

COMP370 Final Project

Comparative Analysis of *The Marvels* and Contemporary Film Releases

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Introduction

This project is designed to assist Marvel Studio in comprehending the media's portrayal and reception of its latest movie, "*The Marvels*," and to compare it with three other movies released around the same time: "*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*", "*Napoleon*" and "*Five Nights at Freddy's*". The primary objectives of this study are to determine if "*The Marvels*" received more media attention compared to these films and to explore the specific aspects of the movies that the media focused on. To achieve this, we utilized NewsAPI as our main tool for article collection, gathering a total of 500 articles across the four movies. During the open coding phase, we designed the typology, following the principles discussed in class to avoid ambiguous types and ensure that our categories were both unbiased and comprehensive. This process led to the development of eight distinct categories for the typology: Previews, Trailers, and Must-Watch Lists; Commercial Performance; Cast and Crew Focus; Studio and Production; Critical Reviews and Analysis; Comparative Film Studies; Irrelevant; and Spam Streaming Link. Following the annotation of all collected articles, we developed multiple scripts for the statistical analysis to quantify the volume coverage and identify the key focuses within the articles.

Our analysis of the 500 articles, collected over a four-week period from October 30 to November 25, revealed insightful dynamics in the media coverage of these films. "*The Marvels*" emerged as the most covered film, with 144 articles (28.8%) dedicated to it, notably receiving this attention in the period leading up to and immediately following its release on November 10. In comparison, "*The Hunger Games*" released a week later, was featured in 132 articles (26.4%), positioning it as a close competitor in media visibility. "*Napoleon*" with its later release date, was covered in 70 articles (14%), while "*Five Nights at Freddy's*" received 81 articles (16%). The categorization of these articles revealed distinct media focuses. Critical reviews and analysis formed the largest share of coverage for "*The Marvels*" representing 35% of its articles, indicating a significant interest in the film's content and quality. This category was also prominent for the other movies, though to a lesser extent (26%). Interestingly, other movies received more attention regarding their commercial performance (23%) compared to "*The Marvels*" (18%). However, "*The Marvels*" led in

the categories of Previews, Trailers, and Must-Watch Lists (19%) and Studio and Production Insights (12%), indicating a strong media interest in its promotional content and production background. Conversely, the Cast and Crew Focus was slightly more pronounced for the other movies (13%) than for "*The Marvels*" (9%).

In summary, our analysis uncovered that "*The Marvels*" received the most media coverage, with a significant portion of articles focusing on critical reviews and analysis. This was indicative of a keen interest in the film's content and quality. Contrasts were noted in the coverage of the other films, with varying emphases on commercial performance, previews, and production insights.

Data

This report's dataset comprises 500 articles gathered over a four-week period (October 30 to November 25) utilizing NewsAPI. To identify movies comparable to "*The Marvels*" for our analysis, we selected films that were released in a similar timeframe, specifically late October through the entirety of November. To accomplish this, we first utilized various cinema-related websites. These platforms provided us with comprehensive lists and schedules of movie releases, and we chose the movies that have a similar playing frequency as "*The Marvels*". For the movies that will be released soon, we turned to IMDb, an online database known for its extensive information on films, television programs, and streaming content. We focused on identifying the most popular movies released within our specified timeframe.

To ensure comprehensive coverage and relevance, we strategically collected 100 articles for each segment 5-day interval within this period, we employ the '*sortby = relevancy*' filter in our search criteria. We made three main decisions on data collection that ensures we collect articles in a way that does not bias towards or against the coverage volume of our selected movie. We set filters above to ensure that all 500 articles have a high likelihood to relate to one of the movies and are all in English.

The first decision we made is to establish a time-frame for our analysis. Given the diverse release dates of the movies we are examining - "*The Marvels*" (November 10), "*The Hunger Games*" (November 17), "*Napoleon*" (November 22), and "*Five Nights at Freddy's*" (October 27) - we opted for a four-week window encompassing all re-

leases: October 30 to November 25. This period was chosen to capture the media coverage in proximity to each film's release, ensuring a fair and comprehensive dataset.

The second decision we made is to separate our chosen 4-week timeframe into 5-day periods and use "relevancy" for sortby. NewsAPI's default ordering is by "*publishedAt*" which results in newest articles (relative to the date of collection) coming first. We made the design decision to use "relevancy" so we are not biased towards any movies released closer to the date of our collection. To further eliminate such bias, we decided to collect 100 articles every 5 days based on two reasons. Firstly, although we have changed "*sortby*" from the default option, from a test run of our script without time parameters as filters, we can still see an orientation towards the latest articles relative to the date when we ran the script, so we decided to divide up the time span to have a relatively even collection across the entire 4-week period. Secondly, as there is a daily limit of numbers of articles collecting for using NewsAPI, dividing the time period eliminates any potential repeats of the articles. This decision ensured a consistent and evenly distributed data collection across the entire duration of our analysis period.

Lastly, we used an array of the movies as our query string for each 5-day period collection. For each 5-day data collection interval, we utilized a query string array consisting of all four movies (*MOVIES* = [*"The Marvels"*, *"The Hunger Games"*, *"Napoleon"*, *"Five Nights at Freddy's"*]). This technique was designed to randomly and evenly select articles related to each movie, thereby fostering a balanced representation in our dataset. During the annotation phase, we observed a strong correlation between the volume of the articles and the proximity of each movie's release date. While more coverage of a movie closer to its release date is natural trend, we determined that this pattern did not diminish the quality of our dataset. An alternative approach might have been to evenly distribute the collection by selecting 25 articles for each movie in every 5-day interval. However, after careful consideration, we concluded that selecting the most relevant articles in relation to our comprehensive movie array would yield a more representative sample compared to evenly distributing articles per movie.

Methods

Overview

In this section, we will first demonstrate topic design validity and topic validity through the discussion of methods in the development of our typology. We then discuss methods related to annotation quality. Lastly we show specific tools that we used to derive insights and findings that will be presented in the results and findings sections.

Motivation and Context for Typology

To answer our question posed in the introduction section, we decided to develop a comprehensive, sharply-defined categorization system, also known as a typology. The typology derived from the media coverage of movies is instrumental in understanding the focal points of media interest. These categories illuminate whether the media's attention

is centered on aspects such as box office performance, the movie's content quality, or the cast and crew involved. Analyzing the results within these categories can provide production companies with valuable insights into which aspects of their films are garnering the most media attention and, consequently, may influence public perception and interest. This understanding is crucial for guiding strategic decisions in future productions and marketing efforts.

A good typology is well-defined, comprehensive, and objective. To achieve that, our methods include five steps: getting representative data, getting a typology, sanity check, human test, and validation. We will demonstrate below our topic design validity through examining these five steps.

Getting Representative Data

The first step in designing a typology is getting representative data, which includes all phenomenon of interest in their correct proportions. We wrote a script to randomly select a subset of 200 articles from the original pool of 500. This random selection was aiming at ensuring that our sample for open coding was representative of the broader dataset.

Open Coding

Since there is no existing typology for our question of interest, we decided to develop our own through the process of open coding. We then developed a script specifically designed to extract key information - the title and URL - from each of the 200 articles in our dataset. This script then evenly distributed this information into four CSV files, with each file containing 50 articles. Each team member was assigned one of these CSV files and was responsible for developing their own categories based on their set of 50 articles, and each member conducted three rounds of annotations for their articles. Upon completion of individual open coding, the team had a discussion to develop the first version of our typology.

We first identified overlapping categories. These common categories that were common or similar across different team members' data were retained consolidated as we believe that they represented recurring themes or patterns within the broader data set. Through discussion, we identified opportunities to merge similar categories or create new ones that encompassed the essence of multiple categories.

We then discussed what level of resolution that we needed. For each remaining category, we assess how solid they are and if they are a "real" category for the purpose of our analysis. We either combined or rearranged those categories. For example, we moved "Awards and Accolades" into "Studio and Production" as there is not a substantial amount of awards as these are recently released films, and for our purpose, we did not need a high level of resolution for awards to be its own separate category.

Lastly, we identified potential gaps to achieve comprehensiveness. Naturally, not every article that we encounter is going to fit neatly into our initial design. We all encountered articles that were not relevant to the movies at all, such as articles that mentioned the movie keywords but were not actually about the movies. Instead of grouping everything into "other," we also identified a sub-category of spam links like

“streaming the marvels.” Therefore, we introduced two additional categories: “Irrelevant” and “Spam Streaming Link” to best ensure the comprehensiveness of our typology while avoiding definitions that were too broad.

Sanity Check, Human Test, and Validation

A typical workflow of building a well-defined, comprehensive, and objective typology includes a repeated process of researchers’ sanity check and human test on expert coders on representative data until we validate that our typology worked.

Therefore, after producing our first version of our typology, we conducted a sanity check / human test on a sample of randomly selected 50 articles using written definitions. We interpreted annotator disagreements as confusing typology, tricky cases, and human error for different cases, and adjusted our working typology accordingly. For instance, in our working sample, using the category definitions of “Must-see list and Previews” and “Trailers and First Looks” turns out to be very ambiguous. Therefore, it was combined into “Previews, Trailers, and Must-Watch Lists” in our final categories.

Through sanity check / human test, we agreed upon a final set of eight categories and validated our typology.

- Previews, Trailers, and Must-Watch Lists
- Commercial Performance
- Cast and Crew Focus
- Studio and Production
- Critical Reviews and Analysis
- Comparative Film Studies
- Irrelevant
- Spam Streaming Link

The definitions of the categories are the following:

- **Previews, Trailers, and Must-Watch Lists:** This category primarily focuses on anticipatory aspects of the movies. It encompasses articles that offer early insights into the films through previews and trailers, providing audiences with a glimpse of what to expect. It also includes articles featuring must-watch lists, where the films are recommended or highlighted as noteworthy.
Example: “5 movies like Five Nights at Freddy’s you should watch right now”
- **Commercial Performance:** This category concentrates on the financial and market aspects of the movies. It includes in-depth analysis and reporting on box office earnings, budget comparisons, and overall financial success or challenges faced by the films.
Example: “The Hunger Games: The Ballad Of Songbirds & Snakes’ Begins With Thursday Previews Around \$6M – Box Office”
- **Cast and Crew Focus:** This category encompasses articles that primarily concentrate on the individuals behind and in front of the camera – the actors, directors, and other key crew members associated with the movies. It varies

widely in content but consistently highlights the contributions, backgrounds, and news related to these individuals.

Example: Who Is Park Seo-Joon The Actor Playing Prince Yan In ‘The Marvels’

- **Studio and Production:** This category centers around the film studios and production companies which produce the movie. Articles within this typology delve into various facets of the studios, including their perspectives on the movies, official announcements, production strategies, and overall role in the filmmaking process.

Example: “The Marvels Director ‘Really Wanted’ The Film to Be Under Two Hours”

- **Critical Reviews and Analysis:** This category is a crucial segment that comprises articles written by movie critics, offering their opinions and in-depth analyses of the films. These articles vary extensively in content but generally provide a critical examination of various elements of the movies.

Example: “Review: Nia DaCosta’s ‘The Marvels’ is a Solid Mid-Tier MCU Movie”

- **Comparative Film Studies:** This category consists of articles that engage in a comparative analysis of the target movies with other films. Articles in this category often draw parallels or highlight contrasts between the target movie and others.

Example: “Napoleon was compelling — Ridley Scott’s movie is not”

- **Irrelevant:** The “Irrelevant” category is designated for articles that, upon closer inspection, are found to be unrelated to the films in question.

Example: “Constantine 2 Update Given by DC Sequel’s Director”

- **Spam Streaming Link:** This category comprises articles that are essentially spam, offering dubious or illegitimate links under the guise of phrases like “online streaming The Marvels.”

Example: “The Hunger Games Streaming: Watch & Stream Online via Peacock”

Data Annotation and Annotation Quality

In the data annotation phase, our team mirrored the workflow established during the open coding process. Utilizing a specialized script, we extracted the title and URL from each article within the JSON file which has all the information of articles. This script was programmed to divide the articles into four separate CSV files, with each file containing the title and URL of 125 articles. Additionally, we incorporated an extra column in these CSV files specifically designated for annotations.

We are confident in our annotation quality based on three reasons: typology validity, minimal error, and dynamic process. Firstly, as demonstrated above, we are confident in the well-definedness, comprehensiveness, and relative objectiveness of our typology through the process of sanity checking / human testing. A good typology gives us confidence for our annotation quality. Secondly, our method mini-

mizes invalid results caused by tricky cases, confusing typology, and bad coder. For the purpose of this project, since all members were involved in the open coding process and are researchers and expert coders simultaneously, we argue that we can safely make the assumption that tricky cases, confusing typology, and bad coder scenarios that might cause different annotation results were all minimal and we did not need to use gold standard questions to ensure quality of annotation in the context of our methods,. Thirdly, although we used a non-standard format of typology definition and inclusion / exclusion rationale, for the same reason as above, we are confident in our annotation quality since we developed these definitions and continuously discussed different aspects of positive, negative, and edge cases encountered in a dynamic process. A different typology document and gold standard questions should be required to ensure annotation quality if bigger-scale follow-up studies were to be conducted, however, in this specific project, we are confident in the annotation quality and can further develop tools to analyse our results.

Statistical Tool Development

Upon finalizing the data annotation process with contribution from all team members, we initiated the development of specialized tools for the statistical analysis of the annotated dataset.

we developed a python script, ‘calculateArticles.py’, specifically tailored to analyze the volume of articles for each movie. This script processed the combined CSV file (of the 4 annotated CSV file) to count and compare the number of articles dedicated to each of the films within our study’s timeframe. By doing so, we could quantitatively assess the media coverage volume of each film, including “The Marvels”, and the other comparable movies.

Further deepening our analysis, we utilized another script, ‘calculateCategory.py’. This script was designed to calculate the proportion of articles within a specific typology for each film. For instance, it enabled us to determine the percentage of articles categorized as “Preview and Must-Watch Lists” for “The Marvels” relative to the total number of articles about the film. This analysis provided insights into reception of the media coverage, revealing how different aspects of each film were emphasized or underrepresented in the media.

Results

The analysis of 500 articles collected over a four-week period from October 30 until November 25 through News-API provides valuable insights into the media dynamics surrounding the latest film releases. “The Marvels” received the most attention with 144 articles, constituting 28.8% of the overall coverage. This significant coverage is noteworthy, considering that “The Marvels” hit theaters on November 10, predating the releases of “The Hunger Games” and “Napoleon” in the study period.

In contrast, “The Hunger Games”, released on November 17, attracted attention in 132 articles (26.4%), establishing itself as a strong competitor to “The Marvels” in me-

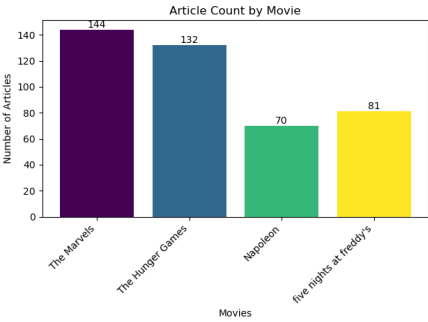


Figure 1: Article Count by Movie

dia discussions. “Napoleon”, released on November 22, received coverage in 70 articles (14%), while “Five Nights at Freddy’s”, released on October 27, got 81 articles (16%) (as shown in Figure 1).

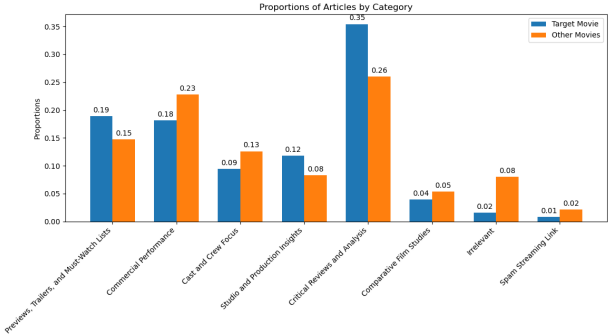


Figure 2: Proportions of Articles by Category

Each movie article is classified into one of six distinct categories: Preview, Trailers and Must-Watch Lists, Commercial Performance, Cast and Crew Focus, Studio and Production Insights, Critical Reviews and Analysis, and Comparative Film Studies. Two additional categories, Spam Streaming Link and Irrelevant, are specifically designated for content unrelated to the movie itself.

As shown in Figure 2, apart from a total of 3% of unrelated articles for our target movie, “The Marvels”, and 10% of unrelated articles pertaining to other films, a detailed examination of the specific aspects of the movies that articles focused on shows that both “The Marvels and other films predominantly draw attention for critical reviews and analysis. Notably, 35% of the total articles about “The Marvels” fall into the critical review and analysis category, while this figure is 26% for other movies. Comparative film studies is the category with the least coverage for both our target movie and other films, accounting for only 4% and 5% for “The Marvels” and other films respectively. The results also show that other movies receive more attention for commercial performance (23%) compared to “The Marvels” (18%). Conversely, when it comes to articles about previews, trailers, and first looks, “The Marvels” outshines other movies.

Approximately 19% of articles about “*The Marvels*” fall into this category, while only 15% do so for other movies. A similar trend is observed in the Studio and Production Insights category, with 12% of articles focusing on this topic for “*The Marvels*”, while only 8% do so for other movies. However, a contrast emerges when examining articles centering on the cast and crew. Other movies seem to attract more attention in this regard, accounting for 13% of the total articles, whereas for “*The Marvels*”, the proportion is slightly lower at 9%.

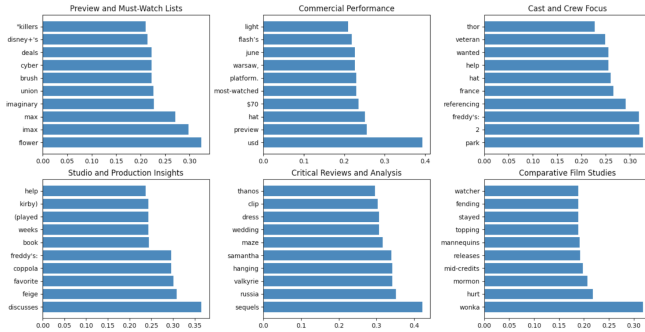


Figure 3: Most Frequent Words by Category

For the most frequent words, each unique TF-IDF score is calculated by analyzing the word frequency in each article’s description and content, as indicated in the ‘all_articles.json’ file. This frequency is then divided by the inverse document frequency, where the IDF score is determined by taking the logarithm of the ratio of 500 articles to the number of articles (considering only the description and content) where the word appears. Using our comprehensive group annotations from the initial collection of 500 articles, the top 10 words with the highest TF-IDF scores for each of our six meaningful categories are shown as in Figure 3.

Discussion

Firstly, the analysis indicates that the focus of the articles on “*The Marvels*” was the highest among the mentioned movies, constituting 28.8% of the overall coverage. This suggests that media attention was particularly drawn to “*The Marvels*” in comparison to other films. This could be attributed to several factors. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has immense popularity and a global fan base, whereas “*Napoleon*” and “*Five Nights at Freddy’s*” are standalone films or smaller franchises. Marvel, on the other hand, has a cinematic universe that connects multiple films. The interconnected nature of the MCU creates a more significant ongoing narrative, leading to more discussions. Its interconnected and diverse characters may have also contributed to a broader audience appeal and ongoing interest.

However, The fact that “*The Hunger Games*” released just a week after “*The Marvels*” was able to secure the second-highest coverage at 26.4% suggests a competitive level of attention. This could imply that both films were competing for the spotlight during this period, and media outlets were actively comparing and contrasting the two releases. This may be due to the fact that although “*The Marvels*” and “*The Hunger Games*” belong to different gen-

res, with the former being a superhero film and the latter a dystopian science fiction adventure, there might still be an overlap in their target audiences, especially among fans of blockbuster franchises and general movie enthusiasts. Media outlets might have seized on this potential audience crossover to create content that contrasts and compares the two films.

The coverage percentages for “*Napoleon*” and “*Five Nights at Freddy’s*” (14% and 16%, respectively) suggest a lower level of media attention in comparison to the leading films. The timing of their releases might have contributed to this. The releases of “*Napoleon*” and “*Five Nights at Freddy’s*” were in close proximity to highly anticipated movies like “*The Marvels*” and “*The Hunger Games*”; thus, they might have faced stiff competition for media space. Moreover, “*The Marvels*” and “*The Hunger Games*” seem to cater to a broader and more mainstream audience, whereas “*Napoleon*” and “*Five Nights at Freddy’s*” might have had a more niche appeal. Generally, niche genres often garner less widespread media attention as they target a more specialized audience.

Secondly, examining the categorical proportion of articles surrounding the film “*The Marvels*” reveals several interesting trends in its reception and visibility compared to other movies released around the same time. Critical reviews and analyses are the most frequently discussed topics for both “*The Marvels*” and other films, constituting 35% and 26%, respectively, of their total articles. This suggests that both “*The Marvels*” and its cinematic counterparts are extensively scrutinized in terms of thematic exploration, performances, and overall cinematic quality. The prevalence of critical reviews underscores their important role in shaping the narrative surrounding the film. This result implies that evaluations of a movie’s merits and shortcomings hold significant weight in influencing audience perceptions and potentially impacting its standing relative to other releases. On the other hand, our findings reveal that comparative film studies, focusing on articles that analyze the interplay between movies, only constitute a small fraction of the overall coverage, accounting for merely 4% and 5% concerning “*The Marvels*” and other films, respectively. One possible explanation is the limited availability of similar films, particularly if the target movie belongs to a niche genre or possesses distinctive characteristics, can result in a scarcity of comparable works for comparative studies. Moreover, the observed contrast in the percentage of articles dedicated to commercial performance between “*The Marvels*” (18%) and other movies (23%) could be attributed to the fact that “*The Marvels*” is part of an expansive and established franchise. Therefore, it might be subjected to more comprehensive analyses that delve into plot details, character development, and its interconnectedness within the broader MCU narrative, rather than focusing solely on commercial performance. Conversely, other movies lacking in this aspect might attract a higher proportion of articles analyzing their box office performance, as financial success becomes a more central point of interest. On the same wavelength, the higher percentage of articles focusing on previews, trailers, and first looks for “*The Marvels*” compared to other movies, approx-

imately 19%, can likely be attributed to the immense popularity and dedicated fanbase of the MCU. The MCU has established itself as a cultural phenomenon, with a massive following eagerly anticipating any information related to its upcoming releases. This results in a greater proportion of articles dedicated to sneak peeks and promotional materials, as fans actively seek out and engage with these materials. In contrast, other movies lacking the same level of built-in anticipation or an established fanbase may only see around 15% of articles falling into this category. Similarly, the higher emphasis on the Studio and Production Insights category, with 12% of articles dedicated to “*The Marvels*” compared to the 8% for other movies, could be attributed to the unique and highly anticipated nature of “*The Marvels*” in the film industry. As part of the MCU, the film likely attracts significant attention from fans and industry insiders eager to gain insights into its production process, casting decisions, and overall studio strategy. Finally, one possible reason for the lower proportion of articles focusing on the cast and crew of “*The Marvels*” compared to some other movies could be the film’s strategic approach to marketing and publicity. The production team might be prioritizing alternative promotional strategies, such as emphasizing the storyline, special effects, or broader themes, rather than extensively highlighting individual cast members.

Thirdly, results about the most frequent words for each article topic provide an interesting glimpse into the thematic focus and content of the respective articles. For articles categorized under “Preview and Must-Watch Lists,” words like “flower,” “imax,” “imaginary,” and “deals” suggest a focus on the visual and immersive aspects of the film, such as its cinematic and aesthetic qualities. In the “Commercial Performance” category, terms such as “USD,” “\$70,” and “most-watched” imply that these articles emphasize the movie’s box office success and financial performance. The mention of “platform,” “Warsaw,” and “June” suggests discussions about the film’s release strategy and timing that may have a connection to their financial success. Articles about “Cast and Crew Focus” seem to center around specific characters or individuals involved in the film, with words like “freddy’s,” “thor,” and “veteran” suggesting attention to the cast and their roles. Moreover, the inclusion of “park” and “france” could indicate discussions related to filming locations or cultural influences. “Studio and Production Insights” articles appear to delve into the behind-the-scenes aspects of the movie with featuring terms like “feige,” “cop-pola,” and “kirby” that likely refer to key figures in the production. The mention of “book” and “weeks” may imply discussions about the creative process and the timeline of production. The “Critical Reviews and Analysis” category seems focused on the film’s artistic and narrative qualities, as words like “sequels,” “valkyrie,” and “thanos” suggest discussions about the storyline, characters, and potential sequels. The inclusion of terms like “russia” and “wedding dress” might indicate contextual elements or specific scenes under scrutiny. Lastly, “Comparative Film Studies” articles draw parallels with other films, as indicated by terms like “wonka,” “hurt,” and “mormon.” The mention of “mid-credits” and “watcher” suggests discussions about the film’s

post-credit scenes and potential tie-ins with broader cinematic narratives.

Group Member contributions

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- Open Coding
- Typology Design
- Sanity Check / Human Test
- Data Annotation
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- Data Collection
- Methods
- Open Coding
- Typology Design
- Sanity Check / Human Test
- Data Annotation

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