Children’s attitudes toward superheroes as a potential indicator of their moral understanding

Justin F. Martin*
Formerly Harvard Graduate School of Education, USA

McCrary's work in the late 1990s suggested that superheroes influence children’s development of moral values. Similarly, Bauer and Dettore advocated adults’ and educators' monitoring of children’s superhero play to help children foster cooperation and conflict resolution skills. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between children’s attitudes toward themselves and their attitudes towards superheroes. Forty-two fourth-grade children (aged 9–11) from a school in Massachusetts completed a questionnaire. Results indicated that participants generally rated themselves and their superhero as being high on prosocial behaviour. Findings suggest that there may be a relationship between how children feel about themselves and how they feel about superheroes.

Superhero culture

Regardless of the culture or the environment in which children develop, key aspects of their development include their curiosity and imagination. By imitating adults and talking to strangers, children demonstrate their fascination with things that are beyond their realm of possibilities. Thus it is no surprise that superheroes (e.g. Batman, Superman and Spider-Man) are extremely popular amongst youth. As the popularity of superheroes increased, so did the various media forms through which the lives and adventures of superheroes were disseminated. Initially introduced primarily through comic books, superheroes were soon included in television shows and films. Movies such as X-Men (2000, 2003 & 2006) and Spider Man (2002, 2004 & 2007) have generated large box-office receipts and received a lot of media attention, and several other movies about superheroes have also made their way to the big screen (e.g. Batman Begins, 2005; Superman Returns, 2006; and Fantastic Four, 2005, 2007).

*Human Development and Education, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, USA. Email: just_martin@berkeley.edu

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Superheroes and morality

Previous research has explored the relationship between children’s exposure to superheroes and their development of moral values. In a study that involved kindergarten children drawing heroes and heroines, McCrary (1999) found that children’s artwork (which included superheroes such as Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman) suggested that they learned moral values from the superheroes they watched on television. McCrary also acknowledged the concerns associated with these implications, given that children’s artwork depicted both positive and violent behaviour.

Boyatzis (1997) and Huesmann (1994) argued that the current popularity of superheroes is potentially problematic because children know that heroes are often rewarded for aggressive or violent behaviour (i.e. thrashing the villains). They contended that children might learn to emulate such violent behaviour. Although these concerns are legitimate, I argue that due to the complexity of superheroes’ lives, they can positively influence the development of children if children are taught not to focus on the violence but on the values superheroes promote.

Pardales (2002, p. 430) argued that a healthy and refined ‘moral imagination’ is essential to moral agency and decision-making. Among the components that make up this moral imagination are the ability to view one’s life as a narrative and the utilization of moral perception (Pardales, 2002). The former deals with individuals’ ability to reflect on their life experiences, and the latter refers to the way in which people decide what is important in their lives. By thinking about themselves as characters in a story, people are able to acknowledge ways in which choices and actions work together to influence the construction of their identity. Similarly, superheroes’ lives follow detailed and complex story lines involving moral dilemmas and difficult choices.

Moral perception is also related to this sense of viewing one’s life as a narrative. According to Pardales (2002), moral perception is important because one cannot respond to immoral acts if one is unable to recognize that such acts are immoral. A finely tuned moral perception allows individuals to be sympathetic and responsive to situations to which they may otherwise be insensitive. Although Spider-Man is often characterized by his strength, agility and web slinging, he also has a spider-sense that alerts him about potential danger to himself and others (Brewer, 2004). Similar to Pardales’ (2002) idea of a heightened moral perception, Spider-Man’s spider-sense allows him to recognize and respond to situations he considers morally important.

Many adults worry about superheroes’ violent behaviour, especially as depicted on television, and this is indeed a legitimate concern. However, I argue that superheroes’ potential role in influencing children is more complex than simply being promoters of violence. Hart (2005) contended that one’s moral identity is partly a function of one’s social context. Similarly, superheroes’ use of violence is also dependent on their social context. Superheroes are considered good or bad not because of their use of violence, but with regard to the contexts and motivations that influence their actions. Superheroes typically face villains with weapons or comparable superpowers, and not apprehending the villains will result in harm to
others. In addition, superheroes often try to avoid the use of violence. They first try to resolve a situation by reasoning with the villain. When that does not work and superheroes are forced to use violence, the goal is apprehension, not annihilation. In other words, superheroes use violence only to prevent harm to others. As Morris (2005) stated with regard to the superhero Daredevil,

> Even when he considers killing the most evil and murderous of them, he chooses not to… Even when villains fighting Daredevil or fleeing from him die by their own foolish actions, our sensitive vigilante seems genuinely sorry, as if a child of God has been lost unnecessarily. (p. 59)

Despite superheroes’ frequent use of violence, a closer look at the context and motivation behind their decisions to use force suggests that superheroes do not place a high value on the use of violence.

**Superheroes and education**

Lerner (2002) argued that people are intrinsically motivated to believe in a just world where everyone is treated with dignity, equality and fairness. One can argue that superheroes’ commitment to fighting injustice reflects a similar belief. Given that superheroes often have to sacrifice their own self-interests in order to protect the welfare of others, it is clear that their motivation for doing so does not stem from personal gain. For instance, Silver Surfer’s commitment to protect and serve humans on earth comes at the expense of him not being with his own race of people (he is from another planet) and pursuing his love interest (Gabillet, 1994).

Research suggests that there is a relationship between children’s belief in a just world and their school experiences. Dalbert and Maes (2002) found that students who believed in a just world were often less averse towards school, had more trust in their teachers and interpreted their overall school experiences as positive. Thus superheroes’ commitment to justice and its relationship to a belief in a just world may potentially serve an educational function for children’s moral development.

Pardales (2002) also acknowledged the importance of fostering students’ moral development in the classroom. He suggested that accessing one’s moral imagination not only allows one to reflect on the possibilities of one’s life, it also provides one with insight into the practicality of leading such a life. Therefore, educators should focus less on curricula geared towards improving students’ test scores, and more on curricula that fosters their moral development.

Bauer and Dettore (1997) suggested ways in which educators can use children’s fascination with superheroes to teach them how to behave inside and outside the classroom. They argued that by monitoring students’ superhero play, educators could use superheroes to help students identify positive and negative behaviour, as well as to teach them cooperation and conflict resolution. Although these aims are worthy, the risk is that allowing students to engage in superhero play can ultimately undermine conflict resolution and desensitize children to violent and aggressive behaviour. However, Bauer and Dettore contended that, despite this risk, educators and adults should acknowledge the reality that children are going to be exposed to
superheroes. Therefore, it is the responsibility of adults and educators to use superheroes as a tool to facilitate children’s development (Bauer & Dettore, 1997).

Superheroes and teamwork

In Brewer’s (2004) analysis of the superhero group, Fantastic Four (Reed Richards, Ben Grimm, Johnny Storm and Sue Storm), he highlighted the importance of working together with others despite personal differences. Upon receiving their powers, the group struggled to decide on a common goal. The personal issues plaguing the members included insecurity, guilt and feelings of ostracism. For example, Reed Richards, the leader, was reluctant to fully embrace his leadership position because he feared failure. However, through providing support for each other and working through their problems together, the Fantastic Four were able to overcome their individual differences, trust each other and work as a team to protect humanity.

Superheroes and society

In a study where children wrote about and engaged in play around the superhero group the X-Men, Dyson (1997) found that the group’s influence on children had implications for larger society. Dyson noticed that, when engaged in superhero play, children (implicitly or explicitly) addressed issues of complex human relationships and social identity. They resolved conflicts that arose from assigning the same X-Men character to two children, debated over team goals and dealt with issues of gender equity when assigning individual roles. Dyson believed that the issues addressed by the students reflected larger social concerns regarding gender, race and class. Related to the issue of gender inequality is the finding that the female children preferred the X-Men to other superheroes (Dyson, 1997). Unlike most other superhero groups where women are a noticeable minority, the X-Men consists of 8–15 members, with the number of male and female members remaining approximately equal. Dyson contended that the females were able to identify with the X-Men because of the group’s female representation. Lastly, Dyson argued that the X-Men are important because of their emphasis on mental as well as physical strength.

Although Dyson (1997) contended that the X-Men’s importance stems from the group’s concerns with broader social issues and their focus on mental fortitude, Brewer (2004) and Evans (2005) suggested that the group’s importance is also a function of their goals and leadership. As mutants born with exceptional abilities, they are minorities and outcasts in a society where the majority of humans hate them because they are different. Moreover, there are other mutants who believe that the only way mutants can live in a world in which they are accepted is by eliminating humans. Therefore, the X-Men are faced with a moral dilemma of whether they should help their fellow mutants eradicate the genetically inferior humans, or work towards achieving equality for humans and mutants.
According to Brewer (2004), their decision to fight for justice and equality for everyone (including those who hate them) suggests that they are agents of social change. They understand the value of all human life, and have dedicated their lives towards opposing injustice. Evans (2005) noted that their decision to take the moral high road in the midst of discrimination is due to the influence of their mentor. Their moral compass is Professor Charles Xavier, a mutant who is responsible for teaching them how to manage their powers and use them for the benefit of all humans. Evans contended that just as children who internalize the morals of a loving and nurturing parent are motivated to be moral agents, the X-Men’s internalization of Professor Xavier’s teachings of love and acceptance motivates them to work towards uniting humans and mutants despite their differences.

Superheroes and responsibility

Whereas the Fantastic Four and the X-Men highlight the importance of teamwork and uniting for a common goal, Peter Parker’s transition into a superhero (Spider-Man) involved an individual struggle between selfishness and responsibility. Shortly after receiving his superpowers, Spider-Man decided to wrestle to earn money. After a wrestling match, he observed a man running past him who just robbed a guy. Upset that he got paid less than expected for winning the match, he decided not to stop the robber. Shortly after the incident, Peter Parker’s uncle encountered the robber, and was killed in an attempt to stop him. Realizing that his decision not to get involved had resulted in his uncle’s death, he decided to use his powers to protect others (Brewer, 2004). Unfortunately, Peter Parker had to lose his uncle before he understood that ‘with great power comes great responsibility’ (Brewer, p. 109). Peter Parker’s transition from selfishness to responsibility suggests that being responsible sometimes requires one to put others before oneself.

The study

Past research suggested that superheroes influence children’s development of moral values (McCrary, 1999). Bauer and Dettore (1997) advocated adults’ and educators’ monitoring of children’s superhero play to help children foster cooperation and conflict resolution. In addition to superheroes’ influence on children’s development, Dyson (1997) argued that superheroes such as the X-Men could be used as tools to educate children about social issues. Moreover, Brewer (2004) contended that the X-Men’s dedication towards eliminating social injustices makes them not only individuals with superpowers, but also agents of social change. Their motivation for social change is believed to have developed through an internalization process similar to children’s internalization of the values of a nurturing parent or caregiver (Evans, 2005). Despite concerns (Huesmann, 1994; Boyatzis, 1997) that superheroes’ influence on children can result in increased violent behaviour, Bauer and Dettore (1997) urged adults and educators to use children’s exposure to superheroes to help children foster positive behaviour. Brewer
(2004) suggested that the struggles and triumphs of the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man reflect common human experiences of insecurity and selfishness, as well as cooperation and responsibility.

In this study, I analysed the relationship between children’s attitudes toward themselves and their attitudes towards superheroes. One purpose of the study was to assess children’s familiarity with superheroes. It was hypothesized that children would be most familiar with superheroes that have experienced recent success in television and film. The second purpose of the study was to identify the extent to which children may be positively influenced by the superheroes with whom they were most familiar. It was also hypothesized that children would rate their favourite superhero as often engaging in positive behaviour. Lastly, it was hypothesized that children would rate themselves similarly to how they rate their superheroes.

Method

Participants

Forty-two fourth-grade children participated in the study. The participants came from two fourth-grade classes (Class 1 N=22; Class 2 N=20) in an elementary school in an urban district in Massachusetts. Females accounted for 52% of the participants who were aged nine (35.7%), ten (47.6%) and eleven (16.7%). Twenty-one participants were Hispanic (50%), seven were Asian (16.7%), four were Black (9.5%) and ten participants fell into several other ethnic categories.

Measure

The questionnaire used in the study contained two subscales. The first scale was developed for this study and assessed children’s familiarity with superheroes. Three individual superheroes (Batman, Spider-Man and Superman) and two superhero groups (Fantastic Four and X-Men) were chosen for this study. These five were chosen because each has been the subject of a recent successful film. Participants rated their familiarity with the superheroes on a 4-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘not at all familiar’ and 4 indicating ‘very familiar’.

The second scale used in this study was taken from the Global Portraits of Social and Moral Health for Youth (GPSMHY; Davidson & Kmelkov, 2003). The GPSMHY measures the overall social and moral health of a community and its schools, as well as respondents’ attitudes about their peers, parents, school personnel and community members. The 10 items used assessed respondents’ attitudes towards characteristics such as fairness (‘...believe it’s important that everyone has a fair chance’), forgiveness (‘...can forgive those who hurt them’), tolerance (‘...are respectful to others even if they do not agree with them’), and responsibility (‘...can be counted on to do their part for any group they are members of’). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating ‘not like me at all’ and 5 indicating ‘exactly like me’. The GPSMHY was chosen...
because its questions on moral health (e.g. fairness, tolerance) are characteristics that children can easily observe in others, including superheroes. Davidson and Kmelkov (2004) reported a reliability coefficient of .85 for GPSMHY scores in a previous study.

Given that the study examined children’s attitudes toward social and moral behaviour, two of the items that were not appropriate for the context were replaced. The item, ‘…would give up watching their favorite TV show to study for a test’ was replaced with an item on ‘…trying to treat others the same’, and the item on ‘…never talking disrespectfully about teachers to other kids’ was changed to ‘…never disrespecting others’. Students rated themselves and their favourite superhero on the same items. The reliability coefficients for scores on the modified scales were .78 for participants’ self-ratings and .51 for participants’ superhero ratings. The low reliability coefficient for the superhero ratings resulted in assessing individual items on both participants’ self-ratings and superhero ratings, rather than the composite scores.

**Procedure**

Students were told the researcher was conducting a study on superheroes and that their participation was voluntary. After explaining the instructions and answering questions the students asked, I administered the surveys. The teacher and I were in the classroom with the students as they completed the survey, which took about 10 minutes. After collecting the surveys I thanked the students, and engaged them in a general discussion about who their favourite superheroes were and why.

**Results**

*Familiarity with superheroes*

Participants’ responses regarding their familiarity with superheroes (means & standard deviations) are presented in Table 1. Participants were most familiar with Spider-Man and least familiar with X-Men. When asked to write down the name of their favourite superhero or the superhero they were most familiar with, 54% of the respondents wrote down a superhero other than the ones listed. Some of the other superheroes named included Captain Underpants, Cat Woman and Goku.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superheroes</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batman</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spider-Man</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superman</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic Four</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Men</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ratings of self and superheroes

Participants’ self-ratings and superhero ratings are presented in Table 2. As indicated, ratings were generally high—above 4.0 on a 5-point scale—on all of the positive traits and low on the negative trait (i.e. cheating to win or get ahead). This pattern applied to both ratings of self and superheroes. Participants rated superheroes slightly higher on feeling badly when others are in pain and keeping working to achieve difficult goals. Participants rated themselves slightly higher on forgiving those who hurt them and believing everyone should have a chance.

Correlations

Correlations between participants’ self-ratings and superhero-ratings are also presented in Table 2. With two exceptions, correlations were in the moderate to large range. The two correlations below .20 were with regard to forgiving those who hurt them and never disrespecting others. Four correlations were greater than .50. These included being respectful to others one does not agree with, keeping working to achieve difficult goals, being respectful to others they do not agree with, and believing everyone should have a fair chance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Superhero</th>
<th>( r^* )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel badly when others are in pain</td>
<td>4.40 0.88</td>
<td>4.74 0.64</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel responsible for helping those in need</td>
<td>4.50 0.74</td>
<td>4.62 0.79</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to be nice even to those who are not friends</td>
<td>4.02 1.20</td>
<td>4.08 1.24</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can forgive those who hurt them</td>
<td>3.98 1.14</td>
<td>3.47 1.54</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never disrespects others</td>
<td>4.60 0.74</td>
<td>4.57 0.74</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that everyone should have a fair chance</td>
<td>4.60 0.74</td>
<td>4.32 1.13</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes cheat to win or get ahead</td>
<td>1.82 1.37</td>
<td>1.82 1.37</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are respectful to others they do not agree with</td>
<td>4.13 1.18</td>
<td>4.19 1.37</td>
<td>.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep working to achieve difficult goals</td>
<td>4.30 0.98</td>
<td>4.62 0.85</td>
<td>.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be counted on to do their part for the group</td>
<td>4.07 1.22</td>
<td>4.29 1.18</td>
<td>.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do what they think is right even if others disagree</td>
<td>4.10 1.28</td>
<td>4.05 1.37</td>
<td>.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to treat everyone the same</td>
<td>4.60 0.91</td>
<td>4.50 1.00</td>
<td>.72*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aCorrelations between participants’ self-rating and their superhero rating

\( *p<.004 \)
to achieve difficult goals, doing what one thinks is right even if others disagree and trying to treat everyone the same.

Correlations between participants’ self-ratings and superhero-ratings by gender are presented in Table 3. Male participants had substantial correlations (medium or large effect sizes) between their self-ratings and superhero ratings on 11 of the 12 items, with 6 of the correlations being greater than .50. Female participants had substantial correlations on 6 of the 12 items, with 4 of the correlations being greater than .50. Male participants had significant correlations between their self-ratings and superhero ratings on being respectful to others, trying to treat everyone the same and doing what they think is right. No significant correlations were found between female participants’ self-ratings and superhero ratings.

**Discussion**

In this small study, I examined children’s familiarity with popular superheroes, children’s self-ratings of prosocial attitudes, children’s ratings of their favourite superhero’s prosocial attitudes and the correlation between the self and superhero ratings. Participants indicated some familiarity with popular superheroes and rated themselves and superheroes as prosocial. Significant correlations between children’s self-ratings and their superhero ratings were found on 5 of the 12 items. Children indicated that they should treat others fairly and help others. Children also indicated that they should not cheat, that they should respect those who disagree with them and that they should work hard towards achieving goals they feel are important. Lastly, children indicated that they do the right thing even when others disagree with them, and that they should forgive others who hurt them. Children rated their superheroes in the same manner.

Children’s high superhero ratings on positive behaviour and low superhero rating on the single negative behaviour are consistent with literature that highlights the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel badly when others are in pain</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel responsible for helping those in need</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to be nice even to those who are not friends</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can forgive those who hurt them</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never disrespects others</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that everyone should have a fair chance</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes cheat to win or get ahead</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are respectful to others they do not agree with</td>
<td>.84*</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep working to achieve difficult goals</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be counted on to do their part for the group</td>
<td>.71*</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do what they think is right even if others disagree</td>
<td>.80*</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to treat everyone the same</td>
<td>.83*</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<.002$
prosocial behaviour that superheroes promote (Dyson, 1997; Brewer, 2004; Morris, 2005). Moreover, the correlations between children’s self-ratings and their superhero ratings support the idea that children may learn values from superheroes, and that superheroes can be used as a tool to educate children on how to cooperate with others (Bauer & Dettore, 1997; McCrary, 1999). The low correlations between self-ratings and superhero ratings on forgiving others and never disrespecting others suggest that children may feel that superheroes are sometimes unforgiving. This view of superheroes may be due to children paying attention to superheroes’ use of violence, a concern that has been raised in the literature (Huesmann, 1994; Boyatzis, 1997; Bauer & Dettore, 1997; McCrary, 1999).

Although both males and females had significant correlations between their self-ratings and superhero ratings, there were some differences. Results indicate that males may identify with superheroes more than their female peers. Despite the presence of individual female superheroes such as Wonder Woman, and the superhero group X-Men that contains 4–8 female superheroes, female superheroes have not experienced as much success in comic books and film as their male counterparts. In addition, the popularity of superheroes such as Batman and Spider-Man, and their frequent engagement in aggressive behaviour, may be more appealing to males than females.

As noted earlier, the majority of the participants chose as their favourite superheroes those that were not listed in the survey. One reason for this finding may be that although the superheroes such as Batman, Spider-Man and X-Men have had recent success in film, younger children may be less likely to attend these types of movies due to PG ratings or parents’ concerns about content and they may instead be more likely to watch cartoons or read comic books, such as Captain Underpants or Dragonball GT (e.g. Goku). Therefore, the superheroes included in the study may be more popular among adolescents than children attending elementary school.

**Limitations**

There were a few limitations in the study that need to be acknowledged. The sample size was small and some participants did not complete all of the items. As a result, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. The choice of superheroes was also a limitation in this study. Participants were not as familiar with the superheroes as I initially believed they would be, and the majority of the participants’ favourite superheroes differed from those included in the questionnaire. Instead, they were more familiar with superheroes such as Captain Underpants, Cat Woman and Goku, superheroes who may be more salient for elementary-aged populations. Secondly, although more than half of the participants were females, there were no individual female superheroes included on the questionnaire, although the X-Men and Fantastic Four have female members. Given Dyson’s (1997) finding that females identified with X-Men’s female characters, future research should include a sufficient balance of male and female superheroes for children to choose from.
Lastly, there is the possibility that participants gave socially desirable responses. The fact that teachers were present in both classrooms may have affected students’ responses to the items.

**Conclusion**

There has not been much research on the relationship between children’s personal attitudes and their attitudes toward superheroes. Although there is plenty of research on children’s moral development, there needs to be more research on the potential influence of children’s engagement with superheroes (e.g. comic books and television) on such development. As those responsible for the developmental outcomes of youth, educators must make an effort to listen to children, not just to learn about what they enjoy, but also why they enjoy it. Moreover, educators should not just focus on children’s academic development, but on fostering children’s moral and social development as well (Pardales, 2002). If children are fascinated with superheroes, then educators should learn why so they can use this fascination as a way to help children develop into individuals who know how to treat others and participate in society (Bauer & Dettore, 1997).

The hypothesis that students’ personal attitudes are positively related to their attitudes about superheroes was partially supported. The hypothesis that children would be very familiar with superheroes from popular movies (i.e. Batman, Spider-Man, Superman, Fantastic Four and X-Men) was not supported. In general, more research needs to be conducted on which superheroes children are most familiar with, and whether the values that they develop are influenced by these superheroes.

The study offers a few implications for educators. Children may be drawn to superheroes not just because of their powers, but also because of the behaviour they promote. Therefore, a way to learn more about a child or student may be to learn about which superheroes they identify with and why. Secondly, incorporating children’s favourite superheroes into other activities or lessons may help facilitate children’s learning process in that activity or lesson. Lastly, monitoring children’s exposure to superheroes and emphasizing superheroes’ prosocial behaviour may help better prepare children to recognize the difference between positive and negative influences in other contexts. Given the success of comics and the recent success of superhero movies, it appears that the popularity of superheroes is here to stay. As educators, we must ensure that their influence on youth is both positive and educational.

**References**


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