*Wonder Woman* provides ‘equipment for living’ for people who believe in action and not talk

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify Burke’s concept of ‘equipment for living’ within the sphere of the movie *Wonder Woman*. Also, applying the project topic, *Wonder Woman* provides ‘equipment for living’ for people who believe in action and not talk to *Theories of Human Communication* by Littlejohn and Foss (2011). In the realm of the seven traditions, I have applied the socio-psychological tradition which serves as an appropriate approach to this topic because it is "the study of the individual as a social being." (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 52). Additionally, this paper examines four peer-reviewed articles by Frentz and Farrell (1975), Kesiner (2008), Yergensen (2006), and Young (2000) that investigate the use of movies within the ideal concept of why people connect to movies in general. People watch movies for entertainment purposes but end up with a connection to the plot, storyline, characters, musicality, overall themes, and more.

*Keywords*: equipment for living, socio-psychological tradition, action, *Wonder Woman*

Literature Review

When we connect to various events, situations, or people, it creates many different ideals. Also, connection gives us a sense of distinctiveness, character, belonging and so much more. Connecting to various movies, in my opinion, enters us into a relatable territory to the subject material. In most cases, a movie is successful if it connects with the audience. That connection can be based on topic, purpose, ideal, characters, social and more. The structure of this literature review that relates to the "equipment for living" will be based on "how do people connect with movies"? How did people connect with the 2017 Fantasy - Science fiction movie *Wonder Woman* that was directed by Patty Jenkins? A connection was made with the audience because the movie *Wonder Woman* provides ‘equipment for living’ for people who believe in action and not talk." There is a power behind anyone who can prove themselves by their actions.

The ability to have a connection to an audience is in line with Burke's concepts of rhetoric providing "Equipment for Living" and can be found in the subject matter in the articles by Frentz and Farrell (1975), Kesiner (2008), Yergensen (2006), and Young (2000). For this literature review I will compare Kesiner (2008) and Young (2000) as it deals with the concept of why people connect. Then I will compare Frentz and Farrell (1975) and Yergensen (2006) as those articles deal excellent and evil but focus on the singular event which in this case would be faith and transcendence.

Kesiner (2008) examines the question "Why do we watch movies?" and claims that "Movies have long since been considered an entertainment form with a few people acknowledge the emphasis social and psychological ramifications." (p. 412). To ensure entertainment value, Warner Brothers Pictures distributed *Wonder Woman* with a budget of $149 million and received a worldwide box office return was $821.9 million. (En.wikipedia.org)

Young (2000) examines the importance of movies in our lives; for example, "therapists use commercially available films and videos to address psychological problems." (p. 448). This article also discusses a symbolic - development approach which the movie *Wonder Woman* is stacked with symbolic measurements, even down to her battle armor. Diana Prince alias Wonder Woman herself is commonly viewed as a feminist icon that demonstrates that women are powerful as well can be considered to be symbolic.

Good VS. Evil! Yergensen (2006) examines the faith side of an audience and relates it back to *The Lord of the Rings,* referring that the film could be scripture for Christians even citing that it is a great reference tool for teaching scriptures. "With equipment for living being a way to solve problems, people are doing more than just creating a culture with stories, but are sharing how they solve the problems of life. And they are doing it while at the same time creating fantasy themes. (p. 163). Comparing to Diana Prince Wonder Woman and her upbringing demonstrates that you should always be prepared for battle, and you are raised strong and aware. Frentz and Farrell (1975) delve into the discussion on how to balance positivism and to be transcendent. This article discussion portion is about the "momentous cultural transformation may lurk behind the magic of *The Exorcist*." (p. 46) indeed compares with the evil magic behind General Erich Ludendorff, who Diana Prince alias Wonder Woman believes is Ares who she has set out to kill to end the war. When she kills the General, the war does not end. However, she figures out that Ares is actually the British politician Sir Patrick Morgan that has been guiding the adventure the entire time.

The four articles found common ground where the audience saw a connection to the movie which provides equipment for living. "Movies are designed to direct emotions and entire thought processes." (Kesiner, 2008, pp. 412-413). These four articles found a connection between how people connect and how the related between good vs. evil.

Methodology

To showcase the ‘equipment for living’ for the movie *Wonder Woman* I would conduct a qualitative research project because it is "based on words, feelings, emotions, sounds and other non-numerical and unquantifiable elements" (Herbst and Coldwell, 2004, p.13). The methodology would include developing a Qualitative Data Collection Method because those "methods are often regarded as providing rich data about real-life people and situations and being more able to make sense of behavior and to understand behavior within its wider good." (Vaus, 2002, p.5). I would execute this research project in partnership with Radio One Charlotte by situating a mixed-age focus group that targets 200 women between the ages of 25-55 from African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic cultural backgrounds. This focus group would be arranged to convene at a centrally located, local movie theatre with a Girls Night Theme with Radio One to view *Wonder Woman*. The announcement and reservation process would be driven by the Radio One Charlotte's database from on-air mentions, email newsletters, text blasts, and their social platforms. The campaign window would be four weeks total with the awareness portion for four weeks prior to the focus group date for a 21 day run, spending the fourth and final week contacting each participant and explaining the intention of the focus group, confirming reservations, obtaining consent forms, focus group participant profile, and emailing the participants their entry letter. Also, this fourth week would be creating the balance of the ages and ethnicity panel as well to ensure representation. For organizational purposes, the participant's participation profile would request demographic information such as their name, age, ethnicity, education level, employment status, marital status, email address and best contact phone number. For the focus group, participants would be asked to arrive at staggered times to prevent a back up at the check-in process. At the actual focus group before the participants enter the theatre, research assistants would ask each focus group member to provide their full name for to check in with the research assistants and ask then they will be asked to review their focus group survey participant profile information for accuracy. Each participant will be provided a clipboard and directed to find a seat to fill out a pre-movie survey. Once participants are settled, the research conductor briefly addressed the theatre and explains the purpose of the focus group is to study the effects of watching the movie *Wonder Woman* has on their lives. At the conclusion of the movie *Wonder Woman*, participants would also take a follow up survey gathering information regarding their "take-away" from the film, most pivotal moments, favorite character, which character they identify with the most, any themes of action vs. talk stood out to them, if they plan to make any changes in their lives based on the movie *Wonder Woman*, and their personal commentary. Included in the follow-up survey is an area where participants can indicate if they can be contacted for any follow-up questions. Once participants were done with the follow-up survey, research assistants would collect forms as well as the pre-movie survey as the women left the theatre. The follow-up survey feedback would be then merged with the focus group participant profile, and all data would be collected for the data review. These surveys would be provided in English and Spanish, and additional research assistants would be available to assist any participants.

Data

Based on my previous experiences with focus groups in combination with the literature review, I expect to find that the women in the focus group either identify with Diana Price alias Wonder Woman or they strive to identify with her in the area of confidence. I predict that 50% of the women in the focus group will notate that will make changes in their lives due to the movie *Wonder Woman* and its sense of empowerment. Also, I gather due to the nature of *Wonder Woman* the film that about 20% of the women in the focus group will remain committed to their endeavor to make changes in their lives and continue those changes. Furthermore, I would anticipate that some participants that notated they did not mind further follow up will then change their mind and decline the option to be contacted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, movies are created about every topic imaginable, ranging from action, comedy, suspense, romance, mystery, thriller, and more. The plots of these movies can reflect life, and it can influence people in different ways. How one person views a characters mission possibly will differ from another person's viewpoint. Movies can spur new ways of thinking of things, and that can "affects your thoughts, and your thoughts, in turn, create new meanings" (Littlejohn & Foss 2011, p 49). The movie *Wonder Woman* correlates well to the socio-psychological tradition as it focuses on "individual social behavior, psychological variables individual effects, personalities, and traits, perception, and cognition" (Littlejohn, 2011, p. 52). To summarize, the Fantasy - Science fiction movie *Wonder Woman* provides ‘equipment for living’ for people who believe in action and not talk because the movie demonstrates the will to lead when all odds are against you.

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