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HARRY POTTER AND THE HERO'S JOURNEY: AN ANALYSIS OF A WIZARD'S TRANSFORMATION

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In April of 2010, 30-year old Nikki Carpenter had to make a difficult decision: her life or the lives of her three children. For her, the choice was easy. As a tornado pummeled through their town of Yazoo City, Mississippi, Nikki knew that she had to keep her three boys safe. To that end, she put a mattress on top of them and situated herself on top of it to shield them as their house started coming down (Putnal, 2010). Because of her efforts, her children are alive today even though she had to sacrifice herself. Parental sacrifice may be seen as something that every good parent should do, but it doesn't make the act any less heroic. To give up one's own life so that another can live is a remarkably heroic act, even if it's for one's own child.

Self-sacrifice is a common theme throughout the Harry Potter series, but the first and most notable example of sacrifice is the one that allowed Harry to live. Faced with the same decision that Nikki faced, Lily Potter chose to sacrifice herself in order to create the magic necessary to protect Harry. After Voldemort killed Harry's dad, James Potter, Lily stepped in to save Harry even though it meant her own death. In sacrificing herself, she was able to cast a spell over Harry that was so strong that when Voldemort tried to kill him as well, it merely bounced off and almost destroyed Voldemort himself. This traumatic experience is what primed Harry for heroism. In surviving the attack, Harry became revered by the wizarding world and unanimously decreed "the boy who lived." Before Harry did so much as a heroic deed, there was an expectation from others that he would do great things. But, more importantly, Harry desired something to give his life meaning in order to repay his parents' sacrifice for him, but he didn't know what that was yet. To gain a complete understanding of Harry's transformation as a hero, it is necessary to use the principles of heroism science to explore his role as a hero and how he and society changed because of it.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Before embarking on an analysis of Harry Potter's transformation, it is important to first explain his role within the context of the hero's journey as described by Campbell (1949). The hero's journey consists of the hero being summoned to go on a journey that is challenging and compels them to discover a quality they were missing in themselves. Ultimately, at the end of the journey, the hero bestows a boon or gift upon society. This heroic path involves going through three phases of departure, initiation, and return.

Departure

Prior to Harry going to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry had no idea that he was a wizard and that his parents were murdered by a dark wizard named Voldemort. Instead, until he was 11 years old, Harry lived with his aunt, uncle, and cousin where he was forced to live in a closet under the stairs. Despite receiving letters from Hogwarts for some time, Harry didn't attend until he was 11 because his aunt and uncle intercepted the letters to keep the wizarding world a secret from him. However, that all changed one night when Hagrid appeared and informed Harry that he was a wizard. Of course, this news

was met with skepticism from Harry at first, but the notion that he was meant for something better and more purposeful than the bleak life of monotony he had grown accustomed to had already taken root. Thus, Harry left the muggle, magic-less world he was used to and immersed himself into a new world of magic and wizardry, marking the start of his journey.

Initiation

Upon crossing the threshold into the world of wizardry and, more specifically, Hogwarts, Harry was given his first indication of what he would do with his life. By the time the sorting hat placed Harry in the house of Gryffindor, Harry had already made his first two friends: Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. The process of the sorting hat was an initiation in itself. Harry could have been placed in one of four houses: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw or Slytherin, each potentially having a different effect on Harry's maturation as a wizard. If he had been placed in Slytherin, his heroic nature may have never flourished let alone occurred. Gryffindor gave Harry the opportunity to be with his friends who would go on to be significant sources of help for him, and it provided an environment that allowed his hopes for a purposeful life to manifest. To make that happen, though, Harry first had to learn the basics of magic. Although Harry was never able to match Hermione's vast knowledge of spells and magic, he showed great proficiency in the defense against the dark arts magic. By attending Hogwarts and starting his wizarding education, Harry was initiated into the world of magic which made his journey possible.

Return

Along Harry's journey, he faced many obstacles and adversaries but none more sinister than Voldemort. By finally defeating Voldemort, he was able to complete his journey and gain a sense of fulfillment. His journey was not one fueled by a desire for vengeance, as that motive would have made his actions unheroic. He was guided by doing the right thing for others, even if it meant putting himself in harm's way. In doing so, he was able to get the sense of fulfillment that he so yearned for. By the completion of his journey, Harry had gone through major transformation in terms of his moral, mental, emotional and physical capacities (Allison & Goethals, 2017). He went from a position of

inferiority in his muggle life to a position of esteem and power that made him a leader in the wizarding world.

Harry began his journey with no knowledge of magic and spells but developed into a powerful wizard with mastery of defense against the dark arts magic. He lessened his dependency on others and became capable of acting independently. Harry developed by becoming more confident in his abilities and in the role of being the hero whom others admired. He also changed from being taught magic to teaching others the necessary spells to defend themselves. These transformations didn't occur overnight or all at the same time; rather, they were part of a long developmental process as depicted by Joseph Campbell's (1949) monomyth of the hero (Allison & Goethals, 2017). By completing his journey, Harry was able to live up to others' expectations of him and his own expectations as well. In killing Voldemort, Harry gave the wizarding world something it hadn't had for a long time: peace.

Mentors and Friends

The peace that Harry bestowed upon the world of magic was not easy to secure. Harry had to overcome tremendous obstacles along the way, each one transforming him in some way and bringing him closer to his goal. In the sense that Harry was transformed by his journey, transformed his society, came from humble beginnings, overcame challenges, and received help from others, he can be seen as a traditional and transforming hero (Allison & Goethals, 2013). In this section of the chapter, the nature of Harry's relationships with his friends and mentors is explored along with how they each played a role in Harry's development as a hero and in the completion of his journey.

Ron and Hermione are perhaps some of the more significant influencers on Harry because they had the most continual interaction with him. Starting out as merely friends when they were 11-years old, the two turned into much more than that for Harry as the years passed. The first instance of the three acting as a team occurred in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, when Harry and Ron saved Hermione from a troll who had inexplicably gotten into Hogwarts. With very rudimentary training up to that point, the three were able to defeat the troll and establish deep bonds with each other. That moment served to create a foundation for them that established them as a dynamic force to be reckoned

with. It was Harry's first heroic deed and it seemed to come naturally to the young wizard. The three don't relent when it comes to doing what's right, even when the odds are stacked against them. This becomes true when the trio learn that the mysterious and terrifying three-headed dog is guarding a valuable object called the Sorcerer's Stone and that a professor is attempting to steal it.

To stop the professor before he takes it, the three must get past the dog and then a series of obstacles designed to keep intruders out. With little magic knowledge between them, they work together to get past these obstacles and, in doing so, they give Harry the support and confidence he needed to face the professor alone. After Harry successfully secures the stone, he is hailed as hero in the school and from that point on, his heroic deeds only continued. Because of this experience, Harry's hero attributes as detailed in "the great eight" (Allison & Goethals, 2011) become clear and continue to develop in subsequent books and movies. Although not all of these attributes are seen to the extent that they are in later movies, Harry demonstrates that he is smart, strong, selfless, caring, charismatic, resilient, reliable, and inspiring. Harry, in some way or another, encompasses all the characteristics of a hero from a young age, making his transition into a hero that people can count on relatively natural for him. This transition is also made easy with the help of Ron and Hermione, whose "active role in selecting and shaping [Harry] into a symbol of the goals of the group" (Adams, 2006; Gardner & Avolio, 1998) helps advance his heroic journey.

As important as friends are in assisting the hero, mentors serve the purpose of guiding and caring for the hero along his journey. One of the most notable mentor figures for Harry is the headmaster of Hogwarts' school who is widely considered to be the most powerful wizard: Dumbledore. Dumbledore takes interest in Harry from his first day at Hogwarts, as he knows his past and the fact that he survived an attack by Voldemort. This interest blossoms into a strong relationship between the two that Harry uses in times of distress. Dumbledore offers sage wisdom to the budding hero on his journey whenever it is needed and he believes in Harry's ability to handle situations well beyond the scope of an ordinary pre-teen. His belief in Harry allows him to see past his age and inexperience and see him as the hero he is destined to become.

After Harry witnessed Voldemort murdering Cedric Diggory in *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry is quick to warn others of the dark lord's return but none in a position of power, besides Dumbledore, believe him. Additionally, Dumbledore entrusts Harry with the monumental challenge of finding all the horcruxes that make up Voldemort's soul, and destroy them. Dumbledore recognizes the good that Harry can do and so he risks his life on multiple occasions to protect Harry so that he can continue fighting the good fight. Dumbledore's belief in Harry and his support of him were invaluable, and this confidence allowed Harry to develop both mentally and morally by giving him knowledge not only of magic, but of right and wrong as well.

Whereas Dumbledore's impact on Harry was obvious, Sirius Black's was less so but still crucial to Harry. Sirius Black was a mysterious character at first; Harry only knew him as the ravenous murderer that escaped the wizard prison, Azkaban. However, when Harry met him for the first time, he found out that he was innocent of those crimes and was also his godfather. This was important to Harry because he believed that all his family was dead -- excluding the Dursley's whom Harry didn't really consider family. There was an instantaneous connection between the two because Harry yearned for family and Sirius wanted a relationship with his godson. Sirius gradually became a father figure for Harry as the years passed, which was important for Harry who felt like he was alone in the world at times.

Although most transformations take a long time, Harry's transformation after meeting Sirius was one that occurred rather fast and intensely (Allison & Goethals, 2017). He no longer felt so alone because he had someone who was family now. Beyond that, Sirius was a mentor to Harry who did whatever necessary to protect him, even if it meant sacrificing his own life in the process. After Sirius was slain by the deatheater Bellatrix Lestrange while protecting Harry, Harry wanted to inflict pain on or even murder her for taking his last remaining family. While these intentions may seem unheroic, it doesn't necessarily entail that his observable disdain and desire to punish Bellatrix are associated with unobservable qualities that aren't aligned with heroism as noted by the costly signaling theory (Kafashan et al., 2017). Not all heroes are perfect semblances of the characteristics they embody, as all people have their flaws. Harry's history of family being taken from him will always be there, but because he doesn't let it take control of him or dictate his decisions, he remains a hero.

An unlikely ally that doesn't make his true intentions known until the last movie is Professor Snape. In the beginning, Harry is untrusting of Snape and believes him to be a death eater working for Voldemort. As such, the two don't exactly see eye to eye and Harry views him as an enemy. It is not until Snape dies at the hands of Voldemort that his nature is revealed to Harry. All along Snape was doing the most to help Harry by acting as a double agent and pretending to serve Voldemort when in reality he supported Dumbledore as a means of protecting him. He taught Harry how to defend his mind from intrusion by Voldemort and to see into others' minds. He also took the unbreakable vow to assist Malfoy in killing Dumbledore to maintain his cover so that he can keep Harry safe, and let himself be seen as bad while in reality he was a hero in his own right.

Although the focus of this paper is on Harry's transformation as a hero, Snape can be seen as transparent hero whose deeds are unknown and he is unsung until the end (Allison et al., 2019; Goethals & Allison, 2012). Snape risked his own security and reputation to protect Harry all out of love for Lily Potter. After finding out the truth and realizing that he owed a great deal to Snape, Harry underwent an emotional transformation that made him feel foolish for being so short-sighted about Snape and the fact that he was his greatest ally of all.

Hero Functions

In this section it will become evident how Harry fits into the three categories of the heroes function framework (Kinsella et al., 2017). Each category -- enhancing, moral modeling, and protecting -- plays a role in how Harry acts as a hero throughout his journey. Enhancing is associated with how the hero motivates and instills hope in others; moral modelling is related to how he promotes good values and encourages others to follow them and also do good in the world; and protecting is the function of the hero that saves others from forces of evil that will cause harm.

With regard to the enhancing function, Harry is a source of inspiration to the other wizards who fight alongside him against Voldemort. At first, many of the people who are part of his cause, besides Ron and Hermione, are older and more seasoned wizards than he. By virtue of his age and determination, Harry impresses others and motivates them to give their all in their endeavors against the dark forces. As he gets older, more mature, and starts taking on greater

responsibility, he earns admiration from wizards his own age and younger. As such, he acts as a role model to them by proving that anyone can help in some way. Harry uses his status to teach other students defensive and offensive magic when Hogwarts is under new rule and won't teach it themselves. By demonstrating to them that they do all have power and can use it for good, he effectively inspires many more young wizards to join him on his journey.

To go along with that, Harry has a strong influence on others in imparting the morals and values he believes in. He does so by continually demonstrating to others the difference between doing what is right and what is not. For example, in *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry partakes in the triwizard tournament representing Hogwarts alongside Cedric Diggory. This competition is centered on winning as many of the challenges as possible to be crowned the winner and prove that your respective school is more superior than the others. In one of such challenges, one of his competitors is unable to rescue her sister from the bottom of the lake. Seeing this, Harry forgoes his lead and rescues Ron along with the girl's sister. In doing so, Harry made it clear to those watching that protecting others is always his priority. Harry consistently exudes empathy for the concerns and interests of the many, not just acting based on his own interests. These qualities make Harry a good model of morals and values that are inherently heroic, which leads many others to act accordingly.

Finally, Harry is above all a protector. He strives to save others when they are in harm's way and often risks his well-being in doing so -- whether one deserves saving or not. One scene in particular in *The Deathly Hallows* epitomizes just what kind of protector Harry is. After Harry, Ron, and Hermione fight Malfoy and his henchmen from Slytherin, one of the henchmen unleashes a fiery serpent that engulfs everything in its path in flames. Just as it looks like they won't make it out alive, Harry finds three broomsticks that they can ride to safety. However, as they are making their escape they see Malfoy and his henchman struggling to climb a mountain of objects while flames nip at their heels. Even though they had just tried to kill Harry and his friends, Harry chooses to go back and rescue them, helping them to narrowly make it out alive. Beyond that, Harry demonstrates the willingness and the capability to defend others from the forces of evil throughout his journey.

Transformation

It is evident that during the course of his journey, Harry changed and developed in a number of ways. In this section the causes of his transformations are explored and whether they are internal, external, or both. Considering he began his hero's journey when he was 11-years old and didn't complete it until years later, he underwent transformation based on natural human development. As he progressed on his journey he got older and more physically fit while also becoming more intelligent and wise in regard to his magic capabilities and decisions as a leader (Piaget & Inhelder, 1958). Moreover, his emotional state altered as he transitioned into his role as a hero because he became more empathetic to others and regarded their problems as his own (Trentacosts & Izard, 2006). Another internal source of transformation that Harry experiences is based on his needs and goals. After accomplishing his goals at lower levels such as destroying Voldemort's horcruxes, Harry was able to reach the highest level by sacrificing himself so that his allies would have the chance to kill Voldemort. He does this because he realizes that he is the last horcrux and that in order for Voldemort to be vanquished, he needed to perish. By sacrificing himself -- as many others did for him -- he was able to reach a state of self-actualization that took place right after he was killed and before he came back from the dead (Maslow, 1943).

Harry also went through transformation because of his transgressions and failures. Although Harry didn't necessarily have many failures of his own, he attributed the deaths around him to his own shortcomings. As his journey went on he put more and more responsibility on himself, which wasn't needed or even helpful. He felt like it was his fault alone that his family and many of his friends died for him which caused him to change his decision making, culminating in him sacrificing himself for the good of others (Rohr, 2011).

On the other hand, there are external forces that caused Harry to change as well. First, there are many situations Harry went through that elicited emotional responses that transformed him (Allison & Goethals, 2017). By being subjected to death all around him, especially the deaths of family and friends, Harry became more determined and focused on completing his journey. Additionally,

the series of trials that Harry experienced only furthered his transformation and proved that he was, indeed, capable and willing to complete his task.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry is thrown into an extremely dangerous situation that offers little chance of escape, otherwise known as the “belly of the whale” (Campbell, 1949), when he and Cedric grab the trophy that transports them to Tom Riddle’s graveyard. In this situation, Harry witnesses Voldemort rising once again and killing Cedric. The two then battle and Harry is able to escape. This moment was significant for Harry because, even though he was still young and inexperienced, it proved to him that he was the one who had to, and could, defeat Voldemort. The social environment that Harry was in also played a large role in transforming him. He had many friends, mentors, and even his family from beyond the grave, that contributed to his success along the way as detailed above in the mentors and friends section of this chapter.

With regard to transformational arc, Harry most closely falls into the category of stagnation to growth, meaning that Harry was reluctant to change initially but once he realized there was a problem he was able to grow and abandon his false self (Allison & Goethals, 2017). The period of stagnation for Harry occurs before he realizes that he is a wizard. Although he detests the life he has, he accepts it because it is the only one he knows. Even after Hagrid informs him that he is a wizard, he denies it and doesn’t believe it to be true. It is not until he attends Hogwarts that he begins to move out of stagnation and into growth mode. However, he doesn’t experience real growth until he recognizes how special he is for surviving Voldemort’s attack as a baby. His true self is born when he begins to see his potential for what he could do, and then realizes what he should do (Rohr, 2011; Sperry, 2011). As such, it is not immediate change from stagnation to growth, rather it takes Harry the course of his journey until he is fully transformed.

CONCLUSION

Heroes serve an important role in society and act as forces of goodness, benevolence, and well-being (Efthimiou, Allison, & Franco, 2018). Heroes accept great responsibility and the immense risk that comes along with the title. Harry Potter is no exception to this rule. His rise to heroism was paved with death and

seemingly insurmountable challenges along the way. He was able to use the deaths of loved ones and friends as motivation to complete his journey instead of letting it ruin him. With his intelligence, fortitude, and magical capabilities -- along with assistance from friends and mentors -- he overcame the significant obstacles that he faced. During the course of his journey he developed and transformed in many ways that made him a hero who was able to defeat Voldemort, create peace in the wizarding world, and instill in others a sense of hope and optimism for the future.

Beyond positively affecting the magical world, Harry also impacted the muggle world through the books and movies about him. Harry Potter has become a household name who is associated with bravery, good moral values, and heroism. Many children and adults, such as myself, have donned their Hogwarts attire and hastily scribbled his signature scar on their foreheads for Halloween and other occasions. It goes beyond just wanting to dress up like Harry, though. The lessons that Harry taught us all and the acts of courage he demonstrated served a broader purpose of inspiring people to act like him in everyday life.

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