BRAINS, BRAWN AND BREASTS: HOW WOMEN ARE DEPICTED IN TODAY'S
ACTION/ADVENTURE COMIC BOOKS

by
Melissa A. Sievers

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April, 2003

Approved by:

_____

Advisor

Melissa A. Sievers. Brains, Brawn and Breasts: How Women Are Depicted in Today's Action/Adventure Comic Books. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2003. 64 pages. Advisor: Barbara B. Moran.

This study examined popular American action/adventure comic books from the year 2002, comparing the portrayal of men and women.

Four categories of action/adventure comics were defined and the five best-selling titles in each category were identified.  Six issues of each title were analyzed for textual and visual stereotyping.

Women continue to be in the minority.  As a result, women are less likely to be main characters, the rescuer or the person in charge.  Women are also objectified visually by depicting them with large breasts, tiny waists, revealing outfits and uncomfortable poses.

Headings:

Comic books, strips, etc.

Comic books, strips, etc.—Women.

Comic books, strips, etc.—Evaluation.

Women in literature.

Abstract

This study examined popular American action/adventure comic books from the year 2002, comparing the portrayal of men and women.

Four categories of action/adventure comics were defined and the five best-selling titles in each category were identified. Six issues of each title were analyzed for textual and visual stereotyping.

Women continue to be in the minority. As a result, women are less likely to be main characters, the rescuer or the person in charge. Women are also objectified visually by depicting them with large breasts, tiny waists, revealing outfits and uncomfortable poses.

Table of Contents

Table of Tables

Introduction

Comic books are very much in vogue. This year alone at least five movies based on comic books are being released: *Daredevil, Bulletproof Monk, The Hulk*, *X-Men 2*, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. The sudden popularity of action-packed comics will likely attract new adolescent readers, as well as inspire adults to get back into reading them again. Parents, educators, librarians, and others who haven't looked through a comic book in 10 or more years may wonder what changes have occurred in the realm of superheroes. They may remember the hyper-sexual and physically-distorted women from the 1980s or the anti-feminist storylines from the 1970s and wonder if comics have changed, and if so, how much. Not long ago, comic books depicted women in obviously stereotyped and negative ways. Female superheroes were usually petty or indecisive. Their superpowers were weaker and they had less control over them, needing the help of a male hero to guide them in using their abilities. Very few superheroines had successful comic books of their own; most were found in team comics, like the X-Men, or were spin-offs from more popular male superhero comics, like *Batgirl* from *Batman*. As adults, we may look back on the comics of our youth with fondness or distaste, but certainly with an opinion one way or the other. Our memories may shape whether we stock comics in our libraries or recommend them to children today, but our decisions would be better informed if they were based on current information.

The idea that comic books can have influence over children is certainly not new. In the 1950s, psychologist Fredric Wertham (Lavin, 1998) believed so strongly that

comics were warping young minds that he wrote the highly-influential book *Seduction of the Innocent*, leading to a series of U.S. Senate hearings on the subject. Most people today would agree that he took things to the extreme, but we also would probably agree that our childhood reading choices helped to shape the people we are today. The values we hold as adults are the result of a lifetime of learning and socialization (Wood, 1974). As children, we looked to society around us to teach us how to behave and to tell us what is acceptable. Popular media, such as movies, television and even comic books, present us with role models for behavior. Comic books provide readers with a range of heroes they can identify with as they grow up, develop psychologically, and experience different conflicts in their lives (Widzer, 1977). We learn from reading *Superman* that men are strong, brave heroes and women are emotional and need to be saved. We learn from reading *Spider-man* that women can be superficial and greedy. And we learn from reading comics like *Catwoman* and *Wonder Woman*, that women look really sexy in spandex. Some of the values we get from comics are obvious, such as "crime is bad." Most are much more subtle, though, like what traits society views as masculine or feminine. But all of the values presented to us in comics ostensibly reflect our culture's accepted social values (Alward, 1982).

As numerous researchers have discovered, twelve to thirteen year old boys are the primary readers of comic books (Alward, 1982; Lavin, 1998; Gagnier, 1997). Around the age of puberty, children enter a new stage of development and face the conflict of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1963). They look for idols and heroes with which to identify in the search for their own identity and values. Adolescents look fervently for ideas and people to emulate while deciding who they can and will become

in adulthood (Erikson, 1968).  Gagnier (1997), a librarian and lifelong comic book enthusiast, emphasizes how vitally important comic book heroes are in the life of a teenage boy.  Superheroes overcome problems through cunning and strength, giving hope to boys everywhere that life's troubles are not insurmountable.  Superheroes amuse and delight teens with their resilience, wit and bravery.  They represent social responsibility (Alward, 1982).  These are the qualities that are desirable in a role model.

Publishers are aware of who their main audience is and therefore cater specifically to teenagers (Alward, 1982).  Superhero comics emphasize action, strength, and secret identities, knowing that these are especially appealing to young boys just starting to assert their own independence.  Main characters are four times more likely to be men than women (Alward, 1982).  Because of the presumed short attention span of their teen audience, comic book authors generally do not explore the social and philosophical impact of the actions which take place.  Even though Marvel has a self-imposed ratings system (http://www.dcbservice.com/images/marvelratings.jpg) for their comics to alert readers to potentially sensitive content, they are the only ones who do so.  The ratings system closely parallels that of the Motion Picture Association of America, but in this case, a rating of PG+ (or the equivalent of PG-13) prevents no one from reading or buying it.  For these and many more reasons, it is important for librarians, educators, and parents to be informed about what their children are reading.

Literature Review

In order to determine whether stereotypes exist in comics, it is first necessary to understand and recognize female stereotypes.  Wolff (1972) discusses five main

stereotypes of women in literature, their origins, and their usage.  They are the Virtuous Woman, Sensuous Woman, Sentimental Woman, Liberated Woman, and American Girl.

The Virtuous Woman and the Sensuous Woman are often found as a pair because they complement each other in storylines.  According to Freud, they originated in what he termed the Oedipus complex, where a boy idolizes his mother as pure and perfect; when he grows up, he comes to the sometimes shocking realization that she is a sexual being and flawed.  This creates two distinctly opposing classes of women: the Virtuous Woman, who is good and chaste like the mother of his childhood, and the Sensuous Woman, who is sexually-arousing, destructive and contemptible.  In literature, the Virtuous Woman is usually well-born, blonde, blue-eyed and fair; although she doesn't fit the physical description, one example would be the Virgin Mary.  The Sensuous Woman is often low-born or a gypsy, dark-haired and brown-eyed; for example, the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's sonnets.

The stereotype of the Sentimental Woman arose from the eighteenth-century cult of Sentimentalism, which believed that man had a natural inclination toward good which often expressed itself as a spontaneous and deeply felt response to human suffering.  But men could not prove themselves to be good people by expressing pity and giving aid without a guaranteed pool of victims, so women and children fulfilled that role.  Men prized women who were helpless, vulnerable, weak in health, submissive, highly emotional and incompetent because it allowed them to show their virtue by rescuing these poor women.  Consequently, women who showed self-sufficiency were regarded with contempt and distaste.  An example would be the perpetually-ailing Beth in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

The Liberated Woman, on the other hand, is the exact opposite of the Sentimental stereotype. She grew out of Mary Wollstonecraft's assertion that men and women are equals. Wollstonecraft believed that women have great intellectual capacities and should not be limited to a domestic role. Men of the time viewed this argument as laughable and felt that such ambitious women were freaks and aberrations, sexually perverse and lacking in motherly tendencies. The Liberated Woman is portrayed as desiring a meaningful outlet for her potential, but is doomed to failure since her "proper" role is to submit to her husband for her own good, as women are biologically inadequate. An example would be Lois Lane from the Superman comics. She is focused on her career, but would give it all up if Superman were to ask her to marry him.

The stereotype of the American Girl grew out of economic and moral issues post-Civil War. Men were feeling threatened by the self-sufficiency shown by women during the war and this stereotype served to reinforce male dominance in marriage and society. In literature, the American Girl exists solely as a symbol of a man's success. She is lavished with money to "improve" her through education, though this education has no practical applications. A girl whose father could afford to send her to school (rather than remain at home to work) and have that education be totally useless was a symbol of prosperity. She is also the repository of civilized morality. Her mission is to teach others about culture and manners, despite the fact that most men refuse to be civilized. An example would be any well-to-do female character from Edith Wharton's novels. Stereotypes of women are much more offensive than stereotypes of men because, while masculine stereotypes are often fantasies of male supremacy, the feminine stereotypes are used to justify male-dominant behavior (Wolff, 1972).

Wright (2001) describes the most common female stereotype in comics of the 1960s as a combination of several of these literary examples. Women would pine over the superhero while rejecting his everyday, human alter-ego. They frequently get captured by the villain and must wait for rescue by the hero, who then chastises them for putting themselves in harm's way by stepping outside the bounds of their proper position. They are invariably unhappy career women who would gladly give up their jobs if the right man came along. Lois Lane is the best known example of the type of woman Wright describes. Female superheroes are no better. They are almost always subordinate to their male counterparts. When in battles, they faint, overexert themselves, and worry about smudging their makeup. Outside of the crime-fighting realm, they prove to be equally superficial and weak, primping and preening. According to Wright, an additional stereotype emerged in the 1970s—the man-hater. She is a caricature of feminist ideals who usually gets her come-uppance at the hand of a man. It is apparent from the male-centered stories, simplistic relationships, and black-and-white treatment of issues that these comics are geared towards adolescent boys.

As Young (1991) discovered in studying Marvel Universe Trading Cards from 1991, the comic book universe continue to be quite sexist. Female superheroes were featured on only 22% of these cards, proving they are in the minority in the Marvel universe. Although he found that the men and women had an equal win/loss ratio, heroines fought in significantly fewer battles. Young concluded that women were not considered important enough to play a major role in the "morality drama" of comic books. In a second study, Young (1993) found further evidence of sexism in the Marvel Universe. Each of the trading cards included detailed statistics on various superheroes

and heroines.  Though men and women were found to have equal speed, agility, durability, and intelligence, the men had consistently greater strength and stamina.  Overt sexism was found in the descriptive paragraphs written about each character.  One heroine was described as frequently needing help from other heroes to capture criminals; another was initially frightened by her super abilities; and yet another was essentially characterized as vain, constantly showing off her great figure.  One would hardly guess from looking at these reports that, in the real world, women are capable of performing the same jobs as men and can be strong and athletic.

Marvel comic books themselves are rife with stereotypes.  Comic books, one might argue, are meant to contain stereotypes.  The superheroes are drawn as exaggerated idealizations of the male form and problems are often black and white, people are good or evil.  Women are portrayed through exaggerations as well.  When Wood (1974) conducted her research, the women's movement was at its height, yet women were hardly being given equal treatment in comics.  Girls were portrayed as a bad influence (pressuring drugs on a boyfriend) or as greedy and fickle (threatening to leave if gifts were not offered as a sign of affection).  They were often so overcome with emotion that they could not protect themselves against the bad guys and made rather ineffective villains.  Women were essentially either the "Poison Maiden"—the perfect and passive virgin (a cross between the Virtuous and Sentimental Woman)—or the "Great Bitch"— the deadly, greedy, clever and dishonest woman (the Sensuous Woman with an added twist).  They were continuously exploited in the storylines as plot-points, merely objects to be rescued.  Emotions, traditionally a feminine characteristic, were shown to be bad in general.  Superheroes who crossed gender boundaries and allowed themselves to

experience emotions like love and jealousy were punished. They were constantly getting into trouble as a result of romantic entanglements. Love is a weakness often exploited by the bad guy, who attempts to strike at the hero indirectly by attacking his love interest or family. Heroes, like Superman and Spider-man, were sometimes forced to choose between their sworn duty to protect the innocent and giving it all up for the love of a woman. Likewise, women were held in contempt for crossing gender boundaries by displaying "masculine" aggression.

In comic books where female superheroes fight alongside men, they were rarely taken seriously and usually portrayed as physically inferior. Wood cites *Captain America* comics as a notorious example of this situation. Meanwhile, Marvel and Stan Lee, Marvel's most prolific writer during the 1960s and 1970s, professed to be writing about relevant and important issues. Every major issue is indeed addressed in the pages of comic books, from war to drugs, racial hatred to pollution, with one exception— equality for women. Instead, women's rights were continuously treated as a joke and female readers mocked for their concern about this in the editorial pages. In regard to every other issue, the writers saw themselves as shaping our societal view. When it came to women's rights, though, they claimed comics can only reflect readers' opinions and that readers want a Victoria's Secret catalog with some action and a story.

Writing just a few short years later, Widzer (1977) notes that male superheroes have evolved from two-dimensional characters concerned only with battling evil into complex, flawed heroes with realistic problems like everyone else. Many of the more recent articles express a belief that superheroines have also improved to become equally complex and realistic role models. Boker (1993) feels that Catwoman and others like her

represent the free expression of female sexuality without the danger of victimization. Because these superheroines are physically strong and capable of defeating bad guys, they send the message that women in general are neither weak nor passive. Lavin (1998) and Rimmels (1995) both agree that comics today are showing improvement by including more strong, competent, independent heroines. They name characters such as Storm and Shadowcat/Kitty Pryde of the X-Men and Black Canary, Oracle and Catwoman of Gotham City as examples. Yet, in order to make these two isolated comic worlds seem like a larger trend, they must pad out the list with peripheral characters like the Scarlet Witch and the Black Cat.

Though many people have written about sexism and stereotypes found in the text of comic books, far fewer have addressed the portrayal of women in comic book art. Of those that have, most agree that the revealing outfits and Barbie doll proportions of women are designed to appeal to adolescent boys. Despite his belief that character development has improved, Lavin (1998) admits that superheroines are still drawn in outrageously skimpy outfits and sexy poses to pander to young male readers. He especially deplores bad girl art, a highly popular trend originating in the 1990s. Florence (2002) discusses bad girl art in more depth. The term refers to women who are both violent and sexually-stimulating in appearance and/or behavior. Most often they are marital arts assassins like Elektra or vigilantes like Sara Pezzini, wielder of the Witchblade. These anti-heroines are drawn with breasts larger than their head, elongated taut thighs, and waspish waists. They are often seen standing in impossible poses with their backs arched to better present their breasts to the world. Florence is optimistic that

this trend will wane in popularity.  Boker (1993) is definitely in the minority in her belief that bad girl superheroines are feminist activists or warriors.

Perry (2002) proves that all of these negative images of women have a measurable impact on men who view them.  After showing voluptuous comic book women to one group of men and realistic photographs of women to another group, the comic book group showed a marked preference for larger breasts and muscles in their image of the ideal woman.  It is obvious that if limited exposure to these images among undergraduate college students causes such a change in values, then prolonged exposure would undoubtedly create an even greater, more indelible impression on young boys.

Much of the research discussed here concentrated on either the characterization of women within the storyline or on the artistic representations.  As Faust (1971) points out, though, the message of a comic book is communicated through both the verbal and pictorial elements equally.  By concentrating on one or the other aspect, you are only getting half the story.  The two aspects are mutually dependent.  By ignoring one, a reader may miss the real message entirely.  Abbot (1986) agrees that when the text and images are taken separately, the contextual associations normally extracted by readers are lost.  Visual-verbal relationships are pivotal in interpreting the true meaning of the comics.  The visual elements support the storyline, while the text influences the perception of the art.

Though much has been written about sexism and stereotypes found in comic books, the most relevant articles are at least a decade old.  The comic book industry changes quite quickly; as Alward (1982) noted, whole genres can disappear within less than five years, as did love comics in the late 1970s.  For this reason, it is especially

important to look at what is being read today. This study will examine the most popular comic books (because they inherently have the widest distribution and influence) to evaluate how women are portrayed in both the text and images. Unlike previous studies, this research will look at more than just the Marvel Universe, instead including DC, Image, and any other comic publishers whose books qualify as top sellers.

## Methodology

In order to conduct an analysis of how women are depicted in action/adventure comics, categories of comic books must first be defined. I have identified four different types: the male hero comic, as represented by *Amazing Spider-man*; the female hero comic, such as *Batgirl*; male/female teams of heroes, one of which is *New X-Men*; and finally all-female teams of heroines, like *Birds of Prey*. There are no action/adventure comic books with teams composed entirely of men. In order to gain a better understanding of the characters in each comic, the titles must be examined over a period of time to allow for story progression and character development. This immediately eliminates any comics that are intended as limited series, such as *Spider-man/Black Cat Evil That Men Do*, which will only have four issues total. This also provides for any future studies of comic books to use the findings of this paper for comparison. For this study, six issues of each comic title will be analyzed. This study is meant to look at how the portrayal of women affects the comic-reading audience, so the most widely read comic books—the comics that will affect the most readers—were chosen. Comic Book

Resources (2002) provides a monthly listing of Diamond Comics Distributors'[1] top 300

comic book sales ranked by quantity sold. Using this list for the period of June 2002

through November 2002 and averaging the rankings, four lists were compiled of the best-

selling titles in each of the previously-defined categories. In order to provide as diverse a

view of the comic book world as possible, multiple issues of the same title (*Ultimate*

*Spider-Man* #26 and *Ultimate Spider-Man* #27) were only counted once for each month

and titles that are merely variations on the same heroes (such as *New X-Men*, *Uncanny X-*

*Men*, *Ultimate X-Men*, etc.) were also reduced to just one entry on the final list. Thus the

top five best-selling comic books for each of the four categories of action/adventure

comics are as follows (for a more complete breakdown, see Appendix A or consult

Comic Book Resources, 2002):

Table 1

*Top 5 Comic Book Titles for Each Category of Action/Adventure Comics*

| Male Hero | Female Hero | Male/Female Team | All-Female Team |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Amazing Spider-man | 1. Batgirl | 1. Ultimates | 1. Birds of Prey |
| 2. Wolverine | 2. Elektra | 2. New X-Men | |
| 3. Captain America | 3. Tomb Raider | 3. JLA | |
| 4. G.I. Joe | 4. Catwoman | 4. Avengers | |
| 5. Batman | 5. Witchblade | 5. Fantastic Four | |

One thing becomes immediately clear from looking at this chart—there is only

one entry for the "All-Female Team" category. Though a fairly thorough search was

made through comic book stores and lists of comics currently for sale, *Birds of Prey*

---

[1] Diamond Comics Distributors is the world's largest distributor of English language comic books and thus considered the best authority for this information.

appears to be an anomaly in that it is the only comic of its kind. Other possibilities may have existed in the past, such as *Ghost/Batgirl*, a cross-over comic series featuring two female superheroes, but did not qualify for the obvious reason that it is no longer being printed and was intended as a limited series from the start.

Some of these comics, like *Tomb Raider* and *Witchblade*, are printed irregularly and thus do not have six issues available during a single six-month period. In those cases, issues from the months preceding or following the designated study time period was used to provide a comparable base.

The goal of this study is to identify which comics, if any, portray women in stereotyped ways or otherwise discriminate against women. A content analysis of text and images was conducted. Appendices C, D, and E show the coding sheets designed for this analysis, while Appendix B provides definitions of the terms used. Page one of the comics coding sheet records the basic bibliographic information for each comic and compiles a list of character names with the corresponding gender and occupation, if applicable. These tallies helped to calculate the percentage of women featured in order to show whether women have remained a minority presence. Knowing the occupations held by women in comparison to men is important to determine if women are being assigned stereotypically female jobs. Page two of the coding sheet grades comics by assessing women's occupations, as well as roles, relationships, and the writer's attitude towards women. Based on a similar score sheet created by Willson (1974), the options were expanded to include descriptions and occupations more specific to comics using the literature mentioned in the Literature Review. Most of the information recorded here is highly subjective and the interpretation of it may vary widely from coder to coder. The

information was used to determine whether comic book women are realistic and

believable characters or predictable stereotypes.  Part three of the coding sheet looks at

the illustrations in comic books.  The Bad Girl Art (BGA) Index is adapted from Van

Domelen (1998) and looks at sexual imagery.  It was originally developed to rate

advertisements found in Diamond Comics' Previews magazine, where a grade of over 5

was considered bad by Van Domelen.  The BGA Index has been used for an analysis of

comic book cover art in a shortened form to good effect (Florence 2002), though the full

version was used here.  The observations recorded here were used to assess whether

women are drawn in realistic proportions or if the illustrations are designed to titillate

readers.

To provide a somewhat varied opinion of the portrayal of women in these 16

different comics, two men and one woman read and coded each issue.  Keeping in mind

the words of Wright (2001)—"Ten individuals can read a comic book…and come away

with ten completely different impressions, interpretations, and influences" (p. xviii)—it is

understood that much of the overall judgments may be subjective.  It is also highly

probable that opinions on some points will be so varied as to be unusable for statistical

purposes.  The hope is that by analyzing as many aspects as possible, an overall

impression of the comic title will emerge.

Each title was analyzed on six different points.  From these various analyses, an

understanding of the state of action/adventure comics in 2002 emerges.

1. Gender analysis—The number of women in comparison to men were considered,

    as well as the relative importance of these characters to the story.

2. Occupational analysis—A list of occupations or roles for both men and women was compiled and analyzed for stereotypical assignment.

3. Victim vs. hero analysis—The number of times men rescued or avenged victims was tallied and compared to how often women were the rescuers.

4. Abilities analysis—The superpowers or other abilities displayed by women were noted and compared to those of men

5. Behavior analysis—The text of each comic was then evaluated for the presence of female stereotypes as discussed in the literature review

6. Visual analysis—The artwork in the comics was looked at to determine if women were represented realistically or designed to appeal to boys' developing interest in sex

## Results

Gender Analysis

After reviewing the characters in each of the sixteen different comic titles, I discovered that men are still in the majority numerically (see Appendix F). Women comprised an average of 31% of the characters overall. This is a definite improvement over Young's findings where women constituted only 22.2% of all superheroes in set one of the Marvel universe trading cards (1991) and 24% in set two (1993). This percentage is, however, far below that of real life, where women make up roughly 50% of the world's population (McDevitt, Stanecki, & Way, 1999). The comic book with the highest percentage of female characters was *Tomb Raider: The Series* with 46% women and the one with the least was *Wolverine* with merely 8% women.

As can also be seen in Appendix F, one can see that most of these titles have more male main characters. Women are main characters 66% of the time they appear, but overall make up only 32% of the total number of main characters. Again, this still shows



improvement over what Young (1991; 1993) describes. In three instances, women even outnumber men as main characters—*Catwoman* (12 women to 5 men), *Elektra* (7 women to 5 men) and *Tomb Raider: The Series* (7 women to 4 men). All three fall under the female hero comic book category. The biggest discrepancies in the other direction, where men vastly outnumber women, occurred in *G.I. Joe* (3 women to 37 men) and *Ultimates* (8 women to 23 men). Both of the series feature

male/female teams. This bias subtly reinforces male superiority and dominance in the realm of action/adventure comics.


Occupational Analysis

Appendix G shows the results of the occupational analysis. Though the roles of hero and villain were left out, interpersonal roles such as wife, sister, daughter, and mother were included since in ten cases this was the sole "occupation" of a character. In five of the sixteen comics, all of the women were given real jobs, rather than simply identifying them through their relationship to a man. These were *Captain America*, *Tomb Raider*, *Witchblade*, *JLA*, and *Birds of Prey*. The women that do have jobs are frequently cast in stereotyped roles, such as secretary, nurse, or teacher. Out of a total of 76

occupations and roles identified for women in these comics, 31 (or 41%) were

stereotypical roles.  Only 14% were positions of authority or other conventionally male

roles.  Men are more likely to be in positions of authority or power, such as police officer,

doctor, or head of a corporation.  For men, 47% of all occupations were positions of

authority or power, whereas only 9% were



interpersonal roles or assistant-type jobs.

The overall greater number of men in

comparison to women does have some

effect on the variety of occupations seen

for each of the sexes, but the pattern of

placing women in lower status jobs is evident in the percentages.  The comics displaying

the least skewed role assignments were *Captain America*, *Tomb Raider: The Series*, and

*JLA*, where there were no stereotyped occupations.  The ones with the most skewed were

*Green Arrow* and *Batgirl*, where occupations other than hero were all stereotypes.


Victim vs. Hero Analysis

When the roles of victim and rescuer were examined, another interesting pattern

emerged (Appendix H).  In the female hero and female team comics, men and women

were equally likely to perform the selfless act of risking their lives to rescue or avenge

another person.  However, in the male hero and male/female team comics, men did the

rescuing and avenging twice as often as women.  Women seem to play a less active role

in helping others.  In the male hero comics, there are only two occasions when a woman

acts to save another person.  This is mainly due to the fact that there are very few

heroines in these stories.  In *Amazing Spider-man*, *Captain America* and *Wolverine*,



women are either victims or villains.
In *Batman* and *Green Arrow*, there
are heroines present, but they are
either ineffectual fighters or aren't
allowed to participate at all in the
action.  In the male/female team
comics, men do the rescuing three
times as often as women.  Heroes
like Reed Richards, Superman,

Professor Xavier, and Captain America are in charge and call the shots, while women

play supporting roles and follow orders.


Abilities Analysis

When looking at the abilities, super-human or otherwise, displayed by heroes and

heroines, there appears to be very few disparities (Appendix I).  Both men and women

are strong, agile, and intelligent.  The differences seem to be ones of degree.  The

nuances emerge as a result of the roles men and women play.  Because men are more

likely to be in positions of authority, their powers and abilities are stronger or better than

women's.  For example, in *Batman* and *Batgirl*, both title characters are skilled fighters,

but Batman is superior because he is Batgirl's mentor and she is still the protégé.  In *New

X-Men*, both Professor Xavier and Jean Grey-Summers are telepaths, but Professor

Xavier is superior because he is Jean's mentor.  Men and women may have the same

abilities, but when viewed in combination with their relative status, men surpass women in skill.

Other factors considered when analyzing heroes' and heroines' abilities were the origin or nature of these abilities and whether they had full control over their powers or needed help and guidance in using or understanding them. Five women have nature-based abilities or origins. Shathra from *Amazing Spider-man* is a spider-wasp, Poison Ivy from *Batman* is part plant, Hawkgirl from *JLA* is part bird, Storm from *New X-Men* has the ability to control weather, and Wasp from *Ultimates* is a human/wasp hybrid. When compared to male characters, though, this is not especially significant as an equal percentage of men possess nature-based powers.

Three female characters cannot control their powers. Sara Pezzini may have an amazing weapon and enhanced fighting abilities as a result, but she is not in control of



the Witchblade. It has a consciousness of its own and decides when and if it will appear. For example, in *Witchblade* #59, the Witchblade appears while Sara and her partner Jake are following two suspects and nearly causes her to kill him. In *New X-Men* #132, Polaris acts as a magnetic pole, absorbing millions of magnetic memory patterns, which nearly causes her to go insane, until Xavier, Quicksilver, Storm and Jean help her. Teenager Madison, in *Birds of Prey* #49, is unable to control her anger and fear, accidentally burning or electrocuting her attackers.

Three of the heroines, though they are considered main characters, rely on men to guide or train them in developing and using their skills. In the six *Elektra* comics examined here, a new story arc begins where Elektra is drugged, kidnapped, and re-educated about the misguided choices she has made in the past. A man, Jeremy Locke, must teach Elektra to use her powers for good. In three of the *Batgirl* comics, Batman actively plays the part of mentor. He gives her assignments or missions, critiques her performance, and offers advice. We are told that Batgirl came to Batman straight from the tutelage of her adoptive father, the notorious assassin David Cain. Clearly she is not a self-sufficient woman. Additionally, Jean Grey-Summers from *New X-Men* needs the help of Professor Xavier to instruct her in understanding her growing telekinetic abilities, despite the fact that she is more powerful than he is. Interestingly, her degree of control over her abilities is linked to her emotional state—the more agitated she is, the less control she has. Yet, these women are the exceptions. For the most part, heroines are in control and act independently.

Behavior Analysis

Reviewing what has been written previously about these comics, some titles have improved and some have remained essentially the same. In general, Marvel comics still retain the same attitude towards love and family relationships noted by Wood (1974).

Women and the emotions they evoke are either a distraction for heroes, causing them to make mistakes, or women serve as victims to be saved or avenged. Spider-man forces himself to crawl out of a collapsed building, despite some serious injuries, when he realizes that his elderly Aunt May and estranged wife Mary Jane are in danger in *Amazing Spider-man* #45. Wolverine hunts down Lady Deathstrike in *Wolverine* #183 to retaliate against her for crippling his friend Yukio and kidnapping his foster daughter Amiko. In *Fantastic Four*, Reed Richards is continually called upon to save his wife Sue or their children Franklin and Valeria. In issue #62 and #63, the people he loves are in danger from Modulus and Reed must save the day. In *Ultimates* #4 and #5, fear of losing fiancée Betty Ross is the reason behind Bruce Banner's rash decision to inject himself with an experimental serum, transform into the Hulk and rampage through Manhattan to



win her back. In the *New X-Men* comics studied here, there are numerous female victims. Sam saves Siryn's life (#130), Darkstar is killed and the whole team mourns (#130 and #131), Jean's feelings of lust for Phantomex distract her allowing him to escape (#130), Emma Frost distracts Scott Summers while he pilots a plane by telepathically entering his thoughts (#131), Polaris needs to be rescued from her own powers gone amuck (#132), Sooraya needs to be rescued by Wolverine from slave traders (#133), an Indian woman held hostage on a plane is rescued by Professor Xavier (#133) and Lilandra must be rescued from herself (#133). All but one of the Marvel comics examined contained elements that followed

this theme.  Even DC comics sometimes revolve around women as a distraction or victim.  In *JLA* #75, we learn in flashback that Aquaman was originally imprisoned by Lady Gamemnae in ancient Atlantis because he was attracted by her beauty and lulled into trusting her.

Batman, *Green Arrow*, *Batgirl*, *Catwoman* and *Birds of Prey* all have overlapping characters.  Many times, though, because the writers are different, the interpretation of the characters is different.  In *Batman* and *Batgirl*, Oracle is very motherly and protective



of the others.  In *Green Arrow*, she is practically nonexistent—heard, but rarely seen.  In *Birds of Prey*, her character is developed in more depth.  She is young, intelligent and definitely the brains of the duo.  Black Canary is another ubiquitous character.  In *Green Arrow*, she is realistically portrayed and talented, even teaching Ollie a combat move that saves his life (*Green Arrow*

#18), but mostly plays the concerned girlfriend.  In *Birds of Prey*, though, she is almost ditzy, jumping to conclusions and acting on instinct without thinking things through.  For example, in issue #48, she uses her Canary Cry inside the van against her kidnappers, causing the driver to lose control and nearly getting herself

killed.  The Catwoman found in *Batman* is also quite different from the woman in the

*Catwoman* comic.  In *Batman*, she is simply a pawn of Poison Ivy's, having been brain-

washed by Ivy's powers of mind control.  She flirts with Batman, but remains aloof.  In

*Catwoman*, though, she is one of the most independent, intelligent and competent

heroines to be found.  She is loyal to her friends, fighting to clear her friend Holly's name

of murder in issues #8-9 and freeing her childhood friend Rebecca from an unjust death

penalty sentence in issue #10.  She is also generous, anonymously financing a community

center in issue #12 with stolen diamonds she has recovered from criminals.  From these

examples, it is clear that heroines vary in behavior and personality from author to author

and series to series, so it is important to note this information in any analysis.

Stereotypes were not uncommon in most of the comics.  Mary Jane, from

*Amazing Spider-man*, is the Liberated Woman, torn between her budding career and the

man she loves.  Betty Ross, Bruce Banner's fiancée in *Ultimates*, is also a Liberated

Woman, choosing her career over marriage until Bruce transforms into the Hulk to show

her how much he loves her.  Snowbird, a member of the X-Men team Alpha Strike, is the

quintessential lady in distress in *Wolverine* #179.  She is one of four X-Men captured, yet



she is the only entirely helpless one, waiting to be rescued.  Other Sentimental Women include Vasson (from *Elektra*), Mera (from *JLA*), Lilandra (from *New X-Men*), and Madison (from *Birds of Prey*).  Only one character seems to fit the

description of the American Girl—Jan Pym.  Jan is the one of the few heroines in

*Ultimates* and even though she holds a double PhD in molecular biology and another unnamed science, she has done nothing with that education. Her mutation into the Wasp was the doing of her husband and while Hank Pym busily works away at various inventions and projects, Jan spends her time helping Captain America look for an apartment and shop.

The two most popular stereotypes are the Bad Girl and the Sensuous Woman. In *Amazing Spider-man*, Shathra is a Bad Girl villain, using invented tales of Spider-man's sexual perversions to provoke his anger and draw him out. Other Bad Girls include Huntress (from *Batman*), Elektra, Zarana (from *G.I. Joe*), Sela (from *JLA*), and Black Widow (from *Ultimates*). The Sensuous Woman stereotype is found in equal numbers. In *Batman* #608, the villain Poison Ivy uses her powers to seduce Catwoman and control



her. Lara Croft, from *Tomb Raider*, is especially sensuous in issue #24, lazing about in a barely-there bikini for the benefit of new boy-toy Tsang. The coders also identified Lisa (from *Witchblade*), the nameless supermodels in *Fantastic Four*, Emma Frost (from *New X-Men*), Angel (from *New X-Men*), and Camorouge (from *Birds of Prey*) as examples of this stereotype. The difference between being a Bad Girl and Sensuous Woman seems to lie in the character's attitude. Black Widow qualifies as a Bad Girl

because she is bold and confident, taking out enemies with aggression while flaunting her sexuality.  Emma Frost is a Sensuous Woman who avoids confrontation and violence by seducing married man Scott Summers as a means of hurting his wife and fellow heroine Jean Grey-Summers.

*Elektra* has degenerated the most out of the sixteen comics since last being studied.  In 1998, Lavin describes her as being richly detailed and interesting, a unique individual worthy of her own comic.  Inness (1999) found Elektra to be an intriguing mixture of toughness and femininity. However, the coders in the present study found her to be the stereotypical Bad Girl.  She is a martial arts assassin who wears a skimpy silk outfit with no underwear underneath (Rucka, Pagulayan & Miki, 2002d).  She is completely out of control and needs the physical and emotional abuse of a crippled man to help her become "human" again. Vasson, the one woman in the vigilante coalition against Elektra, is equally stereotyped. She is completely helpless, running around the desert in a mini-dress and high heels, waiting for the men around her to make decisions and protect her.  Elektra regards her as so non-threatening that she kills everyone but Vasson, allowing her to escape unharmed.

Visual Analysis

Visual elements under consideration were pose, body, clothes type and clothes coverage (Appendix E).  Poses and framing of bodies in *Amazing Spider-man*, *Captain*

*America*, *Fantastic Four*, *G.I. Joe*, and *Catwoman* were natural and fit with the story being told. Poses in *Batman*, *Green Arrow*, *Elektra*, *Tomb Raider: The Series*, *Witchblade* and *Birds of Prey* either focused in on women's breasts and buttocks gratuitously or showed women being struck in situations unimportant to the main story.

For the most part, artists rendered women's bodies realistically. In only five cases—*Batman*, *Elektra*, *Tomb Raider: The Series*, *Witchblade* and *JLA*—were women drawn with disproportionately large breasts, tiny waists and big, flowy hair.

Outfits for women in the comics were, by contrast, mostly skimpy, torn and accessorized with large weapons. These included Mary Jane's lingerie movie costume in *Amazing Spider-man*, Poison Ivy's teddy in *Batman*, Sara Pezzini's Witchblade armor consisting entirely of metal claws and spikes, and Emma Frost's virginal white lingerie and thigh high boots in *New X-Men*. Only four comics—*Captain America*, *Wolverine*, *Batgirl*, and *Catwoman*—consistently feature characters clothed appropriately for what they are doing.

Some of the most gratuitous images deal with clothes coverage. In *Amazing Spider-man*, the movie producer invites all his male friends to the set to leer at Mary Jane in her lingerie. In *Tomb Raider: The Series* #24, Lara Croft lounges and poses on her yacht in various thong bikinis. On the more extreme end, Polaris in

*New X-Men* #132 is shown completely nude in six separate frames. Jan Pym is also nude in *Ultimates* #3, #5 and #6. Even *Catwoman*, one of the better comics comparatively in all categories, shows Selina Kyle completely naked with her buttocks obscured only by an arm.

Overall, *Captain America* rated the best in the visual analysis, followed closely by *Catwoman*. *Captain America* had very few women, but those that were included showed very little skin and were realistically drawn. *Catwoman* shows women in full-body costumes and normal clothing. Selina and her female friends have normal body proportions. The comics with the worst ratings were *Elektra*, *Tomb Raider: The Series*, and *Witchblade*. Elektra wears only a straight-jacket and thong in half of the issues, while Lara Croft favors bikinis, short-shorts, and a bare midriff. Sara Pezzini, though dressed in regular everyday clothes most of the time, writhes on every cover with her breasts and body just barely covered by the metal claws of the Witchblade. All three heroines stand in painful-looking poses and possess amazing flexibility, which they show off in battle.

## Summary

Women have been stereotyped in their occupations, behavior, body shape and mode of dress practically since comic books came into existence. Many previous researchers found these stereotypes to be purposeful and degrading. Since comic books are traditionally the reading material of malleable adolescents, this is particularly disturbing. However, much of the research conducted on the subject of female stereotypes in comic books is several years old and mostly out of date. Comic book

authors and illustrators rarely stick to writing any one title for long, causing great differences between issues from year to year or even month to month. As a result, reliable assessments of comic books must be current.

This study looked at the most popular comics from the last half of the year in 2002. The three coders found that overall, though female characters are gaining in numbers, they are still in the minority, comprising only 29% of all characters. The percentage of females as main characters is about the same. Women make up 30% of the main characters in the comics studied. Despite this, women tend to hold jobs as varied and challenging as men, when occupations are assigned. Because most women in the stories analyzed are secondary characters, they are often merely identified by their relationship to a more important character, usually a man. Fewer heroines in the stories also results in fewer women being involved in rescuing victims or taking a bullet for a friend. Male dominance affects the skill level of heroines. Since there are more male characters, they are more likely to be in charge or act as mentor to other less skilled characters, frequently women. Abilities, though, seem equal in strength, origin and



nature. The majority of the textual inequities seen were the direct result of the uneven ratio of men to women. The coders found that comics are making slow progress in equal treatment for women visually. Some individual titles, such as *Catwoman*, may be improved, but large breasts and revealing outfits are still the favored look.

References

Abbot, Lawrence L. (1986, Spring). Comic art: Characteristics and potentialities of a
    narrative medium. *Journal of Popular Culture, 19*(4), 155-76.

Alward, Emily. (1982, Spring). Superhero comic books. *Serials Review, 8*(1), 33-38.

Boiling Point Productions DBA Comic Book Resources. (1995-2002). Comic Book
    Resources – comic book news, reviews and commentary. Retrieved November
    13, 2002, from http://www.comicbookresources.com/

Boker, Pamela S. (1993). America's women superheroes: Power, gender, and the comics.
    *Mid-Atlantic Almanack, 2*, 106-18.

Erikson, Erik H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton &
    Co.

Erikson, Erik H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*.  New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Faust, Wolfgang Max. (1971, Summer). Comics and how to read them. *Journal of
    Popular Culture, 5*(1), 194-202.

Florence, Brandi L. (2002). *Busting out all over: The portrayal of superheroines in
    American superhero comics from the 1940s to the 2000s*. Unpublished master's
    thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill.

Gagnier, S. Richard. (1997, September). A hunger for heroes. *School Library Journal,
    43*(9), 143.

Gebelein, Keith. (2003). Hero biographies. In *Comic book heroes*. Retrieved April 13,
    2003, from http://comicbooks.about.com/library/heroes/blheroesa.htm

Inness, Sherri A. (1999). Tough girls: Women warriors and wonder women in popular culture. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lavin, Michael R. (1998, Summer). Women in comic books. *Serials Review, 24*(2), 93-99.

McDevitt, Thomas M., Stanecki, Karen A. & Way, Peter O. (1999). *World population profile: 1998* (U.S. Bureau of the Census report WP/98) [Electronic version]. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Perry, Kimberly Anne. (2002). *Super sexy super heroines: How female comic book characters affect young adult males' perceptions of the female body*. Unpublished undergraduate honors thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill.

Pollard, Dino. (2001). New X-Men. Retrieved April 13, 2003, from http://marvelrevolution.tripod.com/xtitles/new.htm

Psy. (2003, February 18). *X-Men's room*. Retrieved April 13, 2003, from http://psy35.1accesshost.com/xmen.html

Rimmels, Beth Hannan. (1995, August). You've come a long way, baby? *Wizard: The Guide to Comics, 48*, 32-36.

Sturdivant, Cynthia L. (1997). A content analysis of sexual stereotypes in contemporary young adult literature. Unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill.

Van Domelen, Dave. (1998). *What's (not so) good in comics: Bad girl art ratings*. Retrieved November 18, 2002 from http://users.rcn.com/brons/Comics/BGA.html.

Van Leeuwen, Theo & Jewitt, Carey (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of visual analysis*. London: SAGE Publications.

Widzer, Martin E. (1977). The comic-book superhero: A study of the family romance fantasy. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 32*, 565-603.

Willson, Norma. (1974, November). Majority report. *English Journal, 63*(8), 16-17.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. (1972). A mirror for men: Stereotypes of women in literature. In Edwards, Lee R., Mary Heath & Lisa Baskin (Eds.), *Woman: An issue* (pp.205-218). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Wood, Susan. (1974). *The poison maiden and the great bitch: Female stereotypes in Marvel superhero comics*. San Bernardino, CA: The Borgo Press.

Wright, Bradford W. (2001). *Comic book nation: The transformation of youth culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Young, Thomas. (1991). Are comic book super-heroes sexist? *Sociology & Social Research, 75*(4), 218.

Young, Thomas. (1993). Women as comic book super-heroes: The "weaker sex" in the Marvel Universe. *Psychology, 30*(2), 49-50.

Primary Source Materials

Blaylock, Josh (w), Igle, Jamal (p), Brown, Clayton & Ketcham, Rick (i). (2002,

September). Malfunction!, 1 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (10).

Blaylock, Josh (w), Kurth, Steve & Igle, Jamal (p), Larter, John & Brown, Clayton (i).

(2002, July). Reckonings, part 3 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (8).

Blaylock, Josh (w), Kurth, Steve (p), Larter, John, Schulz, Barb & Snyder, Ray (i). (2002,

August). Reckonings, part 4 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (9).

Blaylock, Josh (w), Kurth, Steve (p), Larter, John & Snyder, Ray (i). (2002, June).

Reckonings, part 2 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (7).

Blaylock, Josh (w), Sharpe, Kevin (p) & Larter, John (i). (2002, October). Malfunction!,

2 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (11).

Blaylock, Josh (w), Sharpe, Kevin (p) & Larter, John (i). (2002, November).

Malfunction!, 3 of 4. *G.I. Joe comic book,* (12).

Brubaker, Ed & Johns, Geoff (w), McDaniel, Scott (p) & Owens, Andy (i). (2002,

October). Death-wish for two. *Batman, 1*(606).

Brubaker, Ed & Johns, Geoff (w), McDaniel, Scott (p) & Owens, Andy (i). (2002,

November). Deathwish for two, conclusion. *Batman, 1*(607).

Brubaker, Ed (w), McDaniel, Scott (p) & Owens, Andy (i). (2002, August). Reasons.

*Batman, 1*(604).

Brubaker, Ed (w), McDaniel, Scott (p) & Owens, Andy (i). (2002, September). Courage.

*Batman, 1*(605).

Brubaker, Ed (w), Rader, Brad (p) & Burchett, Rick (i). (2002, August). Disguises, part 3 of 4. *Catwoman,* (8).

Brubaker, Ed (w), Rader, Brad (p) & Burchett, Rick (i). (2002, September). Disguises, part four of four. *Catwoman,* (9).

Brubaker, Ed (w), Rader, Brad (p) & Burchett, Rick (i). (2002, October). Joy ride. *Catwoman,* (10).

Brubaker, Ed (w) & Stewart, Cameron (a). (2002, December). Relentless, part one. *Catwoman,* (12).

Brubaker, Ed (w) & Stewart, Cameron (a). (2003, January). Relentless, part two. *Catwoman,* (13).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Ross, Dave (p) & DeCastro, Nelson (i). (2002, October). Cretaceous picnic. *Birds of prey, 1*(46).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Ross, Dave (p), Pepoy, Andrew & DeCastro, Nelson (i). (2002, August). Deadly convergence. *Birds of prey, 1*(44).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Ross, Dave (p), Pepoy, Andrew & [DeCastro], Nelson (i). (2002, September). The killing ground. *Birds of prey, 1*(45).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Scott, Damion (p), Janson, Klaus (i). (2002, September). Legion of the lost. *Batgirl,* (30).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Scott, Damion (p), Von Grawbadger, Wade (i). (2002, October). The catafracts. *Batgirl,* (31).

Dixon, Chuck (w), Scott, Damion (p), Von Grawbadger, Wade (i). (2002, November). Morituri. *Batgirl,* (32).

Grant, [Steven (w)], Rader, [Brad (p)], Davis & Lipka [(i)]. (2002, November). Final

report. *Catwoman,* (11).

Jurgens, Dan (w), Park, Andy (p), Sibal, Jonathan, Crime Lab Studios & Conrad, Kevin

(i). (2002, April). Pieces of zero, part IV of IV. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(20).

Kelly, Joe (w), Guichet, Yvel (p) & Propst, Mark (i). (2002, Early November).

Transition. *JLA,* (71).

Kelly, Joe (w), Guichet, Yvel (p), Propst, Mark & Petrecca, Bob (i). (2002, Early

December). Last call. *JLA,* (73).

Kelly, Joe (w), Mahnke, Doug, Guichet, Yvel, Banks, Darryl & Smith, Dietrich (p),

Nguyen, Tom, Propst, Mark, Faucher, Wayne & Parson, Sean (i). (2003, January).

Tragic kingdom. *JLA,* (75).

Kelly, Joe (w), Mahnke, Doug (p) & Nguyen, Tom (i). (2002, Late October). Revisionist

history. *JLA,* (70).

Kelly, Joe (w), Mahnke, Doug (p) & Nguyen, Tom (i). (2002, Late November). History is

written by…. *JLA,* (72).

Kelly, Joe (w), Mahnke, Doug (p) & Nguyen, Tom (i). (2002, Late December). Obsidian.

*JLA,* (74).

Loeb, Jeph (w), Lee, Jim (p) & Williams, Scott (i). (2002, December). Hush, chapter one:

The ransom. *Batman, 1*(608).

Loeb, Jeph (w), Lee, Jim (p) & Williams, Scott (i). (2003, January). Hush, chapter two:

The friend. *Batman, 1*(609).

Meltzer, Brad (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2002, October). The archer's

quest, chapter one: Photograph. *Green Arrow,* (16).

Meltzer, Brad (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2002, November). The archer's quest, chapter two: Grays of Shade. *Green Arrow,* (17).

Meltzer, Brad (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2002, December). The archer's quest, part three of six: Grundy no like arrows in face! *Green Arrow,* (18).

Meltzer, Brad (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2003, January). The archer's quest, chapter four: Superfriends. *Green Arrow,* (19).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Currie, Andrew (i). (2002, May). [21st century boy]. *The Ultimates, 1*(3).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Currie, Andrew (i). (2002, June). [Thunder]. *The Ultimates, 1*(4).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Currie, Andrew (i). (2002, July). [Hulk does Manhattan]. *The Ultimates, 1*(5).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Currie, Andrew (i). (2002, August). [Giant man vs. the Wasp]. *The Ultimates, 1*(6).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Currie, Andrew (i). (2002, September). [Untitled]. *The Ultimates, 1*(7).

Millar, Mark (w), Hitch, Bryan (p) & Neary, Paul (i). (2002, November). The experts. *The Ultimates, 1*(8).

Moore, Terry (w), Conner, Amanda (p) & Palmiotti, Jimmy (i). (2002, November). The chaotic code, part one: Icarus rising. *Birds of prey, 1*(47).

Moore, Terry (w), Conner, Amanda (p) & Palmiotti, Jimmy (i). (2002, December). The chaotic code, part two: Crash & burn. *Birds of prey, 1*(48).

Moore, Terry (w), Conner, Amanda (p) & Palmiotti, Jimmy (i). (2003, January). The
chaotic code, part three: Family matters. *Birds of prey, 1*(49).

Morrison, Grant (w) & Kordey, Igor (a). (2002, September). Fantomex. *New X-Men,
1*(129).

Morrison, Grant (w) & Kordey, Igor (a). (2002, October). Weapon twelve. *New X-Men,
1*(130).

Morrison, Grant (w), Leon, John Paul (p) & Sienkiewicz, Bill (i). (2002, October). Some
angels falling. *New X-Men, 1*(131).

Morrison, Grant (w), Jimenez, Phil (p) & Lanning, Andy (i). (2002, November). Ambient
magnetic fields. *New X-Men, 1*(132).

Morrison, Grant (w), Van Sciver, Ethan (p) & Rapmund, Norm (i). (2002, December).
Dust. *New X-Men, 1*(133).

Morrison, Grant (w), Grant, Keron (p) & Rapmund, Norm (i). (2003, January). Kid Ω.
*New X-Men, 1*(134).

Nixon, Matt (w), Fraga, Dan (p) & Stucker, Lary (i). (2002, August). The shadow pulpit,
book 2 of 2, featuring Wolverine. *Wolverine, 1*(178).

Nixon, Matt (w), Van Sciver, Ethan (p) & Stucker, Lary (i). (2002, September). Of lesser
demons…. *Wolverine, 1*(179).

Nixon, Matt (w) & Lucas, Jorge (a). (2002, October). Everything's zen. *Wolverine,
1*(180).

Puckett, Kelley (w), Scott, Damion (p) & Campanella, Robert (i). (2002, August). Bruce
Wayne: Fugitive, part thirteen. *Batgirl*, (29).

Puckett, Kelley (w), Scott, Damion (p) & Campanella, Robert (i). (2002, December). Father's day. *Batgirl,* (33).

Puckett, Kelley (w), Scott, Damion (p) & Campanella, Robert (i). (2003, January). Lesson one. *Batgirl,* (34).

Rieber, John Ney & Austen, Chuck (w), Hairsine, Trevor (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2003, March). The extremists, part 2 of 4. *Captain America, 4*(8).

Rieber, John Ney & Cassaday, John (w, a) & Stewart, Dave (i). (2002, August). Enemy, chapter three: Soft targets. *Captain America, 4*(3).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Cassaday, John (a) & Stewart, Dave (i). (2002, September). Never give up. *Captain America, 4*(4).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Cassaday, John (a) & Stewart, Dave (i). (2002, October). Warlords, part 2: Above the law. *Captain America, 4*(5).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Cassaday, John (a) & Stewart, Dave (i). (2002, December). Warlords, part 3. *Captain America, 4*(6).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Green, Randy (p) & Sibal, Jonathan (i). (2002, May). The trap: Path of the tiger. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(21).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Green, Randy (p) & Sibal, Jonathan (i). (2002, August). The trap: Path of the tiger, part 3. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(23).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Green, Randy (p), Smith, Jonathan & Ketchum, Rick (i). (2002, June). The trap: Path of the tiger, part 2. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(22).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Hairsine, Trevor (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2003, February). The extremists, part 1 of 5: "Barricade". *Captain America, 4*(7).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Sandoval, Gerardo (p), Sibal, Jonathan & Gorder, Jason (i). (2002, October). A prelude to endgame. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(24).

Rieber, John Ney (w), Turner, Michael (w, p), Sibal, Jonathan & Tan, Billy (i). (2002, November). Endgame #1. *Tomb Raider: The series, 1*(25).

Rucka, Greg (w), Pagulayan, Carlo (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2002, August). Introspect, part one. *Elektra, 2*(11).

Rucka, Greg (w), Pagulayan, Carlo (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2002, September). Introspect, part two. *Elektra, 2*(12).

Rucka, Greg (w), Pagulayan, Carlo (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2002, October). Introspect, part three. *Elektra, 2*(13).

Rucka, Greg (w), Pagulayan, Carlo (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2002, September (sic)). Introspect, part four. *Elektra, 2*(14).

Rucka, Greg (w), Pagulayan, Carlo (p) & Miki, Danny (i). (2002, December). Introspect, part five. *Elektra, 2*(15).

Rucka, Greg (w), Bennett, Joe (p), Miki, Danny & Crime Lab Studios (i). (2003, January). Standing outside the temple in the rain, part one. *Elektra, 2*(16).

Smith, Kevin (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2002, August). The sound of violence, part two: Pitch. *Green Arrow,* (14).

Smith, Kevin (w), Hester, Phil (p) & Parks, Ande (i). (2002, September). The sound of violence, part three: Modulation. *Green Arrow,* (15).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2002, August). A strange turn of events. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(42).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2002, September).

    Cold arms. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(43).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2002, October).

    Arms and the men. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(44).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2002, November).

    Until the stars turn cold. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(45).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2002, December).

    Unnatural enemies. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(46).

Straczynski, J. Michael (w), Romita, John, Jr. (p) & Hanna, Scott (i). (2003, January).

    The life and death of spiders. *The amazing Spider-man, 2*(47).

Tieri, Frank (w), Chen, Sean (p) & Palmer, Tom (i). (2002, November). Chasers.

    *Wolverine, 1*(181).

Tieri, Frank (w), Chen, Sean (p) & Palmer, Tom (i). (2002, December). Three funerals

    and a wedding. *Wolverine, 1*(182).

Tieri, Frank (w), Chen, Sean (p) & Palmer, Tom (i). (2003, January). …And got yourself

    a gun; Nixon, Matt (w), Bodenheim, Ryan (p) & Morales, Mark (i). Restraining

    order. *Wolverine, 1*(183)

Waid, Mark (w), Wieringo, Mike (p) & Kesel, Karl (i). (2002, October). Inside out.

    *Fantastic Four, 3*(60).

Waid, Mark (w), Wieringo, Mike (p) & Kesel, Karl (i). (2002, November). 24 blocks and

    one blockhead. *Fantastic Four, 3*(61).

Waid, Mark (w), Wieringo, Mike (p) & Kesel, Karl (i). (2002, December). ∫£πti∑∏+,

    part 1 of 3. *Fantastic Four, 3*(62).

Waid, Mark (w), Wieringo, Mike (p) & Kesel, Karl (i). (2003, January). ∫£πti∑∏+, part 2 of 3. *Fantastic Four, 3*(63).

Warren, Adam (w), Grant, Keron (p) & Fridolfs, Derek (i). (2002, October). The ever-lovin', blue-eyed end of the world, part 2 of 3. *Fantastic Four, 3*(58).

Warren, Adam (w), Grant, Keron (p) & Fridolfs, Derek (with Hanna, Scott) (i). (2002, October). The ever-lovin', blue-eyed end of the world, part 3 of 3. *Fantastic Four, 3*(59).

Wohl, David (w), Ching, Brian (p), Gorder, Jason, Alquiza, Marlo, Santos, Jeff de los, Sibal, Jonathan & Batt (i). (2002, September). [Untitled]. *Witchblade, 1*(58).

Wohl, David (w), Ching, Brian (with Lansang, Clarence) (p), Gorder, Jason, Regla, Sal, Alquiza, Marlo, Santos, Jeff de los & Basaldua, Eric (i). (2002, October). [Untitled]. *Witchblade, 1*(59).

Wohl, David (w), Manapul, Francis (p), Gorder, Jason, Alquiza, Marlo, Conrad, Kevin & Galli, Marco (i). (2002, July). [Untitled]. *Witchblade, 1*(56).

Wohl, David (w), Manapul, Francis (p), Gorder, Jason, Regla, Sal, Batt & Sibal, Jonathan (i). (2002, November). Endgame [#2 of 3]. *Witchblade, 1*(60).

Wohl, David (w), Manapul, Francis (p), Gorder, Jason, Sibal, Jonathan, Alquiza, Marlo & Martinez, Alan (i). (2002, August). [Untitled]. *Witchblade, 1*(57).

Wohl, David (w), Molenaar, Romano (p), Gorder, Jason, Banning, Matt, Sibal, Jonathan, Tan, Billy, Santos, Jeff de los & Basaldua, Eric (i). (2003, February). [Untitled]. *Witchblade, 1*(61).

# Appendix A

Comic Book Rankings

The quantity rankings, based on the total copies printed, for each comic book are listed

by month[2].  At the end of each row, these rankings are averaged to find the approximate

6-month sales ranking for each comic book.  The goal was to provide an idea of which

comics were the most popular during the given six month period.  Some months show a

dash instead of a rank number.  This indicates that no issue was printed that month.

| Title | 6/02 | 7/02 | 8/02 | 9/02 | 10/02 | 11/02 | Avg. rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** | | | | | | | |
| Amazing Spider-man | 6 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5.5 |
| Ultimate Spider-man | 9 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8.17 |
| Wolverine | 12 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 14.33 |
| Captain America | 13 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 17 | 20 | 17.17 |
| G.I. Joe | 16 | 19 | 20 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 19 |
| Batman | 26 | 22 | 31 | 32 | 1 | 6 | 19.67 |
| Green Arrow | 11 | 15 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 25 | 20.17 |
| Spider-man Peter Parker | 18 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 21 | 21 | 20.83 |
| **Female hero** | | | | | | | |
| Batgirl | 27 | 44 | 54 | 48 | 47 | 49 | 44.83 |
| Elektra | 51 | 57 | 69 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 58.5 |
| Tomb Raider | — | 75 | — | 80 | 52 | — | 69 |
| Catwoman | 62 | 63 | 78 | 69 | 71 | 77 | 70 |
| Witchblade | — | 82 | 87 | 83 | 55 | 80 | 77.4 |
| Spider-girl | 80 | 83 | 85 | 82 | 75 | 83 | 81.33 |
| **Male/Female team** | | | | | | | |
| Ultimates | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3.17 |
| New X-Men | 3 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Ultimate X-Men | 7 | 9 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8.83 |
| Uncanny X-Men | 8 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 10.5 |
| X-treme X-Men | 15 | 16 | 18 | 15 | 16 | — | 16 |
| JLA | 17 | 20 | 21 | 18 | 18 | 17 | 18.5 |
| Avengers | 20 | 23 | 26 | 25 | 23 | 26 | 23.83 |
| Fantastic Four | 28 | 31 | 1 | 24 | 25 | 28 | 22.83 |
| JSA | 31 | 30 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 33 | 32 |

[2] Figures are from Comic Book Resources – CBR News – The Comic Wire, 2002.

| Title | 6/02 | 7/02 | 8/02 | 9/02 | 10/02 | 11/02 | Avg. rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Female team** | | | | | | | |
| Birds of Prey | 71 | 73 | 81 | 62 | 68 | 74 | 71.5 |

# Appendix B

Definitions for Coding Sheets

*Active (in a relationship)*: The opposite of passive. Behavior traditionally considered male, such as asking for a date, making the first move, paying for dinner, etc.

*American Girl*: She is a symbol of male success by having every luxury and opportunity, yet has no career or ambitions for one, except perhaps as a teacher. She is cultured and well-mannered, but often nags men for uncultured behavior.

*Assistant-type occupation*: Any job where you assist someone else who has a higher-paying job that entails decision-making skills and requires more education. Some examples include nurse, secretary, legal or other aide, personal assistant, dental assistant, clerk, and supporting actress.

*Bad Girl*: Erotic and violent anti-heroine, usually with breasts larger than her head, elongated taut thighs, and a tiny waist. She is usually a martial arts assassin or vigilante. Her main purpose is as a sex object.

*Chest/butt shot:* When a frame is centered on this aspect of a woman's body, or a woman is posed in such a way as to purposely draw the viewer's eye to her chest or butt.

*Labor-related occupation*: Any job that requires physical strength or knowledge of machines, such as longshoreperson, mechanic, construction worker, welder, or machinist.

*Liberated Woman*: The opposite of the Sentimental Woman. She longs for a career to fulfill herself, but is doomed to remain unfulfilled because her rightful place is by a man's side. She is sometimes portrayed as sexually perverse or lesbian.

*Lip shot:* Close up of a woman's lips for sexual purposes.  The lips are shiny and wet, slightly parted, red, and plump.  Usually accompanied by some sexual innuendo in the dialogue.

*Main character*: Who the story is about.  There can be more than one main character.

*Passive (in a relationship)*: Rarely makes decisions, leaving everything up to the man.  This goes for small things, like which restaurant to eat at, and big things, like proposing marriage.

*Position of authority*: Any job that entails making the final decisions for others, like a group, company, or patient.  Some examples are president, doctor, dentist, manager, and policeperson.

*Secondary character*: Other players in the story who are essential to the plot.  They need not have names, but usually do.

*Sensuous Woman*: She is sexually-arousing, contemptible, and destructive to men's lives.  Usually she is dark-haired, dark-eyed, and darker-complexioned.

*Sentimental Woman*: Helpless, vulnerable, weak in health, submissive, highly emotional and incompetent are descriptors.

*Virtuous Woman*: The idealized woman.  She is pure, perfect, and good.  Usually she is blonde, blue-eyed, and fair-skinned.

*Woman's status*: Women, in general, are still fighting for equality in pay and status.  Despite many changes in society, women are still not equal to men in many areas.

*Writer approval*: The story is written in such a way that a woman's decisions and actions are portrayed as positive.  The woman is characterized as a good role model and heroine, or on the side of the heroes.

***Writer disapproval***: The woman is characterized as uppity or presumptuous for taking action without asking for male approval first.  She is characterized as in the wrong, a bad role model, or evil.

# Appendix C

Comic Book Coding Sheet[3]

**Bibliographic Entry:** Author's Last, First. (Publishing Year, Month). Issue Title. *Comic Title*, Vol. (Issue).

| Male characters: | Main/Secondary: (in this story only) | Occupations: |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**TOTAL # OF MEN:** _____

| Female characters: | Main/Secondary: (in this story only) | Occupations: |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**TOTAL # OF WOMEN:** _____

---

[3] Based on Sturdivant, 1997.

# Appendix D

Stereotypes Coding Sheet[4]

| | Pts. | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 1. STEREOTYPES: *If any woman in the story fits one of these neat packages, minus 25 points for each occurrence.* | | |
| The Virtuous Woman (behaves herself, virginal) | -25 | |
| The Sensuous Woman (sexually arousing, but held in contempt by men) | -25 | |
| The Sentimental Woman (helpless, vulnerable, weak, emotional) | -25 | |
| The Liberated Woman (intelligent, unfulfilled) | -25 | |
| The American Girl (cultured and educated, but never meant to work) | -25 | |
| The Bad Girl (erotic, violent) | -25 | |
| 2. DESCRIPTIONS: *If any of these words (or similar ones) are used to describe a woman or girl, add or subtract allotted points.* | | |
| [Mildly offensive]: i.e. cheerful, kind, jealous, mindless, _____ | -5 | |
| [Hostile in tone]: i.e. witch, delicate, sentimental, pretty, ugly, _____ | -10 | |
| Strong, wiry, intrepid, intelligent, ambitious, curious, self-confident, talented, or other descriptors that contradict sex-role conditioning, _____ | +10 | |
| 3. ROLES: *If a woman/girl's identity comes primarily through the fulfillment of one of these roles, deduct points.* | | |
| Wife, daughter, mother, grandmother, aunt, consumer | -10 | |
| Bride, fiancée, mistress | -20 | |
| 4. OCCUPATIONS: *If a woman or girl is any of these, add or subtract allotted points.* | | |
| Teacher, nurse, secretary, or other assistant-type occupation | -5 | |
| Housekeeper: Paid | -5 | |
|           Unpaid | -10 | |
| Musician, student, artist, or similar | +5 | |
| Engineer, dentist, jockey, truck driver, pilot, or other traditionally male job | +15 | |
| Longshoreperson or labor-related job, policeperson or position of authority | +20 | |
| 5. LOVE RELATIONSHIPS: *Judge the woman's behavior according to the following:* | | |
| Passive | -10 | |
| Active, with writer disapproval | -15 | |
|       with writer approval | +15 | |
| Self-actualized (neither active nor passive but actions consistent with inner self) | +25 | |
| 6. WRITER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN: *Cite examples to support your view.* | | |
| Feminist attitude | +50 | |
| Mildly sympathetic | +25 | |
| Neutral | 0 | |
| Mildly derogatory | -25 | |
| Hostile or misogynistic | -50 | |
| 7. STATEMENTS OF "TRUTH" OR INSIGHT: *Phrases of wisdom, advice, or moments where someone has a revelation* | | |
| Said by a woman | +25 | |
| Includes women in its generality | +15 | |
| Excludes women by inference or by use of male pronoun or the word "man" | -25 | |
| 8. AWARENESS | | |
| Subtract points if a woman is mocked for wanting equality or fair treatment | -5 | |
| If the writer is aware of woman's status and discusses this problem in the text of the story, add points for each statement | +5 | |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | | |

---

[4] Based on Willson, 1974.

# Appendix E

Visual Analysis Coding Sheet[5]

| 1. POSE: *For each occurrence* | STORY | COVER |
|---|---|---|
| +1 if the pose is anatomically impossible or severely painful | | |
| +1 if the woman is being struck (aside from in battle) | | |
| +1 for bondage situations | | |
| +1 for a gratuitous lip shot | | |
| +2 for a gratuitous butt shot | | |
| +2 for a gratuitous chest shot | | |
| +3 for a spread-legs crotch shot | | |
| 2. BODY: *Overall; do not count each instance* | | |
| +1 if the width of one breast is wider than the head | | |
| +2 for breasts larger than waist | | |
| +1 for erect nipples shown | | |
| +1 for thigh wider than waist | | |
| +1 for thigh longer than total torso plus head height | | |
| +1 for Big Hair (generally, hair larger than torso) | | |
| +1 for inhuman or demonic part, such as claws, fangs, etc. | | |
| +1 for facial expression indicating sexual themes (seductive, etc.) | | |
| +3 for expression indicating the subject is in the throes of orgasm | | |
| 3. CLOTHES TYPE: *Count each outfit only once.* | | |
| +0 for skintight bodysuit | | |
| +1 for swimsuit | | |
| +1 for lingerie, skimpy toga, loose bathrobe, or similar | | |
| +2 for leather | | |
| +3 if torn or tattered | | |
| +4 if adorned with spikes or blades | | |
| +1 for body piercing (navel, nose, etc.) or more than 2 ear piercings | | |
| +1 for spiked heels or walking on toes | | |
| +1 per weapon | | |
| +1 per fluid type covering subject (i.e. blood, sweat, tears, etc.) | | |
| 4. CLOTHES COVERAGE: *Count each outfit only once* | | |
| +1 if less than half of each breast is covered | | |
| +2 if less than ¼ of each breast is covered | | |
| +4 if breasts are totally bare | | |
| +1 if enough of crotch is uncovered to require shaving | | |
| +1 if wearing a thong | | |
| +1 for excessively low-cut pants (pelvic bones visible) | | |
| +3 if naked but in shadows | | |
| +4 if outline of genitalia is drawn | | |
| +4 if totally naked with black bars | | |
| +5 if crotch is totally bare and everything is visible | | |
| +10 if subject is totally naked (except for accessories) | | |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | | |

---

[5] Based on Van Domelen, 1998.

# Appendix F

Numbers of Male and Female, Main and Secondary Characters by Comic Title

| | Men Main/Secondary | | Women Main/Secondary | | Totals Men/Women | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** | | | | | | |
| Amazing Spider-man | 11 | 14 | 5 | 8 | 66% | 34% |
| Batman | 11 | 19 | 2 | 11 | 70% | 30% |
| Captain America | 8 | 11 | 0 | 5 | 79% | 21% |
| Green Arrow | 10 | 17 | 1 | 8 | 75% | 25% |
| Wolverine | 15 | 30 | 1 | 3 | 92% | 8% |
| **Female hero** | | | | | | |
| Batgirl | 9 | 18 | 8 | 8 | 63% | 37% |
| Catwoman | 5 | 36 | 12 | 12 | 63% | 37% |
| Elektra | 5 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 64% | 36% |
| Tomb Raider | 4 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 54% | 46% |
| Witchblade | 13 | 25 | 8 | 12 | 66% | 34% |
| **Male/Female team** | | | | | | |
| Fantastic Four | 12 | 16 | 3 | 12 | 65% | 35% |
| G.I. Joe | 37 | 58 | 3 | 16 | 83% | 17% |
| JLA | 26 | 47 | 15 | 10 | 74% | 26% |
| New X-Men | 18 | 19 | 8 | 20 | 57% | 43% |
| Ultimates | 23 | 25 | 8 | 9 | 74% | 26% |
| **Female team** | | | | | | |
| Birds of Prey | 9 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 54% | 46% |
| **Totals** | 216 | 376 | 91 | 152 | 71% | 29% |

# Appendix G

Male and Female Occupations and Roles by Comic Title

|  | **Male Occupations/Roles** | **Female Occupations/Roles** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** |  |  |
| Amazing Spider-man | Sorcerer<br>Teacher[6]<br>Scientist/inventor<br>Movie producer[7]<br>Actor<br>Waiter[6]<br>Photographer<br>Screenwriter<br>Cab driver | Secretary[6]<br>Actress<br>TV reporter<br>Wife[6]<br>Aunt[6] |
| Batman | Crime boss[7]<br>Wealthy socialite<br>Assassin<br>Butler[6]<br>Mercenary<br>Philanthropist<br>Brain surgeon[7]<br>Child heir<br>Father[6] | Court reporter<br>FBI agent[7]<br>Thief<br>Girlfriend[6]<br>Mother[6] |
| Captain America | Soldier[7]<br>Secretary of the Army[7]<br>US Army colonel[7]<br>Head of elite defense agency[7]<br>Terrorist<br>Leader of street gang[7]<br>Shaman | TV reporter<br>SHIELD agent[7] |
| Green Arrow | TV reporter<br>Sniper<br>Neurosurgeon[7]<br>Anesthesiologist<br>Son[6] | Nurse[6]<br>Daughter[6] |
| Wolverine | Vatican cardinal[7]<br>Assassin<br>Shaman<br>Bartender<br>Gangster<br>Mob boss or Oyuban[7]<br>Federal agent[7] | Inquisitor/torturer<br>Assassin<br>Daughter[6] |

|  | **Male Occupations/Roles** | **Female Occupations/Roles** |
|---|---|---|
| **Female hero** | | |
| Batgirl | Butler[6]<br>Billionaire financier<br>TV reporter<br>Judge[7]<br>Police detective[7]<br>Monk<br>Sensei<br>Archeologist[7]<br>Assassin<br>Crime boss[7] | Girlfriend[6]<br>Wife[6] |
| Catwoman | Shop owner[7]<br>Private investigator[7]<br>Police officer[7]<br>Drug dealer or mafia member<br>Police investigator[7]<br>Judge[7]<br>Defense attorney[7]<br>Federal agent[7]<br>Bodyguard[7]<br>Investment banker | Waitress[6]<br>Cat burglar<br>Philanthropist<br>District attorney[7]<br>Teacher[6]<br>Crime boss<br>Doctor[7]<br>Friend<br>Sister[6] |
| Elektra | Weapons dealer<br>Assistant[6]<br>Lawyer[7]<br>Colonel[7]<br>Soldier[7] | Assassin<br>Lawyer[7]<br>Martial arts master<br>Fiancée[6]<br>Widow[6] |
| Tomb Raider | Adventurer<br>TV producer[7]<br>Pilot[7]<br>Military commander[7]<br>Gardener[6]<br>Tibetan monk | Adventurer<br>Archeologist[7]<br>TV producer[7]<br>Thief<br>Police detective[7] |
| Witchblade | Police detective[7]<br>Businessman<br>Assassin<br>Cult leader[7]<br>Police officer[7]<br>Doctor[7]<br>Police chief[7]<br>Police investigator[7] | Police detective[7]<br>Retail worker<br>TV reporter<br>Model/actress[6]<br>Nurse[6]<br>Archeologist |

| | **Male Occupations/Roles** | **Female Occupations/Roles** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| Fantastic Four | Scientist<br>Aviator[7]<br>Public relations representative<br>Businessman<br>Fashion designer<br>Son[6] | Businesswoman<br>Supermodel[6]<br>Mother[6]<br>Daughter[6] |
| G.I. Joe | Smuggler<br>Special Forces soldier[7]<br>US Army general[7]<br>Weapons dealer<br>Bomb defuser<br>Race car driver<br>Bodyguard and spy[7]<br>FBI agent[7]<br>Scientist<br>Computer hacker<br>Police officer[7]<br>Tracker<br>Son[6] | Special Forces soldier[7]<br>Computer hacker<br>Police officer[7]<br>Lover[6]<br>Sister[6]<br>Daughter[6] |
| JLA | Priest<br>King[7]<br>Magician<br>Shaman<br>Head of a corporation[7]<br>Head of JLA[7] | High priestess<br>Magician<br>Newspaper reporter<br>Queen[7]<br>Mage/witch |
| New X-Men | Terrorist<br>US Marine[7]<br>Head of a corporation[7]<br>Professor[7]<br>Doctor[7]<br>Student[7]<br>Instructor[7]<br>Pilot[7]<br>Thief<br>Hijacker<br>Royal advisor<br>Fashion designer<br>Entrepreneur<br>Homicide detective[7] | Receptionist[6]<br>Sex therapist<br>Student[7]<br>Space Empress<br>Mistress[6]<br>Mother[6]<br>Wife[6] |

| | **Male Occupations/Roles** | **Female Occupations/Roles** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| Ultimates | Scientist<br>Soldier[7]<br>Head of the Ultimates[7]<br>US Army general[7]<br>Industrialist<br>Doctor[7]<br>Butler[6]<br>US president[7]<br>TV talk show host<br>God[7]<br>Ex-nurse<br>Actor<br>Emergency medical technician[7]<br>Receptionist[6]<br>Husband[6] | Public relations representative<br>Actress<br>Scientist<br>Doctor[7]<br>Secretary[6]<br>Wife[6]<br>Fiancée[6] |
| **Female team** | | |
| Birds of Prey | CIA operative[7]<br>Mercenary<br>US Marine[7]<br>Japanese naval officer[7]<br>Head of a corporation[7]<br>Doctor/scientist[7]<br>US senator[7]<br>Security guard | Mercenary<br>Assistant[6]<br>US senator[7] |

---

[6] Indicates a stereotypically female occupation or other lower status job, as judged by this study's coders and Willson (1974).

[7] Indicates a position of authority or power, typically associated with men, as judged by this study's coders and Willson (1974).

# Appendix H

Gender of Victims or Those Who Are Injured, Wronged or Killed and Those Who

Rescue or Avenge Them

| | Man rescues Man | Man rescues Woman | Woman rescues Man | Woman rescues Woman |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** | **13** | **11** | **2** | **0** |
| Amazing Spider-man | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Batman | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Captain America | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Green Arrow | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Wolverine | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Female hero** | **7** | **7** | **7** | **9** |
| Batgirl | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Catwoman | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Elektra | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Tomb Raider | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Witchblade | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| **Male/Female team** | **14** | **16** | **7** | **3** |
| Fantastic Four | 6 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| G.I. Joe | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| JLA | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| New X-Men | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Ultimates | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| **Female team** | **1** | **2** | **2** | **4** |
| Birds of Prey | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| **Totals** | **35** | **36** | **18** | **16** |

# Appendix I

Superpowers and Abilities of Male and Female Heroes[8]

|  | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** | | |
| Amazing Spider-man | **Dr. Octopus/Carlyle:** intelligence, mechanical arms attuned to his body and thoughts<br>**Dr. Strange:** magic<br>**Spider-man:** agility, web shooting, spider-sense, strength, wall crawling<br>**The Shade:** transport matter and self to and from the Astral Plane, become intangible | **Shathra:** strength, spider-wasp senses and instincts, flight |
| Batman | **Batman:** acrobatics, agility, detective skills, gadgets, intelligence, martial arts, strength<br>**David Cain:** intelligence, marksman, martial arts<br>**Deadshot:** gadgets, marksman; has a deathwish<br>**Killer Croc:** human/crocodile mutant, low intelligence, speed, super strength; vulnerable to hypersonics<br>**Nightwing:** acrobatics, agility, gadgets, strength<br>**Robin:** detective skills, fighting skills, gadgets, martial arts | **Batgirl:** fighting ability, martial arts<br>**Catwoman:** acrobatics, agility, gadgets<br>**Huntress:** excellent with weapons, fighting ability<br>**Oracle:** intelligence, technology and computer expert; paralyzed from waist down<br>**Poison Ivy:** human/plant mutant, mind control |
| Captain America | **Barricade:** psychotic, strength<br>**Captain America:** enhanced strength, stamina, shield that serves as both weapon and armor<br>**Inali Redpath:** wind control | NONE |

---

[8] Based on coders' observations and information compiled by Gebelein, 2003; Pollard, 2001; and Psy, 2003.

| | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male hero** | | |
| Green Arrow | **Arsenal:** bow, arrows<br>**Connor Hawke:** bow, arrows<br>**Flash:** super speed, vibrates through matter causing it to explode, can lend speed to others<br>**Green Arrow:** strength, bow, arrows, some martial arts training<br>**Green Lantern:** can create illusions<br>**Grundy:** super strength, body armor, regeneration<br>**Manhunter:** shape-shifter, strength, endurance, telekinetic, telepathy<br>**Shade:** immortal<br>**Sniper:** strength, resistance to injury, marksman<br>**Superman:** super strength, speed, flight, x-ray vision, laser eyes | **Black Canary:** strength, martial arts, Canary Cry shatters glass and stuns people<br>**Oracle:** technology and computer expert |
| Wolverine | **Charles Moss:** omega mutant, powers unknown<br>**Demon**: animal control, mind control, spell-caster<br>**Dogma:** energy being, has a suit to make him corporeal, agility, strength<br>**Puck:** agility<br>**Sasquatch:** super strength, transformation into beast<br>**Shaman:** animal control and communication, levitation, spell-caster, weather control<br>**Wolverine:** super strength, accelerated healing, stealth, speed, tracking, adamantium skeleton and claws, shielding from demonic possession | **Lady Deathstrike:** accelerated healing, adamantium claws, super strength, speed, skilled swordsman<br>**Snowbird:** demigod, flight, stretching |

|  | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Female hero** | | |
| Batgirl | **Batman:** acrobatics, agility, detective skills, gadgets, intelligence, martial arts, strength<br>**Connor Hawke:** bow, arrows<br>**David Cain:** intelligence, marksman, martial arts<br>**Nightwing:** acrobatics, agility, gadgets, strength<br>**Robin:** detective skills, fighting skills, gadgets, martial arts | **Batgirl:** fighting ability, martial arts<br>**Oracle:** intelligence, technology and computer expert<br>**Spoiler:** fighting skills |
| Catwoman | **Batman:** acrobatics, agility, detective skills, gadgets, intelligence, martial arts, strength | **Catwoman:** acrobatics, agility, gadgets |
| Elektra | NONE | **Elektra:** martial arts, sais master<br>**Drake:** martial arts |
| Tomb Raider | **Quill:** immortal<br>**Lord Vymes:** demi-god<br>**Tsang Do Khyi:** martial arts<br>**The Weave:** mind control, immortal, energy being | **Caronne:** time traveler, holographic imaging to disguise self<br>**Gomchenna/Lydia:** flight, fighting skills<br>**Lara Croft:** fighting skills, intelligence<br>**Sara Pezzini:** wielder of the Witchblade |
| Witchblade | **Aiden/Maximillian/Janus:** fighting skills<br>**Ian Nottingham:** wielder of Excalibur<br>**Sonatine:** magic<br>**Tora-No-Shi:** swordsman, fighting skills<br>**The Weave:** mind control, immortal, energy being | **Lara Croft:** fighting skills, intelligence<br>**Rayla:** future wielder of the Witchblade, fighting skills<br>**Satine:** fighting skills<br>**Sara Pezzini:** wielder of the Witchblade |
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| Fantastic Four | **Mr. Fantastic:** elasticity, stretching, intelligence<br>**Human Torch:** flight, self-combustion<br>**Modulus:** alter reality through mathematics<br>**The Thing:** stone skin, strength | **Invisible Woman:** invisibility, force fields, force bolts |

|  | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| G.I. Joe | **Kamakura/Snake-Eyes/Storm Shadow:** martial arts<br>**Flint/Beach Head/etc.:** fighting skills | **Lady Jaye:** fighting skills |
| JLA | **Aquaman:** transform self to water, breathe underwater,<br>**Atom:** ability to shrink or grow<br>**Batman:** acrobatics, agility, detective skills, gadgets, intelligence, martial arts, strength<br>**Firestorm:** able to transmute anything inorganic, fly, phase through solids<br>**Flash:** super speed, vibrates through matter causing it to explode, can lend speed to others<br>**Green Arrow:** strength, bow, arrows, some martial arts training<br>**Green Lantern:** flight, create objects from green energy ring<br>**Hebrew:** strength, fighting skills<br>**Jason Blood:** magic, immortal, transforms into the demon Etrigan<br>**Major Disaster:** simulate the effects of and manipulate natural disasters<br>**Manhunter:** absorb and transfer emotions, mind-reading<br>**Manitou Raven:** magic<br>**Nightwing:** acrobatics, agility, gadgets, strength<br>**Plastic Man:** elasticity, transformation<br>**Rama Khan:** magic<br>**Superman:** super strength, speed, flight, x-ray vision, laser eyes<br>**Tempest:** Breath underwater, communicate with marine life, superhuman strength<br>**Tezumak:** fighting skills<br>**Whaler:** energy powers, | **Faith:** flight, energy manipulation, telekinesis, emits "positive vibes"<br>**Gamemnae:** magic<br>**Hawkgirl (Kendra):** flight, fighting skills<br>**Sela:** fighting skills<br>**Wonder Woman:** fighting skills, Amazonium bracelets to deflect bullets, lasso of truth<br>**Zatanna:** magic |

| | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| | levitation | |
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| New X-Men | **Archangel:** flight<br>**Beast:** intelligence<br>**Cannonball (Sam):** flight, force field, immortality<br>**Cyclops:** optic blasts<br>**Fantomex:** telepathic connection to bio-ship, create illusions,<br>**Kid Omega (Quentin):** omega mutant, intelligence<br>**Madrox the Multiple Man:** self-cloning<br>**Professor X:** telepathy, mind control, mind wipe, astral projection, mental bolts<br>**Proudstar:** speed, strength, dexterity, flight<br>**Quicksilver:** super speed<br>**Rictor:** vibratory waves, psychic defenses<br>**Shocker:** electricity<br>**Sunfire:** fire generation and control<br>**Thunderbird:** heat and fire generation<br>**Toad:** leaping, wall crawling, tongue, poison<br>**Unus:** force field<br>**Weapon XII:** virally infects others through touch, making them an extension of himself<br>**Wolverine:** super strength, accelerated healing, stealth, speed, tracking, adamantium skeleton and claws | **Angel:** flight<br>**Darkstar:** summon and manipulate dark force<br>**Emma Frost:** telepathy, mind control, diamond skin<br>**Feral/Thornn:** tracking, feline-like reflexes, teeth and claws<br>**Lilandra:** weapons<br>**Monet:** super strength, telepathy<br>**Phoenix (Jean):** telepathy, telekinesis, Phoenix force<br>**Polaris:** magnetic manipulation<br>**Sabra:** flight, strength, speed, energy quill gauntlets<br>**Siryn:** sonic scream, flight<br>**Slick:** telepathy, charisma<br>**Sooraya:** transform to dust<br>**Stepford Cuckoos:** telepathy, 5 linked minds<br>**Storm:** weather control<br>**Tattoo:** skin displays thought messages |

|  | **Male abilities** | **Female abilities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Male/Female team** | | |
| Ultimates | **Captain America:** enhanced strength, stamina, shield that serves as both weapon and armor<br>**Giant Man:** ability to grow<br>**Hawkeye:** marksmanship, bow, arrows<br>**Hulk:** transformation, strength, leaping, healing factor, durability<br>**Iron Man:** flight, sensors, energy blasts, electromagnetic disruptors<br>**Quicksilver:** super speed<br>**Thor:** god of thunder, lightning hammer, strength | **Black Widow:** strength, martial arts, weapons<br>**Scarlet Witch:** probability altering ability, hex bolts, magic<br>**Wasp:** ability to shrink, flight, wasp sting |
| **Female team** | | |
| Birds of Prey | **Connor Hawke:** bow, arrows<br>**Deathstroke:** fighting skills | **Black Canary:** Canary Cry, fighting ability<br>**Camorouge:** martial arts, camouflage<br>**Madison:** control over her "chaotic code," can temporarily repair physical ailments, energy attack<br>**Oracle:** computer and technology expert |