
Lowery Anderson Woodall III, University of Southern Mississippi

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Department
Mass Communication and Journalism

School
Communication

Committee Chair
Christopher Campbell

Committee Chair Department
Mass Communication and Journalism

Committee Member 2
Andrew Haley

Committee Member 2 Department
History

Committee Member 3
Fei Xue

Committee Member 3 Department
Mass Communication and Journalism

Committee Member 4
Kimberly LeDuff

Committee Member 4 Department
Mass Communication and Journalism

Abstract
Does race exist in comics? And if so, what do those characters tell us about how one of the largest fiction producing industries in the country has explained minority relationships to its millions of readers? This study took a close look at three of the most successful comic book characters of all time (Batman, Superman, and The Black Panther) and examines how each exemplifies a position that the comic book industry has taken on race over the years. Using a counter-narrative analysis informed by the strategies of Critical Race Theory and post-modernist thought, the racial messages lying beneath the surface in the each of these character’s worlds was uncovered. The study took the provocative position that race is discussed in the most vivid and worthwhile terms by characters that are not openly ethnic. The dissertation provides three models of racialized behavior employed by comic book publishers to introduce race and ethnicity into their storylines. Hopefully, this study will act as a first step in shining a critical light on a section of the industry that has thus far been woefully ignored by many critics and scholars.

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In superhero comics, great work can be a marathon (the hundreds of issues Stan Lee and Jack Kirby labored over to create the Marvel Universe) or a brilliant flash (the four issues of The Dark Knight Returns Frank Miller used to transform the medium). This week, thousands of comic book fans will descend upon New York Comic Con for a glimpse of greatness, and in honor of that, The Hollywood Reporter and iconic creators are looking back at 100 classic runs of superhero comic books that went on to become fan favorites and define the genre. While Coogan explores the popularity of the superhero in various media, he really excels when discussing the intricacies of the comic book superhero in its indigenous format. Superhero provides an excellent analysis of the genre and will surely find a wide audience of both faculty and fanboy. To paraphrase a casual remark by a friend, Peter Coogan has quite literally written the book on superheroes. Read more.

Dr. Peter Coogan, in his new study Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre, makes the very important case that the American superhero comic book is an artistic genre with its own guidelines, set archetypes and genre specific storytelling. This thesis lays down some groundbreaking guidelines for viewing one of popular culture's most "trivial" academic pursuits. Racial stereotyping in comic books certainly isn't a new trend; but it's something that hasn't quite died out as much as you might have thought. Much like Sooraya Qadir, such stereotypical treatment reduces indigenous identity and spirituality to gimmicks or parlor tricks, as if they are somehow outside the realm of common human experience. No article on racist stereotypes in comics could be complete without mention of the gold standard of racial tropes, the one and only Luke Cage, Power Man. At the center of the overwhelming majority of topics focused on race and "urban" scenarios, Luke Cage has been the ambassador for the black community in the Marvel universe for years. Reflecting the changing political climate, the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in comic books have also evolved over time. This article is intended to document and discuss historical and contemporary racial and ethnic stereotypes in the medium of mainstream comics. Throughout history, comics have reflected the sociopolitical attitudes of their writers and readers. In America, early comics consisted primarily of short, humorous comic strips printed in newspapers. In the 1930s, comics...