculine trait (Baker & Raney, 2007; England et al., 2011; Thomas & Zarbino, 1995). Rendering Anna as a brave princess deviates from the stereotype of the submissive and obedient princess that has long been reinforced by Disney films (England et al., 2011).Gru, on the other hand, demonstrates major stereotypically masculine features including bravery, aggression, use of weapons, commitment and heterosexuality. Only two qualities deviate from the conventional portrayal of masculinity in animation, namely defenselessness and intimidation. These findings reflect the slow progress in gender representation of female and male protagonists in the selected animated movies. Although previous studies such as England et al. (2011), Rudloff (2016), and Finklea (2014), have suggested that the portrayal of female and male protagonists have been progressing towards new gender models, the findings of the visual analysis of the movies under study indicate how minimal this progress seems.

Addressing the second question, portrayal of Anna and Gru as female and male protagonists through frame size and angling has yielded significant findings. Concerning the use of different frame sizes, the two protagonists do not vary much in their depiction through long, medium and close-up shots. As explained in the analysis above, each of these frame sizes performed a particular function in portraying the actions, personal qualities and emotional reactions of each protagonist. Also, rendering of Anna and Gru through the use of horizontal angling has relied majorly on frontal and three-quarter angling that maximize the viewers' engagement with the represented actions and reactions of the protagonists. However,

the two protagonists seemed to differ in their depiction through vertical angling, specifically low and high angles. Whereas Anna is mainly pictured through high angling rendering her in an inferior position to other characters, often males, as well as to the viewers, Gru continuously appears through low angles that essentially portray him in a superior and powerful position in relation to other characters, basically females, as well as the viewers. These findings contribute to the representation of the female protagonists as an inferior visual subject that is recurrently looked down upon whereas the male protagonist is looked up to as a superior and powerful visual subject. This, in turn, reinforces the stereotypical representation of female and male characterization in animation (Baker & Raney, 2007; England *et al.*, 2011; Thomas & Zarbino, 1995) despite the arguments about breaking gender-based stereotypes of females and males in animated films (Do Rozario 2004; England *et al.*, 2011; Macaluso, 2016, 2018; Rudloff, 2016).

Addressing the third sub-question about Anna's and Gru's visual salience, the findings have indicated a major disparity. As illustrated above, Anna is recurrently depicted as visually non-salient subject, especially when she appears with a male figure in the same frame or shot. In contrast, Gru stands out frequently in frames with other female and male characters. In this way, the compositional aspect of visual salience seems to contribute to the representation of Anna as a visually insignificant female figure due to her small body size, low visual placement and backgrounding, which in turn indicate her lack of dominance in the depicted frames/shots. On the other hand, the portrayal of Gru as a visually prominent male figure due to his large body size, high visual position and foregrounding, reflect his continuous dominance in frames and shots where he appears with other female and male characters. These findings clearly reinforce

the traditional representation of females' subordination and males' dominance in animated movies (Baker & Raney, 2007).

Despite the arguments of some analysts that recent animation productions have started to shed conventional gender stereotypical roles (Finklea, 2014; Macaluso, 2018; Rudloff, 2016), based on my findings, the female and male protagonists demonstrate minimal progress towards women's emancipation and the New Man's model (Gillam & Wooden, 2008; Macaluso, 2018). In fact, the visual depiction of Anna's and Gru's personal qualities and roles appear to be contradictory. Although Rudloff (2016) has argued how Anna appears as a "liberated, agentic, empowered young woman" (p.11), representing some conventional characteristics of men, i.e., bravery and independence, still the use of self-sacrifice is retained as a major stereotypical quality of female protagonists, particularly Disney Princesses (Rudloff, 2016). Moreover, Anna's portrayal as the brave princess who finds and rescues the Queen and the entire kingdom goes alongside her occasional reliance on male assistance, Prince Hans who remains in the kingdom to protect it during Anna's absence and Kristoff who leads her to the North Mountain and returns her back to her kingdom when she was helpless due to Elsa's magical spell. This dependency on male support represents a conventional characteristic of Anna as a female protagonist. In addition, the love connections with two male characters, Prince Hans and then Kristoff, and the implied marriage of Anna and Kristoff, reinforce her representation as a traditional romantic heterosexual woman who constantly aims to attain the "happily ever after" life by finding the perfect male figure (Cummins, 1995; Rudloff, 2016).

These observations reveal how animation depiction of females

might trigger mixed messages to the viewers that can be confusing for female and male viewers. The representation of brave female protagonists who are capable of taking initiatives and rescuing others sends positive messages to both female and male viewers (Baker & Raney, 2007). While female viewers watch good female models, which can help them feel empowered, male viewers are exposed to female figures in untraditional positions of power rather than positions of submission and passivity (Baker & Raney, 2007). In addition, this contradictory portrayal seems consistent with the postfeminist interpretation of (re)production and perception of culture (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007). According to the postfeminist interpretative model of femininity, concepts of feminism including individualism, emancipation and empowerment coexist with and even require some adherence to cultural norms such as physical beauty. In *Frozen*, Anna's distinctive individualistic and brave character seems to retain her conservative elegance, courteous behavior and heterosexual romance.

Similarly, Gru's representation as a male protagonist has indicated some paradoxes that seem consistent with the postfeminist portrayal of masculinity through the model of "the New Man" suggested by Gillam and Wooden (2008) and supported by Macaluso (2018). According to Gillam and Wooden's (2008) proposal, the *New Man* model suggests that male characters deviate from the conventional "alpha male" (p.3) roles and rather start to acquire the means to become well rounded males. Gru's portrayal seems consistent with this proposition of *New Man* in that his depiction is not strictly bound to the traditional features of *Old Man* or *alpha male*. This is illustrated in Gru's relatively fat body shape and bald head that breaks

out from the stereotypical portrayal of the handsome princes and the muscular alpha males (Gillam & Wooden, 2008). In this sense, Gru's representation of masculinity is freed from the restriction of the muscular physical appearance to the free expression of personal traits and behavior. As Jeffords (1994) noted *New Men* were valued for their morals rather than muscular physiques. In this case, Gru's portrayal as a *New Man* is accomplished through the positive and powerful qualities of bravery, skills in using technology and weapons, and commitment towards his daughters alongside some rather traditionally feminine features such as defenselessness and intimidation. This paradoxical combination of features indicates the shift in the representation of masculinity that has initiated since the 1990s reflecting the effect of the masculinity crisis due to the threat of feminism on the western versions of masculinity (Malin, 2005; Poling & Kirkley, 2000). Pompper (2010) observed that this approach toward redefining masculinities as a set of mental capacities and personal qualities was also applied in the real world. Therefore, it is of great benefit for female and male viewers to become aware of these multiplefacades of masculinities, regardless of traditional gender stereotypes.

Following Pompper's argument, reliance on rigid definitions of gender has minimized allowing for broader constructions of male identities. Pompper also noticed how masculinity's identity crisis has mostly resolved by the 2010s. This can be illustrated in *Despicable Me 2* as the male protagonist, Gru, learns to accept changes in masculinities, i.e., his vulnerability and intimidation towards women, and represent a wider range of identities, including father, husband, leader and hero. Although he maintains superiority, powerfulness and leadership towards his daughters, his assistant minions, and his partner Dr. Nefario, Gru does not appear to sustain the same

positions with his female partner Lucy. He is repeatedly represented equal to Lucy and occasionally threatened or intimidated by her. In addition, as Poling and Kirkley (2000) highlighted how masculinity was threatened by feminism during the 1990s, Brydon (2009) underlined the fears that the masculine will be removed from power and might even be emasculated, i.e., transformed into the feminine. This seems evident as revealed in the analysis above, in the visual representation of Gru in particular frames/shots which depict him in the costume of a fairy princess for the sake of his daughter Agnes. He also appears in Lucy's daydreams in different feminine rendering as a stewardess, a mother, and a wife. Besides, his intimidation towards female figures is repeatedly pictured revealing his childhood complex. These instances clearly illustrate how Gru's masculinity seems threatened. However, his hegemonic heterosexual masculinity prevails at the end when he bravely rescues Lucy, asks her out and marries her. Eventually, the film represents an ideal version of fatherhood and masculinity once again in a position of power and authority. Gru's ultimate re-masculinization manifests the fears about gender fluidity that emerged in the late 20ᵗʰ century.

7. Implications of the Study

Findings of this research have revealed the underlying gender messages delivered in the two selected animated movies highlighting implications for viewers of animation production including young children and their parents, animation producers and discourse analysts and scholars. This paper has attempted to add a better understanding to viewers of animation movies about what is visually portrayed by this media type. This is important because animated movies are often popular among young viewers, i.e., children and teens, and not everything presented has positive influences. The

lessons and messages delivered through this type of media are carefully observed and ingested by young viewers influencing their perception of reality. Thus, parents should monitor the content of what their children are exposed to and it is essential to educate them to differentiate between the real-life and the imaginary images.

These findings can also help children and parents understand some of the significant meanings of femininity and masculinity that are represented in the animation visual images. These should contribute to raise the viewers' awareness about the crucial issues of gender enabling them to critically analyze animated characters' looks and behaviors with which they repeatedly interact (Baker & Raney, 2007). I hope my study will help the coming generation grow up with a heightened awareness of gender construction and representation both in the society and the media. It is my hope that my findings will not solely reside within the academic realm, but enable parents to understand how gender messages are a part of our children's media and act accordingly.

Furthermore, animation producers play a significant role through their wide-spreading animation productions in developing the ways children think and acquire knowledge about real life. Findings of this research can also help animation makers and professionals better understand the possible implications of their work. They need to be thoughtful and deliberate in portraying female and male characters in general and heroines and heroes in particular in children's animated movies. In fact, gender-stereotyping has to be minimized to offer children a more diverse and egalitarian pictures of female and male characters and racial minorities which will contribute to enforce more accurate and just cultural depictions that in turn can broaden and deepen understanding of others. Challenging and eliminating

traditional gender stereotypes in children's media, including animated movies, should be a priority for media professionals and producers. This will eventually lead to positive changes that improve the position of women and men in the society, and provide girls and boys with a wider variety of gender images and ideals coping with the ever-changing social reality.

In addition, findings of this study add to the existing body of literature by analyzing a sample of animated films that has not been studied from a visual perspective before and indicating how female and male characters still possess stereotypical features; however, they are shown slightly deviating from traditional images of femininity and masculinity. This in turn offers young girls and boys improving images that might lead toward more gender equality. Moreover, this study serves as a detailed exemplar for qualitative visual analysis of gender representation in animated movies that can guide other analysts and scholars to conduct similar studies and analyses of visual data applying the same analytical framework. Also, the movies in this study can serve as excellent sources for qualitative studies of gender images with further focus on gender categories and characters' appearance.

8. Limitations and Recommendations

One of the greatest limitations to this study is the polysemic nature of the animated films texts. My findings are based on my readings of the texts, but other researchers will possibly read them differently. Although I list this as a limitation, alternative readings do not truly pose a limitation for my findings. Rather, they will help build a broader understanding of gender in animated movies. A more concrete limitation of this study is that analysis has mainly been of (female and male) protagonists of the selected two films.

Alternative representations of gender through antagonists and supporting characters were not included, but can be in future research which will allow for a broader comprehension of gender in the two animated films under study. Moreover, the films selected for my research were a purposive sample of children's animated films, but not a random sample that might represent all children's animated films. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable beyond the two animated films under study. However, future research can expand the corpus to include a wide scope of animated films that would yield more generalizable findings.

Future research might also investigate other aspects and dimensions. For example, examining visual aspects such as colors and modality might contribute to a better understanding of the visual representation of animated characters. Also, scrutiny of the scripted verbal dialogues in animated films can offer significant findings about the language used by and about female and male characters. Furthermore, exploring the interaction between visual and verbal aspects in animated films can reveal valuable insights about this multimodal medium and its influence on children viewers, their identities, and their social behavior. Finally, since animation productions are not confined to motion picture, television, or mobile screens, which have permeated the global consumer culture allowing children to incorporate characters into their various life realms such as playtime, clothing, and school work, a steady exposure to patterned, repetitive gender images and notions may result in cultivating effects (Fischer, 2010). Therefore, further multimodal studies need to be conducted to closely examine these media and their impacts on consumers of different genders, ages, and cultures.

9. Conclusion

Gender portrayals in children's media cause concern due to the crucial role of the media in children's socialization (Signorielli, 1990). Young children tend to identify with and imitate same-gender media characters more than opposite-gender characters (Courtney & Whipple, 1983) which highlights the role media play in encouraging gender-specific conduct (Remafedi, 1990; Cited in Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). Research on the prevalence of gender stereotyping in children's media, in particular animated movies, is crucial for steady progression toward gender equality in society. My study has extended previous research conducted in this field and has provided some insights of gender images rendered in recently released children animated movies not only in the United States but worldwide.

How children actually interpret the heroic characters in animated movies lies beyond the scope of my study; however, the ways these characters are rendered may suggest possible impact. Cultivation research argues that young children (particularly heavy viewers) ingest the values and perspectives offered through the various media. Hoffner (1996) maintains how children socialization can be mediated through children's identification with a certain model viewed in the media, i.e., adopting her/his psychological characteristics including beliefs, personality traits and social roles (Gewirtz & Stingle, 1968). Researchers have found that children and adults form affective connection to certain media, e.g., television and film, fictional figures, especially those of the same gender, ethnicity, social class, and age (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Maccoby & Wilson, 1957; Reeves & Miller, 1979). Potter (1997) maintains that viewers' identification with presented characters is greatly promoted based on the characters' attractiveness, strength, and hero status. For example, girls would most likely identify with female characters, especially

those who are portrayed as beautiful and attractive while boys identify mainly with male characters who manifest physical power and dominance (Hoffner, 1996). In addition, Dorr (1981) asserts that the more a child identifies with a particular character, the greater the likelihood s/he will be influenced by that character's behaviors. Therefore, it is compelling to examine carefully and critically these media texts that influence our children's attitudes, behaviors, and preferences (Gillam & Wooden, 2008).

My hope is that animation film producers will continue to depict positive portrayals of femininities (emancipated woman) and masculinities (New Man model). Children need to see stories that tell them it is okay to show emotion, ask for help, work as a team, and engage with one's family. However, I also would like to see animated films move away from such a strict adherence to patriarchy and show that female characters can be in positions of power without relying on a male character or without depicting them as villainous. Although *Frozen* and *Despicable Me 2* might seem deviating from the grain of stereotypical portrayals of gender in the rendering of their protagonists, I believe that animation producers still have a long way to go to promote egalitarian representations of female and male roles.

While I agree with Giroux (1999) and Giroux and Pollock (2010) that popular texts, e.g., animation texts, serve as pedagogical and ideological means, I also acknowledge that today's abundant digital discourse plays that role as well. (Macaluso, 2018) therefore, future research should explore the role of such digital media and its influence on people's social and cultural perceptions. My hope is that this qualitative research provides an in-depth examination into portrayals of gender in the selected animated films. This study

completes the first step of the study of mass media as proposed by Signorielli (2001), namely studying the images offered to the viewers through the media. It also hints at Signorielli's second step, which is to explore possible effects these images might have on viewers. Because they represent one of our society's dominant pop cultural genres, further research should be examining what messages these animated films may be triggering in the minds of our young, impressionable audience.

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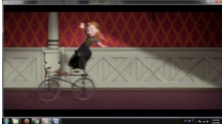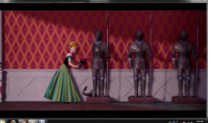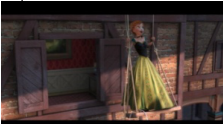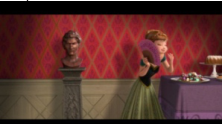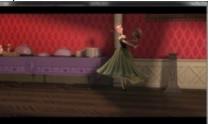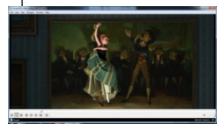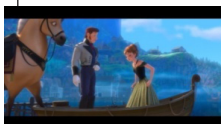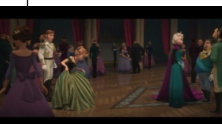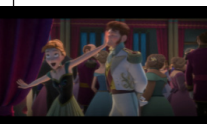
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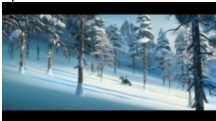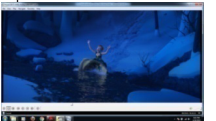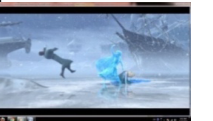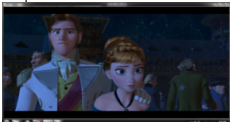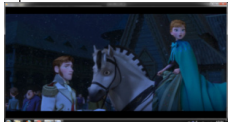
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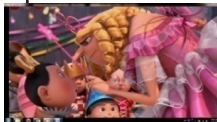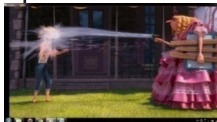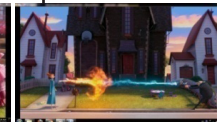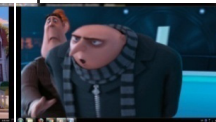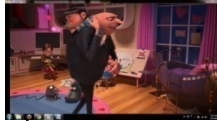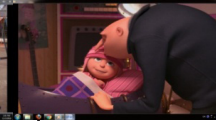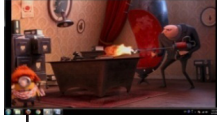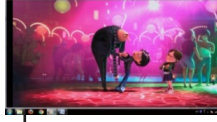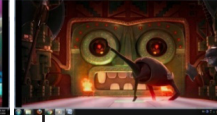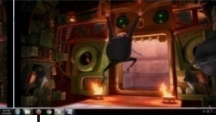
Appendix I- Anna in *Frozen*

Processes and Roles (Long & Medium Shots)			
Frame A 1	Frame A 2	Frame A 3	Frame A 4
Frame A 5	Frame A 6	Frame A 7	Frame A 8
Frame A 9	Frame A 10	Frame A 11	Frame A 12
Frame A 13	Frame A 14	Frame A 15	Frame A 16

Frame A 17	Frame A 18	Frame A 19	Frame A 20
Frame A 21	Frame A 22	Frame A 23	Frame A 24
Frame A 25	Frame A 26	Frame A 27	Frame A 28
Shots and Angling Types			
Frame A 29	Frame A 30	Frame A 31	Frame A 32
Frame A 33	Frame A 34	Frame A 35	Frame A 36
Frame A 37	Frame A 38	Frame A 39	Frame A 40
Frame A 41	Frame A 42	Frame A 43	Frame A 44

Frame A 45	Frame A 46	Frame A 47	Frame A 48
Composition (Visual Salience)			
Frame A 49	Frame A 50	Frame A 51	Frame A 52
Frame A 53	Frame A 54	Frame A 55	Frame A 56

Appendix II- Gru in *Despicable Me 2*

Processes and Roles (Long & Medium Shots)			
Frame G 1	Frame G 2	Frame G 3	Frame G 4
Frame G 5	Frame G 6	Frame G 7	Frame G 8
Frame G 9	Frame G 10	Frame G 11	Frame G 12

Frame G13	Frame G14	Frame G15	Frame G16
Frame G17	Frame G18	Frame G19	Frame G20
Frame G21	Frame G22	Frame G23	Frame G24
Shots and Angling Types			
Frame G25	Frame G26	Frame G27	Frame G28
Frame G29	Frame G30	Frame G31	Frame G32
Frame G33	Frame G34	Frame G35	Frame G36
Frame G37	Frame G38	Frame G39	Frame G40
Composition (Visual Salience)			
Frame G41	Frame G42	Frame G43	Frame G44