

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Studies

The American Revolution of Independence was established before it became a political entity in 1871, as a new political unity (Gleason, 1980). The demand for cultural ancestors from Britain did not come from the different languages, religions and nationalities of the settlers in the thirteen colonies, or the demand for national identity that was different from the political opposition, "The United States defines itself as a country through its commitment to the principles of freedom, equality, and governance, and the nationality of its people depends on their recognition of these principles" (Gleason, 1980). Identity is difficult to define when applied to individuals, but it becomes more confusing when applied to countries. In essence, "identity" is a person or a group's sense of time. Individuals and groups have identities, but the former can only define their identities in the context of the latter (Freese, 2018). They can have many economic, cultural, political, ethnic and other identities, which have different meanings at a specific time and in a specific situation. All these identities are constructed, as a product of interaction between a person or a group and others, requiring comparison and evaluation, which inevitably leads to self and alien stereotypes that threaten transnational understanding. Since the

concept of "nation" did not appear until the middle of the 18th century, it was caused by groups of different languages, religions and history launching wars to develop a collective identity different from other nations, so the concept of "nation" identity "simplified ". It can be said that we usually distinguish between two types of "countries". A good person is a society based on a social contract. It is open to anyone who wants to join and is patriotic while evil is a society based on racial characteristics or ideological principles, limited to people with common characteristics or beliefs, and it is national (Freese, 2018).

The comic book culture has been increasingly popular since the early 20th century, visual stories such as comics and animation are becoming more and more popular as tools for scientific education and communication. Comics that combine the advantages of visualization with powerful metaphors and role-based storytelling can make scientific topics more accessible and appealing to a wider audience. Storytelling and visual communication have been independently studied, but it is difficult to predict the result and effect in visual and storytelling will be when combined (Farinella, 2018). Due to its nature, comics have become an increasingly popular form of communication that can attract readers from different ages, background, and cultures. Despite the initial resistance, the potential of comics as an educational tool has been recognized by teachers and psychologists (Farinella, 2018). In the past few decades, the interdisciplinary field of comics research has grown significantly, not only leading to an increase in the number of professional conferences and scientific journals, but also leading to many different methods of studying comics,

including different types of research like Semiotics , Narrative analysis and historical, political and cultural studies(Thon & Wilde, 2016). Researchers grow to believe that comics could be used as a valid results to show research findings in printed and online publications that can lead to wider acceptance of such research results and affect public order. (Sousanis & Labarre 2015). and this also led to the increasingly popular study about the comic book among the scholars, due to their design that they have much to offer as it has many ways to convey narratives. (Katerina Marazi, 2012).

Although the comic book culture is steadily growing in sales over the course of 5 years, The popular culture method reinvented comics into the paradigm it wanted to get rid of. In this paradigm, "mass" contrasts with "quality", "art" and "high culture" (ICV2 & Comichron, 2019 & Storey 2009). An estimated number of comic book sales in 2019 in the United States alone indicating that the comic book industry has made a revenue of more than 1.2 billion US dollars in that year alone, It is proving to be one of a big industry in the United States, and its impact is not limited only with economic, but also cultural, and historical. Comics and graphic novel income reached \$1.2 billion in 2019, in keeping with a brand new joint estimate research through Comichron's John Jackson Miller and ICv2's Milton Griepp. Total comics and picture novel income to clients within the U.S. and Canada have been approximately \$1.21 billion in 2019, an 11% boom over income in 2018. The increase was due to persevered rapid gains in graphic novel income in the book

channel and single digit growth in sales of periodical comics in comic stores (ICV2 & Comichron, 2019).

The impact of the comic book industry go beyond the size of its sales, as aside from comics, the comic book industry also produce and license many other things such as clothings, foods, snacks, toys, and even theme parks (Palmer, 2010). The "golden age" of comics, a term coined by collectors, lasted until the early 1950s and has been the subject of numerous amateur, commercial and academic work over the years. At first glance, Superman, Batman, and other superhero icons born in the golden age are breathtaking, but there were no authoritative academic monographs or any cartoonists at that time. Since the 20th century, the production price of its comic books has generally been cheaper, and there is a tendency to think that the region is harmful in the worst case, and benign in the best case. Favorable criticism is limited to the argument that certain pages or books are exceptions to the rule. In 2021, the more well-known publishers that dominated the comic book market are DC Comics, and Marvel Comics. While both publishers are popular, but each has their own fan base and unique way of conveying their messages through their publications.

Comic book has created and produced so many iconic characters, and DC Comics has made superhero characters such as the ones that we have been hearing frequently like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and other comic book superheroes. Although these comics are old their incarnation has not really change along the years of their publications due to the characters of being so

iconic and have their own distinctive features, for example Superman has as super strength and are Bulletproof, Batman are super intelligence, and Wonder Woman is a super female Warrior from Amazonian Island and these unique powers and characteristic cannot be changed too much or else they would not be as appealing as they are. Comics have the potential to boost the standard of lifetime of people who interact in comics creation or reading, and to rework attitudes, awareness, and behavior around social issues; comics will produce new opportunities for practitioners and audiences (Cardiff University, 2014)

Wright's creative interpretation of thousands of titles from the 1930s to the 1980s clearly shows that comics consistently reflect national sentiments. Wright found that in all genres such as superhero, war, romance, detective and horror comics, writers and illustrators are using the environment to solve a variety of serious problems, including racism, economic injustice, fascism, and the threat of nuclear war, as well as drug abuse and youth alienation. At the same time, the Xenophobic War series proves that comics can be as reactionary as any other medium. (Wright, 2003). More than 80 years after "Superman" first appeared, the comics industry is still important, thanks to the early adoption of digital comics, the successful saturation of the film and television markets, and strong connections with movie fans. Based on the optimism and power of superheroes in the Silver Age, Come 1996 heralded the beginning of modernity. During this time, comic publishers tried to correct mistakes by developing more flexible business plans and with less effort. After the disastrous defeat of

Batman and Robin (1997), the superhero movie was frozen for renovation (Kowalski, Norman Rockwell Museum).

Since Superman's debut on Action Comic #1 in 1938, comics have been a core part of the country's popular culture, and comics have sold millions each year for the past 60 years. Comics play an important role in most childhoods of the Americans living today (Wright, 2003), however this study would be focusing on one of the recently trending comic book called "*Invincible*". Robert Kirkman's *Invincible* comic series is an adult comic that draws inspiration from various other comics to bring a unique and novel style to the genre. As a result, some of the characters in the series are similar to other popular cartoon characters that already exist. In particular, the main group of superheroes in the universe "Guardians of the Earth" seems to be the target of imitation of several characters in DC Comics, all of which are members of the Justice League (Bell, 2021). Although Omni Man is not as close to its DC doppelganger "Superman" as most other characters, there are still similarities. Both roles are the leader and the strongest member of the team, with the same skills, speeding, super strength, invincibility, etc., and the most important thing is their ability to fly. However, the difference in their power is that the Omni-Man does not have superman's frozen breath and laser vision. In addition, Omni-Man does age but are very slowly, while Superman can still age and get older over time just as how it is for human being. In terms of clothing, the two characters also have the first letter of their superhero in the clothing design, with the letter S. and the "O" logo on the chest of Omni-Man (Bell, 2021). As how the previous research has

been analyzed, this study will further analyze various stand point of American National Identity in the *Invincible* comic with Social Semiotics.

1.2 Research Question

1. How American national identity is being portrayed in the *Invincible* comic?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This study aim to Analyze:

1. The portrayal of American National Identity in the *Invincible* Comic.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on the third volume of the *Invincible* comic with the name of: Volume #3 : Perfect Strangers.

Invincible is a collaboration among author Robert Kirkman and artists Cory Walker and Ryan Ottley. While 2003s *Invincible* #1 is officially considered to be its first appearance, the comic technically debuted in 2002 with the title of Tech Jacket #1, which included a preview of *Invincible* #1. *Invincible* in the long run spanned a hundred and forty four issues and diverse spinoff collection before wrapping up in 2018. The third volume of the comic is chosen to be the corpus of this study because on the third volume, the character that about to be analysed is going through major character development in the comic's storyline.

1.5 Significance of The Study

The writer hopes this research will be valuable to readers as a source of information, particularly in related subjects such as cultural studies and comic book studies. This research is also expected to raise more awareness to the comic book enthusiast about American National Identity that implicitly exist in the Invincible Comic book, where the third volume of the Invincible comic could be thoroughly examined with the Visual Social Semiotic theory.

