Truth, Justice, Boobs: Gender in Comic Book Culture

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Abstract

Women's representation is widely debated within the comic book cannon. Many comic and cultural scholars argue that women characters are overly sexualized, objectified, or excluded from this literary genre (Child, 2013; Danziger-Russell, 2012; Fesak, 2014; Lepore, 2014; Simone, 1999). However, few scholars have adequately addressed how comic book readers make sense of women's representation within graphic storytelling. The author's research addresses the issue of women's representation in comics with special attention to how audiences interpret these supposed images of women's empowerment. Capitalizing from the author's time spent working at a local comic book store and a series of 20 in-depth interviews that the author conducted with comic book readers, the author draws from a series of personal field notes, participant observation, and transcribed interviews to understand how gendered relationships in comic books manifest in real-life experiences. Ultimately, the author argues that static comic book stereotypes about hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity shape consumers' gendered realities. More specifically, this study demonstrates how popular character archetypes like the love interest, the nag, and the slut are redefining readers' relationship to women both within and outside of comic book culture. By examining this culture, and its audience at large, this research advances a more nuanced understanding of how graphic narratives contribute to gender difference and violence against women, thereby situating women's empowerment within popular culture.

Keywords

Gender Comic books Popular culture Superheroes Women's representation Graphic novels

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Citation


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Research paper approval truth, justice, boobs? Analyzing female empowerment and objectification in the graphic novel genre. Modeling “appropriate” gender roles, comic book culture provides a template for idealized femininity and/or masculinity. Danziger-Russell (2012) points to mass media’s influence when she finds that comics have historically “mirrored the sociopolitical climate of their times” (p. 30). Showing young girls and women the “correct” way to express their femininity, Danziger-Russell (2012) concludes that comics have an important role in the construction of gender expectations. These findings suggest that comics serve a larger latent function within society. Home » Browse » Books » Book details, Comic Book Crime: Truth, Justice, and the American Way. By Nickie D. Phillips, Staci Strobl. No cover image. Of immersion in comic book fan culture, Phillips and Strobl reveal the kinds of themes and plots popular comics feature in a post-9/11 context. They discuss heroes’ calculations of “deathworthiness,” or who should be killed in meting out justice, and how these judgments have as much to do with the hero’s character as they do with the actions of the villains. This fascinating volume also analyzes how class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are used to construct difference for both the heroes and the villains in ways that are both conservative and progressive. Many comic and cultural scholars argue that women characters are overly sexualized, objectified, or excluded from this literary genre (Child, 2013; Danziger-Russell, 2012; Fesak, 2014; Lepore, 2014; Simone, 1999). However, few scholars have adequately addressed how comic book readers make sense of women’s representation within graphic storytelling. Women’s representation is widely debated within the comic book cannon. Many comic and cultural scholars argue that women characters are overly sexualized, objectified, or excluded from this literary genre (Child, 2013; Danziger-Russell, 2012; Fesak, 2014; Lepore, 2014; Simone, 1999). Comics. Culture. Comic Book Hyper-Sexualization Part II: Why Men Like Half-Naked Ladies. By. Is this unfair or just a manifestation of hardwired instincts and natural gender distinctions? Having Attractive Women Depicted in Sexy Poses Is Not The Same as Excluding Them From Geekdom Entirely. Another thing I see frequently in arguments which assert that “it’s bad that comic book women are sexy” is evidence-by-conflation. Ice Man can be gay and progressive and other comics can have hot chicks with big boobs. Another problem with the arguments against the depiction of attractive women in sexual poses in comics is the assertion, explicit or implicit, that such depictions are anti-diversity. They aren't.