

**THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MARGOT ROBBIE AND
RYAN GOSLING IN AMERICAN ONLINE
ENTERTAINMENT NEWS MEDIA**

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Abstract <p>Medialla on yhteiskunnassa erittäin merkittävä rooli ja sillä on valtaa vaikuttaa ihmisten ajatteluun. Diskurssit eli kielenkäyttötavat taas liittyvät siihen, kuinka ihmiset hahmottavat ympäröivää maailmaa ja kuinka eri asioista puhutaan. Diskurssit ja kielenkäyttö siis rakentavat maailmaa ja samalla erilaiset sosiaaliset tilanteet rakentavat diskursseja. Media ja sen sisältämät diskurssit voivat luoda ja ylläpitää erilaisia representaatioita. Esimerkiksi eri sukupuolet voidaan edelleen esittää mediassa eri tavoin, mikä näkyy etenkin piilevien kielenkäyttötapojen kautta. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi on olennainen osa eriarvoisuuksien ja vallankäytön ilmenemisen tutkimusta. Sen avulla esimerkiksi juuri mediateksteistä voidaan havaita eriarvoisuuksia eri ihmisryhmien välillä.</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena oli tarkastella, kuinka kaksi eri näyttelijää esitettiin yhdysvaltalaisissa viihdeuutisartikkeleissa. Datan laajempina kontekstina toimi suureen suosioon noussut Barbie-elokuva, joka ilmestyi vuonna 2023. Tutkielma keskittyi elokuvan kahteen päätahteen Margot Robbieen ja Ryan Goslingiin, sillä heidän samankaltainen asemansa elokuvan kontekstissa loi otollisen asetelman kahden eri sukupuolen representaatioiden vertailulle. Viihdeuutiset valikoituvat tutkimuksen kohteeksi, sillä niillä on todella suuri yleisö. Täten myös niiden sisältö vaikuttaa suureen ihmisjoukkoon ja heidän ajatteluunsa. Lisäksi Barbie-elokuva tarjosi tutkielmalle kiinnostavan tausta-asetelman, sillä itse elokuva käsittelee tasa-arvoon ja feminismiin liittyviä teemoja. Tutkielman analyysimetodina toimi kriittinen diskurssianalyysi. Aineisto koostui kahdestatoista People.com-sivustolta kerätystä artikkelista.</p> <p>Analyysin tärkeimmät löydökset jaettiin kahteen kategoriaan näyttelijöiden mukaan ja molempien representaatiot jaettiin edelleen kolmeen päähavaintoon. Margot Robbie esitettiin itsevarmana ammattilaisena, roolissaan Barbiena sekä yhteiskunnallisesti vaikutusvaltaisena henkilönä. Ryan Gosling taas esitettiin ammattilaisena ja koomikkona, ulkonäkönsä kautta sekä modernina miehenä. Tutkielman löydökset olivat osittain yllättäviä ja sukupuoli vaikutti representaatioihin ajateltua vähemmän. Esimerkiksi Robbien esittäminen vahvasti oman alansa ammattilaisena ja Goslingin esittäminen modernina eli empaattisena, kannustavana ja perhekeskeisenä erosivat aiemmasta tutkimuksesta ja viittasivat siihen, että sukupuolen vaikutus representaatioihin on vähentynyt ainakin tässä kontekstissa.</p>	
Keywords: Discourse, critical discourse analysis, media, representation, gender, pop-culture, entertainment	
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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis will investigate the media representations of two actors in American online entertainment news. The topic was chosen based on media having a significant role in affecting people's views and understanding of the world (Fairclough 1995b; Kosut 2012). Media representations can affect the way readers view other people, their roles or lives as well as concepts in general, which is why it is important to study how media covers different topics and people. Nowadays, media is also extremely prevalent in society and has, thus, a significant effect on people and society. Especially in the Western context, it is often assumed that media is rather neutral and truthful, and that many platforms are reliable, objective and offer factual information. However, there can be "hidden" ways through which media still displays harmful representations. Because these representations might not be visible to everyone, it is important to carefully study and discover them. The focus of this thesis is on gender and how it affects representations visible in media.

The study will investigate and compare the representations of two actors, Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling. They were chosen as the subjects of the study as they both starred in *Barbie*, the highest grossing movie of 2023. This guarantees that there is plenty of media content about the actors and that the representations derive from the same context. The status of the actors' roles in the movie was similar as they starred in leading roles and they are shown as representing two different genders, female and male. Gender variance was also considered when conducting this study. Due to the limited length of the study and the context, which discussed these specific actors, a more binary focus was chosen. The actors are also rather similar in age and they have similar backgrounds. Additionally, the *Barbie* movie offers an interesting context since the movie itself covers themes of inequality and feminism although that is not the focus of the thesis. However, one might consider whether this affects the representations as well. The present study asks what kind of representations are visible in the entertainment news articles about the two actors and how or whether they differ in significant ways. The study will utilise critical discourse analysis as the

methodological tool as it focuses on uncovering possible inequalities and social injustices. With the help of critical discourse analysis, the articles will be analysed thoroughly and, for example, word choices and different narratives will be looked at.

Media representations, celebrities and popular culture as a combination has not been studied much, which is why it is a meaningful focus of study. As well as media in general, popular culture and entertainment media interest many people and it is prevalent in society. Entertainment news have a large audience even though they are often considered more light-hearted and not as important. The large audiences make it important to discover what kind of representations are presented in entertainment news media. The data of for this study was gathered from the biggest American online entertainment news website, *People.com*, that has a wide American and international audience and is, thus, highly influential. The present topic is especially interesting from the point of view of gender and equality. It is important to strive for a more equal world, especially in a context where it is often thought that equality has already been achieved and that there are no issues. In addition to wanting to promote equality, my minor in journalism has given me the interest and skills to study the world of media, which can be considered an essential part of society.

This thesis begins with reviewing previous research related to the topic. The key concepts of discourse, critical discourse analysis, media, representation and gender in media will be discussed from the point of view of the present study in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will cover the aim of the study as well as the research questions, the data collection procedures and the methods of analysis. The findings of the thesis, or the representations of Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, will be covered in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 discusses how the representations compare between the two actors. Chapter 6 will conclude the main findings, consider the implications of the present study as well as suggest topics for future research.

2 BACKGROUND

This Chapter will discuss previous research and theories related to the present study. First, discourse and critical discourse analysis will be reviewed and their importance to the study will be justified. Next, the concepts of media and representation will be explained and discussed. Finally, the Chapter will conclude with discussing gender in media, from the point of view of women and men.

2.1 Discourse and critical discourse analysis

This section discusses the concepts of discourse and critical discourse analysis. It considers how discourse is a layered, multifaceted concept that connects language with social reality and how critical discourse analysis aims to uncover social injustices that are communicated through language use.

2.1.1 Discourse

Discourse is a complex concept that can be defined in different ways. Pietikäinen & Mäntynen (2019: 14-36) say that language use is always social: it for example creates information, is dependent on context, there are certain constraints and consequences and through language use, power can be used. This is also their definition of discourse: language use as a social activity in a certain context. Thus, in discourse studies, language is understood as creating social reality while social reality also affects language (Fairclough 1995b: 55; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2019: 26). This view is especially important for the present study. Discourse can also be defined as “the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view” (Fairclough 1995b: 56) or a certain way of speaking about something (Pietikäinen &

Mäntynen 2019: 35), which means that there can be different discourses related to certain topics, such as the actors of this study. Discourse analysis situates texts or language in a wider context, and it should also be noted that meaning always depends on context and is ever-changing (Fairclough 1995a: 7; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2019: 37). Overall, discourse is a layered concept that is a “complex set of relations”, which can include, for example, communication between people, languages, genres, institutions as well as power relations (Fairclough 2010: 3). According to Fairclough (1995b: 54; 2010: 3) discourse, however, specifically relates to meaning and meaning making, which in addition to language use can also occur through, for example, images and non-verbal communication.

Fairclough (1995a: 97) sees discourse as three-dimensional. It is at the same time a text or a piece of language of some kind, discourse practice relating to the production and interpretation of a given text and finally, sociocultural practice. This relates to discourse being a layered concept: it has many levels. The first aspect, the text, has three functional categories, which are ideational, interpersonal and textual. Textual analysis can focus on and texts can consist of ideologies, writer and reader identities, roles and status as well as the relationship between the writer and the reader (Fairclough 1995b: 57-58). Discourse practice can include processes of text production and interpretation, or consumption (Fairclough 1995b: 58-59), such as a reporter writing a piece of news and a citizen reading and understanding it or even forming their own view about the topic. Finally, discourse is part of sociocultural practice on different levels, such as the smaller context of the text, for example, a piece of news within a newspaper, but also a wider societal context as well as all the “levels” in between (Fairclough 1995a: 97), which also relates to the importance of context that was discussed above. In conclusion, discourse is a multifaceted and significant concept that connects language and text to the processes surrounding them as well as to society. Discourse allows one to see what kind of an effect for example language use has on different levels. Overall, discourse helps us make sense of the world, as Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2019: 28) remark.

2.1.2 Critical discourse analysis

The present study focuses especially on the relationship between discourse and language use, which will be considered through critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis does not only focus on discourse, but instead on the relations between discourse and other elements of the social reality (Fairclough 2010: 4, 10). As a method, critical discourse analysis is transdisciplinary: it reaches across the traditional boundaries of disciplines and the dialogue between disciplines is

important (Fairclough 2010: 4). The main focus of critical discourse analysis is on how relations of power and inequalities create “social wrongs”, what are the reasons for these and how they could be improved (Fairclough 2010: 8) as well as how “social inequality [- -] is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use” (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 2). The connection between language use and power is not always clear, or visible at first sight, but it is central when considering power and aspects related to it (Fairclough 1996b: 54; Wodak & Meyer 2001: 2). In addition to focusing on inequalities, critical discourse analysis research also often concentrates on certain topics. It especially “considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses”, which often express cases of inequality (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 2). This makes it relevant to the present study. The dialectical relationship of language use is also relevant when discussing critical discourse analysis. It emphasises the way language use “is socially shaped but is also socially shaping” or how language use affects things and in turn, how it is affected (Fairclough 1995b: 54-55), which is much like what was emphasised in the definition of discourse above.

Using language can hold plenty of power and it can even make a difference. However, it should be noted that language on its own is not powerful, but the social situations in which language is used and the people who use it make it powerful (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 10). Language use can constitute, maintain and transform existing identities, relations and knowledge as well as challenge or alter power distributions (Fairclough 1995b: 55; Wodak & Meyer 2001: 11), which means that it has the power to both maintain and change for example unequal representations or any other injustices in texts, media or other environments. Additionally, critical discourse analysis enables analysis, that can discover hidden ideologies, as they are usually implicit rather than explicit, and some aspects of text can be seen as normal when they should be looked at more critically (Fairclough 1995a: 5-6). Critical discourse analysis widely considers how discourses have developed, how they are interpreted and which contexts they can be found in, making it possible to question “unequal power relationships that appear as societal conventions” (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 3). As language use has the power to affect reality, people and society, it is an essential point of study and critical discourse analysis is a relevant tool, especially if one aims to discover inequalities hidden in societal norms and conventions.

In addition to being a relevant theory, critical discourse analysis is a widely used methodological tool. Fairclough’s (1995a) three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis is essential for the present study and it functions as theoretical background, but also as a tool of analysis. According to Fairclough (1995a: 96), his framework is suitable for research that focuses on “social and cultural change” and it

enables the investigation of the relationship between language and/or text and different social processes and relations. The three-dimensional analytical framework follows a similar pattern to Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse (Fairclough 1995a: 97), which was discussed above in section 2.1.1. Fairclough's (1995a: 97) critical analysis of discourse, which will be used in the present study, includes describing the subject text, interpreting the relationship between the text and discursive processes and further explaining the relationship between discursive and social processes. Thus, it aligns with the idea of discourse being a layered concept and also enables deep analysis of the data. This framework is also chronological in the sense that the first step related to the text and the last step related to the sociocultural practice are connected by the second step of analysing discourse practice (Fairclough 1995a: 97). The framework will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

In conclusion, the concept of discourse sees language use as a social activity in different contexts. Language creates social reality and social reality affects language use. Discourse is a layered concept that can be seen as having three dimensions, which include a language text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. Critical discourse analysis is a more specific tool that considers the inequalities of the world through, for example, language and how these inequalities could be improved, which makes it relevant for the present study. Critical discourse analysis emphasises the power of language as well as ideologies hidden in language use. Studying different societal structures and the power dynamics within these structures is typical for critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis includes the description of a text, understanding the relationship between a text and discursive processes and also understanding the relationship between discursive and social processes. This framework is essential for the present study in investigating language-related injustices.

2.2 Media and representation

This section introduces the concepts of media and representation. Media can include a broad range of outlets and has plenty of influence in today's society. Representation can mean communicating meaning through language use and representations can affect how people see others and themselves. The two concepts are interrelated as media platforms display many different representations.

2.2.1 Media

Media is a broad concept and can include a multitude of different aspects. According to Kosut (2012: xix), media can include for example traditional newspapers and television as well as social media, films and video games. She continues that media often provides audiences with information and entertainment, and that media as a concept can also include the production of media, in addition to the final products. Nevertheless, media holds a highly significant role in today's society and appears in many forms. Mass media is especially powerful since audiences cannot very directly affect it, and large audience sizes also underline its power (Fairclough 1995b: 39-40). Society shapes media, but media also has the power to shape society and issues, such as gender, race and class relations (Fairclough 1995b: 51). Media affects how people view the world both close to them as well as further away (Kosut 2012: xx), which is also why media and media representations matter. According to Kosut (2012: xx), media representations can include hidden views about gender, social roles and desirable features. Because language use is essential in maintaining and changing existing views and knowledge (Fairclough 1995b: 55), the language of media also has an essential role in society.

Entertainment news are part of news media but differ somewhat from the traditional idea or concept of news. Many might value entertainment news less but they hold a significant role in society alongside other news and media. Many researchers also use the terms soft news (Reinemann et al. 2012) or tabloid news (Grabe & Kleemans 2012). Compared to hard news which are highly factual, soft news aim to entertain in addition to being "more sensational, more personality oriented, less time-bound, more practical and more incident-based" (Spragens 1988, in Ban 2008). Reinemann et al. (2012) discuss how hard and soft news are defined and how they should be measured. They propose a definition made through three dimensions: the topic, the emphasised aspects or the focus and how the topic is presented stylistically. Additionally, they emphasise that the topic dimension should work as the foundation for the other two since it holds greater importance. Following Reinemann et al.'s (2012) three dimensions, the data of this thesis can be defined as soft news.

Additionally, one can talk about the concept of tabloid news. According to Grabe and Kleemans (2012), tabloid news are defined as entertaining, while hard news or in their words, "proper" news, are thought of as more useful. They also highlight how tabloid press and hard news are thought of as strict opposites. Big headlines, dramatic photos and placing sensational articles on the front page are some of the features associated with tabloid press (Grabe & Kleemans 2012). Soft news are popular and common as entertainment-based news can be more attractive to audiences and a source of

enjoyment but there are also people who value soft news less than hard news (Ban 2008). There are also features of tabloid journalism that concern people: it is thought that tabloid journalists would rather provide entertainment than information and tabloid reporting is at times seen as morally questionable (Grabe & Kleemans 2012). However, views on what can be defined “as socially significant news” have changed and people seem to recognise the distinctions between hard news and soft news, or tabloid news (Grabe & Kleemans 2012), which indicates that people are aware of the negatives of tabloid press. Although entertainment news media is not always seen as important or offering factual content, it is still consumed widely, which makes it powerful and something that should be studied. The present study will utilise the term entertainment news even though this section discusses research on both soft news and tabloid news.

2.2.2 Representation

Representation is strongly connected to language and additionally, media. Hall (1997: 28) has defined representation as “the production of meaning through language”. Language constructs meaning and passes it on: language-like elements “operate as symbols” and they represent what people want to communicate (Hall 1997: 4-5). Representation connects three important aspects of meaning-making in language: “things”, concepts and signs (Hall 1997: 19). According to Webb (2009: 1-2), representation has several definitions, but they all have one thing in common: representation is used to discover “the embedded, underlying meanings of texts” and they can highlight the writer’s attitudes about the topic or certain people in a piece of media. Orgad (2012: 17) explains that media representations are remarkable in the sense that their goal is to represent, or “their function is to produce meaning”.

Representations are constantly present even in people’s daily lives: representations relate to how people understand their surroundings, other people and themselves (Webb 2009: 1-2). Fairclough (1995a: 5-6; 1995b: 44-45) points out from his perspective of critical discourse analysis that when studying texts, it is important to consider what is included in the text but also what is absent from it. He continues that the implicit aspects of texts and language can, in fact, reveal ideologies and maintain relations of power as these ways of writing can feel normal and natural for reporters without them realising it. This is relevant when considering representations since they are often not explicit but rather implicit and in ways, hidden, sometimes even from the creators of the texts. Overall, representations are significant as they carry meaning and affect how one understands the world.

The process of how meaning is created and conveyed can be explained through Hall's (1997) systems of representation. The first system of mental representation refers to the way in which people organise the world in their minds: humans have interrelated concepts, which always "mean" something, even when these concepts are abstract, and have varying relationships (Hall 1997: 17-18, 28). Concepts are however not objective in the sense that culture (and individual experiences) affect how people see the world and, thus, people from the same culture share roughly the same concepts of ideas and are able to understand each other (Hall 1997: 4, 18). Mental representation cannot, however, function without the second system or representation, language. Language is vital in communicating the meanings of concepts and without a common language, meaning cannot be communicated (Hall 1997: 18, 28-29). Language consists of signs but the relationship between concepts and signs can fluctuate as they are products of societal norms (Hall 1997: 19, 28-29), meaning that representations can differ even when discussing the same concepts. Thus, representations are made through the relationship between our mental worlds and communicating them through language.

Language and representation can be viewed through three approaches (Hall 1997; Webb 2009) or as Webb (2009: 43) introduces them, modes of representation. The first approach is reflectionist, which argues that language represents what already exists in the world rather than contributing to the creation of reality (Webb 2009: 43; Orgad 2012: 18). This can be a problematic view as Webb (2009: 43) and Orgad (2012: 18-20) explain that language and representations can also create reality, and media has the power to interpret and represent topics in their chosen way rather than purely objectively. The second approach is constructionist. It argues that all representations are constructed and their views about reality are selected, which means that representations only highlight some meanings and exclude others (Webb 2009: 44; Orgad 2012: 20-21). Webb (2009: 43) also introduces a third approach, called the intentional approach, which relies on the idea that "communication conveys precisely what the communicator intended". The theory on discourse and the goals of this thesis align with the notions of the second approach about representations being constructed.

In summary, the role of media is significant in today's society, which is why it is important to discuss what kind of representations and views it presents. Media has influence and can affect the way people see the world and people around them as well as contribute to, for example, maintaining or questioning gender roles and harmful representations. Soft news cover, for example, lighter and more sensational topics than hard news. Soft news or tabloid news are often seen as less important due to their flashier style and entertaining content, but they have large audiences, which increase

their influence in affecting people. Media is also full of representations, the function of which is to produce meaning. Representations can affect how people see others and themselves. Hall's (1997: 17-29) systems of representation include mental representation, or how one organises the world in their mind, and language, through which things can be communicated. Of the three approaches of representation, the constructionist approach aligns with the theory and goals of the present study.

2.3 Gender in media

This section discusses the concept of gender and presents previous research on how women and men are shown in media. As a concept, gender can be challenging to define. It can be defined as "the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). Gender and sex are often used as synonyms but the definition of sex emphasises the biological aspects of gender, which are often seen as dual. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines sex as, for example, "the state of being male or female". The present study focuses on the term gender and the view that it is socially constructed rather than something inherent (Harvey 2020: 3). According to Harvey (2020: 3), gender is seen as an identity, which consists of "attributes and traits we express and are ascribed by our social and cultural affiliations". Gender can be seen as something subjective and relating to people's sense of self in an environment where some behaviours (related to gender) are seen as normal and some 'unnatural' (Harvey 2020: 4). Traditionally gender was seen as biologically determined, genes and hormones affecting the way one would act or what kind of attitudes they would have in addition to physical features, and this affected the development of gender roles as well (Macnamara 2006: 22). As the traditional view on gender emphasises how it is inherent, it also emphasises how men or women cannot necessarily change too much, while the constructionist view allows all genders to be what they want to be (Macnamara 2006: 32). The present study defines gender as an identity, as something one oneself defines. Additionally, gender is considered through the constructionist view.

2.3.1 Women in media

Gender is an essential part of all media, although it might not always be clearly visible. Gender can still affect how certain people are portrayed in media and what kind of light they are represented in. Especially women and minorities can still face inequity in many media contexts and Harvey (2020: 1-2) points out that, even though many think that nowadays this is not a problem, media continues to be gendered, which

means that, for example, representations are affected by gender and women can continue to be sexualized. Additionally, women are largely underrepresented in media and male influence is emphasised: men are often associated and represented in contexts surrounding business and politics, or overall, as experts and knowledgeable, while women are associated with soft topics, such as fashion and entertainment (Jia et al. 2016; Burke & Mazzarella 2008). D'Heer et al. (2020) also found that women are often used to provide personal experiences to news articles rather than hard facts. Overall, media genres and topics are still gendered (Edström 2018).

Kosut (2012: xx) also points out the under-representation of women as well as minorities in the history of mass media. She agrees with Jia et al. (2016) about men dominating significant hard news, while women are associated with soft news and topics, such as entertainment, health and beauty. Harvey (2020: 60) also agrees that women's stories and the way they are told is limited "despite claims made about progress and greater inclusion in media culture". The under-representations and women's limited roles in media have also not improved to a great extent over time and minorities, such as women of colour, are represented rather rarely (Harvey 2020: 62). Gender stereotypes in news media have not changed much in the 21st century, and very few news articles challenge them actively or represent women centrally, even in the 2020s (The Global Media Monitoring Project 2020: 53).

Women are often shown in stereotypical roles, for example, as a mother or a caregiver, which then affects the way audiences see women and their desirable roles (Kosut 2012: xx). Additionally, it has been noted that media reporting about female political candidates often covers more personal topics, such as appearance or family life, and news writing can also be more critical when females express power and assertiveness, or qualities that can be seen as unsuitable for women (Devere & Davies 2006, in Burke & Mazzarella 2008). Mass media often shows dominant cultural norms and only certain people, groups and views (Edström 2018) and overall, strict gender binary thinking has resulted in many gender stereotypes, and both of these can be seen as rooted in heteronormative thinking (Kosut 2012: xx).

Additionally, Walsh (2015) found that women's looks are also highlighted in media: looks can distract audiences from what women are trying to say as well as result in criticism about their appearance. She continues that men do not face this issue, which means that women are overall more criticised in media. Harvey (2020: 72-73) agrees with this by highlighting the almost impossible expectations that women face considering their looks and how this can take attention away from "real" issues, such as the political and economic rights of women. The underrepresentation and the

limited role of women in media can be seen as rooted in how most media industries are male-dominant, as both Kosut (2012) and Harvey (2020) remark.

2.3.2 Men in media

It seems that the representations of men in media have been studied less than those of women or minorities, which is confirmed by Macnamara (2006: 1), who recounts that male representations have been assumed to be mostly positive and unproblematic. However, Gill (2007: 29) does mention how earlier the “male experience had often been treated unproblematically as human experience”, while now men are considered more as a gendered group. Men have often also been studied through the ways in which they are or have been problematic, although nowadays the study of masculinity is more diverse and considers different kinds of masculinities, from more dominant ones to more infrequent ones (Gill 2007: 29-30). New representations of males and male identity are being portrayed in mass media, which could have “significant social implications” (Macnamara 2006: 1). These new representations can also play a role in creating new masculinities and new ways to be men (Gill 2007: 32).

According to Macnamara (2006: 166-167), mass media portrays men often as abusers, criminals and overall, violent as well as unable to commit and as “bad” fathers. He continues that most media content represents men in negative light: the most common representation is violence but also irresponsibility, insensitivity and being a bad communicator. However, there were also some positive representations that related to being a good father and/or husband as well as a hero, such as a war veteran or a fire fighter (Macnamara 2006: 167). In their more recent study, Nilsson and Lundgren (2021) focused on the Me Too -movement in Swedish news media and what kind of masculinities were represented. They found that masculinity was often linked to violence and harassment in this context and additionally, toxic masculinity was brought up as having an effect on all men and making them for instance unempathetic. This is similar to Macnamara’s (2006: 167) findings, which also point out that positive representations of men often relate to them having “feminine sides”. However, the studies about women in media also highlight that men are often represented in roles of an expert especially in hard news about topics such as business and politics, and they are given a more powerful position in media compared to women (Jia et al. 2016; Kosut 2012; Burke & Mazzarella 2008).

In conclusion, both women and men face negative and questionable representations in media. Representations can be very limited and narrow (Gill 2007: 32). Women face criticism on their looks, they are sexualised, and they can also often be represented in

very traditional roles. Additionally, women do not hold many powerful positions in media industries, which can affect the reporting and how it has not changed much. The representations of men have not been studied as much. Men are often represented through negative features: as violent, aggressive, unempathetic and as abusers. It was noted that positive representations of men related to them having traditionally feminine features. The data of the present study will be from a different context making it interesting to see if and how the representations differ from these studies.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

This Chapter includes a description of the aim and the research questions as well as the data, the data collection and the methods of analysis.

3.1 The aim and research questions

The aim of the present study is to examine the media representations of two actors in entertainment news. The subjects of the study are Australian Margot Robbie, 34, and Canadian Ryan Gosling, 43. They both starred in leading roles in a movie called Barbie, which was the highest-grossing movie of 2023 (The Numbers n.d.) and evoked a lot of discussion in the media. Robbie and Gosling were chosen as the subjects of the study since they starred in the same movie and represent two different genders, which enables the comparison of their representations in the same context and even in the same data articles. They are similar in age and background as well as popularity at the moment. Additionally, due to the popularity of the movie, there is plenty of media content around the movie and the actors. That content also has a large audience. The movie itself is a relevant context since it evoked a lot of discussion around its themes of gender equality and feminism. This paints an interesting background for the equality-themed study as well. The articles cover the Barbie movie or the actors from different points of view across a time period of around two years. The present study will investigate what kind of representations are visible in the twelve articles collected as data and whether the representations are similar or different when compared between the actors. The research questions are:

The research questions:

1. How are Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling represented in the articles?
2. How do the representations compare between the two actors?

3.2 Data

The data for this study consists of American online entertainment news articles as the topic movie is American and news coverage is likely to be higher in American news media. In total, twelve articles were collected for the purposes of this study. The news media was chosen based on its popularity and audience size. For the study, I chose a website from the most popular news platforms listing (Press Gazette 2024). The present study will investigate the articles of *People.com*, which has millions of American and international monthly readers and is the most popular US-based website that focuses on entertainment news (Press Gazette 2024). The data was collected by using the search function on the website. The articles cover roughly a similar topic, which is the Barbie movie and events surrounding it. A more specific timeframe or topic was not chosen to gain enough variety for the articles and the representations they hold. The publication dates of the articles vary and they have been published throughout the years 2022, 2023 and 2024. The 2022 and some of the 2023 articles have been published before the movie was released. Most of the 2023 articles have been published around the time of the movie's release in July, while the 2024 articles cover events after the movie's release. With this timeframe, there is variety to the articles as well as some different topics.

A few different search words were used to collect the articles. These include for example "Margot Robbie Barbie movie", "Ryan Gosling Barbie movie" and "Barbie movie Oscars", or some variation of these. The articles were collected by going through all of the search results and looking for the relevant headlines due to the search function itself being rather limited. When choosing the articles based on the headlines, the two actors' names were looked at as well as whether the article covered the Barbie movie generally. The articles were picked in such a manner that each of the actors had roughly a similar number of articles that focused especially on them. The rest of the articles discuss both of the actors or the movie in general. The reporters were also lightly noted in the data collection to gather a data set that included articles from several different writers to not target any specific writer and also to gain some variety. The articles overall had different points of view and some different topics, which will be illustrated in Chapter 4.

People Magazine was first published in 1974, and it continues to publish the print magazine as well as online content (People.com n.d.). They "deliver the most trustworthy celebrity news and captivating human interest stories" so their goal is to tell people's stories (People.com n.d.). In August 2024, they were the 7th most popular news website in the U.S. with over 162 million monthly visits to their website (Press

Gazette 2024) and they pride themselves in being the “go-to” source for celebrity and entertainment news (People.com n.d.), which is also visible on the website, that has a high number of articles on different topics. This entertainment news website was chosen due to its extremely high audience numbers, making it influential both in the U.S. and internationally. The process of gathering the data, however, also included visits to other entertainment news websites and reading articles about the topic of the present study from these other news outlets to gain useful background information and perspective for the analysis. I also watched the movie itself to gain deeper understanding of the context. The ethical aspects of the data collection were considered as well. However, there are few ethical issues as the articles were free and not behind a paywall, and they are public content. Additionally, no one journalist was targeted in the data, which consisted of articles from several different writers.

3.3 The methods of analysis

For the method of analysis, critical discourse analysis was utilised. Critical discourse analysis focuses on power relations and inequalities as well as how they are created and could be corrected (Fairclough 2010: 8). The relationship between language and, for example, power is at the centre of critical discourse analysis or in other words, how social inequalities are expressed or created by language use especially in “institutional, political, gender and media discourses” (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 1-2). The aims of critical discourse analysis support the goal of this study in discovering gender representations and possible inequalities in media. As Wodak and Meyer (2001: 1-2) mentioned, media discourse can also be one of critical discourse analysis’ foci, which further motivates the use of the method for this study, which focuses on entertainment news media.

For the analysis of the thesis, Fairclough’s (1995a) three-dimensional framework was used. According to Fairclough (1995a: 96), his framework is suitable for research that focuses on “social and cultural change” and it enables the investigation of the relationship between language and/or text and different social processes and relations. Discourse is simultaneously seen through three dimensions: as a piece of language text, as discourse practice, which refers to the production and interpretation of a text and finally, as sociocultural practice on different levels from the specific situation to a wider societal context (Fairclough 1995a: 97). This relates to the three-dimensional analytical framework, which follows a similar pattern. Fairclough’s (1995a: 97) analysis of discourse, that was used in the present study, includes describing the text or language, “the interpretation of the relationship between the [-

-] discursive processes and the text” as well as explaining “the relationship between the discursive processes and social processes”. The framework is chronological in the sense that the first step related to the text and the last step related to the sociocultural practice are connected by the second step of analysing discourse practice (Fairclough 1995a: 97).

Additionally, in the analysis, Fairclough’s theory about media texts was considered. This includes the analysis of communicative events and the orders of discourse (Fairclough 1995b: 56). Similarly to the three-dimensional framework, communicative events should be analysed through the three dimensions of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice mentioned above, and the orders of discourse refers to considering how a media text is situated in a wider social and cultural context of public and private domains through different discourses and genres (Fairclough 1995b: 56-68). When considering media texts, one should also consider the possible ideological representations, how the identities of writers and readers are constructed as well as what the relationship between the writer and reader is like (Fairclough 1995b: 58). When considering discourse practice, one should, as mentioned, think about the text production and consumption as well as any changes that might happen during these processes (Fairclough 1995b: 58-59).

In addition to Fairclough’s (1995a; 1995b) framework(s), the linguistic choices, such as word choices and labels of the data articles were also considered (Matheson 2005: 20). According to Matheson (2005: 20), choosing one linguistic form “over another is always potentially meaningful”. This is especially relevant when considering representations that can be constructed through word choices, as was the case for most of the data. Labels relate to word choices as well. They hold power in that they can sort people into strict social categories even though they can be helpful as well in creating meaning through a short form (Matheson 2005: 24). Labelling people in a certain way can contribute to harmful representations. Additionally, it is important to consider different patterns as meaning is made through sets and combinations of words rather than individual words (Matheson 2005: 27).

The analysis was conducted based on Fairclough’s (1995a) framework as well as Fairclough’s (1995b) theory about media texts that were discussed above. The data of the present study was only considered through its textual elements, and audiovisual features were excluded due to the limited length of the study. First, the data was thoroughly read and relevant linguistic aspects, such as descriptive words and phrases, were highlighted and marked, which related to the first phase of the analysis, the description of the text. Next, patterns of language use and how they created

different meanings and representations were discovered, or the relationship between the text and discursive processes. Finally, the discovered representations were connected to a wider societal context and previous research in addition to considering the smaller context of the data. Once the data was analysed through the three-dimensional framework, the orders of discourse were further considered in connecting the data articles to societal contexts of gender inequality and entertainment media as well as the context of the data itself, the Barbie movie. Fairclough's (1995b) remark about ideological representations and writer and reader identities and relationships was considered in the analysis in finding the possible unequal representations as well as the how the writers created different mental images and how readers could be expected to understand them. Additionally, the processes of text production and consumption were considered especially in how the timing and context of the data articles affected them. It was also considered what aspects were visible in the data and what were not, as mentioned in Chapter 2 by Fairclough (1995a; 1995b). Finally, labels, word choices and patterns, as mentioned by Matheson (2005: 20, 27), were considered widely throughout the analysis to gain precision and a complete view of how language created the different representations.

4 THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MARGOT ROBBIE AND RYAN GOSLING

This Chapter introduces the results of the study, which have been divided under two sections: the representations of Margot Robbie and the representations of Ryan Gosling. Both actors are represented through three main themes. First, the representations of Margot Robbie will be discussed and after that, the representations of Ryan Gosling. The analysis includes examples from the twelve data articles. These examples are marked by the writers of the articles, the full list of which can be found in the references.

4.1 The representations of Margot Robbie

Margot Robbie is represented in the articles through three main views, that will be introduced in this section. Firstly, Robbie is represented as a confident professional. Her career and achievements are emphasised and details about her work as an actor and producer are brought up. She is also labelled through her professional roles of actor and producer. Secondly, Robbie is represented through her role as Barbie, which includes discussing her looks and fashion in the movie as well as how she and her role are interlinked. Thirdly, Robbie is shown as a societal influence. She is shown as talking about issues, such as sexualisation and feminism, as well as acknowledging the influence of Barbie and the Barbie movie and its themes.

4.1.1 Margot Robbie as a confident professional

Robbie is mostly represented as a professional in her own field. Especially labels emphasise her profession and what she has achieved as an actor and producer. She is

described through rather neutral terms, such as “the Oscar-nominated actress”, “the actress” and “a producer”. It is also especially emphasised how she, in addition to acting in the title role of the movie, has produced the movie, through which her professional achievements are once again emphasised. This is illustrated in examples 1 and 2:

- (1) “Robbie – who produced Barbie with her company LuckyChap Entertainment – previously shared with Collider in an interview before the actors' strike that she claimed her movie would make \$1 billion when initially pitching Barbie to the studio.” (McArdle 2023b)
- (2) “Robbie produced Barbie with her company LuckyChap Entertainment, which previously produced *Birds of Prey* and the Oscar-winning *Promising Young Woman*.” (VanHoose 2023)

In examples 1 and 2, Robbie’s status as a producer is emphasised, which directs the readers into thinking of her through her profession and having an essential role in creating the movie. It is also mentioned how she has her own company that has previously produced other successful films. It can be considered how the labels of actress and producer and the combination of them function in creating different mental images of Robbie. Anyway, Robbie’s presence and knowledge in the film industry is strongly brought up. Additionally, Robbie is labelled through her role in the movie as well as a “star”. “Star” provokes, again, different mental images and possibly emphasises how Robbie is a celebrity and successful in her own field. Robbie’s achievements as an actor are also brought up highlighting how she is good at what she does. This is visible in examples 3 and 4:

- (3) “Meanwhile, Robbie has secured numerous awards this year for her lead role in Barbie [–].” (Juneau 2024a)
- (4) “Robbie has received two Oscar acting nominations in the past: Best Actress for *I, Tonya* in 2018, and Best Supporting Actress for *Bombshell* in 2019.” (Juneau 2024b)

These examples show how Robbie has been recognised through her work as an actor in many contexts in the field, which add to her being shown as successful. Additionally, Robbie is represented as a confident professional, who believes in her own ideas, and as a leader, who is not afraid to take space. Some of the articles discuss the making of the Barbie movie and how Robbie was behind the idea. She is presented as determined, as is shown in example 5:

- (5) “[--] she claimed her movie would make \$1 billion when initially pitching Barbie to the studio. [--] Added Robbie, 'And I was like, 'And now you've got Barbie and Greta Gerwig.' And I think I told them that it'd make a billion dollars, which maybe I was overselling, but we had a movie to make, okay?'" (McArdle 2023b)

This example illustrates how Robbie is shown as assertive, confident about her idea and convincing the studio that the movie would be financially viable. She has even exaggerated the movie's possible success in order to convince people of her idea. This can be seen as emphasising her professionalism in the film industry: she knows what kind of films could be popular and profitable, especially as in this case, she succeeded. Additionally, Robbie is shown as a leader in the context of filming the movie. It is described how she created a “pink day” at work and got everyone else to participate as well, which is illustrated in example 6:

- (6) “Ryan Gosling revealed that his costar Robbie, 33 – who also served as a producer on the project – created a mandatory pink dress code for everyone on set one day of every week.” (McArdle 2023a)

In addition to example 6 once again mentioning Robbie's role as a producer, it is told how she has come up with this practise at a work context. The article also reports how everyone was aboard with Robbie's idea, creating a narrative of Robbie as a successful leader. Being shown as a leader as well as confident and assertive can be an uncommon representation for women as these qualities are more often associated with men (Devere & Davies 2006, in Burke & Mazzarella 2008). Finally, it is mentioned how much money Robbie would make from the movie, which relates to her being shown as a professional as well. This is illustrated in example 7:

- (7) “Margot Robbie is raking in big Barbie bucks. The 33-year-old star of Barbie, who also produced the film, is expected to earn \$50 million as part of a deal that combines her salary and back-end box office bonuses [--].” (VanHoose 2023)

This example and the specific article discuss Robbie's earnings and emphasise the amount of money she is expected to get. “Rake in big bucks” refers to gathering money very easily or even too easily (Merriam-Webster n.d.), which could illustrate the writer's attitude towards the topic. It could be considered whether the writer thinks that actors generally earn more than they should or whether it could be frowned upon

for women to earn this much compared to men. However, the writer could have also wanted to use a colourful expression rather than express their opinion.

4.1.2 Margot Robbie as Barbie

A prevalent representation of Robbie is presenting her through her role as Barbie. It can be considered how the role and Robbie as an actor are interlinked and whether the representations of her as Barbie can be considered as also representing her since she has accepted the role and been involved in creating the movie. Robbie's role as Barbie is described as something iconic and Barbie the doll's influence is emphasised. Robbie's role is "the titular iconic doll" and the movie is about "the beloved Mattel [toy company] doll". Example 8 also illustrates the "famousness" of Barbie:

- (8) "The official full-length trailer for Barbie debuted earlier this month, showing Robbie as the famous blonde with Gosling's Ken, as well as several more Barbies and Kens." (Huff & McArdle 2023)

The articles emphasise Barbie (the doll's) cultural influence by writing about the topic as if everyone knows something about it. Robbie is also mentioned most of the time when Barbie is mentioned. Thus, in this context, Barbie becomes personified in Robbie who also meets the stereotypical criteria for how the "original" Barbie looks like. It can be seen in example 8 that there are multiple "Barbies" as some of the other characters go by that name as well, but Robbie is represented as the main Barbie, or as the movie refers to her, "stereotypical Barbie". Additionally, Robbie's looks are discussed more when she is represented in the role of Barbie. Her own fashion sense or fashion choices are not brought up but rather what she was wearing while acting in the movie or promoting it. This is visible in examples 9, 10 and 11:

- (9) "[--] namely, ones [photos] showing him [Gosling] and Robbie, 32, rocking bright neon while rollerblading in Venice Beach, California." (Juneau 2022)
- (10) "For that go around, Robbie wore a hot pink halter-top with matching flared pants." (Lazarus Caplan 2022)
- (11) "In the photo, Robbie as Barbie wore a blue-and-white polka-dotted headband and matching striped halter top, as she smiled and leaned forward in a pink Chevrolet Corvette convertible." (Lazarus Caplan 2022)

These examples show that Robbie's looks are discussed quite neutrally and only from the point of view of the movie rather than emphasising Robbie's looks in situations where it is not relevant. This context can be seen as suitable for discussing fashion choices as fashion is an important part of the movie (and playing with the dolls). Often women's looks are highlighted and criticised in media (Harvey 2020: 72-73; Walsh 2015) but this does not seem to be the case here. One could also note that in example 9, Gosling's outfit is also described and considered, which balances the choice of describing Robbie's. Overall, it could be considered how the line between Robbie and her role is blurred and how it affects the way Robbie is represented, for example as the perfect Barbie or as a fashion icon.

4.1.3 Margot Robbie as a societal influence

Robbie is also represented as a feminist as well as a societal influence. She is shown as being aware of various societal phenomena and wanting to discuss them. One article especially discusses Robbie's views on the movie's influence and overall, the history of the Barbie doll. She is shown as standing up for other women and girls and wanting to make the world better. This is illustrated in example 12:

- (12) "The actress [Robbie] believes Barbie inspired girls who held the doll, and "had some sort of impact" on what they believed was possible for their futures, despite any controversy surrounding the "first woman doll," as Robbie called her. Part of this controversy is the sexualization of Barbie, though Robbie believes the character she plays in the film is anything but sexual." (Strater 2023)

In example 12, Robbie's views are given space but they are shown as primarily that: her own opinion. This is indicated by the use of "believe" with Robbie's comments. Additionally, it is noted that the role of Barbie has some "baggage", which acknowledges some implications on society and recognises Robbie as someone with influence and awareness of societal phenomena. She is not shown as "a clueless celebrity" or as someone who does not recognise her own privilege. Her comment on Barbie's history is included in one of the articles as is illustrated in example 13:

- (13) "She [Robbie] added that the role "comes with a lot of baggage," considering some historical controversy over the doll. "And a lot of nostalgic connections," the Oscar-nominated actress said. "But with that come a lot of exciting ways to attack it." (Lazarus Caplan 2022)

Examples 12 and 13 as well as these two articles show Robbie as considerate and aware, but also as brave: she is not scared to “attack” the issues that come with the role of Barbie. However, it can also be seen how Robbie’s comments are undermined in Strater’s (2023) article, which discusses the “over-sexualisation” of Barbie. This happens through the writer’s comment, which is shown in example 14:

(14) “Whatever the outfit, whatever the reason, though, one thing is for sure: Barbie's impact on fashion is undeniable.” (Strater 2023)

This might come across as undermining Robbie’s comments about a societally important issue as the article starts by discussing the “over-sexualization of Barbie” and bringing forward Robbie’s views on the issue. The article, however, finishes by saying that Barbie will definitely have influence on fashion, even though Robbie is shown as considering the movie’s wider influence and wanting to improve equality, for example. This creates some controversy between Robbie’s comments and the reporter’s own text. Because this sentence is at the end of the article, it will stay on the readers’ minds, which is why this could be an issue. Also, one could say no one dresses to be intentionally sexualised as is somewhat indicated in the same article. This is visible in example 15:

(15) “Because Barbie doesn't dress to be seen or sexualized, she "dresses with intention," Jacqueline Durran, the film's costume designer, told Vogue.” (Strater 2023)

This comment can be seen as possibly unthoughtful even if the writer did not mean it this way. The comment in example 15 can further be seen as undermining Robbie’s influence and opinions by directing the focus to fashion, which is a softer topic, and typically associated with women (Jia et al. 2016; Burke & Mazzarella 2008). Even though Robbie’s looks do not distract audiences from what she is saying (Walsh 2015), it seems that the focus on fashion does. It should be noted, however, that this specific article was published in May 2023, which could explain the focus on fashion as the movie itself had not been released yet.

4.2 The representations of Ryan Gosling

Ryan Gosling was mainly represented through three ways, which will be introduced in this section. Firstly, Gosling was represented as a professional, similarly to Robbie. He was talked about through his work as an actor, but also as a comedian. Secondly, Gosling was represented as aesthetic and even sexualised. His looks as Ken were discussed several times by describing his clothing and body in detail. Thirdly, Gosling was shown as a modern man. This representation included several ways in which Gosling was shown as modern and progressive.

4.2.1 Ryan Gosling as a professional

The most prominent representation of Ryan Gosling was him as a professional, similarly to how Robbie was mostly represented. Gosling is mostly labelled as “the actor” or “the [Oscar] nominee”. He is also a “cast member” and a “co-star”, both of which refer to his professional status or his work as an actor, and are, also, neutral terms. Gosling’s achievements are highlighted in several articles, which also relates to creating an image of a professional. This is illustrated in examples 16 and 17:

(16) “[--] Gosling, 43, scored a Best Supporting Actor nomination on Tuesday for his work on Barbie [--].” (Vasquez 2024)

(17) “[--] the Barbie star was recognized in the Best Supporting Actor category for his performance as Ken (the award ultimately went to Oppenheimer's Robert Downey Jr.). His nod for the box-office hit marks his third at the Academy Awards, with the last coming in 2016 for the musical *La La Land*.” (Le & Wenger 2024)

These examples show what kind of achievements Gosling has had in his role as Ken, but also earlier in his professional career, as is shown in example 17. Example 17 illustrates to readers that Gosling is experienced also outside of the current movie despite not winning the award. Robbie’s comments about Gosling’s professional abilities are also brought up in McArdle’s (2023a) article and they further highlight Gosling’s success and professionalism, which is illustrated in example 18:

(18) ““Ryan is the most comedically gifted actor I have ever worked with. He really is,” Robbie says of Gosling in PEOPLE's new Barbie special issue. “He’s known for his dramatic acting, and rightly so. But he is unbelievably gifted with comedy, and I ruined most of his takes because I was laughing through all of it.”” (McArdle 2023a)

In example 18, Robbie is shown as complimenting Gosling's skills as a comedian and actor. This illustrates further trust in Gosling's professionalism as his, also professional, colleague is shown as especially complimenting him. Overall, Gosling is represented as a professional quite neutrally: his professional titles are used and the articles discuss his achievements in the film industry. In contrast to this, in several articles Gosling is also presented as "joking" about something, which highlights him being a comedian or "a comedically gifted actor" (example 18). On the other hand, this could indicate Gosling not taking things seriously or the writer showing him in that light. Many of Gosling's comments and citations include "joking" as the verb, which is illustrated in examples 19, 20 and 21:

(19) "I'm proud of that," Gosling said, *joking*, "I have that Ken-ergy that you can feel, obviously." (Juneau 2022, emphasis added)

(20) "During the presentation, the actor *joked*: "It was like I was living my life and then one day I was bleaching my hair, shaving my legs and wearing bespoke neon outfits and rollerblading down Venice Beach." "It came on like a light scarlet fever. Then I woke up one day and was like, 'Why is there fake tanner in my sheets? What just happened?' " Gosling *joked*." (Huff & McArdle 2023, emphases added)

(21) "Gosling's casting as Ken in Barbie has been the subject of much fascination during the film's production, with the actor more than once *joking* about his "Ken-ergy" over the last year." (Huff & McArdle 2023, emphasis added)

In these three examples, Gosling has either really joked about these comments or the writer has made that assumption. Either way, they can create an image of Gosling not taking the movie (and perhaps any criticism towards it) too seriously. This also contributes to the representation of Gosling as a modern man, who is owning the role of Ken, which will be discussed in section 4.2.3. Most importantly, the articles create an image of Gosling as a comedian as he talks about things jokingly, which relates to his professional career as well. Relating to this, the Barbie movie is in many places labelled, at least partly, as a comedy. Thus, Gosling is represented in a way that aligns with his role as Ken. Gosling as a comedian is also supported by Robbie's comment about his abilities as a comedian actor (example 18). However, it could also be considered whether it is only acceptable for a man to be in this kind of a role through joking or as a joke.

4.2.2 Ryan Gosling as aesthetic and sexualised

Next, Gosling is represented through his looks. Most of the discussion around Gosling's looks relate to his role as Ken, but his fashion choices "as himself" are also

mentioned. It could be argued that there is a difference in discussing one's looks when it is the actor himself or the role which he portrays. It can be seen as more acceptable to discuss the looks of a fictional character and on many occasions, fashion is an important part of moviemaking. Anyhow, Gosling's clothing as Ken is discussed somewhat often. This is illustrated in examples 22 and 23:

- (22) "Of photos that have been released from the Barbie set thus far – namely, ones showing him and Robbie, 32, rocking bright neon while rollerblading in Venice Beach, California – Gosling teased, "That's nothing."" (Juneau 2022)
- (23) "The platinum-hued Barbie and Ken donned rollerblades on the Venice Beach set, accessorizing the skates with neon outfits and requisite visors, grinning as they rolled down the boardwalk." (Lazarus Caplan 2022)

In these examples, it is described what Gosling is wearing in the set of the movie with Robbie, and it is done rather neutrally. There are no further details about their appearance other than the clothes they are wearing (as Ken and Barbie). This view is similar to how Robbie was represented as well. One article, however, also touches upon what Gosling is wearing "as himself" when performing a song from the movie in the Oscars, which is shown in example 24:

- (24) "The actor, 43, dressed in a hot pink suit and black cowboy hat, kicked off his performance of the Oscar-nominated song "I'm Just Ken" from the audience [--]." (Le & Wenger 2024)

This example illustrates how Gosling's clothing choices are seen as important in the context of his Oscars performance. It could also be argued that the context of the Barbie movie affects this: fashion has a central role in the movie, which makes it interesting what Gosling is wearing when doing a performance related to the movie. Award ceremonies are also traditionally contexts where fashion is widely discussed, which makes this example typical for its own context. Furthermore, in some of the articles, Gosling's looks are discussed in more detail, the necessity of which can be considered. Some of these instances are shown in examples 25 and 26:

- (25) "Last month, Warner Bros. Pictures shared a first-look photo of Gosling in character as Ken, sporting platinum locks (*and a killer six-pack!*) as he posed in all light-wash denim, including an open vest and matching jeans, in front of a hot-pink backdrop. To top it all off, a pair of white boxers stitched with "KEN" could be seen peeking out from above his jeans' waistline." (Juneau 2022, emphasis added)

- (26) "Fans then got their first glimpse of costar Ryan Gosling as Ken earlier this month, when Warner Bros. shared a snapshot of the actor online. Gosling, 41, posed and showed off his platinum-blond hairdo and his abs under a ripped denim jacket in the image." (Lazarus Caplan 2022)

Examples 25 and 26 emphasise Gosling's looks and, most notably, Gosling's body is discussed in addition to his clothes. This makes the comments different from examples 22, 23 and 24 where only his clothes were mentioned. Gosling is also referred to as "forever heartthrob" (Rubenstein 2023), which means someone, who is considered good-looking and even having "sex appeal" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). It could be considered whether nowadays men's bodies are discussed in more detail or with less consideration compared to women's bodies as Robbie's looks were not described in this detail. The term "heartthrob" can also be seen as almost sexualising Gosling especially as the specific article also discusses how Robbie did not get to kiss him onset of the movie and creates a narrative about how he is seen as physically attractive. Both of these points could be seen as somewhat problematic.

4.2.3 Ryan Gosling as a modern man

Furthermore, Gosling is shown as a modern man who has the courage to be different and confident as himself. Him accepting the role of Ken is shown as progressive as well as his comments about the other actors and the director of the movie, which show appreciation towards the female creators of the movie. Firstly, Gosling is represented as a confidently modern man, who has "Ken-ergy" or "is bringin the "Ken-ergy"". This term from the movie seems to aim to show that Gosling is essentially suitable for his role as Ken: even in contexts outside of the movie, he has been inspired by it. The articles create a narrative about Gosling being brave for accepting the role and owning it, which is illustrated in examples 27, 28 and 29:

- (27) "In an interview with Entertainment Tonight surrounding this week's release of his new Netflix film *The Gray Man*, the 41-year-old actor also teased his role as Barbie's main squeeze [-]. Gosling told the outlet that he doesn't consider it "an insult at all" that his *Gray Man* costar Chris Evans' character refers to Gosling's character in the Netflix action-thriller as a "Ken doll." "I'm proud of that," Gosling said, joking, "I have that Ken-ergy that you can feel, obviously." (Juneau 2022)
- (28) "[--] Gosling admitted he was not so sure about playing Ken at first. "I only knew Ken from afar. I didn't know Ken from within, and if I'm being really honest I doubted my Ken-ergy," the *La La Land* actor told an audience during Warner Bros. Pictures' presentation at the convention. "I didn't see it, but Margot and Greta, they conjured this out of me somehow." (Huff & McArdle 2023)

- (29) "Gosling's casting as Ken in Barbie has been the subject of much fascination during the film's production, with the actor more than once joking about his "Ken-ergy" over the last year." (Huff & McArdle 2023)

These examples emphasise Gosling's journey to becoming Ken and how he first doubted taking the role (example 28) but is now "proud of" it (example 27). The articles report how he emphasises having "Ken-ergy" in many contexts and occasions, which can highlight the importance of the role for the actor himself. Example 29 also notes how Gosling's casting as Ken has evoked "much fascination", which can be read as Gosling being a surprising choice for the role for some reason. Secondly, Gosling is shown as supporting women and giving them credit for creating the movie, or even being quite careful not to say anything offensive, if this interpretation can be made. He is also shown as wanting to be seen as supportive and aware. This is especially visible in articles that cover the Oscar nominations of the actors and is illustrated in examples 30 and 31:

- (30) "Following the nominations announcement on Tuesday, Gosling, who plays Ken in Barbie, issued a strong statement in support of Robbie and Gerwig. "To say that I'm disappointed that they are not nominated in their respective categories would be an understatement," he said about the pair. While Gosling, 43, added that he was "extremely honored to be nominated," the dad of two added that there is "no Ken without Barbie. And there is no Barbie movie without Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie."" (Juneau 2024a, emphasis added)
- (31) "While Gosling, 43, scored a Best Supporting Actor nomination on Tuesday for his work on Barbie, his thoughts were with Greta Gerwig, who failed to be nominated in the Best Director category, and Margot Robbie, who was left out of the Best Actress category." (Vasquez 2024)

In these examples, Gosling shows support for his colleagues even though he was nominated for an Oscar and thus, had reason to celebrate. It is, instead, brought up how he is disappointed for others rather than celebrating his own achievements. This creates an image of caring about other people as well as being humble as Gosling emphasises being "honoured" to be nominated. Additionally, he is labelled as a dad, which will be discussed in more detail below. These traits can be seen as not traditionally masculine (Macnamara 2006), which adds to Gosling being represented as modern. It could be argued that Gosling is shown as empathetic as well as aware of societal issues, such as gender equality when wanting to speak out about the issue. Finally, there are two other more minor representations of Gosling that add to his representation as a modern man. Firstly, he is represented as modern also in McArdle's (2023a) article, which discusses the movies "pink day", for which everyone was supposed to wear pink to the set of the movie. Gosling has been interviewed

regarding the topic and he brings out a modern way to consider men and masculinity, which is shown in example 32:

- (32) "What was really special was just how excited the male crew members were. At the end of the film, they all got together and, with their own money, made pink crew shirts with rainbow fringe," he adds. "It was this opportunity for them to show their respect and admiration for what Margot and [director] Greta [Gerwig] were creating," Gosling tells PEOPLE." (McArdle 2023a)

In example 32, Gosling also praises the other male crew members in his comments and everyone is shown as open and wanting to participate in this, which might be seen as progressive. Secondly, Gosling is shown as a father and a partner, or part of a family. A few of the articles label him as "the dad of two" and his daughters and partner are mentioned, as is illustrated in examples 33 and 34:

- (33) "Gosling's longtime partner Eva Mendes appeared on The Talk in late June, sharing her reaction to seeing her beau as Ken for the first time." (Juneau 2022)
- (34) "And he had the best little helpers, his daughters Esmeralda, 8, and Amada, 7, with partner Eva Mendes. "They were at home while I was doing it," he says of practicing the [dance] routine, "and they ended up knowing it well as well as I did."" (Rubenstein 2023)

Gosling is represented as someone who spends time with his family and also as a good dad. It is notable that Gosling's labels include him as a father even though this might be more common for females (Devere & Davies 2006, in Burke & Mazzarella 2008; Kosut 2012: xx). However, additionally, Gosling being shown as a (good) father aligns with for example Macnamara's (2006: 166-167) study which found that positive representations of men in mass media can often include for example fatherhood even though being a "bad" father is a common representation as well.

5 DISCUSSION: COMPARING THE REPRESENTATIONS

Overall, this thesis found that Robbie and Gosling are represented in somewhat similar ways. They are both shown as professionals in their own field, their looks are discussed in some of the articles and they are presented as progressive and aware of any societal issues and inequalities. There are, however, also differences in their representations and especially in the details of how they are shown in the data articles. This Chapter will cover the main differences and relevant similarities of the two actors' representations.

Firstly, both of the actors were mostly represented as professionals, as actors. They were discussed through their professional roles and achievements rather neutrally. Robbie's role as a producer was even emphasised in the articles. The articles created a narrative about her as a confident leader when wanting to make the movie come true as well as on the set of the movie. She was shown as someone with influence in the professional context surrounding her. While Gosling was also shown as professional, he was also represented as a comedian and someone who jokes often. It could be considered whether this related to Gosling being shown as a (professional) comedian or as someone who does not take things seriously. It could also be considered whether Gosling being shown as joking related to his role as Ken and whether his role was shown as something that a man could only accept through joking or as a joke. Overall, it could be argued that Robbie was discussed more in the professional context and her professionalism was emphasised more compared to Gosling. She was shown more as confident and as a leader, which can be seen as unusual for the representation of women ((Devere & Davies 2006, in Burke & Mazzarella 2008; Kosut 2012: xx) and is especially interesting in this comparative context. However, it could also be considered whether it was acceptable to show Robbie in this role only in this context

as women are often associated with soft topics, such as entertainment (Jia et al. 2016; Burke & Mazzearella 2008).

Secondly, it could be argued that Gosling's looks were discussed somewhat more than Robbie's, which is in contradiction with some of the previous literature that emphasises how women's looks are often discussed without reason and how it distracts readers from what they are trying to say (Harvey 2020: 72-73; Walsh 2015). The discussion around both of the actors' looks mostly related to their roles in the movie, which can be seen as reasonable and relevant for the topic. Especially their clothing was described, but Gosling's body was also brought up as well as what he was wearing somewhat outside of his role in an award ceremony performance. Additionally, Gosling was described as a "heartthrob", which contributed to him being sexualised. Overall, the discussion around the actors' looks did not align with previous literature as Gosling's looks were discussed more and in more detail even though he is a man. Robbie's looks were brought up rather neutrally in the context of her role as Barbie. It could, thus, be considered whether the practices around discussing one's looks have changed and whether it is seen as more acceptable to focus on men's looks than those of women's. The context of the articles can also affect this as the line between the actors and their roles seemed to be somewhat blurred, which could have resulted in, for example, Gosling's looks being a focus in the context of the award ceremony.

The third remarkable finding is that Gosling was overall represented as a very progressive or modern man who considers others, is aware of societal inequalities and is a good father. This is also not in line with some of the previous research that emphasises traits, such as aggression and toxic masculinity (Macnamara 2006: 166-167; Nilsson & Lundgren 2021). Since Gosling is shown as very progressive, supportive and even humble, there is not as much difference in how he and Robbie are represented as was initially thought. However, Gosling's family being emphasised can be seen as a major difference between the two actors: he is in several articles referred to as a dad and his family is included in some of the stories, which can be seen as more typical for how women are shown in media (Kosut 2012: xx). Robbie's husband is also mentioned briefly but he is not discussed in any more detail and Robbie is not represented as a wife. This could also relate to the fact that Gosling has children whereas Robbie did not at the time. Still, this is significant when considering previous research, but it is also in line with Macnamara's (2006: 167) findings about positive male representations that included being a husband and a father.

Similarly to Gosling being shown as very progressive, it is remarkable that both of the actors are shown as being rather aware of societal issues such as sexualisation and inequality. Some societal issues are mentioned and the actors' comments have been included. Gosling's statement about the Oscar nominations and their unfairness has been included in several articles and Robbie discusses Barbie's effect and influence on girls. Thus, the website brings out views that can also be seen as untraditional for entertainment news overall. Often entertainment news websites focus on lighter, softer and more entertaining topics (Reinemann et al. 2012; Spragens 1988, in Ban 2008), which makes the data of the present study somewhat different but could also be part of a more widespread societal change of discussing harder topics in new contexts. Even though these topics relate to the actors who are celebrities and to the movie, which is very popular, there are also wider implications to these issues and by bringing them up, the website makes the readers aware of the issues as well. It is also significant that celebrities are shown as having influence and awareness, but also using their influence to try to change things. It can be considered whether this is a new representation and how it changes the media landscape in a way that places greater responsibility on media outlets to consider whose views they bring out or endorse. Also, as was seen in examples 14 and 15 above, the way these harder issues are discussed, matters.

Overall, the representations of Robbie and Gosling are rather similar with some differences. It can be said that both of the actors were represented in ways that did not align with previous research about gender in media. Both of the actors were shown in ways untraditional for that gender. For example, Gosling was shown as very supportive, humble and considerate, but also sexualised, while Robbie was shown as a confident professional whose looks were not discussed as much. However, Gosling was also shown as joking about his role, which could relate to showing the role of Ken as not serious or as something men could take seriously. Both of the actors were also shown through their roles as Barbie and Ken as well as societally aware, the latter of which was somewhat surprising for entertainment news.

It should be considered how these somewhat new and progressive representations related to the context of the data. The Barbie movie discusses themes of inequality and feminism rather boldly and explicitly, which could affect the representations. The writers could have possibly acknowledged the themes of the movie to some extent. It would, of course, feel odd to, for example, downplay the role of the female creators of the movie or show male actors as toxic in the context of a movie that aims to fight these issues. All in all, the articles showed consistent views and representations despite several different writers, even though some topics did bring out specific

representations. For instance, the articles about the Oscars emphasised Gosling being supportive and when discussing the creation of the movie, Robbie's confidence and professionalism was brought up more.

6 CONCLUSION

The present study set out to examine the representations visible in entertainment news articles about two famous actors. Due to media's heavy influence in today's society and the popularity of entertainment news, the topic of the present study is important. Media can also affect people's ideas about other people and themselves. For the wider context of the study, the Barbie movie was chosen as it was the highest grossing movie of 2023 and it discussed themes of gender equality and feminism. More specifically, two actors from the movie, Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, were chosen as the subjects of the study since they hold similar positions in the context of the movie and they represent two different genders. The goal was to discover what kind of representations the articles held about each of the actors and how these representations were similar or different from each other.

Critical discourse analysis was used as the methodological tool for the present study. The aims of critical discourse analysis in uncovering possible inequalities and injustices in for example media contexts (Fairclough 2010: 8; Wodak & Meyer 2001: 2) supported the aims of the study and also provided relevant theoretical background in addition to previous research about discourse, media, representations and gender in media. Fairclough's (1995a; 1995b) frameworks for critical discourse analysis as well as for media texts were utilised in the analysis. With the help of the framework(s), the texts itself were analysed thoroughly, relevant representations and discourses were pointed out and finally, the representations were connected to the wider societal context. Critical discourse analysis functioned well in considering possibly unequal representations and looking at the data critically, as well as considering its societal implications. The data consisted of twelve entertainment news articles from *People.com*, an entertainment news website with the largest audience in the United States. There were little ethical issues regarding the data collection as the articles were not behind a paywall and they were public content.

The present study found that the twelve data articles showcased a wide range of representations about both of the actors. It was notable that some of the representations differed significantly from previous research. The male actor, Ryan Gosling, was represented through his looks and as very progressive and modern in his thinking. He was also represented as a father and as a professional, who also jokes often. The female actor, Margot Robbie, was represented as a confident professional and as someone wanting to speak out about societal issues, in addition to being shown through her role as Barbie. Both of the actors were represented mostly in a professional context as well as through their roles as Barbie and Ken. The data articles also discussed some harder topics, such as inequality and sexualisation, which could be seen as untypical for entertainment news. Overall, gender did not seem to have such a large role anymore when uncovering these representations.

However, it should be considered how the context of the present study, the Barbie movie itself discussing themes of equality, and the data being entertainment, or soft news, affected the results. One could assume that context was especially significant in the present study and it might have affected the non-stereotypical gender representations. It could, however, also be considered whether some of the gender roles that media upholds, are changing. New, more neutral representations have the power to change the way people think about others and themselves. For example, new representations of males and male identity could have “significant social implications” (Macnamara 2006: 1). Also, showing women in mainly professional roles even in entertainment-related contexts would be a significant positive change.

The data and context of the present study were also limited due to the length of the study. The twelve articles from one entertainment news website offer only a glimpse of the situation. A wider data set including more articles from several websites and even from several different countries would provide a more reliable result in whether these observations about gendered representations changing are correct and how much context affects the representations. It would also be interesting to consider and compare representations visible in entertainment news as well as harder news in major news outlets. Gender variance could additionally be considered in future studies. There are many opportunities for future research within this topic and the present study could function as the basis, despite its limitations. The findings about representations being more versatile and gendered representations changing can be influential. They could illustrate how society is possibly starting to change and how that is reflected in media.

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