

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the introduction of the study, which consists of the background of the study and the research questions. Aside of the introduction, this chapter also talks about the aim of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study. Research methodology, data collection, and data analysis are also amongst those covered in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the past years, there have been a lot of superhero films produced, especially by Marvel Studios and DC. When we hear the word ‘hero’, generally people will think of someone with a very good attitude and a very good sense of justice. S/he is also someone who is willing to help people and to sacrifice himself/herself for greater good. Often times, this someone is also a patriot, along with many other good qualities (i.e., bravery, honesty, selflessness, etc.). The examples of these heroes are Superman, Batman, Wonder-woman, Ironman, Spider-man, and Captain America. The heroes mentioned are all people who have a great sense of justice that made them decide to be heroes and save people from danger and often time risk their own safety. Some of them are also portrayed as having patriotic characteristics. The heroes mentioned above are mostly American. Their patriotism are depicted through most of their costumes that are dominated by the colour of red and blue which represent America’s flag. Some of their costumes also have white stars featured, which are also featured in America’s flag. For example, Superman’s and Spider-man’s costumes that are dominantly red and blue; Wonder-woman’s costume that also has the white stars on her pants aside of the red

and blue colours; and Captain America has a star-shaped logo on his chest and star-shaped logo on his iconic shield, “A” letter on his forehead which stands for America, and his iconic red, blue, and white coloured costume. Aside of them, Batman may not be patriotic, but he loves his hometown, Gotham, very much that he risks his own safety in defending it from the criminals.

All these people mentioned above have the qualities that people generally will consider as heroes. However, looking at the group of misfits in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), it causes people to question: do heroes need to be necessarily good natured and have good qualities? *Guardians of the Galaxy* consists of the outlaw Star-Lord, Drax the destroyer, Gamora the assassin, the genetically modified bounty hunter Rocket, and the walking tree Groot. All of them are criminals or outlaws that lack the qualities of being a hero. However, in spite of their lack of good qualities, they are still considered as heroes because they are labeled the Marvel Heroes. This is especially so in their film, *Guardians of the Galaxy* (Gunn, 2014), where they save a city from the villain’s attack and save many lives in the process.

There are several studies that have been conducted regarding the issue of heroism in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014). One of them is Jake Casale’s (2014) “Heroism, Realism, and Transformation in Guardians of the Galaxy” where he states that the heroes from *Guardians of the Galaxy* are the opposite of the grandiosity, self-seriousness, and epic sheen that can be seen from the Avengers. Another study by John McAteer’s (2015) “The Gospel According to Marvel” that, instead of focusing solely on *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), he discusses Marvel’s heroism in general as the publisher of *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014). McAteer says that Marvel has an idea of heroism where an ordinary person with unique abilities and struggles who tries to overcome his/her personal weaknesses and use those abilities to be a better person than they thought they could be. McAteer added that Marvel considers a hero as someone who shares Spider-Man’s motto: “With great power comes great responsibility”. The

heroes may actually feel that they may not be that heroic, and they may also feel that the power that they have is more of a curse than a gift; however, they do their best in using their power for good. However, there has yet been many studies conducted regarding the construction of the hero itself in the film *Guardians of the Galaxy* (Gunn, 2014).

So what is the indicator for a character to be considered as a hero? How are the heroes constructed? What meaning can be made from the construction? In order to analyze how heroes are constructed, this study uses *Guardians of the Galaxy* (Gunn, 2014) as the subject of the study to determine how the heroes are constructed. Campbell's (2004) theory of hero construction is used in this study as a theory that covers stages in hero's journey.

1.2 Research Question

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How are the heroes constructed in *Guardian of the Galaxy* (2014)?
2. What meanings can be made from the hero construction of the *Guardian of the Galaxy* (2014)?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to explore how characters are constructed as heroes in films by referring to the hero construction theory by Campbell (2004). The other aim is to see if there is any meaning that can be inferred from the construction.

1.4 Scope of the Study

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Construction of Heroes in Guardians of the Galaxy (2014)

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In this study, *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), directed by James Gunn, is the main focus of the analysis. The analysis of the hero construction is limited to the heroes in the *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014). The study focuses on analyzing the scenes containing the stages that each of the heroes in the film goes through in their journey in becoming a hero.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to show the construction of a different kind of heroes, in the case of this study is the heroes in *Guardians of the Galaxy*. In addition, this study is also expected to show that a film about superheroes does not only contain action scene, but also something to learn from.

1.6 Research Methodology

As stated by Hancock, Ockleford & Windrige (2009) that qualitative research can be used to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of the way things are in our social world. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative method to be able to reach a further understanding on the construction of heroes in films. The data are presented in the form of stages of the characters' journey in becoming a hero.

1.6.1 Data Collection

The data are obtained from screenshots of the scenes that are selected based on the stages of hero construction theory by Campbell (2004). The data are then analyzed to answer the research questions. The first step in collecting the data is to identify the stages of hero construction in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014). The screenshots of the

scene are grouped into each character's screenshots. The data are again grouped into each of the hero construction's stage.

1.6.2 Data Analysis

The data that are collected from the film are then presented in the following table. The collected data consist of screenshots of the stages in the journey in becoming a hero of each of the heroes. The data are then described and analyzed with reference to Campbell's (2004) theory of hero construction. The table for analysis is as shown in the following:

Stage:

Character:		
Screenshot:		
Elements:	Description:	Analysis:
Shot:		
Angle:		

1.7 Clarification of the Terms

1. **Hero:** Both hero and heroine refer to people who displayed courage and the will for self-sacrifice when facing danger and adversity or from a position of weakness. (Wei & Xu, 2012)

2. **Hero Construction:** The adventure of the hero usually follow the similar pattern as described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source, and a life-enhancing return. (Campbell, 2004)

3. **Camera Shot:** The types of shots are defined by the amount of subject that is covered within the frame of the screen. Although in actual practice, the shot designations vary. Generally, the types of shots are determined by the amount of the human figure is in view. Due to the fact that some lenses distort distances, the distance between the camera and object photographed is not what defines the shot. (Giannetti, 2008)
4. **Camera Angle:** The director's view regarding the subject photographed can be seen from the angle of which an object is photographed. The camera position is what determines the angle, not the subject's position. Two different meaning can be derived from the identical subject by different camera angle. (Giannetti, 2008)