Race, gender, and social class in batman movie

Multiculturalism and diversity are the two fastest growing elements in today's film industry. Nonetheless, race, class and gender representation seems to the three biggest factors that determine a film's box office in many genres. However, one exception is superhero movies. For my film review project, I have chosen The Dark Knight, second and the most successful movie in the Batman trilogy by Christopher Nolan. Despite the movie's success, I would like to point out several flaws associated with race, gender, and social class in this masterpiece that imply the norms of superhero movies.

Firstly, Batman as a character idealized of a superhero based on certain appearance and identities. Not coincidentally, these defining physical traits are being a tall, muscular, heterosexual, and wealthy white man who pursue justice and high moral standards. Such image delivers a cultural message to the mass audience that this is what a superhero should be, neglecting the possibilities of mainstream superhero roles cast by any other person except the ideal type. As a result, there are little to none Black superheroes, Asian superheroes, and Latino superheroes within the industry. In addition, LGBTQ characters are almost completely absent from superhero films.

For instance, in The Dark Knight, none of the leading characters were played by people of color or people with a different sexuality. Out of the nine main characters, there is only one black actor – Morgan Freeman as Lucius Fox. Furthermore, the villains in the Batman movies are often portrayed being ethnic minorities and the lower class mob. Although The Dark Knight made a modest improvement to include white criminals such as the Joker, that was not significant enough to alter the fact that white casts dominate the Batman

movies. In conclusion, the underrepresented and misrepresented nature of minority groups in films is still a relevant societal issue that needs to be rectified.

What about gender issue? Following is a fact: Director Nolan's Batman movies are male lead and male-centered. Meanwhile, although there are women in superhero films, often the men to women ratio is ridiculously imbalanced. For example, in The Dark Knight, a list of nine main characters only consists of one woman, Rachel Dawes. After her malice murder halfway through the movie, female characters are completely abandoned. This makes me wonder if Gotham city only has one female resident while the entire city is suffering from terrors of the Joker.

Expand into a deeper analysis, I can conclude that the existence of Rachel Dawes in The Dark Knight serves one purpose: romantic relationships with Bruce Wayne/Batman. In the movie, Rachel Dawes is in love with Batman. Because he loves her and has known her all his life, she is the one that Batman wants to protect the most in Gotham city. Besides from this identity, Rachel as a character is lacking complexity and independent personality. But there must be something special in her character that related to the film, correct? Many of you might ask. The answer is yes, Rachel reflects Batman's moral high ground. She keeps him humane and defends his high moral standards while fighting crime. In other words, she is a character who shaped Batman's approach to fighting crime, which is far from extreme violence and unethical actions. As evidenced by her death, Batman had transformed into a reckless hunting machine seeking for the Joker, and

eventually becomes morally bankrupt. Batman's moral world collapsed because Rachel was him ultimate motivation to protect Gotham city.

As long as she is alive, Batman would not tolerate any crimes because she might be harm someday. Indeed, Rachel Dawes as the only female cast in the Dark Knight has transcended beyond the identity of Batman's lover and childhood friend, into an ideology that guides Batman to morality. On the other hand, the setup of her character is far from flawless. It is obvious that Rachel, rather than as an independent character, has portrayed as an inseparable part of another character. I find this phenomenon fairly common in superhero films.

Overall, I believe the character of Rachel Dawes is very symbolic. She represents Batman's spirituality, a higher value in which is detached from physical boundaries that helps him determine what is good or bad, what is right and wrong. Director Nolan's use of symbolism through the physical character of Rachel Dawes was astounding in my opinion. However, the fact that women are underrepresented in Batman movies is still relevant regardless.