The representation of women in comic books, post WWII through the radical 60's

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Abstract
The American comic book as long served as an alternative form of entertainment for a diverse demographic. Alongside jazz and Hollywood movies, the comic book is considered an indigenous American art form (Conroy). While the first comic book didn’t originate in America, the comic book superhero and comic books as they are known today are credited as originating in America. Comic books are not only a source of pleasure, but they also serve as a unique reflection of American culture. Comic book characters are usually depicted in visual and contextual extremes. These extremes are representations of how common stereotypes are turned into archetypes and can help us learn about contemporary American social structure. This is especially clear in studying gender roles, the focus of my research on female superheroes. From the debut of the first female superhero, Wonder Woman, the representation of women was always within the frame of gender bias. The ascribed and acquired roles that women typically held post-WWII through the sixties, such as wife, mother and secretary, are nearly duplicated in comic books. The Rosie the Riveter era gave us women who could handle, “men’s work.” The fifties served as a rollback to the forties with limited roles, and the sixties proved to be the richest decade for women up to that point. This research follows the roles given to five female superheroes and helps to explain the social importance of this influential American art form.

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