

How I developed my question

Comic books have been a major part of American pop culture since around the 1930s. These comic books depicted ordinary people who, through some sort of accident or happenstance, gained superpowers. People who could lift cars over their heads or leap over buildings in a single bound. Comic books have a long history. The history of comics is divided into six ages: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Plastic Age, the Revival Age, and the present. There have been many different comic book companies over the years, but at the forefront of comic book culture, there have been the two major companies: DC Comics and Marvel Comics. Marvel Comics introduced characters like Spider-Man, Ironman, Captain America, the Human Torch, the Incredible Hulk, etc. Over the years, comic book artists have inadvertently fed readers myths about the male and female physique.

Literature and Implications

Concepts that helped me take my research in the direction I wanted to were derived in part from the teachings of Jean Kilbourne. Her movie, entitled *Still Killing Us Softly*, was about how advertisement of women negatively affects all of us. I took some of her concepts and applied them to comics. In a way, comics are a form of advertisement. In the same way as regular advertisements, women are dehumanized and objectified in comics. Kilbourne talks about how women are dissected and made out to be sex objects. Advertisements basically tell women to conform to impossible standards or they are not good enough. It is basically the same way in the comics. The female heroes and characters are most always drawn as curvy, sexy, women with large breasts and a tiny waist, which has a very negative affect on women's body image. At the same time, advertisement of women also negatively affect men. According to Kilbourne, "the distorted image of women affects not only how men feel about women, but how men feel about everything that gets labeled feminine in themselves. Femininity is consistently devalued and men grow contempt for women and all things considered feminine. These facts are why we are constantly drawn as big men with huge muscles in the comics. They are drawn that way because masculinity is now linked with ruthlessness and brutality. The way men are shown or drawn tell men that they should strive to be invulnerable, which also has a negative effect of the body image of men.

Methods:

First, I compiled two lists of Marvel characters; 30 male and 30 female. I then assigned a number to each character. Using a random number generator, I randomly picked five characters from both lists. I then looked up 3 different comic book covers for each of the 10 characters selected. One from the first appearances of the characters, one from the middle years, and one from the latest appearances. I then analyzed all 30 of the comic book covers selected based on the following criteria. For men, I focused on body size and muscles. For women, I focused on breast size, waist size, and uniforms.



Breast size: Increased throughout the years, reduced recently
Waist: Very small, now more proportional
Uniform: Tight, now more conservative



Breast Size: Increased, now reduced
Waist: Very small, now more proportional
Uniform: Tight, less detailed and more loose



Breast size: Increased greatly over the years, now more consistent
Waist: Remained small
Uniform: Tight, became very revealing, now more conservative



Breast size: Increased and remained big
Waist: Reduced and remained small
Uniform: Tight and remained tight



Breast size: Has remained consistent
Waist: Very small to more proportional
Uniform: Tight to more practical



Body size: Big to gigantic
Muscles: Average muscular to unrealistic muscle sizes, muscles on top of muscles



Body size: Incredibly huge and remained huge
Muscles: Huge, muscles on top of muscles on top of muscles



Body size: Average human size
Muscles: Average muscles, abs have decreased in size, not much of a change in any aspect



Body size: From big to gigantic
Muscles: More rounded to very big and more defined, more human-like and muscular



Body size: Average body size, been very consistent in portrayal
Muscles: Consistently big, not much has changed