



Women's representation in *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the representation of women in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) through a narratology and feminism perspective. The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyse how a female character is constructed in terms of Linda's presentation, characterization, and the power relations between male and female figures. Employing both visual and narrative discourse alongside a feminist perspective, this research seeks to reveal whether women are presented in equitable manner or instead reproduce patriarchal gender stereotypes. The results of the study show that since the film narratively focuses on the struggle of a single father, women are represented as supporting characters and do not have narrative space that can voice women's struggle. Moreover, the elimination of women's voice in the film emphasizes the construction of women's monstrosity as defying the myth of good mother and wife in subordinate positions as supporting characters or are represented stereotypically.

Keywords: feminism; women's representation; film; *The Pursuit of Happyness*

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INTRODUCTION

Film is an art form and medium that uses a series of moving images to tell a story, convey a message, or express an idea. The film combines various elements, including narrative, visuals, sound, and performance, to create an immersive experience for the audience. Movie often serve as a mirror of society, reflecting relevant social issues and providing a platform for discussion. Through narrative, characters, and visuals, films can explore themes such as social injustice, discrimination, poverty, and human rights struggles (Kumari & Kumar, 2022). Movies are not only entertaining, but movie can also educate audiences and encourage them to think critically about existing social conditions, in this way, movie can serve as a tool for social change, raise awareness, and spark collective action (Kubrak T, 2020).

Film can be seen as a discursive field where various social discourses are produced, negotiated, and questioned. The representation of social conditions in film is not neutral; instead, it is shaped by ideology, the interests of the cultural industry, and the

construction of dominant values that apply in society (Hall et al., 2013). Therefore, it can portray and reinforce dominant narrative about gender role. In patriarchal ideology women should be submissive and their traditional role associated with private sphere, caregiving, dependence (Aryati & Susanti, 2023).

Hollywood cinema frequently reproduces these patriarchal values. Representations of women in film often reproduce traditional stereotypes that position women as passive objects, supporting narratives of male characters, or mere emotional symbols (Mulvey, 1975). Sometimes the media tends to represent women negatively as sexual objects lean on injustice, and sexism. Moreover, women are not given voice to voicing their experience. This silencing does not mean a literal absence but through narrative omission and character simplification. They do not act and speak in a meaningful way and often serve as helper, motivator or even hindrance to the male protagonist (Santonniccolo et al., 2023).

In the context of feminist studies, film becomes a crucial medium for analysing how gender constructions are displayed, maintained, or resisted. However, the development of media studies and gender awareness has encouraged the creation of more complex and agency-based female characters, although not always free from certain ideological limitations (Villaorduña et al., 2024).

The Pursuit of Happyness release in 2006 focuses on the male protagonist, Chris Gardner in achieving his dreams and financial independence. The only significant female character that related to the male protagonist's struggle is his wife, Linda. She is portrayed as a woman who is emotionally unstable, lack of empathy to Chris's struggle and ultimately abandon her husband and her only son.

The way film represented women address the urgency to read more critically on how women is presented in regards to the story line and cinematic presentation and examine more closely on the cost of such representation on a broader media context.

Literature Support

Although developments in the representation of women in media have resulted in more complex and empowered characters, many films and television shows still maintain traditional gender stereotypes that limit women's roles in narrative spaces. Women are often portrayed as loving, patient, and naturally responsible caregivers or mothers for domestic work (Gill, 2007), or as romantic partners whose existence depends on relationships with male characters (Mulvey, 1975; Benshoff & Griffin, 2021). In addition, female characters are also often shown as weak and in need of protection (damsel in distress), or conversely as manipulative figures who use their sexuality to control men (femme fatale) (Kaplan, 1983). Ambitious women in the professional sphere are often portrayed negatively, as cold, unemotional, or unfeminine, and in many cases, constructed as a threat to masculine social norms (Ross, 2010). Even in seemingly "strong" roles, women are still limited by masculine logic that dictates that their strength must be in line with male standards (Maclaran, 2016). These representations suggest that mainstream media narratives still actively reproduce patriarchal values, limit women's agency, and shape the public perception that a woman's worth is determined by her role in

supporting men or maintaining traditional social structures.

Gill (2007) emphasizes the importance of critical media literacy in uncovering how media narratives shape social perceptions of gender and power relations. Through the lens of feminist theory, media representations can be understood as spaces where hegemonic gender roles are maintained or challenged. In the context of *The Pursuit of Happyness*, female characters such as Linda play a significant but limited role in articulating narratives of independence and resilience. Such representations require a deeper feminist analysis that takes into account intersectionality the interaction between gender, race, and class to understand the complexity of the representations presented (Crenshaw, 1991).

Feminist studies emphasize the importance of analysing how media narratives can contribute to the empowerment or marginalization of women's experiences within patriarchal structures (Negra et al., 2007). This approach is particularly relevant in the study of films that represent socio-economic struggles, where women's agency is often reduced due to the limitations of narrative focus and the dominance of broader cultural discourses. By applying an intersectional feminist framework, researchers can examine in more depth how *The Pursuit of Happyness* constructs a discourse of women's empowerment amidst systemic inequality, while also revealing the potential and limitations of cinematic representation in depicting complex gender realities.

Representation of Women in Contemporary Films

The representation of women in films shows a quantitative increase, although many of them are still stuck in limited roles. In the study of gender representation in media, agency is a key concept that refers to a character's ability to act independently, make decisions, and influence the direction of the narrative (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). However, in practice, studies by Martinez and Somandepalli (2022) show that female characters in movies are often not given the same agency space as male characters. Women are often positioned in supporting roles that do not develop independently, and their role only serves to reinforce the male character as the center of the narrative. Benshoff and Griffin (2021) call this pattern part of the patriarchal narrative system, which

is a narrative structure that places men as the main drivers of the story, while women are merely complementary elements.

Research by Lauzen (2023) and Smith et al. (2018) also shows that although women's involvement in film has quantitatively increased, qualitatively they still face serious limitations in the portrayal of agencies. Female characters are rarely portrayed as decision-makers or central figures in the resolution of major conflicts. Even when women are presented as "strong" figures, these powers are often framed in masculine logic, where power is measured through the ability to imitate male roles (Gilpatric, 2010). An intersectional approach such as those put forward by Crenshaw (2019) and Enríquez (2021) asserts that women's agency representation cannot be separated from broader social contexts, such as social class, race, and ethnicity. This representation, according to Neuendorf. (2017), contributes to the formation of public perceptions of women's roles and positions in society. Therefore, a critical study of agency in women's representation is important to uncover the structural biases hidden in mainstream film narratives. This is important to analyze because popular media, including movies, are one of the main spaces in the reproduction and legitimacy of social constructions regarding gender identity.

Although the number of women's involvement in mainstream cinema has been increased. studies by Lauzen (2023) have shown that the qualitative aspects of representation still contain serious problems. Female characters are often placed in subordinate positions, playing the role of supporting male protagonists, or stereotypically represented, without balanced psychosocial complexity. This kind of representation tends to construct male-centered narratives, where female characters function more to reinforce the emotional conflicts or dynamics of the male protagonist's journey, rather than being developed as autonomous subjects that have their own depth of character.

Research conducted by Grall et al., (2021) revealed that female characters in films are rarely given a significant role in the development of the main storyline. Women are more often associated with emotional or domestic functioning, which implicitly reproduces traditional gender norms. In this kind of representation, men are positioned as the main agents of change and the driving force of the narrative, while women often

appear as supporting figures or even as obstacles in the dynamics of the story. Therefore, semiotic and intersectional analysis approaches become particularly relevant to uncover and dismantle the dynamics of representation that implicitly operate in mainstream cinematic discourse.

Intersectional Feminism in Film

Intersectional feminism emphasizes the importance of considering various interacting social identities, such as race, class, and gender, in understanding women's life experiences (Crenshaw, 2019). This perspective shows that the representation of women in film cannot be separated from the broader social context. In many cinematic narratives, female characters from low economic backgrounds are often portrayed facing complex social and economic pressures. Research by Collins (2019) shows that women from lower economic classes are often trapped in traditional restrictive roles, which is reflected in the way female characters are portrayed in films.

An intersectional approach in feminist studies emphasizes the urgency of understanding how interactions between race, social class, and gender shape women's experiences, as well as how those interactions manifest in media representation. In the context of cinema, this perspective becomes an important analytical framework to uncover how structural inequality is reproduced through the construction of women's characters. The representation of women in cinematic narratives often reflects an ambivalent position, in which female characters have to deal with psychological burdens and economic pressures at the same time (Hossain et al., 2023). This suggests that gender roles in film are shaped by unequal social conditions, thus requiring an intersectional reading to understand the structural dimensions hidden behind the narrative.

Female characters from lower-class and ethnic minority backgrounds are often portrayed in a position of powerlessness, where they have to choose between playing the role of caregiver or breadwinner (Fatarani, 2024). This representation reinforces the stereotype that women from marginalized social groups are unable to fulfill both roles simultaneously. As explained by Collins (2019), women from marginalized social positions are often positioned in media narratives as figures who are "trapped" in traditional roles and sacrificed for the

development of male characters, especially in patriarchal narrative structures.

Representational theory in feminist media studies shows that the contemporary film industry still consistently reproduces narratives that limit women's agency, especially those from minority groups (Wilk, 2024). Enriquez (2021), within the framework of intersectional theory, emphasizes that the construction of women's characters from marginalized racial, class, or ethnic backgrounds tends to be directed towards narrow and subordinate roles. This suggests that despite advances in gender representation in general, the dominant narrative structure still maintains a systemic bias that shrinks women's agency space from non-dominant groups in mainstream cinema. The representation of female characters from low economic backgrounds reflects how hierarchical economic structures and dominant gender norms contribute to the formation of asymmetrical storylines. This representation indicates that class- and gender-based social inequality are integrated into the fictional narrative, thereby reinforcing unequal power relations in character construction and story development.

The Impact of Film Representation in Gender

Dwi et al. (2024) revealed that films featuring strong female characters can affect the audience's perception of gender roles. They found that audiences exposed to positive representations of women tended to have more progressive views on gender equality. This suggests that the representation of female characters in film can be an important indicator in assessing how the media contributes to the discourse of feminism and social construction of gender. In many cinematic narratives, women are still often represented in limited positions, such as as emotional partners or obstacles in the male protagonist's journey (Benshoff, 2021). Such representations can serve a dual purpose: as a critique of social structures that oppress women, or conversely, as a reinforcement of gender stereotypes that portray women as less capable in the face of crises.

In line with Simone de Beauvoir's thinking (1949), women have historically been not positioned as autonomous subjects, but rather constructed as "the Other" in patriarchal relations. Her famous statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," asserts that a woman's gender identity is not innate, but rather the result of

social constructs that shape and assign certain roles based on patriarchal norms (de Beauvoir et al., 2010). In many films, female characters are still positioned as passive figures whose existence serves to support the development of male characters. The decisions or actions taken by female characters are rarely explored in depth from their own point of view, making them mere driving elements for masculine narratives (Benshoff, 2021).

Films often do not provide enough narrative space for the audience to understand the psychological complexity of female characters in dealing with social and economic pressures (Wilk, 2024). The lack of representation of women's internal struggles reinforces the assumption that women in films are not individuals with independent goals and conflicts, but rather complements to the male characters who are at the center of the narrative. This reflects de Beauvoir's feminist existentialist critique of how patriarchal culture reduces women to objects in male discourse, rather than as autonomous agents of their own will and aspirations.

As stated by hooks (2014), representations that do not make room for women's experiences and perspectives in the mainstream media indirectly support the continuity of hierarchical gender structures. Instead of inviting the audience to empathize with the condition of women who also face systemic pressure, the media instead emphasizes the success and resilience of men as the lone hero figure. This kind of representation contributes to perpetuating patriarchal views that place women's experiences and social positions in subordinate positions, both in social reality and in cinematic space. The dominance of narrative structures oriented towards masculine experiences, as well as the lack of strong, independent, and inspiring female characters, suggests that traditional gender paradigms are still very strong. Therefore, a critical analysis of gender discourse in film is important to identify the extent to which media representations reproduce, question, or even challenge social norms and expectations of women and gender roles.

Narrative Analysis on Film

Benshoff and Griffin (2021) state that narrative analysis can be used to understand how film shapes audiences understanding of identity and power relations, especially through the interactions between male and

female characters that create power dynamics in the structure of the story. In mainstream films, especially Hollywood productions, female characters are often placed in limited roles and depend on the development of male characters (Wilk, 2024). This pattern is part of a patriarchal narrative system that places men at the center of action and control, while women are associated with themes such as romance, beauty, and marriage (Kumari & Kumar, 2022). Despite attempts to portray "strong" women, their power is often framed in masculine logic, so it has not fully challenged established narrative structures. In addition, the film also reflects other identity biases such as race, social class, and sexual orientation, where the main character tends to come from the dominant majority group, while the minority group is often reduced to stereotypes (Santonnicolo et al., 2023). Therefore, narrative analysis is relevant to uncover how media representations reproduce hierarchical and gender-biased social structures.

Hero's Journey

Hero's Journey is a theory that maps out a universal narrative pattern consisting of three main stages of Departure, Initiation, and Return, which describes the transformative journey of a protagonist from the ordinary world to an extraordinary challenge, and then returns with new insights or powers. In film studies, this structure has become an important blueprint for analyzing character dynamics and internal conflicts, particularly in mainstream cinema (Campbell, 2012). The Hero Journey pattern is not only used in the development of male characters, but also female characters, although it is often still framed in a patriarchal logic that places women as supporting elements (Ahana, S. S., 2021).

Focalization

In film studies, focalization refers to the perspective or narrative perspective that directs the audience's experience of the story and characters. This concept emphasizes "who sees and who knows in the flow of cinematic narrative, both through visual and affective perspectives. In narrative theory, focalization is an important tool for understanding how narrative structure mediates the audience's access to events and

emotions in film (Jahn, 2005). Through the use of cameras, lighting, and narrative plots, focalization not only conveys the story, but also shapes the ideology of representation contained within it (Rizal et al., 2025).

In the context of gender representation, focalization in movies tends to favor the male perspective, otherwise known as male focalization. This can be seen in how narratives are often structured from the point of view of male characters, while female characters only function as objects of view or driving male motivations. Silverman (1988) states that women in film are not only constructed as bodies that are seen, but also as experiences accessed through a male point of view, thus losing their narrative autonomy. Doane (1988) adds that even when the camera appears to follow the female figure, focalization often remains dominated by patriarchal logic that frames women as emotional, unstable, or hysterical beings, which threaten masculine rationality.

Therefore, the analysis of focalization from a gender perspective is important to uncover how narrative and visual structures in film limit women's access to storytelling agency. Male-centric focus not only marginalizes women's experiences, but also shapes the way audiences understand power relations in film. Although female characters are visually present, they are often not given access to narrative or emotional focal points, and thus are trapped in passive or subordinate positions. By understanding focalization as an ideological device, we can trace how the structure of film subtly reproduces gender dominance through the direction of narrative perspective.

Camera Angle Theory

In the study of visual representation in film, the angle of shooting plays an important role in shaping the audience's perception of the characters and the power relations shown. Cameras not only record reality, but also shape it through visual constructions that are full of social and ideological meaning (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018). The use of certain camera angles can reinforce a character's dominant or subordinate position in the structure of a cinematic narrative.

Male characters in mainstream films are generally often shown through a low angle, i.e., shooting from the bottom up. This technique creates a visual impression that reinforces the image of power, dominance, and leadership, while also affirming the position of male figures as the center of

action and struggle (Benshoff & Griffin, 2021). On the other hand, female characters tend to be shown through a neutral point of view (eye-level) or even a high angle, which gives the impression of being weak, small, or powerless. This kind of visual representation reinforces the tendency of mainstream cinema to limit visual and narrative space for women, and places them in a position subordinate to male characters (Lauzen, 2023).

METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach with narrative analysis and visual semiotics to examine the representation of women in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006). The focus of the analysis is directed at the character Linda as a representation of women in a cinematic narrative and visual structure dominated by a masculine perspective. To unravel these constructs, this study integrates three main approaches: narrative analysis, focalization theory, and camera angle theory, which are framed in the perspective of intersectional feminism.

First, narrative analysis is used to examine how the storyline, conflict structure, and agency distribution between male and female characters are formed in the film. With reference to Benshoff and Griffin (2021), this approach aims to uncover how the character Linda is systematically placed in supporting roles that do not develop independently, as well as how narrative structures reinforce the dominance of male characters as the center of the story.

Second, the theory of focalization is applied to analyze the narrative and visual point of view, i.e., "who sees and who knows" in the story (Jahn, 2005). The focalization perspective allows researchers to identify the dominance of male characters' viewpoints in conveying emotions, motivations, and conflicts, ultimately limiting the representation of women only as objects of view (Silverman, 1988). This analysis explores how men's perspectives become ideological mechanisms that reproduce women's subordination in cinema.

Third, camera angle theory is used to analyze how a character's visual placement reflects power relations. This study observed that the character Linda is often presented through a neutral or high point of view, which indicates a weak or subordinative visual position (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018; Lauzen, 2023), while Chris Gardner, the male

protagonist, is often shown through low angle shots that reinforce the dominant impression.

Finally, all three approaches are analyzed within the framework of intersectional feminism by Crenshaw (2019), which considers the relationship between gender, social class, and race. This approach is used to read the character Linda as an African-American woman from the lower middle economic class, who experiences the double burden of patriarchal systems and economic inequality. Thus, this method not only examines the content of the narrative, but also reveals how the cinematic structure reproduces broader social ideologies related to the representation of women.

Research Subject

This study examines the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* with a focus on the portrayal of female character in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006). Despite showing an inspirational story on the struggle in achieving American Dream, the film silencing and marginalizing women's voice and perspective which not only distorts women's experience but also reinforces patriarchal ideology. This study challenges the portrayal by examining closely how women are represented and the impact to the boarder concept of women in media.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study was carried out by sorting out scenes in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* that shows the portrayal of women character which focuses on Linda as a prominent female character. The findings shows that *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) present women in a limited space and time which marginalize her position, voice and agency. As a result, this reinforces the patriarchal success myth.

Narrative Structures That Center on Men

The film focuses on Chris Garner as he struggles in achieving American Dreams. Since he is the main character, all the story follows his story and the perspective of the story is using Garner's perspective.

Mainstream of cinematic narrative in Hollywood tends to use the hero's journey by Campbell. These structures usually center on male protagonist that have to overcome the obstacle in his life and achieve his goal. Chris Gardner struggle follows the classical Structure of Hero's Journey as follows:

1. Call to adventure:

Chris struggling financially which makes him use all his strength to cope with all the difficulties with his life. He then sees a chance to improve his life by becoming stock broker

2. Separation from the Ordinary world:

He loses everything. His wife left him and he loses his house. He even has to take care of his son by himself.

3. Trial and challenge:

He faces a lot of rejection, humiliation, and emotional breakdown.

4. Transformation:

Through his perseverance, intelligent, and will power, he can overcome the hardship.

5. Reward and Return:

He is offered permanent job and get a monthly salary that marking a "return" to society as a successful man.

The mentioned structure of story emphasizes the noble journey of a self-made man which removes women presence as supportive or the ones that give support to his journey. This is an antithesis to the archetype of supporting females.

Rather than being shown as co-struggle to Chris's journey, Linda is removed from the central plotline.

Linda's early exit represents the silencing of women's experience or erasure which enhances the common cinematic pattern of male character's arc of struggle and triumph. It reinforces the trope that "true hero must walk alone" which reflects and reconstructs the patriarchal ideal of masculinity.

The plotline that centres on male narrative is combined by the chosen of focalization. In *The Pursuit of Happyness* the story is strictly focalized through male protagonist's consciousness. The audience is presented the story through the lens of Chris Garner from the beginning of the story. The audience sees the world through his eyes, emotion, and movement. His subjectivity shapes the empathy and sympathy of the audiences as audiences immersed in his perspective, including the way audiences interpret Linda. It shows through his standard and moral lens.

By contrast, audiences never enter Linda's internal world including knowing her thought, struggle, fears, and frustrations. Her acts justification is never explored.

Linda is not granted the narrative depth and development to understand her situation, perspective, inner conflict, and her own struggle. The presentation of Linda is using

external focalization, in which the character is only presented from the outside, without an insight to her internal motivation (Jahn, 2005). This kind of representation serves to give a distance to the characters subjectivity.

Audiences cannot see Linda's struggle and emotion or justify her act. Audiences only can see the effect on her action and emotion on the male protagonist which the viewers have an empathy upon.

This imbalance focalization and plotline reinforce the patriarchal narrative norm. As mentioned by Mulvey (1975) women are positioned as the object of gaze which is seen but not heard. Linda is narratively objectified and she does not have an agency to focalize her experience.

Negative Characterization of Women

In *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Linda is described in a negative emotional light. As Chris struggle to cope with the situation, Linda is shown as unsupportive, irritable and uncaring even to her own son.

Linda, the only significant female character, is shown as an unsupportive, emotional, and easily yielding wife to the pressures of life. This representation is in line with the classic stereotype of women as irrational emotional figures, which, according to Doane, (1988), reflects the "anxiety of the female body" in cinematic discourse. Linda is not given a narrative space to show her emotional complexity or social background in depth, so her every action and reaction seems disproportionate and negative in the audience's perception.

The Representation of Linda as an Uncaring Wife

Rather than presented as co-struggle female character that support her husband that faces a lot of hardship, Linda is presented as impatient and unsupportive.

Figure 1

Linda scolds Chris when he doesn't pay the bill (00:23:59)



Figure 2
Linda scolds Chris when brushing (00:24:30)



In several scenes, Linda expresses her frustration over the unpaid bills and Chris's failing business. She becomes increasingly bitter and expressing resentment toward Chris which highlights her character as uncaring, impatient, and unwilling to endure hardship with her husband. In contrast, Chris reacts differently, he seems to endure everything and focuses on the solution rather than complaining to others. It highlights patriarchal ideologies that frame male endurance as heroic and female struggle as weakness.

Figure 3
Linda is angry when Chris doesn't pay the rent (00:11:56)



In fact, Linda is shown to work in two shift a day. The portrayal is limited and short which also interpolated with her whine on Chris failing in paying their bill.

Figure 4
Linda works hard (00:06:01)



Figure 4 shows Linda's struggles as a hardworking mom within a difficult household economy. However, the narrative focuses more on Chris's struggles such as unpaid bill, unpaid rent, and unpaid Junior's preschool program, while Linda's contributions are underrepresented both narratively and

visually. This reflects a common trope in which women's work especially emotional and domestic work is naturalized and de-heroicized (Lauzen, 2023).

Figure 5
Linda schedules her work schedule (00:22:35)



If audiences can explore more on Linda, it is shown that she is exhausted both physically and emotionally. She works long hours as a hotel maid, a low paying job but tiring and needs extra energy. It gives little stability and dignity to the worker. To that extend, if Linda gains more subjectivity and justification on her short temper and frustration, the audiences can develop an empathy towards her.

Her emotional outburst can be misunderstood as uncaring, but it also reflects her emotional breakdown because of constant financial security and helplessness.

Her struggle and emotional breakdown also develop from the breakdown of marital communication. They have different vision. Chris is more future-focuses, while Linda is grounded on the immediate, harsh reality present time, survival. It also makes her seems to belittle Chris's plan to pursue an unpaid internship and accuse him as irresponsible.

The Representation of Linda Who Has Little Maternal Affection

Women's portrayal also reflects the traditional gender narrative expectation. A mother is expected to be nurturing, ever-present to her child, and put others' needs first. Linda fails to those expectations. She is presented as lack of maternal affection.

The plotline does not give a lot of moments of Linda and Christopher together and create an interpretation that her relationship with her son as cold and uncaring.

By contrast, Chris and Christopher share a lot of time together. Chris also the one who picks and drops off Junior in the day care.

Figure 6

Chris picks-up Junior from day care (00:03:40)



The most morally charge on the representation of Linda is her decision to leave her son with Chris.

Figure 7

Linda decides to go to New York (00:31:03)



In figure 7, Linda makes the decision to leave Chris and move to New York. act against the traditional gender expectation which implicitly judge her as a failing mother.

Linda's position in the narrative as a character who quickly gives up and leaves the family reinforces the cinematic myth of masculinity as a sustaining force and femininity as a weakness. While this can be interpreted as abandonment, it also highlights an act of agency and survival.

This choice, made under immense psychological and economic pressure, aligns with feminist readings that frame women's decisions as a form of resistance to male-dominated failure (Crenshaw, 2019; Collins, 2019).

In fact, from an intersectional perspective, Linda's act of leaving home is a response to systemic pressures involving economic inequality and the double burden of women as double shift workers.

Linda is not shown as a figure who has agency, but is reduced to a symbol of women's domestic failure, which simplifies and distorts the real experience of women in society.

She is actually a caring mother as seen from a short scene in the following figure.

Figure 8

Linda gives Junior a birthday gift (00:22:47)



As shown in figure 8, Linda gives a birthday gift to Junior. Though small, the gesture reflects emotional investment and maternal care. However, unlike Chris, whose parenting moments are framed in emotional close-ups and longer screen time, Linda's care is visually minimized. This supports the idea that mainstream cinema often visually favors paternal narratives while marginalizing maternal presence (Mulvey, 1975). The scene is brief and lacks cinematic emphasis unlike Chris's emotional scenes with his son, which are given close-ups and dramatic lighting. This selective emphasis illustrates how emotional expression is gendered in visual storytelling. While Chris's fatherhood is glorified, Linda's maternal gestures are visually understated.

In figure 9, Linda is seen carrying Junior from the bottom of the stairs to Junior's room. After arriving at Junior's room, Linda kisses Junior's goodbye because she is going to New-York to work at her brother's boyfriend's place. Through gentle gestures and a high sense of concern, Linda in this scene gives the impression and message of a mother who wants to live with her child and she says goodbye to junior while he is still asleep to avoid crying in front of Junior. Unlike Chris who really wants to hold his son in a hurry because it is his responsibility as a father, Linda is the one who brings Junior home from the child's pins house while Chris is in jail for not paying the ticket on time. This scene can be seen cornering Linda who is carrying Junior to go to his bed, while the large camera angle is facing Chris who follows from behind her.

Figure 9

Linda carries Junior into his bed (00:48:27)



The results of the analysis show that the representation of women in this film, especially through the character of Linda, is constructed subordinatively both narratively and visually. Linda is not given the same character development space as the male character, she is shown through external focalization without access to her internal motivations or psychological complexity. The narrative's focus centered on male characters and the use of camera angles tend to put Linda in a weak visual position, reinforcing the masculine dominance in the story structure. The representation of Linda as an emotional, unsupportive, and ultimately abandoned wife affirms the classic stereotype of women as irrational and emotionally unstable figures (Doane, 1988; Mulvey, 1975).

Overall, the film's narrative reinforces patriarchal structures through the exclusion of women's agency from the main conflict. Linda is not positioned as a subject of struggle, but rather as an obstacle in the male heroic journey, which is in line with the masculine version of the Hero's Journey pattern (Campbell, 2012; Samal, 2025). This representation also marginalizes women's emotional and economic work, which in reality is a double burden that often goes unacknowledged in mainstream film narratives (Crenshaw, 2019; Lauzen, 2023). Thus, through narrative approaches, focalization theory, and visual analysis combined with the framework of intersectional feminism, this study reveals that the representation of women in *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) reflects and reproduces gender-based power inequality in the production of cinematic meaning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the representation of women in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) by focusing on the character Linda through narrative analysis approaches, focalization theory, and camera studies in the framework of intersectional feminism. The results of the analysis showed that the character Linda was visually and structurally constructed in a subordinate position, either through shooting angles that tended to be debilitating (e.g., high-angle shots), and through narrative focalization that did not give her room to appear as an autonomous subject. As Silverman (1988) states, women's voices and perspectives in classical cinema are often "trapped" in a diegetic space

without narrative power, and this is evident in how Linda is positioned only as a prop on the journey of the main male character, rather than as a narrative center with her own agency.

These findings confirm that film narratives still often maintain patriarchal structures, where women's experiences and struggles are marginalized in favor of strengthening male heroic narratives. The representation of the character Linda reflects gender inequality in the distribution of narrative agency, while reinforcing de Beauvoir's (2010) critique of women as "the Other" in the construction of patriarchal culture. Linda is shown not as a subject with will and psychological complexity, but as an obstacle in the flow of male character development. Thus, the film implicitly reproduces gender-based power relations that place men as the main agents and women as peripherals.

As a theoretical implication, this study reinforces the importance of using an intersectional approach in film studies to uncover how women's representation cannot be separated from the interaction between gender, class, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 2019). Meanwhile, from a practical point of view, it is important for media creators to consider more equal and diverse representations, both narratively and visually, in order to challenge the dominance of masculinity in popular culture production. Further research is suggested to expand the object of study on films across genres and cultures, as well as explore how female characters are constructed in the context of non-Hollywood cinema. In addition, the use of quantitative approaches in measuring audiences' responses to gender representation can also be an important contribution in seeing the impact of media on public perception of women's social roles.

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