

ABSTRACT

THESIS: A Critical Analysis of Female Representation throughout the X-Men Film Franchise

STUDENT: Shannon Grosenbacher

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: College of Communication, Information, and Media

DATE: May 2018

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There is no question that the superhero genre is timeless amongst generations. Audiences resonate not only with the modern conflicts within the story, but they find pieces of their personal identity within the characters themselves. However, upon further examination, there appears to be a lack of representation for female characters within the genre. Additionally, superhero comics have been criticized for the stereotypical way their female characters have been represented as a whole. The majority of female superheroes adhere to gender normative behaviors and stereotypes, such as being romantically driven, sexually objectified, support systems for the heroes, and incapable of controlling emotions. Using feminist film theory as the foundation of this thesis, I will critically identify ways in which the X-Men film franchise adheres to stereotypical representations of two of its leading female characters: Jean Grey and Storm. Superhero narratives are notorious for adapting their stories to cultural norms but little research has identified whether the characters themselves are equally malleable. Modern culture advocates for equality among men and women, including the way in which characters are represented. Since the superhero genre is notorious for adapting to cultural ideals, the X-Men movie franchise offers a unique opportunity to identify how leading female characters are being represented over the course of time. Areas of interest include roles in which Jean Grey and Storm take within the narrative and the way in which they are being physically represented in their costuming.