

**With us or Against us? Hegemony and Ideology within
American Superhero Comic Books 2001-2008**

John McGuire

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Western Sydney

2014

Acknowledgments

There have been many times that I felt that I would not get to this moment. I know that without the support of those around me, I would not have had the chance to complete this project. I would like to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Adam Possamai for his hard work. I am very thankful for his organisational skills and his understanding. Special thanks to my co-supervisor, Professor Rob Stones who joined my panel within the last year. He has made such a difference to the quality of my work with his expertise on hegemony and the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. I would also like to acknowledge both my previous co-supervisors, Dr Drew Cottle and Dr Michael Kennedy, who helped me get through the first tough years.

Thank you to the staff at the Religion and Society Research Centre. I would like to thank the School of Social Sciences and Psychology for their support, especially the academics who kept me in work these last few years. I have a great deal of love for the University of Western Sydney and I appreciate the opportunities that this institution has given me.

I have been very lucky to have a great group of friends and family around me. Thank you to my family for all of the support and encouragement over the years. Special thanks to my Mum and Dad for the sacrifices they made to allow me a great education as a child. Thank you to David Edler for his help with proof reading, editing and great conversations about pop culture. Thank you to David and Chris Wilcox for their intellectual, emotional and at times financial support over the last few years.

And lastly, this thesis would never have been written if it was not for my wonderful partner, Tuyen Dao. She has made such a difference to my life. Every day she gives me both joy and strength which has carried me through this process. I could not have done this without her.

John McGuire

2014

Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part for a degree at this or any other institution.

.....

(Signature)

Table of Contents

List of Tables	2
List of Figures	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	6
Chapter 1: Superhero comic books: The Industry and Narratives	27
Chapter 2: Theory and Method: the Hegemony of Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe	62
Chapter 3: The American Dream: Nodal points and articulations	92
Chapter 4: 2001-2002: 9/11, Security and the Superhero	114
Chapter 5: 2003-2004: Superheroes and villains in a time of War	147
Chapter 6: 2005 -2006: Decline and Resistance	176
Chapter 7: 2007-2008: Hope, Ideology and Captain Obama	202
Chapter 8: Discussion of theoretical outcomes	233
Conclusion	252
References	262

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Direct Market Comic Book Sales in North America by Year 2001-2008 pg 32	32
Table 5.1 Types and number of violent incidences depicted in Batman Comics October 1998-March 1999 154	155
Table 5.2 Types of and number of violent incidences depicted in Batman comics October 2003-March 2004	155

List of Figures

1.1 Cover of Detective Comics #27	48
1.2 Cover of Captain American Comics #1	52
1.3 Captain America #175 p.32	55
1.4 Cover of Captain America Vol.1 #344	58
4.1 Avengers #48, p.26	128
4.2 Avengers #52, p.10	133
4.3 Detective Comics #765, p.21	136
4.4 Detective Comics #765, p.22	137
4.5 Covers of Captain America Volume vol.4 #1-6	143
5.1 Figure 5.1 Batman #620, p.8	157
5.2 JLA #83, p.16	166
5.3 Avengers #68, p.40	169
5.4 JLA #79, p.2	172
6.1 House of M #2, p.25; p.8	181
6.2 Robin #130, p.30	184
6.3 Batman #650, p.30	189
6.4 Civil War #7, p.21	196
7.1 Batman #664, p.27	220
7.2 Batman #666, p.28	221
7.3 Captain America vol.5 #, p.24	223
7.4 Captain America vol.5 #41, p.24	224
7.5 Batman #678, p.31	227

Abstract

With us or Against us? Hegemony and Ideology within American Superhero Comic Books 2001-2008

Superhero comic books, part of American popular culture since 1938, have been recognised as a site for the reproduction of dominant ideology, however, their ability to resist dominant ideology has not been as equally considered. This study examines the narratives of DC Comics and Marvel Comics superhero characters' Batman and Captain America, in the time period 2001-2008 to evaluate the ability of these superhero narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideological versions of the American Dream. The years 2001 to 2008 were a time of ideological upheaval in American society influenced in no small part by specific articulations of historical events; 9/11 in 2001, the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the election of the first African American to the Presidency, Barack Obama, in 2008.

To position the dominant ideology this study adopts the theoretical lens of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci, and radicalised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Methodologically, the theory of hegemony is used to develop a sociological tool of analysis; the analysed hegemonic ideology. When this tool is applied to the ideology of the American Dream it exposes the constituted ideological components of the ideology that are subject to articulation within the process of hegemony and counter hegemony. The changing articulations, ideologies and process of hegemony from 2001 to 2008 are detailed in this study as a necessary step in analysis. When the specific constituted ideological components of the hegemonic ideology are applied to the superhero narratives of the same period, the true ideological position of the superhero narratives are exposed.

The results suggest that superhero comics' engagement and role in hegemony as a popular cultural product are extremely complex. While there is evidence of superhero narratives reproducing the ideological positions of the Right Wing hegemony that emerges after 9/11, there is also evidence of ideological resistance within the narrative and later support for the Left Wing hegemony that emerges in the Presidential campaign of Obama in 2008. In the changing landscape of hegemony in American society, superhero comics offer intelligent and detailed ideological

contributions to process of hegemony and counter hegemony. This suggests both a progressive power to the concept of the American Dream and a degree of agency within the realm of popular cultural production.

Introduction

Captain America is Dead

On the morning of the 7th March 2007 the superhero Captain America, leader of the Avengers and defender of the American Dream, was murdered on the steps of a New York City court house. The crime sent shock waves throughout the fictional comic book Marvel Universe and also made headlines in the real world of the comic book's readers. His readers had little reason to be worried. Since the Death of Superman in 1992, superhero deaths have become a comic book convention that had been quickly followed by the convention of superhero resurrection. In fact, Captain America himself had 'died' as recently as 2001. Readers knew that Captain America would return to the Marvel Universe. Only time and a somewhat ingenious plot twist was needed to bring him back.

Without the inside knowledge of his pending resurrection, news programs in the real world reported his death as something to be mourned. CBS reported his death on their website, 'Captain America, the stars-and-stripes-wearing crimefighter, was gunned down by a sniper as he left a courthouse today. He was 66.' (Morgan 2009) The BBC reported that Captain America's death had angered his 93 year old co-creator Joe Simon, 'It's a hell of a time for him to go, we really need him now' (BBC news 2007). MSNBC TV reported that Captain America had been shot dead and suggested that the death of Captain America might be because he was not able to tell stories about modern day America as he had in the past (MSNBC 2007). The New York Times quoted Marvel comics publisher Dab Buckley on the Captain's fate, 'He is very dead right now' (Gustines 2007).

Bryan Robinson (2007) writing for ABC news, quoted angry comic book fan, 34 year old commercial production director Ken Feliu, 'I'm definitely pissed off... why did they have to kill him off?... He's supposed to represent all our ideals, everything we're supposed to aspire to and they couldn't leave him intact?' But Robinson did more in his article; he tried to put Captain America's death in context of not only

what was happening in the Marvel Universe¹, but where this superhero narrative interacted with reality. He updated his readers on the Marvel Universe that the Captain had just left, how superheroes were forced to register with the Government because of the tragic deaths of innocent civilians in a case of heroics gone wrong. Robinson explained how Captain America had refused the registration as a violation of civil rights and freedoms and had gone rogue leading like minded heroes in rebellion of an unjust law. However Iron-man, Captain America's long time friend and ally, supported the registration and 'secretly orchestrated a campaign that created circumstances to scare and mislead the public and government officials into supporting the act and all the programs that it entailed'(Robinson 2007). Robinson then let the American mainstream public into the truth that only the comic book readers had known up until then... this was all about the Iraq war, the Patriot Act and domestic surveillance. This was all about the real United States of America and its reality after September 11, 2001.

At the time of Captain America's death, I was busy reading Captain America comic books from the 1980s of Ronald Reagan's Presidency for my honours thesis, "*Holy Hegemony Captain!*" *Opposition to the dominant ideology of the American Dream in the Captain American comic book during the Reagan Era, 1980-1989*. At that time superhero comic books had not got the academic attention (and in some cases respect) that they were due as popular cultural texts (McGuire 2007). One of the most influential writers on the subject of superhero comics, Bradford W. Wright author of the authoritative *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (2001), had shown that superhero comic books had historically been an important part in the shaping of the American youth's world view. As historical documents, superhero comics reflected the views of the American society of their times. While Wright's methodology and his work had led me to the study of superhero comics, I felt that Wright had stopped short in his conclusion. In the study of Captain America comics of Ronald Reagan's Presidency, there was clear evidence that this superhero narrative had actively tried to combat the ideology of Reagan and the New Right, admittedly within the limits of the censored comic book industry of the time. Whilst using the concept of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony (Gramsci 1971)

¹ This was the narrative of the Marvel event series Civil War which will be further covered in Chapters 6 and 7.

to explore ideological power in American society, I became interested in superhero comics place in the battle within the ideology of America. This examination of Captain America during the Reagan years had shown an example of superhero comics involved in the ideological conflict, resistance and negotiation of hegemony in the American nation state. I was eager to explore if this was an exception to Wright's position of mere reflection within the comics. The success of this work led me to an opportunity to embark on this project, a PhD thesis.

Robinson's article from 2007 suggested that Captain America was again proving to be a ready source for discourse on American Society. I wished to continue using this character in my next project. The scope of a PhD thesis as opposed to the limitation of my previous work would allow for a study that could go beyond Captain America and allow exploration beyond the one superhero comic book. While not able to include all the superheroes within the medium, this thesis would allow me to examine another superhero comic book character in parallel with Captain America. The American comic book industry is dominated by two publishers, Marvel Comics the publisher of Captain America, and DC Comics. By taking my second superhero comic book character from DC Comic's stable I would be able to make some comparison between the two publishers and be in a better position to generalise my results to the industry as a whole. The opportunity existed to isolate the patriotic element in the project. It could be argued that my identification of engagement with American societal ideology in the Captain America comic could be because Captain America specifically focused on America and patriotism as themes and not because superhero comics generally engage with hegemonic ideology. Recently, Jason Dittmer (2013) has examined the role of nationalist superheroes, including Captain America, on their ability to be part of the intellectual discussion in a society on national identity and foreign policy. In doing so he had defined superheroes narratives in which the hero identifies themselves as a representative of a particular nation-state as nationalist superheroes. Alternatively, superheroes who are still concerned with representing peoples and concepts but are not always linked to nation-states are referred to as pro-social superheroes (Dittmer 2013, p7-8). Pro-social superheroes still have positive messages for society, but are not explicitly linked to a nation state like a nationalistic superhero such as Captain America. The addition of a pro-social superhero to this study enables comparisons with nationalist

superheroes and an exploration of how both types of superheroes contribute to intellectual discussions on national ideologies. In an attempt to take advantage of this opportunity for further exploration, it was necessary to select a superhero from DC Comics that was not closely associated with nationalism. This meant that DC Comic's popular character of Superman with the long standing theme of the 'American Way' would not be an acceptable choice. In an attempt to keep certain elements of the narrative of the two charters in common, superheroes who did not share the predominant urban setting of the Captain America narrative were eliminated. As such DC Comic's cosmic hero, The Green Lantern was eliminated. Cosmic heroes fit quite comfortably in the science-fiction genre as much as the superhero genre. The conventions of these heroes can differ greatly from the street level superheroes like Captain America. For example, science-fiction superheroes are often able to use far away planets as metaphors for aspects of society, intergalactic wars in place of real wars on Earth. Where superheroes have been neglected in serious academic research, science-fiction has not (Luckhurst 2010). The DC Comics superhero narrative, like Captain America, would be one of the major players in their fictional comic book world and commercially be at a similar level with their own ongoing comic book as well as appearances in other comic books as well. This meant that newer superheroes like DC's *The Monolith*, created in 2004, but cancelled after 12 issues would not be an acceptable subject. While *The Monolith* certainly explored the themes of a post 9/11 America, it could not match Captain America's commercial legacy or his fictional gravitas in the comic book world.

A more comparable subject from DC Comic's stable of superheros is Batman. Like Captain America, Batman is an urban based superhero whose adventures for the most part, take place in the United States. Batman and Captain America both date back to the birth of the superhero genre, the late 1930s. Both characters share a similar skill set in that they do not have 'superpowers' like Superman or Spider-man. Both characters have ongoing solo comic series, although Batman has multiple series while Captain America has only one ongoing series, as well as roles within team comic books in both comic companies. Both characters are popular and of such importance to their respective publishers that they also have important roles in the 'event' style limited series which have become a staple of the superhero genre and are amongst the highest selling comics of their time. The character of Batman

provides both similarity and contrast to Captain America which enhances the quality of this study.

From a methodological point of view, this sample of superhero comics follows one of the ways that readers consume their comics. Readers often follow their favourite character through the superhero's comic adventures, being introduced to other comic books through their favourite guest starring in other books, taking part in crossovers and miniseries that involved the character and being part of other superhero teams.

America from the Outside

The choice of the United States as the society examined in this project was decided by the focus on superheroes. Superhero comics are an American invention, dating back to the first appearance of Superman in Action Comics #1 in 1938. While comic books have been free to expand beyond the superhero genre in other nations and find a place as a respected adult popular culture medium for both genders, for example *manga* of Japan and *bandes dessinées* of Belgium and France, the unique history of the American comic book industry has led it to be dominated by superheros in a male dominated adolescent market (Wright 2001).

As an Australian author of a study of America culture, there is a mixed position as both an insider and outsider to American society. As part of the project, I found myself explaining my research to American academics. While most have been extremely welcoming, helpful and excited about my project, I was surprised at a few reactions. For a while I thought I might have been crossing some cultural taboo, as if I was visiting an isolated society, recording their social customs and norms and then returning to the Western world and using that information for my own career advancement like some 19th Century anthropologist.

At first I cast myself in the mould of Alexis de Tocqueville, the French social scientist who visited and wrote about the United States in the 19th Century for a French audience (Cullen 2004, p.112). I was travelling to America and seeing it with an outsider's perspective. I was neither born, nor have I lived in America. From my perspective, I could see elements of America with fresh eyes. I was able to automatically notice differences from my own experiences in a different nation with

a different history, different social relations and a different national ideology. From what I had read, Alexis de Tocqueville's writings and observations on the American society of 1835 had been valued and respected by Americans. I hope that partly this value comes from Tocqueville's status as a detached outsider, as well as the quality of his work.

Where it is easy to see de Tocqueville as an outsider in 1835, my position as an Australian is not so clear cut. The current day United States holds a much different position globally than it did in 1835, and my nation's relationship with the United States is much more complex than Tocqueville's France of 1835. For while I am an outsider to American society, from another perspective I am a subject of the American empire and American culture. My favourite movies are American, my favourite musicians are American, my favourite writers, and my favourite comedians are all American. From birth I watched Sesame Street just as American children my age did. As a child I knew who the American President was long before I knew who the Australian Prime Minister was. I pronounced "Z" *zee* instead of the British *zed* until the Australian education systems forced my native pronunciations on me. I get excited when American bands tour my country; I look forward to the latest American television shows. I follow the ebbs and flows of the American political system with little effort in the Australian media. I am not alone in this, I am not some *Americophile*, I am a representative of my generation of Australians growing up in a world dominated by American culture. I joked that I would have gladly swapped my vote in any Australian elections for a vote in the US presidential election of 2008 because I wanted my vote to have some influence over Australian foreign policy. Culturally, as an Australian, I am a subject of the American empire, just somewhat removed.

I am having my cake and eating it too. I am the detached outsider able to evaluate American society clinically without the bias and blindfolds of growing up in America. I am also a subject of the American empire, having grown up amongst its cultural products, its artists and its history. (While I am not an official mouseketeer, I know all the best songs by heart).

From 9/11 to Obama

The American identity of superheroes ensured that the United States would be the societal subject of this thesis. On which era of American history this study would focus became the next step in clarifying the project. The Death of Captain America in 2007 and the attention that it received in the mainstream media narrowed the potential timeframe. It was a sense of history that proved to be a factor in the selection of a timeframe for the project.

It was with relative ease that the historical bookends of this project were identified. One of the biggest catastrophes in American history had only occurred a few years before the Death of Captain American in 2007. On the 11th of September 2001 New York City and Washington DC were attacked by terrorists who had hijacked commercial airlines. Two planes crashed into the World Trade Centre, one into the Pentagon and a fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The catastrophe known as 9/11 fundamentally affected American society. The sense of triumph that America had carried since the defeat of its longstanding nemesis, the Soviet Union and Communism in the late 20th Century, (a triumph that had led Fukuyama to declare the end of history (Fukuyama 1992)) ended on the 11th of September 2001. A point of societal crisis and shock, 9/11 became the source for America's aggressive actions on the world stage. A thick black line is drawn from the 11th September 2001, to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib are born in the shadow of the 11th of September 2001.

Domestically the Patriot Act and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security were the direct responses by the Bush administration to 9/11. However, the reduction in civil rights and the creation of a new Federal Department does not illustrate the changes to day to day life that 9/11 caused. Ideologically American Society became concerned with its own safety and security. In the wake of 9/11, President George W. Bush achieved immense popularity (Footman 2009, p.5). It is the articulations of 9/11 that the Bush Administration used to make Security a goal for the American people and to usher in the hegemony of the Right. Americans had to live with new mantras, *With Us or Against Us*. They had to live under the cloud of daily reports of colour coded terror-alerts telling them how likely another attack

would be, forcing them to live with the fear of reliving 9/11 each day, but maybe this time with them at the new ground zero.

Contrasting with fear is the other bookend of this project. On the 4th November 2008, Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. He was the first African-American to hold this position. His campaign against Republican rival John McCain was personified in the one word posters and T-shirts that his supporters displayed, HOPE. A rejection of years of the Bush Presidency, Obama won the presidency in a landslide. From the low of the 11th September 2001 to the high of 4th November 2008 is 2611 days of an uneven progression of American Society, tested by crisis and catastrophe.

Hegemony

With the popular cultural text of superhero comics as the examined medium of this project, the United States as the last remaining cultural superpower of this age as the society and the timeframe of the project identified, it is necessary to use a theoretical approach that can bring into focus the ideological power structures and the ideology of American society itself. The theory that best suits this task is Antonio Gramsci's Marxist concept of hegemony (Gramsci 1971) as radicalised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001).

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is the process which enables an economically dominant class to create and preserve a cultural dominance over the other classes in a society (Williams 1977). The dominant class is able to do this by use of a shared ideology or world view that encompasses the totality of a society (the cultural, economic and the social). This ideology ensures that rule of the dominate class does not rely on coercion, but is consented to by the other groups in society. As a process, hegemony needs intellectuals in service of the dominant class. They have the task to manage and negotiate the shared ideology, ensuring that the ideology can adapt to threats and crisis which challenge it and the dominant classes rule. One of the sites for this ongoing negotiation and management by intellectuals of the shared ideology is the media of which popular cultural texts such as superhero comics are a part.

Gramsci's original work on hegemony, while clearly with a revolutionary goal, explains how a national ideology works in the favour of the dominant class. It explains what the ideology must contain; the hegemonic principle of the dominant class. It also contains other elements such as the shared outlook and world view, patriotism and the myths about the nature of the society. Gramsci's work was radicalised by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), who questioned the privileged position of the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie as the only classes that could truly be hegemonic and allowed hegemonic struggles in society to be seen independently from the class struggle and allowed for recognition of the multiple struggles in a democratic space. This changed the way hegemony could be conceived and the multiple spaces within a society where it could be contested. Laclau and Mouffe also expanded on the details the Gramsci proposed about the ideology at the heart of hegemony. Using ideas drawn from semiotics, Laclau and Mouffe presented the ideology as a floating signifier that is a combination of ideological elements that are connected via a process of articulation. Within each ideology these constitute ideological elements form nodal points where meaning is somewhat defined, although still open to articulation. These ideological concepts allow the researcher to identify the hegemonic ideology, analyse it and use it as a tool of sociological analysis to explore the ideological content of other discourses in relation to hegemony.

The American Dream

In regard to American society, the identification of the ideology is made easier by its cultural self-sufficiency (Crockatt 2007, p. 5). By cultural self-sufficiency, Crockatt means that American society consumes its own cultural products and for the most part is uninterested in the cultural products of other nations (although from time to time exceptions will be made). By ignoring other nation's cultural products, America is not exposed to other nation's ideologies which are within those foreign cultural products. At the core of America's ideology is its belief in its own superiority, its uniqueness, a celebration of competition and success; a manifest destiny. These elements are brought together in the concept of the American Dream. The American Dream has the potential to work ideologically in the support of hegemony in American society. Within its logic it justifies the position of those groups who are at

the top of the social hierarchy. Their success must be the result of their own hard work. The American Dream suggests that there is something inherently superior about the United States that is lacking in the other nations of the world. It gives the other classes in American society a process of merit for their own advancement, success in America is not about birth, but effort. The American Dream may be a myth, but Americans still believe in it and American popular culture continues to reproduce it (Samuel 2012).

Like de Tocqueville's work, one of the goals of this thesis is to explain elements of American society to non-Americans. Research into the American Dream by both Cullen (2003) and Samuel (2012), have shown that Americans have an intimate understanding of the American Dream. For non-Americans, the Dream is harder to grasp. Without an understanding of the Dream, a fundamental part in the understanding of America society is lost. Non-Americans across the globe are consuming American media and entertainment that is saturated with the concept of the American Dream, yet this media refuses to call it by name. Without an understanding of the complexities and details of the American Dream, these ideological messages broadcast to the rest of the world are fragmented and incomplete and can give the rest of the world a confused misunderstanding of America society. It is no surprise that many non-American societies struggle to define their own national ideological perspectives when they are awash in messages about America's national beliefs.

A Heroic Mission...

This thesis is concerned with the role of superhero comic books in the process of hegemony within American society. The research question is focused on the ability of superhero narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology. The superhero narratives that make up the sample are Batman from DC Comics and Captain America from Marvel Comics. The time frame of this study is 2001 to 2008. Hegemony as detailed by Gramsci and radicalised by Laclau and Mouffe forms the theoretical and methodological basis of this study. The ideological components that make up the ideology of American hegemony in this time frame are drawn from the concept of the American Dream as a floating signifier. As such this

study seeks to make contributions to the understanding of the societal role of superhero narratives and comic books as forms of popular culture, the process of hegemony in contemporary society and the position of the American Dream as a unique and power ideology of American society.

Chapter Overview

As superhero comic's ability as cultural products to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideologies is the subject of this examination it is necessary to describe the industry in which the comics are produced and the narrative conventions which help to define them as medium and a genre. Chapter 1 explores and introduces American superhero comics as cultural products and places them within the economic and structural context of the Comic Book industry in the United States. Comic books in America are dominated by superhero narratives with production dominated by two publishing companies, Marvel Comics and DC Comics. At the turn of the 21st Century, both publishing companies embraced a business model which saw an increased focus on the use of superhero characters in the mediums of film and television. As the film and television interests grew, becoming economically larger than the comic book publishing interests, the comic books became subservient to these interests. Superhero comic books subservient relationship has meant that political or controversial narratives in the comic books are seen to have the potential to damage the film interests. Chapter 1 illustrates an example of this in the Captain America narrative of *Captain America #602* (Brubaker, Ross 2010) which presented a critique of the Tea Party movement. The publisher tried to explain that the critique was accidental, the result of unintended production errors, and not a political statement (Phegle, Quesada 2010). This public intervention by management into the formal meaning of the Captain America narrative is one part of a system of corporate oversight of the publishing companies that includes writing summits in which management directs the narratives that the writers produce (Johnson 2011). Marvel Comics abandoned the Comic Code in 2001 (Comic Book Resources 2001)², an industry body that had censored comics and provided a code to control the content of

² DC Comics continued to use the Comics Code until it also abandoned it for its own rating system in 2011.

superhero comics since the 1950s (Nyberg 1998), however the dominance of the film interests of both companies and the oversight of management of the content of comic books created a similar restricting effect on superhero narratives at the beginning of the 21st Century. This restricting effect is an internal process rather than the third party, external process of the Comics Code. This restricting effect of film interests on comic book content is explored in more detail in the chapter 1.

The narrative conventions of superhero comic books have been seen to restrict the narrative's ability to critique, contest and challenge dominant ideologies (Eco & Chilton 1972; Reynolds 1994; Dittmer 2007). The convention of an open narrative means that superhero narratives cannot reach a final narrative conclusion, and as such are always in the middle of the narrative. The need to have the fictional world of the comic book represent the world of the reader; in other words to be the world that is not *THE* world of the reader means that the superhero narrative cannot show an alternative version of the real world in which change is realised. These restrictions and limits are not insurmountable for the creative team, but create the space in which superhero narratives must operate.

Chapter 1 introduces the sample of the study that corresponds to these conventions; the open narrative, the representation of the world of the reader and the duopoly of the superhero comic industry. The sample is the narrative of Captain America from Marvel Comics and the narrative of Batman from DC Comics. This sample also allows for the exploration of Dittmer's ideas of nationalistic superhero narratives and pro-social superhero narratives (Dittmer 2013). All superheroes have a heroic mission, but Dittmer makes the case that nationalistic superheroes like Captain America who are personification of the nation state in relation to the superhero costume, their physical body and morality have the nation state at the centre of their narrative.

Alternatively, superhero characters that lack the intrinsic link to a nation state, such as Batman are pro-social superheroes (Dittmer 2013, p.7). Dittmer describes their mission as not essentially linked to the nation state and therefore their heroic mission is pro-social, oriented to a more general concept of society, although Dittmer notes that these pro-social superheroes can also explore nationalistic concepts as well. Dittmer's ideas of nationalistic and pro-social superhero narratives become important

in the analysis of the Captain America and Batman narratives of the timeframe of this study as each narrative is able to articulate different elements of the United States as a nation after 9/11.

To be able to draw a conclusion as to whether superhero comics are able to reproduce, critique, contest and challenge dominant ideologies it is necessary to establish what dominant ideologies are and how they function. The methodology of this study involves the identification of the dominant ideology of American society at relevant points in time through examination of historical events, the political positions of the Presidential Administration and the use of opinion polls and social research. This creates a narrative of the hegemony of American society, a narrative of how dominant ideology changes in response to social and political pressure and exposes the moments that hegemony succeeds and fails. The concept of hegemony as defined by Antonio Gramsci (1971) and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe 2001) presents a theory of cultural domination within a society that details the content of dominant ideologies, the role of dominant ideology within the process of hegemony and the role of intellectuals in relation to the process of hegemony. Chapter 2 has the goal of establishing this theoretical lens for its use in the analysis on the ideological content of superhero comic books. The key contribution of Chapter 2 is the creation of a sociological tool based on the deconstruction of a hegemonic ideology into its articulated nodal points. Rejecting the class reductionism of Gramsci (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, p.137), Laclau and Mouffe go beyond Gramsci's hegemonic principle of the Bourgeoisie or the Proletariat and detail the content of hegemonic ideology that includes Gramsci's ideological component of the national-popular (Mouffe 1979, p.194), but emphasises the role of articulation within hegemony and ideology. Laclau and Mouffe's work allows for a deeper consideration of hegemony that expands not only the groups that can attempt hegemony but also the spaces within a society that hegemony can be contested. Hegemony and ideology no longer are defined by the exclusive concerns of the fundamental classes, but are seen to operate in a wider field of articulation within society. As such an ideology that is hegemonic (that is it is the ideology of the hegemonic bloc) is articulated by the intellectuals within the hegemonic bloc and is made up of ideological components that Laclau and Mouffe refer to as nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, p.139). These nodal points of ideological components are

floating signifiers, open to articulation but often limited by past articulations and often with somewhat fixed meanings. It is the changing articulations and relationships between these nodal points, the articulations of new ideological elements, the articulation of the primacy of certain nodal points over others that constitutes the hegemonic ideology and allows for alternation and change within the ideology (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, p.142). When this ideology is broken into the constituted nodal points of the ideological component (including the relationships of articulation between the points themselves, the societal events and social groups) the ideology is itself laid bare and open and ready for use in analysis. The analysed ideology is then able to be compared to the ideological content of cultural products from the same time and place of the hegemony. If a cultural product replicates the analysed ideology, then it would contain the same or very similar nodal points of ideological components, similar relationships between these points, similar privileged points, similar articulations to societal events and social groups. It is important to note that these nodal points need not be exactly the same in the reproduction of ideology. The incomplete nature of hegemony as a process means that change within a hegemonic ideology is ongoing.

However if the ideological content of a cultural product is attempting some critique, challenge or contest of the dominant ideology then there should be a more substantial contrast and difference within the ideological points and articulations of the cultural product in comparison to the analysed ideology. In opposition to the hegemony there is the potential for counter hegemony which goes beyond simple critique and attempts to create an opposing bloc and ideology. While critique involves expressing difference to some degree, counter hegemony attempts to create an opposing ideology and opposing bloc through a process of rearticulation that constructs an opposing ideology.

The strategies for counter hegemony include rearticulation of the ideological elements and social groups of the hegemony so as to fix them to the counter hegemony and articulation of elements and groups outside the hegemony. These rearticulations and articulations change the relationships between the ideological components and in effect create a different ideology which may at first be hard to differentiate from the hegemony because they might contain many of the same ideological components.

For Gramsci the defining aspect of counter hegemony was a difference in the hegemonic principle of the fundamental classes, the Bourgeoisie or the Proletariat. A Bourgeois hegemony would include within its ideology a justification for the Bourgeoisie's position at the apex of the social structure (Gramsci 1971, p.161). The Proletariat counter hegemony could include many of the ideological constituent components of the Bourgeois hegemony, but must replace the justification for the Bourgeois dominance with a justification for Proletarian dominance. Laclau and Mouffe, in rejecting the class reductionism, change not only the social groups that can contest hegemony by freeing it from the two fundamental classes, but also change the nature of the hegemonic principle. In Laclau and Mouffe's radicalisation of hegemony in a democratic space there are multiple sites and groups in the contest for hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, p.140). As such, in identifying counter hegemony it is necessary to identify the hegemonic principle of the hegemony, the groups whose dominance it seeks to justify, and also the privileged nodal point; the ideological component that has the strongest relationship over the others in the ideology and therefore primacy in the articulation of the ideology as a whole. Attention to these elements within analysis enable identifications of attempts at counter hegemony that go beyond the steps of critique and challenge and enter the field of contest.

This sociological tool of analysis of the analysed ideology when applied to cultural products such as superhero comics reveals their position in relation to hegemony. The analysed ideology, the relationships between the ideological components and the privileged nodal point can then be compared to the ideological content of the cultural product. Similar ideological components in a similar organisation would suggest support for the ideology. Significant difference in the organisation, or the privileged nodal point or in other ideological components articulated within the cultural product would suggest some resistance to the hegemony. This is an important process in exploring the cultural product's position in relation to hegemony. Without this process there is a danger that representations of superficial rebellion might be taken for counter hegemony, when in reality that are supporting the hegemony ideologically. An example of this is the work of Williams (1994) which is presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 makes the case that in American society the concept of the American Dream and its ideological components can be used ideologically in the process of hegemony. The American Dream is an ideology that exists on many levels in American Society, from personal American Dreams of individuals to a national ideology that explains the United States place in the world. The American Dream is well explained in its broadest sense by Hochschild,

(The American Dream is) the promise that all Americans have a reasonable chance to achieve success as they define it – material or other wise – through their own efforts, and to attain virtue and fulfilment through success (Hochschild 1995, p. xi)

Within the frame of Hochschild's definition are the key constituted ideological components of the American Dream: success as the goal; hard work as the process; and virtue as both a goal and necessary by-product of the process. In addition to these three named components within Hochschild's definition there are other ideological components which are unnamed but are also constituted elements of the ideology: equality in that the Dream is open to all Americans; American exceptionalism in that the American Dream is only possible within the United States which suggests that American society is superior to other societies; patriotism which is the collective celebration of that superiority; and freedom as an important condition in American society that can be perceived as both an ideological part of the creation of the American Dream, a condition for its efficacy, and a product of the American Dream as well. Freedom is an extremely open signifier within the American Dream and as Chapter 3 expands on has been used to justify contradictory points in American history from the freedom to own slaves to the freedom to not be a slave (Cullen 2004). These elements are not the only ideological components that can be included in the ideology of the American Dream or that can be articulated to it. When the American Dream is used within hegemony these ideological components become the nodal points of the hegemonic ideology and can have additional elements and concepts articulated to them. The nodal points are articulated in specific ways within a hegemonic ideology, defined in ways that serve the hegemonic purpose. For example the concept of success is a nodal point that can be defined in different ways within the American Dream, including but not limited to financial wealth and non-material concepts of happiness. The past articulations of these ideological

components work to somewhat fix the meaning of these floating signifiers, influencing the potential articulations. For example, within the history of the American Dream wealth as a goal has had a very strong history of articulation and can easily emerge within the ideology with little effort in articulation.

This thesis makes the case that two different versions of the American Dream became hegemonic ideologies of two different hegemonic groups in American society from 2001 to 2008. The first is the hegemony of the Right that emerged directly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the 11th of September 2001 and is personified in President George W. Bush and his Administration. Referred to in this thesis as *the American Dream of Security*, it is articulated in Bush's speech to the joint session of congress on the 20th September 2001 (Bush 2001). Positioning the Bush administration as the hegemonic group, the American Dream of Security presents Security and the safety of the American people as the principle articulation of success, the privileged nodal point. Accordingly, I will often use the phrase Security as Success as a synonym for the American Dream of Security. This ideology is detailed in Chapter 3 of this study.

The second version of the American Dream is *the American Dream of Hope* which emerged in 2007 and 2008 as part of Barack Obama's successful Presidential Campaign. This hegemony of the Left articulated the American Dream in a very different way. The Obama campaign addressed a perception that the equation of Hard Work equalling Success in the American Dream was broken under the Bush Administration. Obama promised policy changes to re-establish the American Dream, but also offered a more direct expression of the reality of the American Dream. As an African American man brought up in single parent family, his success in reaching the heights of the Illinois State Senate, U.S. Senate and the Democrat nomination for President showed that the American Dream did still exist. In essence the American people, in electing Barack Obama as President in November 2008, proved the American Dream true for themselves.

The study of hegemony in American society from 2001 to 2008 is the study of the narrative from 9/11 and the heights of the Bush Administration's popularity to the election of Obama. The analysis of America during this period not only exposes the core ideological concepts of American society but provides an intriguing case study

in the process of hegemony in a democratic society. The primary role of the notion of hegemony in this study is to present the ideological position of American society as a point of comparison with the ideological positions and contents of the superhero comics of Batman and Captain America.

The analysis of the ability of superhero comics to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology in American Society begins in Chapter 4 with the years 2001 and 2002. The Captain American and Batman narratives of 2001 before the 11th of September show a concern with division within American society and represent substantial positive expressions of female characters in prominent roles within the narrative. The issues of division include concerns about political division with American society after the divisive Bush/Gore election of 2000 and concerns about racial inequality. There is a major change within the content of the comics after the 9/11 attacks. 9/11 gives the Bush Administration an opportunity for hegemony that it was unable to secure in the 2000 Presidential election. From this new hegemony of the Right emerges the ideology of the American Dream of Security. Analysis of this ideology and its application to the superhero narratives of 2001 and 2002 shows that the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain American replicated the ideological components of the new hegemony: Success as Security and accompanying it reduction in concerns for ethnic equality and the role of women (Faludi 2008). Within the space of the Captain America superhero narrative of 2002 there was resistance to the new hegemony with a critique that challenged the concept of America's innocence in the 9/11 attacks at a time when similar narratives in other mediums and media brought serious social repercussions.

Chapter 5 examines the years 2003 and 2004 in which the Bush Administration used the ideology of the American Dream of Security to build public support for and justify the invasion of Iraq on the 20th March 2003. Support for this ideology and hegemony can be seen in the comic books, however there are differences from the comics directly after 9/11. The superhero narratives of 2003 and 2004 moved away from a focus on Security as Success as the nodal point and instead focused on the ideological concept of Hard Work. In exploring what Hard Work was in reaching the goal of Security, some of the comics within the Batman narratives showed positive representations of torture as a legitimate tool in the War on Terror. As the American Dream of Security and the hegemony of the Bush Administration became more

contested within American society, so did more critiques and challenges to the Bush Administration's policies and actions arise in the comics, many using articulations about America that had been well established in superhero narratives (such as the ideological concept of Truth associated with the superhero character of Superman). In comparison to the superhero comics of World War II and the Cold War, the superhero narratives at the height of the War on Terror showed a degree of restraint and do not present the vicious and villainous personification of the antagonistic Other of the Al Qaeda terrorists or Iraqis and seem to specifically avoid the potential for such depictions.

While the hegemony of the Bush Administration and the ideology of the American Dream of Security continued to wane, it was still strong enough to help secure the Bush Administration a second term in November 2004. Chapter 6 covers 2005 and 2006 in which the Right Wing hegemony of the American Dream of Security is undone. The Bush Administration was unable to articulate the crisis of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 for its own purposes and instead, the disaster that was the aftermath of the Hurricane was seen to be a failure of the Administration (Zogby 2007, p.157; Nicholls & Pichu 2012, p.352). The articulation of Security as Success is ruined by the failure to secure the residents of New Orleans. The superhero narratives of this period provide a mix of ideological positions. Some comics pre-Katrina were still attempting to challenge the Bush Administration and its War in Iraq, while others closer in time to Katrina attempted to offer articulations of the American Dream that were not intended to challenge the Bush hegemony, but were directed at an American society in a type of hegemonic vacuum. Within American society the field of articulation opened up in wake of the failure of the hegemony of the Right. The superhero narratives presented possible articulations of Success that could take the place of Security. Within the Marvel Comic *Civil War*, there was an attempt to put the American Dream of Security and the Bush Administration into a social and historical context to move beyond this history.

Chapter 7 examines the final years of the project, 2007 and 2008 which ends with the election of President Barack Obama. The analysis of this new ideology of *the American Dream of Hope* and its application to the ideological content of the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America showed support for the ideology. Not only did the superhero narratives reproduce the ideology, but they

contributed significant justifications for the ideology personified in the characters of Batman and Captain America. The Captain America narratives focus on the transformative nature of the Obama phenomenon through the transformation of Captain America's former side kick Bucky, into a new Captain America after the death of the original in 2006. Within the narrative in the *Batman* comic the contest for hegemony and ideology is shown to be presented metaphorically.

Chapter 8 draws on the results of this study to explore theoretical considerations around the concept of hegemony. The articulations of Hurricane Katrina are an extremely important point in the narrative of American hegemony; the moment when Security as Success and the hegemony of the Right failed. However, articulations and representations of Hurricane Katrina were absent from the superhero narratives while 9/11 as a comparable event was well represented. From a position of exploring popular cultures role in the process of hegemony certain explanations are possible. While issues of production and sales could affect the representation within the comics, there are unique issues with Hurricane Katrina. The articulation of the news media drew heavily on the concept of the Risk Society thesis which presents potential narrative issues for the superhero comics. Superhero comics have a narrative convention that places them in the timeframe of the perpetual now which helps to drive their ideological content ever forward. This is reflective of Laclau and Mouffe's concept of myth (Smith 1998, p.167), the imagination of potential hegemony and ideology which might suit popular culture more than other media like news media.

Chapter 8 also explores the role that the American Dream plays ideological after Katrina to avoid issues of crisis of authority. The powerful articulation of the past of Equality as an ideological element of the American Dream provided stability and helped to direct the ideology from myth to the hegemony of the American Dream of Hope. The results of this suggest that the ideology within hegemony is an important element in studies that seek to explore the processes hegemony in society. This reflective of the Laclau and Mouffe model of hegemony where the focus is on the articulations of ideology, the nodal points of an ideology in the exploration of hegemony. The results of this these suggest that an understanding of hegemony in society needs to move beyond the preoccupation of fundamental classes of the

Marxist Gramsci model. Instead the ideology itself should take centre stage in the analysis.

Lastly, Chapter 8 explores the importance of catastrophe in the process of hegemony in contemporary democratic society. Within this case study the only time that there was significant change within hegemony was at the moment of catastrophe: 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Outside of these two events, while the process of hegemony was observed, change was limited. This suggests that within a democratic society such as the United States where the political spectrum has narrowed, the contest for hegemony is played over a smaller ideological terrain limiting change. Significant change might only be possible when a catastrophe from outside the field of articulation cuts across the society in a devastating fashion and opens up new possibilities of articulation.

The thesis is concluded drawing on the analysis of each chapter, summarising the different ways that the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America reproduced, critiqued, challenged and contested dominant ideologies. The conclusion draws on the past work of academics in the field and expands on the limitations and opportunities of the medium of superhero comics to play a complex role in the process of hegemony and counter hegemony in a democratic society.

Chapter 1: Superhero comic books: The Industry and Narratives

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the economic and creative space in which superhero comics were published in the timeframe of this study and to provide background and justifications for the two characters whose narratives make up the sample of this study, Batman and Captain America. The American superhero industry is a specialist industry with a seventy five year history that has helped to shape superheroes as a genre in the 21st Century. While originally created for comic books, superheroes have successfully transitioned to other mediums such as, radio, television, cinema and videogames. While it is an industry of diverse mediums, it is dominated by two companies that are represented in the sample of this study, DC Comics and Marvel Comics. Both companies are owned by larger multimedia companies, DC Comics has been a long time property of Time Warner and in 2009 Marvel was purchased by Disney. The approach of this chapter is to begin with the history of superhero comics as a consumer product and explore the state of the industry in the time frame of this study. This focus on the American superhero industry illustrates important points in how the structure and business model of the industry affects the ability and limits superhero comics to engagement in critical commentary.

Drawing from previous academic research the next section of this chapter follows the way that some narrative conventions of superhero comics work to limit ideological exploration, while other conventions provide narrative advantages. It also explores and introduces the characters whose narratives are the subject of analysis in this study, the aforementioned Batman and Captain America. This chapter ends with the superhero comics of Batman and Captain America of 2001 to 2008 presented as a site ready for the application of hegemony as a theoretical and methodological tool of analysis to expose the ability of these narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest the dominant ideology of American society.

Superheroes, the origin and industry

Superheroes are an American invention of the late 1930s. Superheroes were an early part of the comic book medium, one of the first popular culture consumer products that targeted American youth (Wright 2001). They were drawn from the stories of ancient mythology and the science fiction and pulp magazines of the 1930s. Superman was the very first superhero, published in Action Comics #1 by National Comics (later to be DC Comics) in 1938 and created by writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster (Jones 2005). As the first superhero Richard Reynolds has noted that Superman creates the archetype definition of a superhero. The superhero is marked out from society, has some type of superpower, and devotion to justice that overrides their devotion to the law. While above the law, the superhero is dedicated to patriotism or is morally loyal to the state. Reynolds stated that the extraordinary nature of the superhero is contrasted to the ordinariness of their surrounds and the mundane nature of the alter-ego/secret identity. The narratives of the superhero are mythic and use both science and magic to create a sense of wonder (Reynolds 1994, p.16).

Superman's commercial success meant this new type of hero joined the established genre comics of the time such as westerns and science fiction. Comic book industries in other nations, such as *manga* in Japan and *bandes dessinées* in Belgium and France have historically explored diverse genres and have been able to create comic books for a variety of age groups including adults. The American industry on the other hand is dominated by superhero comics. This is a result of a successful campaign against the burgeoning and diverse comic book industry in the 1950s. Public fears of subversive comic books leading youth astray were inflamed by child psychologist Doctor Fredic Weltham, in his 1954 book "*Seduction of the innocent*". This in part led to the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to investigate comic books in 1954. In an attempt to restore faith in the industry, the comic book publishers adopted a code and a censorship body to police the industry (Nyberg 1998) that sought to "mainstream the values and messages in comics" (McAllister 1990, p.61). This Comic Code ensured that comic books would no longer be able to explore adult subjects which had been creeping into publications. With the more adult genres such as horror and romance comics unable to meet the standards of the code, the industry was left with superheros as the only viable genre

from the 1950s. At the turn of the 21st Century even though some of the previous genres of comics have returned and many other publishers had entered the market, the American comic book industry was dominated by Marvel Comics and DC Comics who held a duopoly on the superhero comics that were consumed in America.

Marvel and DC Comics in the 21st Century are part of multinational corporations with diverse entertainment interests aside from publishing superhero comics. DC Comics is known for its stable of superhero characters; the original superhero Superman and some of the most well known superheroes in American culture such as Batman, Wonder-woman, Flash and the Green Lantern. Originally known as Detective Comics incorporated, DC Comics changed its name to National Comics before the publication of the first superhero comic, Action Comics #1 in 1938. It was bought in 1969 by Kinney National which became Warner Communications later that year. In 1989, Warner Communications merged with Time Inc to become Time Warner. DC Comics remains a subsidiary of Time Warner during the time frame of this study. It was the leading comic book company in the United States up until 1968 when Marvel Comics began to challenge its dominance of the industry (Wright 2001, p.230).

While Marvel Comics is better known for its resurgence in the 1960s, it too can trace its lineage back to the 1930s, the 'Golden Age' of Superhero comics³. Timely Comics, as it was known originally was responsible for superheroes, Captain America, Namor the Sub-mariner and the Human Torch (Kaplan, 2006). Post World War Two, Timely Comics became Atlas Comics and moved away from the failing superhero genre. It was after the introduction of the Comics Code and DC Comics attempt to revamp some of its cancelled Golden Age superheroes such as the Green Lantern and the Flash that Marvel Comics (trading as Atlas Comics) under the leadership of Stan Lee staged a resurgence in the 1960s.

³ Superhero comic fans refer to the era of the original superhero comics of 1938 to the early 1950s as the Golden Age. This is followed by the Silver Age of the mid 1950s to the late 1960s and the Bronze Age of the 1970s and 1980s (Sassiene 1994). The naming of the eras after the Bronze Age is contested, although Voger has used the term the Dark Age for the 1990s (Voger 2006) in reference to the increase of violence and the grim and gritty themes of this era. While these terms are commonly used by fans of comic books, scholars should be weary of them. They are nostalgic in nature and insinuate levels of quality of comic book writing and art which is misleading.

Stan Lee as the main writer of Marvel's titles, working with artists Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, brought a new aspect to superhero comics. Their superheroes had failings, fears and vulnerabilities. They doubted themselves in their personal lives and struggled with some of the same social and personal issues that their readers were. Spider-man may have had the power to climb walls and swing across the skyline, but as Peter Parker (his alter-ego), he dealt with not being noticed by girls at school and being bullied. He was not a millionaire or an ace reporter, but a school boy who lived in working class poverty with his aging aunt. Lee, working with in collaboration with the artists helped to create Spider-man as well as Thor, The Fantastic Four, Iron-man, and brought back Golden Age heroes the Sub-Mariner and Captain America. Marvel Comics commercial success took them into a two horse market place battle with DC Comics (Wright 2001).

The comic book industry originally sort profit from the sales of comic books at newsstands. Comic book sales operated the same as magazines with individual comic issues on newsstands for a period of time, after which unsold issues would be returned to the publisher. In the 1940s and 1950s comic book companies could expect sales of around 70% of their distributed product. By the 1970s sales had fallen to 30-40% (Wright 2001 p.261). The industry was saved by the growth in specialist comic book stores that focused on the comic book reader as a consumer. The industry embraced direct distribution to this growing retail sector. Managers of comic books stores had a better knowledge of the product than the newsstand operators and would order comics based on the popularity of the titles. Unlike the newsstands, they would not return unsold issues but would retain them to sell at a later date as 'back issues' to consumers (Wright 2001 p.261).

The growth of the direct market and the comic books specialist retailer suggested more long term and short term strategies for profit within the industry. Licensing superhero characters to other entertainment mediums and for production as toys became an important element of the industry and ensured the profitability of Marvel Comics and DC Comics (Wright 2001 p.259). The growth of the specialist retail store at the expense of the newsstand meant that comics were no longer the mass medium it had once been. Now comics were a niche product of a smaller group of fan/consumers (Rogers cited in Pustz 1999 p.209).

DC Comics as part of a large multimedia company proved to be more successful with the licensing of its products than Marvel Comics (Wright 2001). Marvel attempted to match DC Comics success in the early 1990s, focus not only on licensing characters in other mediums but through vertical expansion moving into distribution of comic books and horizontal expansion into other fan/consumer markets such as toys and collectable cards (McAllister 2006, p.28). This expansion was complicated by the collapse of the comic book market in the 1990s. The collapse was due to a reliance on investors buying multiple copies of new comic books in the hope of reaping large profits in resale at a later date. Older comic books from the Golden Age had started selling for thousands of dollar in auctions which suggested to investors that new comics could be worth thousands of dollars in the near future. Once it was clear that new comics could never realise these values, the investors withdrew their capital from the market.

This collapse and Marvel Comic's own internal issues with debt and governance led it to bankruptcy and corporate reorganisation in 1998 (McAllister 2006, p.32). Marvel Comic's corporate issues had a negative effect on its position in the market place. From capturing over 50% of the comic book market in 1992, Marvel Comics continued to lose to both DC Comics and smaller companies throughout the 1990s, finally falling to second place to DC in 1999 with 30.88% of the market. In 2000 Marvel employed a comic book artist for the first time as Editor-in-Chief, Joe Quesada, returning to the idea of creative talent in positions of authority that had served Marvel so well when comic book writer Stan Lee had been Editor-in-Chief during the Marvel resurgence. By 2001, Marvel had started to regain its hold in the comic book market.

The Comic book Superhero industry in the 21st Century

During the timeframe of this study, Marvel and DC Comics dominated the comic book publishing industry within the US. The following are the market breakdown for the years covering this study based on units sold to the direct market in North America:

**Table 1.1 Direct Market Comic Book Sales in North America by Year
2001-2008⁴**

Year	Marvel Comics	DC Comics	Combined Total
2001	37.88%	31.71%	69.59%
2002	40.52%	29.44%	69.96%
2003	39.68%	30.60%	70.28%
2004	43.19%	32.23%	75.42%
2005	42.62%	35.46%	78.08%
2006	42.33%	36.95%	79.28%
2007	44.72%	34.71%	79.43%
2008	45.82%	31.67%	77.49%
Average	41.72%	32.85%	74.94%

Source: Comicchron (Yearly Rankings for Comic Book Sales. 2014)

Marvel Comics and DC Comics business model for the start of 21st Century involved moving away from comic books as the centre of their business and toward the use of their superhero characters in other media such as cartoons, movies and video games. For the general public, the main exposure to superheroes and their stories has not been directly through comic books but through the genre of superhero movies. While Marvel had dabbled with lesser known heroes such as *Blade* (1998) on the big screen, it was with the movies *X-men* (2000) and *Spider-man* (2002) that Marvel made a successful move into the film market. The success of the *Spider-man* movie solidified Marvel's position as a diverse entertainment company. In 2002 Marvel reported net sales of \$79.6 million in 2002 from licensing which includes its joint film productions, \$155 million from toys sales, and \$64.5 million from publishing (New York Business wire, 2003).

DC Comics had been more successful than Marvel in the film and television industry in the past, but worked to match Marvel's new success in film after 2002. DC Comics followed Marvel less spectacularly with the disappointing *Catwoman* (2004) and *Superman Returns* (2006), but found success with the Batman franchise with

⁴ Figures are based on Diamond Comic Distributors market share figures

Batman Begins (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008) as well as smaller DC Comic properties such as *Constantine* (2005), and *V for Vendetta* (2005).

Consolidating their move into film, Marvel reduced their role in the production of toys and cards and instead licensed their top properties to Hasbro (Weiland 2006). In 2008, Marvel took a deeper step into the film industry with the movies *Iron Man* (2008) and *The Incredible Hulk* (2008). They produced the films independently, rather than co-producing in which the superhero property had been licensed to another studio. The move to independently produce these movies resulted in record revenue for Marvel in 2008. Marvel reported that it received net sales for 2008 of \$292.8 million from licensing which included the licensing of toys and the licensing of properties to film such as Sony's licence for Spider-man. \$125.4 million of the net sales came from publishing and \$254.6 million from its own film production (Brady 2009).

The publishing of comic books had become a much smaller element of the other profit making enterprises of the industry. While Marvel increased its net sales of comic books from 2002 to 2008, publishing as sales reduced in comparison to the other areas of the superhero business (In Marvel from 21.8% in 2002 to 18.5% in 2008). The lesser importance of the comic book side of the business meant that it was often placed in a subservient role to other interests such as the growing film and television market for superheroes. In 2009 Marvel ensured that Reptil, one of the few Marvel superhero characters specifically created for a cartoon, was published first in a one off comic book *Avengers: The Initiative Featuring Reptil* (Cage, Uy 2009) to ensure that the rights to the character could not be contested by other production partners involved in the creation of the cartoon. In regards to movie releases of Marvel characters, storylines of the comics were brought into line with the films as they were released to act as marketing and merchandising for the film. For example, Marvel characters Thor and Captain America who had died in the narrative of the comic at the time were brought back to life in time for the release of their respective movies in 2010.

The creation and explanation of the meanings of the comic book narratives does come under a certain amount of control from the executive arm of the corporation. As is shown in the example of the death of female superhero Spoiler in the Batman

narrative (covered in Chapter 6), Executive Management has a hand in the creative process. The meta-narrative which forms the core of the yearly blockbuster limited series and effects most of the narratives of the superhero characters published in that company, is decided and planned during “creative submits” at which the creative teams on the comics are told what narratives they will write. Positions like the Editor-in-Chief have the task of not only promoting the products of the company in their interviews and columns on internet sites dedicated to superheroes, but also to patrol and protect the meanings of the narratives when there is a risk that it could damage the product beyond the comic book. For example there was a level of controversy when it appeared that *Captain America* #602 (Brubaker, Ross 2010), published in 2010 (and therefore outside the scope of this study) appeared to criticise the American Right wing Tea Party movement, linking it to racism and armed militias. In the comic Captain America and his partner the Falcon, attempt to infiltrate an anti-government movement in the hope of tracking down rightwing extremists. The movement is identified as an anglo-saxon anti-tax movement. Captain America’s plan is for the Falcon, an African American superhero, to pose as an IRS agent and use his ethnicity to stir their anger. The Falcon and Captain America make clear that they do not support this political movement. The issue that became the focus of the controversy was that the fictional rightwing extremists were shown to be holding protest signs with the slogans of the real life Tea Party movement, “SAY NO TO SOCIALISTS” and “TEA BAG THE LIBERAL DEMS BEFORE THEY TEA BAG YOU!!” (Miller 2010) When confronted with reader concerns that the comic was attempting to paint the Tea Party as racist villains, Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada denied this was the intent of the comic. Quesada explained that this had simply been a mistake in the production process. Quesada pointed out that the writer and artist had left the protesters’ signs blank and in the finalising of the production it was the letterer who filled the signs with text. The letterer, who was politically naive, simply took protest signs from the photos on the internet and inadvertently used slogans from recent tea part protests. The editor then simply failed to pick up this mistake before the comic was printed (Phegle, Quesada, 2010).

While Quesada attempted to show that any political message against the Tea Party movement in the comic was accidental, the writer of *Captain America* #602

seemingly contradicted his Editor-in-Chief in another interview. Brubaker apologised for the fact that the protest signs had made his commentary on the Tea Party within the comic too overt rather than the more subtle commentary he intended. In an interview with Cyriaque Lamar, for popular culture website i09, Brubaker commented

I don't want to talk about that stuff too much. The only thing we apologized for was identifying those protesters as specifically the Tea Party Movement. In Marvel comics it's Roxxon Oil, not Exxon. It's a step removed from reality. It reflects the world without actually being the world, and that was what the apology was for - not that they got offended. People were reading stuff into that. No one ever said "All protesters are evil." I had to shut down my public email because I started getting death threats from, y'know, peaceful protesters. (Brubaker quoted in Lamar, 2010)

If we reject Quesada's explanation and focus more on Brubaker's comments on his work and take into account his own documented negative political position on the Tea Party (Huston 2010), then it is clear that writers are actively trying to make political and social commentary on American society through the comic book medium, but they must also contend with the corporate interests of their employers who have the authority to declare the meanings of superhero narratives.

This incident suggests that comic book creation is more complex than simply the writer and artists. Letterers and editors may have to step into more creative roles with only their own interpretation of the writer and artists work to go with.

The management of the comic book company needs to be included in the authorship of the comic book. Editors-in-Chief do not just step into the interpretation of the comic in controversies like Brubaker's Tea Party issue, but lead the creative direction of the comic books as well. The creative teams work to a template and direction in regard to the type of stories they can write and what elements of the characters should be emphasised. Peter David wrote *The Incredible Hulk* comic for Marvel from for over ten years through to 1998 when he left, blaming in part the direction that the company wished to take the character. In David's work, Bruce Banner was

able to combine the physical form of the Hulk with his intellect. This led to stories with more intellectual themes that meant David could explore important social issues such as AIDS, but the management of Marvel wanted the Hulk comic to return to a more action based “smash” approach. David decided that he did not want to write within management’s imposed restrictions of a less intellectualised storyline that was more brutal and nasty and choose to leave the comic (McAlister 2006, p.23).

This creative direction from management is also found within the modern comic book industry convention of cross over event storylines. Each year, both Marvel Comics and DC Comics release a limited event series that stretches across almost all their comic books. These event comics promise to change the respective comic book universes, bringing the characters together in an epic tale. Tied into this series are smaller limited series that focus on one character or team’s individual experience in the epic story. Within the ongoing comic series, individual issues will be linked into the major story to keep the whole of the comic books involved. For example, Marvel’s modest 2007 event, *World War Hulk* included a *World War Hulk Prologue: World Breaker* #1, the *World War Hulk* limited series #1-5, *World War Hulk Gamma Corps* limited series #1-4, *World War Hulk X-men* limited series #1-3, *World War Hulk Front line* limited series #1-5, ongoing series *Heroes for Hire* #11-15, *Avengers: The Initiative* #4-5, *Irredeemable Ant-man* #10, *Ironman* #19-20, *Ghostrider* #12-13, *Incredible Hulk* #106-111, and finally the one-shot *World War Hulk after smash* #1. Bigger events such as Marvel’s seven issue *Civil War* limited series included 93 different tie-in comic issues.

The huge scope of these comic events is intended to boost sales and profit for the company, but their effect across the different titles also means that individual creative teams need to be onboard with the central story and characters so they can create their own parts of the event. Comic companies have approached this problem by centralising creative direction for the whole comic universe for periods of time in the hands of the event writers at the direction of management. In the case of the larger comic events such as Marvel’s *House of M* (Bendis, Coipel 2005), *Civil War* (Millar, McNiven 2006; Millar, McNiven 2007), and *Secret Invasion* (Bendis, Yu 2008; Bendis, Yu 2009), each comic event changes the landscape of the Universe and therefore the characters in the majority of the comic books produced by the company. All these events by Marvel Comics were written by one writer, Brian

Bendis, with the exception of *Civil War* which was written by Mark Millar. However the Marvel approach to the creation of these events is a collective process.

Marvel during this time period would hold three day “creative summits” with their top writers. In 2006 the creative summit was attended by Brubaker, Bendis, Millar, Joe Straczynski, Jeph Loeb and Joss Whedon. On the first day the editorial teams of all the comic books would present their plans for the next 18 months (Newsarama 2006). After that, the summit was dedicated to the top writers, editors and management sketching out the direction for the creative side for the company for the next year. They covered the major event storyline as well as the narratives of individual characters, detailing how all these different comics would work together. It is interesting to note that it is not the company’s writers that do this, but only a select group of top writers and the company’s editors and management. This suggests that the management imposed restrictions that David had faced that forced him to leave the Incredible Hulk comic in 1998 might be an everyday issue for comic books writers in the first decade of the 21st Century.

The convention within the comic book industry is to see the writer as the principle creator on the product. This is partially a reflection of the general Western concept of authorship. However, clearly the authorship of comic books is a much more complex reality. Take for example *Batman and Robin #3*, January 2012 (Tomasi, Gleason 2012). The individuals credited on page 4 of the comic are Peter J. Tomasi, writer; Patrick Gleason, penciller; Mick Gray, inker; (These three are also credited on the cover of the comic) John Kalisz, colorist; Patrick Brosseau, letter; Gleason, Gray and Kalisz, cover; Kate Kubert, assistant editor; Marvey Richards, associate editor; Mike Marts, editor; Batman created by Bob Kane. The consumer of the product has little more to inform them on who is responsible for the specific elements of the comic book.

This complexity has two main effects on this thesis. Firstly with the fact that the public statements of creators and management can have the goal of manipulating or misrepresenting intended meaning of the superhero narratives in service of both sales or protecting the value of the superhero property means that this study will as much as possible avoid creator and management commentary on the comics. The complexity of the creative and production process means that this thesis while

abiding by the convention of referencing the creators, will as much as possible view superhero comic books as the cultural creation of a collective of intellectuals. Superhero comic books will be viewed as a cultural product of a corporation. When ideological points within the content of the comics are observed it will be explained from the point of view of the product itself. This is not meant to malign the writer or artists, but to acknowledge the complexity of the authorship of the product itself. However, within the research of this project it is clear that as much as there are restrictions within the industry on creators, there are writers who are able to operate with a degree of licence within these restrictions. The superhero narratives of 2007 and 2008 which are analysed in Chapter 7 show that Ed Brubaker in his work on *Captain America* and Grant Morrison in his work on *Batman*, both have significant power to remain on the one title consistently and to explore ideological issues that are of importance to them.

The comic book industry in the 21st Century is far removed from the Industry of 1939. While the Comic Code no longer has the power of censorship, writers have other corporate restrictions to deal with. McAllister notes that these corporate restrictions affect the ability of creators to oppose dominant ideologies within superhero comics. Publisher and editorial directions around the need for profitability and characters as comic book franchises restricts the scope of potential commentary within the comic book (McAllister, 2006, p.25). Superhero comics as published by Marvel Comics and DC Comics are part of a capitalist venture seeking profits. Their objective is not to promote ideologies, but to sell in numbers that add profits to the publishing company (McAlister 2006 p.18), and to support the film interest of the business. Other issues which McAllister sees as detrimental to the ability of comics to critique dominant values are comic distribution, industry horizontal integration (McAlister 2006p.24) and the licensing of characters especially for profitable movie franchises (McAlister 1990, p.67).

Restrictions and advantages in the narrative conventions of Superheroes

Dittmer (2013) in his work on superheroes makes the point that there have been academic definitions of the character of a superhero within the genre, specifically Reynold's Superman archetype (1994) and Coogan's work which emphasises the

pro-social mission of the superhero and the generic conventions of costumes and secret identities (Coogan 2006). Dittmer however, suggests that a focus on the narrative elements of the superhero genre is more important in an analysis of the ideological content of superhero comics and their ability to provide critical societal commentary (Dittmer 2013 p.7). As such, this thesis will follow Dittmer's example and provide no conclusive definition of a superhero, but instead focus on the narrative conventions of superhero comics and the advantages and restrictions that they pose in making social commentary. The narrative conventions that will be explored here are nationalistic and pro-social superhero conventions, representations of the world of the reader, open narratives and continuity.

Dittmer's work has focused on the superhero subgenre of the nationalistic superhero (Dittmer 2005, 2007, 2011, 2013) and its role in 'legitimising, contesting and reworking state's foreign policies' (Dittmer 2013 p.3). Dittmer makes the point that nationalistic superhero are not, the only, or the most important part of the construction or reproduction of national identity and ideology, nor are they just the reflection of the values of society or the result of economic policy. Nationalistic superhero narratives have a complex role that involves the reproduction of national identity and ideology, and also the negotiation and contest of those ideological concepts. At the heart of Dittmer's work is the relationship between the nationalistic superhero and the state. The nationalist superhero has an overt physiological identification with the nation state through their uniform and body and an ideological representation through their values and beliefs which are also overtly connected to the nation state. This affects the narratives of the nationalistic superhero as the nation state is always present physically and ideologically in the narrative. This identification and connection to the ideological concept of patriotism in the comics makes discourse about the nation state much easier. This identification however can restrict the ability of the narrative to explore other discourses outside of the paradigm of the nation state.

The relationship between the nation state and the nationalistic superhero has an effect on certain narrative conventions of the superhero genre, for example the concept of the superhero's mission (Coogan 2006). Each superhero has a unique mission that is often created through their origin story. In essence, each mission is an articulation of Good versus Evil. The mission is open to articulation however, its meaning is loosely

defined which restricts its parameters of interpretation. A nationalistic superhero's mission must, by the nature of their representation of the nation state, involve the nation state. This is one of the points of difference that Dittmer uses to separate nationalistic superheroes from pro-social superheroes. Pro-social superheroes might have narratives that from time to time explore the concepts of national identity and ideology and might at times identify with the nation state. For example, Batman is a pro-social superhero, who can identify with the United States from time to time, but has a mission that is separated from the nation state. Batman's mission which is rooted in the origin of the character is a war on crime to avenge the death of his parents. On the other hand, Captain America who is one of the superhero heroes that Dittmer's work is focused on is a nationalistic superhero whose mission is again rooted in the character's origin; to fight America's enemies. He finds that nationalistic heroes like Captain America through their unique relation to the nation are able to explore concepts of the idea of the nation and the society that do not simply reproduce nationalism as hegemony, but provide a space for 'legitimising, contesting and reworking states foreign policies' (Dittmer 2013 p.3)

Dittmer's examination of nationalistic superheroes and their specific narratives as different from pro-social superheroes opens up a certain space for examination in this thesis. Dittmer makes the point that pro-social superheroes can also be representative of the nation state, but does not get to explore how these pro-social superhero narratives are able to explore national identity, ideology and foreign policy. This has guided the selection of the sample used in this thesis. The space for the exploration of pro-social superheroes relation to the nation state and Dittmer's work on nationalistic superhero conventions can be explored with a nationalistic superhero narrative; Marvel Comics' Captain America, and a pro-social superhero narrative; DC Comics Batman. In this way their relation to the nation state, their ability to represent specific elements of the nation state for example civil society or the government can be explored.

The ability of superheroes within narratives to represent or not represent the nation state is also affected by the setting of superhero narratives. Brubaker in his response to the Tea Party scandal stated that superhero comics reflect the world without being the actual world of the reader. This is a convention of the superhero narrative, that the narrative takes place in a fictional world that represents the real world on

multiple levels and abstractions. While Metropolis and Gotham are not real places, they are meant to represent the social reality of American cities that are part of the social reality of the comic book consumers. Some narratives take place in a fictional version of a real city include rather than a totally fictional city such as Gotham. Likewise there are other nations and cities possibly outside of the lived reality of the reader, but part of their articulated world that are part of the superhero narratives. Again, sometimes they are fictional nations such as the Middle Eastern nation of Qurac in DC Comics which at times has represented either Iran or Iraq. Not all superhero narratives are so overtly connected to the real spaces of the consumer's reality. Within the genre of superheroes some draw heavily from the genre of science fiction. Their narratives often take place on other planets and other dimensions. Examples of these types of superheroes include DC Comics' Green Lantern and Marvel Comics' Silver Surfer. These divisions are general and not exclusive. The science fiction superhero narratives at times take place in urban settings.

The representation of the world of the reader without being the actual world of the reader is seemingly in contradiction to the mythic and fantastic nature of the superhero narrative as detailed by Reynolds (1994). Dittmer notes "no matter how futuristic or unique the scenario, there must be some recognizable elements of the reader's society if he or she is to be able to relate to the protagonist(s)" (2007 p.251) The narrative of the superhero is restricted by the need to represent the perpetual now, the reflected world without being the actual world of the reader.

Important elements in a narrative are a beginning, middle and end. However the episodic nature of the superhero narrative (a new issue of the superhero comic mostly published every month) means that superhero comics are open narratives without end. This open narrative is complicated by the fact that most superheroes are decades old, such as Batman and Captain America who both debuted in 1939. The story of the superhero has a beginning, the all important origin in which the character gets both their superpower and their mission. The superhero narrative however is stuck in the middle of the narrative. While chapters of their stories may conclude, the superhero is forever caught in the middle of their struggle to achieve their ultimate mission. The moment they overcome an obstacle, another will be presented. Their ultimate mission can never be completed, to do so would end the narrative and therefore the comic itself. Each comic book is one more chapter in a story that

ultimately has no conclusion. Even death is no end to the superhero narrative. It becomes merely another obstacle that may boost sales of the comic, but will eventually be overcome by the superhero in their unending narrative. While superheroes may meet success in the short term, even over death, their ultimate success, the final resolution of their mission is beyond them. Umberto Eco and Natalie Chilton in their examination of the *Superman* comic noted a restriction in the narrative of comics; the plot and superhero must avoid developments and stay at a static point to ensure that the character of the superhero never changes (Eco & Chilton, 1972, p.22). Their point was in the open narrative of the superhero; the superhero is unable to change the world or themselves and is caught forever defending the status quo of society and therefore the hegemony of the establishment.

There are superhero comics that do have closed narratives. These comics are a subset of the main unending narrative style of the superhero. These comics are often set in dimensions or parallel universes that are different from the standard setting of the superhero stories of the publishing company. In the closed narratives a character that resembles the superhero will engage in a narrative that does end. In Marvel, these stories are often called 'What If...?' and in DC that are often referred to as 'Elseworlds' comics. They are often explorations of other possibilities in the superhero narrative, what would happen in the narrative if the plot had veered in another direction, for example 1980's *What if...? #19* (Gillis, Broderick 1980) *What if Spiderman had stopped the burglar who killed his uncle?* At times there can be more of a focus on the concept of parallel dimension that may actually exist alongside the standard narrative. Elseworlds stories more often explore this element such as the three issues series of 2003's *Superman: Red Son #1-3* (Millar, Johnson 2003), in which the Superman narrative is retold with Superman crashlanding in the Soviet Union as a child rather than America.

There are other closed narrative superhero comics that exist outside of these two concepts, limited series that may take the superhero into a future narrative setting or archetype superheroes to explore a new narrative that has a definitive ending. Examples of this include the DC Comics published *Batman: The Dark Knight #1-4* (Miller, Janson 1986) written by Frank Miller, *Watchmen #1-12* (Moore, Gibbons 1986; Morre, Gibbons, 1987) written by Alan Moore and the Marvel Comics' *Squadron Supreme (#1-4: Gruenwald, Hall 1985; #5, #8: Gruenwald, Hall 1986; #6,*

#8-12: Gruenwald, Ryan 1986; #7: Gruenwald, Buscema 1986) written by Mark Gruenwald. These comics take place outside the ongoing narrative. Although it should be noted, that some successful closed narrative comics are followed with the publication of prequels or sequels because of their economic success.

Another example of closed narrative comics is the creation of new narratives based on the characters of the open superhero narratives. An example of this is the Ultimates line of superhero comics started by Marvel in 2000. In this new narrative the superhero properties of Marvel were re-imagined for a present day setting and were able to explore new directions based on the older narrative. In the Ultimate line Peter Parker the original Spiderman is killed and replaced by a new Spiderman, Miles Morales. As of the time of this study, the Ultimate line is continuing to be published, however past attempts at new narratives have not continued. In 1992, Marvel started a new *2099* narrative set 100 years in the future, also with a new Spiderman, Miguel O' Hara. The narrative was concluded in 1998.

Closed narrative comics are often pitched by the publishers for a more mature reader and find a life beyond their serialised publication as intellectually respected hard covered graphic novels on the shelves of book stores. Critically and academically, these comics have gained a higher proportion of attention from the literary and academic communities than their less respected open narrative parents. Both the *Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen* have been praised by critics and have found favour with academics such as Klock who saw these works specifically, as the beginning of a new era in superhero comics of the 'revisionist' superhero narrative (Klock 2002, p.25). Dittmer makes the point that closed narrative comics like *Watchmen* are able to make more critical social commentary because the narrative is freed from the need to end at the same place as it started, the representation of the world of the reader and therefore can explore alternative outcomes beyond the status quo (Dittmer 2007).

The privileged position of closed narrative comics (academically and critically) and the noted narrative restrictions of open narrative comics, informs the sample of this thesis. This thesis is able to explore the open narratives of Batman and Captain America to specifically explore the limitations and advantages that open superhero

narratives have in relating to consumers who are also living their own open narratives of the American Dream.

Another superhero convention that has been seen to restrict the ability of comic books to present critical social commentary is the concept of continuity. Continuity is the idea of a consistent history of the individual superhero narrative that makes sense of the past comics of an individual character but is also consistent with the continuities of other characters and the history of the comic book universe. Dittmer has described continuity as the network of unchanging power relations and shared histories of comic characters in one universe (Dittmer 2007, p.252). This emphasises the consistent relationship between the narratives and characters, and Eco and Chilton's point about the static position of the characters. The project of continuity needs to ensure that the narrative of the superhero moves forward consistently, that the past storylines feed into the larger ongoing narrative for the character. However, the character also exists in a shared universe in which its ongoing narrative needs to remain consistent and complementary with other ongoing narratives. While Dittmer sees continuity as a limitation of the ability of comics to express alternative values and views (Dittmer 2007), Reynolds sees that there is malleability to continuity which can open up some of those restrictions (Reynolds 1994).

The project of continuity and cannon is not the sole responsibility of the creative teams on the comic books. The writers have the direct task of creating stories that will sell and that fit consistently within the continuity and cannon of the superhero and its universe. At times this gives the writers rich tapestries to work with, however at other times it can work to restrain them. Reynolds observes that contemporary comic creators are expected by readers to alter the continuity of superheroes. With reference to only a few fixed points of continuity, new creators bring new aspects and perspectives to the superhero's origin, new plots and villains, and a unique and specific interpretation of the character (Reynolds 1994 p.48).

Writers seem to be greatly respected when they are able to reference stories from the past into the continuity of the character and bring them into the current narrative of the character in new and exciting ways. Reynolds explains that continuity can be wiped away by a publisher in story lines that cross all the comics of the company, resetting the histories of every superhero and allowing for new stories to be told

without needing to reference the stories of the past (Reynolds 1994 p.45). Occasionally the publishers and editorial staff will directly alter the continuity and cannon through the ongoing narrative itself. DC Comics, having characters that have been consistently published since the late 1930s, has had more problems with the sheer volume of stories and inconsistent depictions of superhero narratives. Some of their limited series event series such as *Crisis on Infinite Earths #1-12* (Wolfman, Peres 1985/1986) and *Infinite Crisis #1-7* (Johns, Jimenez 2005/2006) were specifically designed to deal with continuity and cannon inconsistencies and issues⁵.

The readers themselves also have some power in deciding and defining continuity and cannon. The first power is economic. Readers are able to express approval for depictions of the superhero narrative and continuity and cannon by consuming or not consuming individual stories. If sales of titles do not meet specific criteria, then the title may be cancelled or the creative team replaced. Comic book readers have also attempted to directly voice their concerns with continuity with the publisher and creative teams directly via the letters page. While the editor has a choice of what letters to publish on these pages, many of these letters ask the writers to explain inconsistencies with their stories or characters. Stan Lee as editor of Marvel took the process further with the 'no prize'. Instead of merely pointing out issues with the narrative, Marvel fans were encouraged to provide an explanation for the inconsistency that fits within continuity and cannon. The best explanation would be published in the letters page and formally awarded a 'no prize' from Stan Lee becoming part of official continuity (Kaplan 2006 p.63). While the popularity of the letters page has faded in the 21st Century, internet fan sites have filled this role, explaining continuity inconsistencies of current comic books. Some such as J.R. Fettinger's site spideykicksbutt.com have contributed to the official cannon. In a controversial storyline from Spiderman in 2004 it was revealed that Gwen Stacy, the long dead girlfriend of Peter Parker had an affair with Norman Osborn before her death that resulted in twin children. Fettinger went over the back issues of Spiderman

⁵ *Crisis on Infinite Earths* attempted to deal with all the multiple versions of superheros in the DC universe (the origin of multiple versions of heroes like the Flash dates back to the Silver age revamp of Golden Age DC heroes) by having a omnipotent supervillan's plan for ultimate rule foiled, but in the process all the multiple universes are collapsed into one within only more or less one version of each superhero surviving. *Infinite Crisis* was a sequel to *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and recreated the multiverse which helped to bring characters from other narratives such as the Wildstorm comic universe within DC continuity

from 1967 and pinpointed a storyline that supported the affair and argued how it could have occurred within the continuity of the story. Marvel then used Fettinger's explanation of the affair as the official explanation of the event (Mannen 2014).

The narrative conventions of superhero comics need to be understood before the ideological content of the superhero narratives are explored. Focus on these conventions and how academics have considered them opens up space for exploration in this thesis. Dittmer's work into the nationalistic superhero enables exploration of the pro-social hero in a national representative role. The conventions of the representation of the readers' world of the perpetual now ties the narrative into current social commentary. The open narrative while offering restrictions also offers comparison to the open narrative of the consumer's own lives. This suggests that superhero narratives may be able to relate to more than just the space and time setting of the consumer but may also be able to offer a unique representation of the consumers' life than closed narratives cannot. Eco and Chilton's (1972) and Dittmer's (2007) observation that open superhero narratives are unable to express change within the narrative, when viewed through the lens of the concept of the unique representational nature of the open superhero narrative, suggests that the narrative might seek to direct an examination of what the reader should do in the real world. Ironically, while Eco and Chilton are correct that the superhero cannot take their fictional world beyond the status quo in their narrative, if they can get the reader to change the real world that they reflect then their fiction world would change as a result.

Understanding of these concepts supports an exploration of the ability of superhero comics to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology. They also encourage sub aims of the study; to explore how the concepts of open narratives, pro-social explorations of nationalism and how the restrictions of continuity effect the ability of superhero comics to make critical commentary

Background information on the sample; Batman and Captain America

The last task of this chapter is to introduce briefly the two superhero narratives that form the sample of this study.

Batman

Batman, Wonder Woman and Superman are three of the oldest and most important characters in DC comics. They were the only three superheroes that escaped cancelation in the post World War II down turn in superhero comics (Wright 2001) Within DC Comics continuity they form the three member leadership group of all other superheroes, leading the Justice League as the premier super team and assuming leadership in the limited event series comic books. The Batman character has successfully transitioned from comic books to other media such as television and feature films including the recent Batman trilogy *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) directed by Christopher Nolan. These depictions have varied from the camp and fun Batman of the Batman television show starring Adam West of the mid 1960s to the dark, grim and gritty Batman of Nolan's recent films. Figure 1.1 shows the cover of the debut of Batman, *Detective Comics #27* (Finger, Kane 1937) from 1939. *Detective Comics #27* presents Batman as a costumed vigilante who solves crimes using a combination of athletic prowess, reason, intellect, courage and scientific knowledge. Like his predecessor Superman, he wears a costume that shields his identity; a grey body suit with a dark cape, cowl with bat ears and on his chest a silhouette of a bat in flight. Some of the most important elements of the Batman mythos are the use of the bat imagery to generate fear in the criminal population and the detective nature of many of the adventures within the Batman narrative. The Batman narrative is often based in the fictional city of Gotham, in which Batman lives as his alter ego, the millionaire Bruce Wayne.

Batman was born after the initial success of DC stable mate Superman debut in *Action Comics #1*. Artist Bob Kane, with considerable help from writer Bill Finger, presented a new superhero. Rather than follow the 'super-human' theme of the alien Superman, Kane and Finger drew heavily on the pulp fiction stories of the day, the popular gangster films and horror movies for a different kind of comic book superhero (Wright 2001, p.17). Comic writer, and author of the Batman comic for the time frame of Chapter 7 of this study, Grant Morrison stated that part of the appeal of Batman was his rejection of the philosophy and character of the very first superhero whose success he was meant to emulate. Superman is an alien; Batman is human. Superman costume is brightly coloured; Batman's is dark. Superman is the

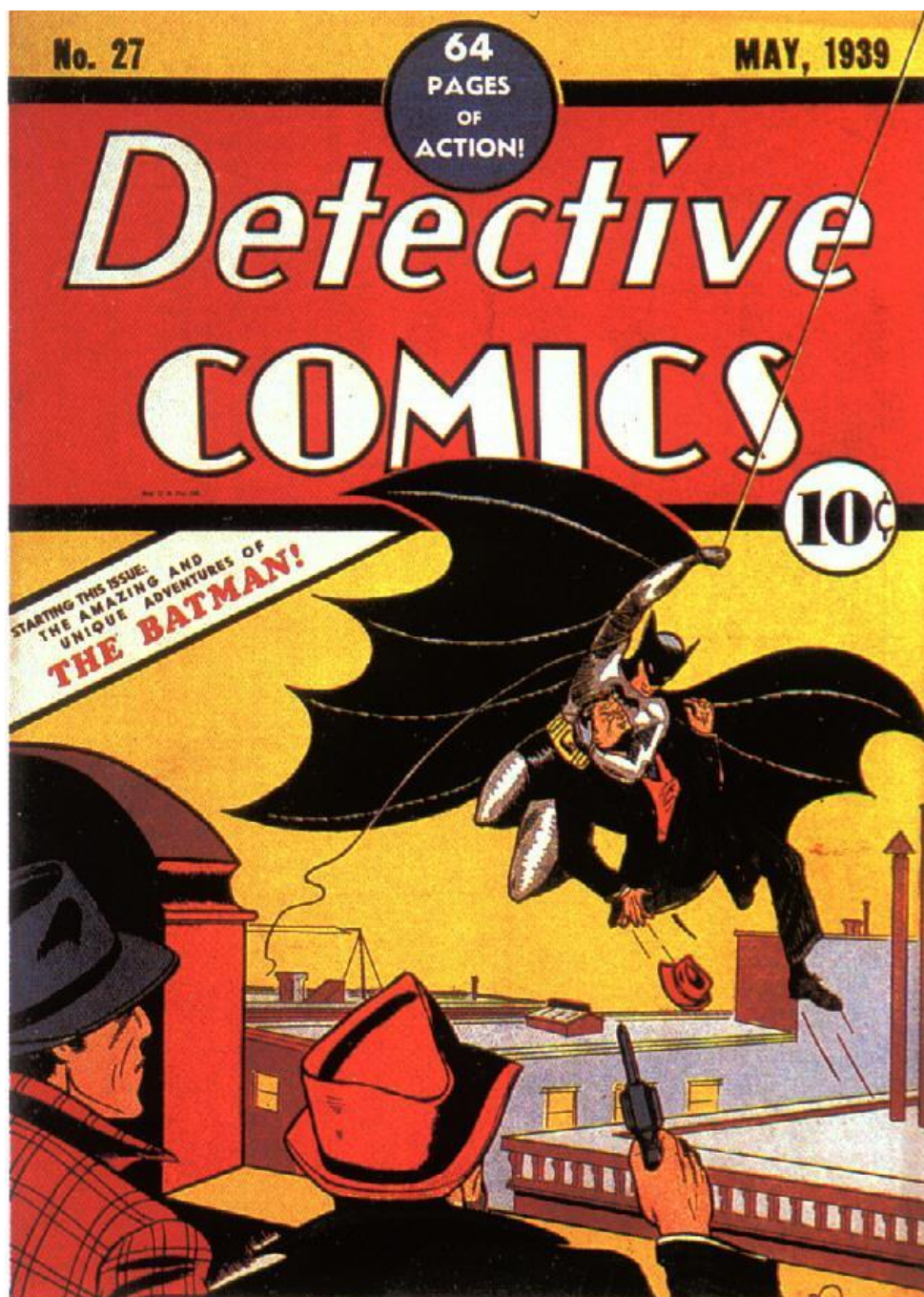


Figure 1.1 Cover of *Detective Comics* #27 1939 (Finger, Kane 1939).

son of hardworking farmers; Batman is the son of old money. Superman is in love with Lois Lane; Batman has a string of “debutantes and leading ladies”. Superman is of the day; Batman of the night. Superman began as a socialist; Batman is a capitalist. Superman is for justice; Batman is for vengeance. (Morrison 2011, p.25-26)

Detective Comics #33 (Finger, Kane 1939) gave the Batman his origin story and his pro-social mission. Fifteen years previous Bruce Wayne, the only son of the millionaire Wayne family, was walking from a movie with his mother and father when they were attacked by an armed mugger. When Thomas Wayne attempted to stop the mugger from taking his wife’s necklace, he was shot dead. His wife was also killed when she yelled for the police. It is this moment that gave Batman his motivation as an adult to engage in a war on crime. Through the years Wayne became a master scientist and trained his body to physical perfection in preparation for his war on crime. One night, while seated in the living room of his estate, Wayne thought about how best to conduct this war on crime. He noted that criminals are superstitious and he wanted to “strike terror into their hearts”. It was then that a bat flew into the room and Wayne decided that he would become the masked Batman.

Over the seventy five years of published Batman comics, there have been different interpretations the motivation of Batman’s pro-social mission war on crime. The murder of his parents is the incident that inspires his actions, but there is an ongoing question. Is his war on crime motivated by vengeance or an attempt to protect the other citizens of Gotham, so that they do not have to suffer the loss of their families? His first origin story makes the point that Batman’s mission is vengeance, but in later stories included in this study, the motivation is presented as concern for the safety and security of others. It is this question of vengeance versus a motivation of security that helps the Batman comics to engage with the American preoccupation with security after the 9/11 attacks (See Chapter 4).

Another element of the Batman mythos that fluctuates during the publishing history of the Batman comics is Batman’s relationship to Government and the state. The earliest Batman adventures have the Batman attempting to help the Gotham police department as an outsider. By the mid 1940s, Batman became an honorary member of the police force rather than a vigilante (Brooker 2000, p.62) giving the police

department the famous Bat-signal in issue #60 of *Detective Comics* (Schiff, Kane 1942), so they could contact him as needed. For most narratives Batman's relationship with the Gotham police department is dependent on the position of and relationship with James Gordon, who for most stories is the Gotham Police Commissioner and is a strong supporter of Batman. If Gordon is undermined in his role or absent from his role within the narrative then Batman's relationship with the state can be antagonistic. This fluctuation in Batman's relationship with the Police Department enables the narratives to explore different representations of Batman, at times he can be a representative of the state and at others he can be more a representative of civil society, outside the control of the state and an active challenge to the state itself.

Batman's alter ego, the millionaire Bruce Wayne also represents an important part of American civil society, the bourgeois ruling class. Like Batman, Wayne's relationship to society can differ in the narratives within the paradigm of the millionaire. Modern age interrelations of the Batman/Wayne duality have often depicted Batman as the closest to the real identity of the character with the Wayne identity more a role that Batman plays. As such, Wayne like Superman's Clark Kent, can be a character that is specifically meant to direct attention from the true identity of the superhero. In this case an old money, millionaire playboy, who wastes his money and time on fast women and reckless pleasures is the opposite of Batman. Wayne can also be depicted as an engaged CEO of Wayne Enterprises, a corporation that has a pro-social outlook and attempts to solve issues like poverty through its businesses. Wayne as a member of the apex of American civil society can be seen within the narrative from time to time usurping the roles of the state in areas such as welfare and even more advanced roles such as intentional relations in holding peace conferences.

An important aspect of both the Bruce Wayne and Batman mythos is the role of Robin. In *Detective Comics* #38 (Finger, Kane 1940) of 1940, the teenage sidekick of Robin the Boy Wonder was introduced to the Batman story. One of the first of what would become a superhero convention of teenage sidekicks, Robin was named after Robin Hood. He shared a similar origin to Batman's of a child whose parents were killed by criminals and dedicates his life to war on crime, although Robin's story differs in that he is already a superior athlete from his career in the family trapeze

group. Robin was introduced because it was thought that young boys reading the comic books needed a character their own age to identify with (Brooker, 2000, p.56). The introduction of Robin also enabled the early Batman comics to become less dark and gritty (Nyberg, 1998 p.4). The original Robin, Dick Grayson left the role of the sidekick in 1984 and became Nightwing. He was replaced by Jason Todd. Todd was killed off in the 'Death in the Family' storyline in 1988 after readers had voted via a 900-line poll to have the Joker kill Robin (Voger 2006), a promotional activity that highlights the importance of sales and profits in the comic book industry. The fan voted storyline also added another element to the Batman mythos, Batman's guilt for Jason Todd's death. A third Robin, Tim Drake took on the role in 1989. Within the timeframe of this study, two other Robins are added to the Batman storyline, Stephanie Brown for a short period in 2004 and Damian Wayne, son of Bruce Wayne who takes on the role of Robin after the death of his father.

Within the time frame of this study, Batman appeared in two solo titles, *Batman* and *Detective Comics* and was a regular member of the *JLA*

Captain America

Whereas Batman according to Dittmer is a pro-social superhero (2013 p.7), Captain America is a nationalistic superhero with a uniform and shield that are essentially the American flag. America is at the centre of the Captain America narrative. The *Captain America* comic was first published in the spring of 1941, almost a full year before America's entry into World War II (Wright, 2001, p.30). Created by writer Paul Simon and artist Jack Kirby for Timely Comics (later to be Marvel), Captain America was not a thoroughly original creation, but was drawn in a large part from another super hero called the "Shield" (Jones, 2005, p.200). The Shield first appeared in *Pep Comics* #1 (Shorten, Norvick 2002) in January 1940 for the publishing company MLJ Magazines, (later to find success with the publishing of Archie comics). A "G-man", an agent for the FBI, the Shield was bullet proof, super humanly strong and in later issues was able to fly. However it was his stars and stripes costume and his overt appeal to American patriotism that was original and unique at the time. While the Shield and Captain America share patriotic imagery, there was an important difference between the goals of the Shield and that of his



Figure 1.2 Cover of *Captain America Comics* #1 (Simon, Kirby 1941).

imitator Captain America. In *Pep Comics #3* (Shorten, Norvick 2002) of April 1940, the Shield uncovers a plan by a long thought dead munitions magnate to mine New York harbour and force the United States to enter the war in Europe. The Shield of course foiled the plan and ensured that the United States did not enter the war.

In contrast, the cover of the first issue of *Captain America Comics* depicted the Captain deflecting bullets from Nazi soldiers as he bursts into Nazi party meeting, where he launches himself directly at Adolph Hitler, smashing him in the jaw (see Figure 1.2). While the Shield's efforts were to preserve the United States pre-war isolationism, leaving decisions on such things to his superiors in the Government, Captain America was calling for a change in America's international policies in regard to the War. *Captain America Comics #1* (Simon, Kirby 1941) hit newsstands in late 1940, almost a year before America entered the War in Europe. The Captain America comic differed from the other patriotic superheroes of his time like the Shield because it took a clear and overt political stand on America's need to enter World War II (Simon and Simon, 2003, p.44). Captain America caused such anger from isolationists and Nazi sympathisers when it was first published, that the two original creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby were subject to threats of violence. They received protection from the Office of the Mayor of New York who supported the political stance they were taking.

The original origin story in *Captain America Comics #1* (Simon, Kirby 1941) is quite basic at only eight pages in length, with little attention paid to the motivations of the alter ego of the Captain. It detailed Captain America's selfless mission of fighting America's enemies. Steve Rogers' concern at the growing Nazi menace leads to his attempts to join the US army. However he is rejected due to his weak physique. Instead he volunteers for a secret military program conducted by Professor Reinstein. Rogers is injected with an experimental serum that turns his thin frame into a muscular build in moments. While this does not give Rogers any real superpowers, it does bring his body to the highest point of physical fitness and agility, a super soldier. At that moment, a Nazi agent who managed to infiltrate the experiment assassinates the Professor. Rogers attempts to subdue the Nazi agent, but not familiar with his new strength, kills the agent instead. With Professor Reinstein dead, the secret of the serum is lost and Rogers is the only Super Soldier. He adopts the mantle of Captain America and builds a reputation busting spy rings and preventing terrorist

attacks. However his identity is uncovered by teenage boy Bucky Barnes, the adopted mascot of Rogers' regiment. Rogers decides that the only way to protect his identity is to enlist Barnes as his new costumed sidekick, unimaginatively called Bucky.

Captain America Comics continued to be published throughout World War II but as the war came to a close, the popularity of Captain America began to diminish. From 1946 Captain America comics were published sporadically, finally being cancelled in 1948, in part due to the down turn in the popularity of superhero comics (Moser, 2009, p.29). An attempt was made to revive the character of Captain America by Stan Lee in 1954 as *Captain America... Commie Smasher*. The new approach proved unpopular and *Captain America... Commie Smasher* lasted only three issues (Olshevsky 1979, pp.16-17).

In 1964 the character was brought back into comics by Stan Lee as part of the superhero revival at Marvel comics. Discovered frozen in ice by the Avengers in *The Avengers #4* (Lee, Kirby 1964), Captain America returned to the modern age with his own doubts and issues. A man out of time, Captain America had been frozen since the last days of World War II and now had to adjust to a new and confusing America of the 1960s. Captain America also was racked with guilt for the death of his teenage sidekick, Bucky Barnes (Hayton and Albringht, 2009, p.17). Captain America quickly became the informal leader of the Marvel superheroes, a similar role to that of Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman at DC Comics. Captain America's leadership is based on the fact he is most experienced and moral superhero in the Marvel Universe, although Captain America has the additional personification of the American nation state to support his authority (Olshevsky, 1979, p13-15).

Like Batman, the modern version of Captain America post 1964 has had a diverse relationship with the state. Captain America as both a member of the Avengers and as a solo superhero, has had a close relationship with the state many times taking on the role as an agent of the state through his membership of SHIELD, the American and sometime UN spy agency, and at times as an employee of the American Government. At other times opposition to the government has been part of the Captain America narrative. In 1973 the Captain America comic explored a storyline where an organisation called the Secret Empire used corporate power and a flying



Figure 1.3 Captain America Vol.1 #175 (Englehart, Buscema 1974, p.32)

saucer to take over the United States. Figure 1.3 shows the moment when Captain America defeats the Secret Empire and confronts their leader. It was insinuated that the leader was in fact the corrupt President of the United States.

MacDonald and MacDonald (1976) noted that this storyline was a direct metaphor for President Nixon and the Watergate scandal. It was this particular narrative that they have used to show that the superhero comics, (Captain America in particular) have the ability to sum up American patriotism and are able to represent a future metamorphosis of American values (MacDonald, MacDonald 1976 p.249-254). Just like *Watchmen* and *Batman: the Dark Knight* (commonly known as the *Dark Knight Returns*), Captain America comics of the Reagan era examined power within American society (Dubose 2007). The Captain America narrative explored other anti-establishment positions in the 1980s when the Captain America narrative opposed the ideology and policies of then President Reagan, challenging the concept of financial success, defending the role of unions in society and criticising American Foreign policy in South America (McGuire 2007). Figure 1.4 shows the cover of *Captain America # 344* (Gruenwald, Dwyer 1988) in which Captain America physically fought President Reagan, only after Reagan was turned into a snake-man by a supervillain⁶. In both cases the Captain America comic explored resistance to the state with the character of Captain America either quitting or been sacked as the representative of the American nation. Throughout the history of the narrative, Captain America comics have explored not only issue of the Government's relationship to the American people but domestic issues with an appeal to American values and civil rights (Hayton and Albright, 2009, p.20).

Throughout its history the Captain America narrative has been concerned with race within American society. The Captain's origin, the eugenic-like experiment that created him and his first Nazi enemies, placed race firmly within the narrative from the start (Hack 2009). While the narrative in the early days was concerned with the racial stereotypes of World War II enemies, it has also focused on the domestic issues of race within American Society. McWilliams (2009) has detailed the exploration of race which occurred in the Captain America comic of the 1970s

⁶ The Comic Code restricted the ability of writers to show authority figures in a negative light so it was necessary to have Reagan innocently turned into snake-man before Captain America could battle the President.

through the African American character of Sam Wilson, the Falcon and the Captain's adventures in Black America. Some of the elements of this exploration can be seen to be derivative and simply representative of the time, while others including the heroic attributes of the Falcon suggest a more progressive exploration (McWilliams 2009). McWilliams (2009) and Carpenter (2005) both note the serious exploration of African American experience in the 2002-2003 series *Truth: Red, White and Black*. This series tells the story of the first Captain America, African American Isaiah Bradley. The creative team started with the premise that the American Government would not have performed the first dangerous super soldier experiments on a white American man. They cite the Tuskegee Syphilis experiments of 1932-1972 where African American men infected with syphilis were purposely misdiagnosed so researchers could observe the results of the disease unchecked (Carpenter 2005, p.51). Bradley's story is one of racism, exploitation by the Government and heroism that is unknown and unrecognised in American society. The storyline continues the Captain America narrative's exploration of race in America with a depiction of inequality faced by African Americans during World War II and provides a commentary on race and the American Dream during a time of war (Carpenter 2005, p.57). The comic was published as America entered new wars in the Middle East.

Within the timeframe of this study, Captain America appears in the solo comic *Captain America* and also as a member of the Avengers in the *Avengers* comic.

Conformation of sample

The two narratives, the DC Comics Batman narrative and the Marvel Comics Captain America narrative form the sample of this study, however further details are needed into exactly how those two narratives are to be explored. The sample includes one open narrative from DC Comics and one from Marvel Comics and does not include closed narrative superhero comics. There is an issue in the difference in volume of comics during the timeframe of this study as the character of Batman has more comics published than Captain America. Whereas Captain America has one



Figure 1.4 Cover of *Captain America* Vol.1 #344 (Gruenwald, Dwyer 1988)

ongoing title *Captain America*, Batman has multiple titles such as *Detective Comics*, *Batman*, *Batman Legends of the Dark Knight*, *Batman Gotham Knights*, *Batman and Robin* and *Superman/Batman* that are published during this timeframe. However of all these titles, only two are consistently published during the whole timeframe of this study, *Detective Comics* and *Batman*. As such they form the core of the Batman narrative sample with the other Batman titles only considered within the sample when there is an explicit crossover from the *Detective Comics* or *Batman* into a story arc. As such the range of the Batman comics is *Detective Comics* #754 and *Batman* #587 published in January 2001 and *Detective Comics* #851 and *Batman* #683 published in December 2008. The Captain America comic's range is a little more complicated due to renumbering and restarting of the series during this time. As such the range starts with *Captain America vol.3* #39 published in January 2001 which runs to issue #50 published December 2001. The series is restarted with *Captain American vol.4* #1 published in April 2002 which runs to issue #32 published in October 2004. The series is then restarted again with *Captain America vol. 5* #1 published in November 2004 which continues beyond the timeframe of the study with *Captain America vol.5* #45 published in December 2008.

To be able to explore the ability of superhero comics to be part of the process of hegemony, it is necessary to place the individual comic book issue into the correct time in which it was published. This is slightly problematic for superhero comics. Superhero comics are identified by issue number, but also by a monthly cover date in their publication. However, the month marked on the cover is very rarely the month in which the comic was actually published. There is a convention that dates back to newsstands in which comics would be released with a cover date three months into the future. This would allow comic books to have a three month life on the newsstand before they were returned to the publisher. It also meant that readers could buy three different issues of the one comic at the newsstand. This convention has continued with contemporary comics. As such, this study will make reference to the actual month the comic was published and not the cover date of the comic.

While these titles form the core of this project, the narratives of both characters also play out in the team titles that the characters appear in as well as the limited series events the character play roles in. These include the DC Comics team titles *JLA* comic which runs to 2006 and is replaced by *the Justice League of America* in 2006

and continues beyond the timeframe of this thesis. For Marvel it is the Avengers vol.3 which runs to 2004 and is replaced by *the New Avengers* in 2004 and continues beyond the timeframe of this thesis. The event series that connect to the narratives of the sample for DC Comics during this time frame are *Identity Crisis* 2004, *Infinite Crisis* 2005 and *Final Crisis* in 2008. For Marvel they are *House of M* 2005, *Civil War* 2006-2007 and *Secret Invasion* 2008.

While the point of approaching the sample in this way is to follow the narrative of the two characters to analyse the ideological content of the comics and therefore their ability to provide social commentary that critiques, contests and challenges dominant ideologies, this sample also replicates how many comic book readers consume comic books. In following a character, readers often need to buy event series and other comics that cross over into the narrative of the character to ensure a full reading of the character's narrative. This is a purposeful system put in place by the publishers to encourage readers to buy other titles. As such, there will be flexibility that is reflective of this approach that will allow for the option of the inclusion of comic books that are outside the sample, but are part of the narrative if the need arises.

Conclusion

The chapter's contribution to the thesis has been to establish the background of the superhero comic book industry and illustrate the effect that the industry has on the ideological content of its superhero comics as consumer products. As the industry has turned more towards film as a business interest, comic books have become subservient to the film interests and the ideological content of the comics has been seen to represent a potential danger to film profits. This chapter has also explored the narrative conventions of superhero comics focusing on the concepts of the pro-social/nationalistic superhero, the open narrative, the representation of the world of the reader and continuity as potential restrictions on the ability of superhero narratives to critique challenge and contest dominant ideologies within their pages. These conventions have helped to inform the sample of this study, the open narrative comics of Batman from DC Comics and Captain America from Marvel Comics. The next step in answering the research question of this thesis, the ability of superhero

narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology is to detail hegemony as the theoretical and methodological approach of this study.

Chapter 2: Theory and Method: the Hegemony of Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe

The role of superhero comics within the process of hegemony and their ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest hegemonic ideology is the research topic of this thesis. As was mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 1, there is debate within academia about whether comics simply reflect the values and norms of a society or if they can actually be part of the broader process of critique and social change. Chantal Mouffe has stated all art is political, it is just a matter of does it reproduce the ideology of the establishment or does it seek to critique and deconstruct it (Mouffe, et al 2001 p.99). Mouffe's statement opens some points for consideration in the field of superhero comics. Within the process of reproduction, what degrees of reproduction are possible; is silence on ideological issues on par with active reproduction of hegemony? Is critique inherently a process of ideological opposition or can critique come from the same ideological position as hegemony within popular culture? If superhero narratives can critique and deconstruct ideology, how does their critique relate to the ideological contest that is hegemony? To answer these propositions it is necessary to have a sociological theory that is able to identify the establishment ideology, detail its ideological component elements, to explore and follow changes to the ideology over a period of time, and explain the actual process of ideological contest. This then allows for the ideological content of superhero comics to be mapped by time and space against the ideological contest within the political space of a society. This study uses the concept of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci and then radicalised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as the theoretical lens that allows for an analysis of the ideological content of superhero comic books. As such this chapter will follow a process of introducing Gramsci's position on each of the relevant concepts of hegemony and then adding Laclau and Mouffe's positions to make clear the position of this study on the theory of hegemony and its methodological application.

Because superhero comic books are both a form of popular art, entertainment and media, their content should not be examined in a societal vacuum but needs to be put into a societal perspective. The content of the comics needs to be read within the context of the struggle for hegemony in American society at the time. It is the comparison that allows for the identification of the true ideological position of popular cultural products.

To illustrate this point take for example the debut issue of the character of Captain America in *Captain America Comics #1* (Simon, Kirby 1941). This comic contained narratives in which Captain America fought Nazi forces, including a cover image shown in figure 1.2 in the previous chapter, of Captain America attacking Hitler in his bunker. If this comic was published while the United States was already engaged with war with Germany, then the ideological commentary about Nazi Germany and war is clearly within the sphere of reproducing establishment ideology consistent with the current hegemony of the United States.

However that was not the case, *Captain America Comics #1* was actually published almost a full year before America's entry into World War II (Wright 2001 p.30). The creators of the comic claim that they were attempting to make social commentary about America's need to enter the war in Europe (Simon, Simon 2003 p.44). The ideological position of this commentary is only identifiable when it is placed into context with a comparison to the establishment ideology of America at the time it was created. In the case of *Captain America Comics #1*, one year before the war gives it a clear claim of intellectual leadership and hegemonic contest, while the similar patriotic comics that emerged after America's entry into World War are wartime propaganda that reproduces American hegemony and ideology.

Before a conclusion of intellectual leadership and counter-hegemony can be reached more information is needed about the hegemonic struggle within the United States, how is the political space divided, what are the ideological positions of the contesting powers within the space, how does the history of past articulations of ideological components and current events relate to the struggle for hegemony? With a more detailed picture of American hegemony within the relevant space and time of the United States, the ideological content of the comic book and its ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest the establishment can be revealed. The task of this

study is more complex in that it does not look at one comic at one moment in time, but looks at a collection of superhero comic books over a seven year period. More than a snap shot of American hegemony at one moment in time is needed. What is needed is a panning shot of the hegemonic contest within the seven year period. This adds another dimension to the analysis as it does not just evaluate the comic on the basis of its relation to the hegemony of its time and place, but also allows for a deeper comparison of the ideology and hegemony as it alters over time. In this way attempts at engagement with societal issues within the superhero narrative that approach intellectual leadership can be seen in the context of these changes, and this provides some ability to evaluate the success of this intellectual leadership and commentary. The goal of this chapter is to present hegemony as the theoretical and methodological basis for the analysis of the ideological content of superhero comics. To do this the concepts of the theory of hegemony will need to be explored and detailed in relation to the time and space of this project, the United States 2001-2008. Drawing on the work of Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe, these concepts will include the process of hegemony, the political space in which hegemony is contested, the role of intellectuals within hegemony and the affect of societal crisis on hegemony.

The theory of hegemony is used to create a sociological tool of analysis in this chapter that is the key methodological application for this study. The hegemonic ideology is broken down into its ideological component elements, the relationships of articulation between these elements and the primacy of certain elements is exposed. This analysed ideology is then used to analyse the ideological content of popular cultural products within the same context of space and time. Chapter 3 makes the argument that in American Society the ideology of the American Dream is well positioned to be used ideologically within a project of hegemony. Chapter 3 starts the process of deconstructing the American Dream to expose possible articulations and illustrates past articulations of the ideological component elements, referred to as nodal points by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau, Mouffe 2001 p.139). Chapter 4 introduces an articulation of the American Dream, *the American Dream of Security*, which is the ideology of the Right Wing hegemony that emerges after the 9/11 attacks on the 11th September 2001.

Previous uses of hegemony in the study of the ideological content of comic books are explored later in this chapter and help to clarify and sharpen this sociological tool. Specifically the work of Williams (1994), Dorfman and Mattelart (1991), Costello (2009) and outside the study of comic books Montesano Montessori (2011) are detailed and their relevance to this study explored. Creating a definitive sociological tool of analysis from the hegemony of Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe, is not a simple task for many reasons. Firstly the key texts of Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (1975) and Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2001) are not sociological texts, but texts with a political objective. In the case of Laclau and Mouffe, their work could be read as being hostile to certain forms of sociology as a social science, in that they declare that the social cannot provide a firm basis for analysis (Dallmayr 1987 p.284-285). Meaning and the social arise from the process of articulation. For both texts, the motivation of exploring hegemony is for the purpose creating a tool of action of the Left for societal change. Gramsci was not a value-free sociologist, but was a revolutionary Marxist activist active in Italy from 1916 until his death in 1937. Gramsci had given up his own desire to become an academic and instead become involved in the Italian Communist party. He served as leader of the Party and was a member of parliament when he was arrested by the Fascist Italian Government in 1926. He remained in prison until he was granted conditional liberty in 1934, a sick man not far from death (Davidson 1977). Gramsci's work is further complicated by the fact that the Prison Notebooks were written under the glare of the prison censor, which forced Gramsci to use unique terminology to hide his meanings. Gramsci also suffered from failing health, a fear that he had been forgotten by his comrades, a lack of academic materials and a lack of academic engagement with colleagues. This meant that Gramsci's greatest works are fragmented, incomplete and at times inaccurate in relation to other works he refers to (Davidson 1977). Laclau and Mouffe, for their part, sought to revitalise Left Wing political thought by challenging the determinist class nature of the Marxist Left and legitimising the concept of a plural democracy as an ultimate goal for the Left.

Laclau and Mouffe's work took the Marxist concept of hegemony from Gramsci and radicalised it. They focused on the poststructuralist work of semiotics in regard to meaning and identity, stripping from hegemony the Marxist concepts of the

determinist economic base and the privileged position of the two fundamental classes in Marxist theory, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat (Laclau Mouffe 2001 p.174). They noted the variety of struggles within society that were not of a class character (Laclau Mouffe 2001 p.165) and saw the danger of a class determinist position in ignoring these struggles or co-opting them and insisting on imposing a class positioning on them regardless of the inappropriateness of this. Their work is an attempt to reenergise the Left away from the class elements of socialism to the progressive potential of democratic politics. Laclau and Mouffe retained the idea of hegemony as a form of political and ideological leadership through consent rather than force, but their ideas changed which groups in society can be hegemonic. Importantly for this project, in doing this they expand the understanding of both the process of hegemony and the components of ideology within it.

The Process of Hegemony

From Gramsci's Marxist perspective, the concept of hegemony attempts to deal with issues within the ideological sphere of the superstructure. In traditional Marxist analysis, the superstructure, which comes to mean the ideological structure of a society, is determined by the economic base (Williams 1977 p.75). The danger is that the revolutionary process may become fixated on the determinist economic base, on changing the relationships at the economic level and ignoring the superstructure with the assumption that it will change once the economic base has been revolutionised. Gramsci's work stated that concern must be given to the ideological superstructure as part of the revolutionary project, that leadership and control must be won at the level of the superstructure as well as the level of the economic. Within a democratic political space the rule of the ruling class or group is not through force exclusively, but relies in the most part on the consent of the other groups in society. This consensus on the leadership of the ruling group is based around a shared ideology that justifies the social structure. The process of the creation and maintenance of this consensus is the process of hegemony, the group that achieves this is the hegemonic group (in Gramsci's model this is a class) and the ideology that justifies this position is a hegemonic ideology. Gramsci argued that the Party of the Marxist Left needed to engage in battle with the Bourgeoisie on this front.

In Gramsci's concept of hegemony, only two classes could truly become hegemonic because of the nature of their relationship to production, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. Because of the inherent conflict between labour and capital in a democratic capitalist society, the Bourgeoisie would never complete total hegemony over the whole society, so there would always be a contest for hegemony between these two groups. For the Proletariat in a democratic setting, the process of achieving hegemony over society would involve incorporating the interests of other groups in society and constructing a counter hegemony. This creation of a collective of different groups under the leadership of the Proletariat is called by Gramsci a historic *bloc* (Gramsci 1971 p.137). We can see that there are two connected processes going on here, the creation of a bloc as a collective of divergent groups and the creation of an ideology that would unite them together in a common identity and ideology, in a broad sense a world view and perspective. This creation of a bloc and associated ideology would involve articulating certain elements of the existing hegemonic ideology of the Bourgeoisie to the counter hegemony and bloc. This could also involve rejecting other elements entirely, identifying further elements that could support the counter hegemony, and then articulating these to that ideological formation. In this way, as part of the Marxist revolutionary project, the Proletariat would counter the hegemony of the Bourgeoisie, creating an ideology and a historic bloc that could assume hegemony over the ideological superstructure. It is from this point that the post-Marxist ideas of Laclau and Mouffe build on Gramsci's theory and develop concepts that justify and enable the use of hegemony as a theoretical approach for this study.

Political Space

Although working for a worldwide socialist revolution, Gramsci focused on the nation state as the political space for the contest for hegemony. He saw that the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 was successful in part because of attention to specific unique issues within the space of the nation.

In reality, the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is 'original' and (in a certain sense) unique; these relations must be understood and

conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them. To be sure, the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is 'national' - and it is from this point that one must begin. (Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal Carcere vol 3*, Gerratana, 1975, p.1729 cited in Mouffe, 1979, p.198)

The use of hegemony has long been popular within the study of international relations. However the use of hegemony in this way focuses less on ideological power and more on 'realism' and the concept of force through military and economic power of states such as the United States (Diez 2013). A criticism of these studies is that they present American Hegemony on an international stage without paying sufficient attention to an ideological analysis of the bloc itself or the hegemonic group that is at the centre of the bloc. American Hegemony in international relations is not in the interests of all Americans, but is an expression of the interests of select groups of Americans within the hegemonic bloc. The interests of the bloc and the identities of the groups within the bloc need some consideration.

Laclau and Mouffe reject the Marxist attribution of a privileged position to the fundamental classes of the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat, where these are said to be the only groups in society that can achieve hegemony. Instead, they suggest that many different groups within society can attempt hegemony and therefore there is not just one political space in society for the contest for hegemony, but many different sites (Laclau Mouffe 2001 p.140). However, Laclau and Mouffe retain the binary nature of the contest for hegemony within these different sites in a way that is similar to the opposing poles of the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat, but with a different explanation. Each hegemonic project for Laclau and Mouffe involves a process of creation of meaning and identity both within a bloc and the linked ideology. Because the creation of meaning for Laclau and Mouffe always involves the negative, in the sense that to be something is to not be something else (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, p.128), hegemony involves antagonism. And because meaning has a plurality of dimensions, hegemony is contested by a number of different antagonistic pairs of blocs that oppose each other throughout the political space in ways that means there are a multitude of spaces and contests within the democratic space, not simply a single contest between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

Laclau and Mouffe's ideas allow for the social agents and the political space that is the context for this study to be perceived in both a broader and more focused way. It is broader in the sense that hegemony is not limited to the space of class and the two antagonists of the fundamental classes but is contested in a broader cultural backdrop that offers many spaces beyond class (ethnicity and gender for example). It is more focused in that Laclau and Mouffe's work allows for examination of hegemony within these different spaces. There are two specific sites that this study returns to. These are, firstly, superhero comic books as a space of popular culture, somewhat distant from the overt hegemonic political contest within society by its role as a forum of profitable entertainment. And secondly, there is the space of the politics of the American Presidency which is at the heart of the contest for hegemony at this time

There is a legitimate question over whether the American Presidency and Party politics in America is a contest of hegemony. This thesis holds the position that the political contest between Republicans on the Right and Democrats on the Left is not always a hegemonic contest, but has the potential at certain moments to become a contest of hegemony around ideological positions. In a simple political contest the political parties of the Left and the Right simply try to replace the other as the intellectual/political functionaries of the bloc of American hegemony with little regard for change in ideological positions. In a contest around ideological positions there is an attempt to reshape or recreate the bloc itself and to change the ideology, shifting it to a different articulation as part of the contest between Left and Right. For example, in Chapter 4, in dealing with the start of the timeframe of the project in 2001, I make the point that the stalemate of the 2000 Gore/Bush election provides an illustration both of the lack of a hegemonic contest and of the inability of either party to achieve hegemony. It is the 9/11 attacks of the 11th September 2001 and the articulation of this event that presents the Bush Administration with the potential for hegemony, not Bush's election win in 2000.

It is worth noting that the political spectrum that both Gramsci and also Laclau and Mouffe experienced in the context of their own societies differs from the political spectrum within American society. The political space of Gramsci's 1920s Italy, with revolutionary Communists in parliament and the rise of rightwing fascism, was much broader in regard to political perspectives in comparison to the political space of the

United States at the turn of this Century. Likewise the political perspective of European party politics in the 1980s was also broader than the United States of the turn of the 21st Century, with social democratic parties being part of the mainstream of the parliamentary Left in comparison to the American Democratic party being more of a liberal party (Smith 1998). This narrowness of the political space between the parliamentary Right and Left in America raises a question over the ability of these two groups to engage in a contest for hegemony. In discussion of liberal parties of the West versus the Social Democratic parties of the Mouffe has stated,

They (the liberal parties) envisage the field of politics as a neutral terrain in which different groups compete to occupy the positions of power, that is, their objective is simply to dislodge others in order to occupy their place, without putting into question the dominant hegemony and profoundly transforming the relations of power. It is simply a competition among elites (Mouffe 2002, p.55).

Anne Marie Smith, a Canadian academic who completed her PhD under Laclau and Mouffe makes similar observations of American politics. Her analysis of the 1996 Clinton/Dole Presidential election suggests that Dole engaged in hegemonic strategies as part of his campaign while Clinton engaged in strategic manoeuvres but made no hegemonic challenge to the neo-conservative ideology which he ultimately shared with Dole (Smith 1998 p 176). However, Smith also makes an important point on the difference between liberal Left parties who do not engage in any hegemonic challenge to neo-conservative ideology and Social Democratic Left parties of the European tradition who do. One of her examples of the difference is the different approach to the issue of access to health care. This is significant in regards to the 2008 Presidential victory of Barack Obama which is another, but very different moment of hegemonic change within the timeframe of this thesis. Obama's position on health care in the 2008 election is close to the same point that Smith uses to describe the counter hegemonic position of the Social Democratic parties of the Left on the European tradition. The focus on the Presidential Administration in this study is because my argument is that Right Wing hegemony was achieved after 9/11, and that the Presidency played a central role within the hegemony after 9/11. Superhero comics however are the direct focus of this study; their ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest hegemony and ideology is the central question. Superhero

comics are somewhat removed from the contest of hegemony than other media such as news media, which has much more of a central role. The purpose of following the narrative of the American Presidency is that it presents a clear image of the construction and contest for hegemony in this time frame and provides a clear context for, and comparison for, the analysis of the ideological content of the superhero comics.

Intellectuals

Essentially, the hegemonic and counter hegemonic project is an intellectual task. Intellectuals from a Marxist perspective are a broad division within society. While most individuals within a society have the intellectual ability to engage with ideas and concepts, and Gramsci notes that all professions require some level of intellectual skill (Gramsci 1971, p.9) , he reserves the title of intellectuals for those who have a role within society to produce knowledge and/or transfer knowledge to other members of society (Crehan 2002, p.131). “All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci 1971, p.9). This does not mean that other members of society cannot engage with the debates and discussion concerning their society and its hegemonic ideology. In fact, this engagement and debate is an important part of the process of hegemony in that “members of society without the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci 1971 p. 9) need to have the intellectual ability to adopt the changing articulations of the ideology that occurs as a process of hegemony. This suggests that an ideology must have an ‘understandability’ to it, to be complex and flexible enough to change as needed, but at the same time be simple enough to be understood by the people and groups within the hegemony.

Within the structure of society, Gramsci notes that intellectual positions often have a degree of upward social mobility, a position of status and a higher standard of living (Gramsci 1971, p. 14). An element in Gramsci’s understanding of intellectuals is their relation to the class that they arise from. Traditional intellectuals are groups of intellectuals that do not rise from either of the two fundamental classes but owe their existence to a group from the past. For example the intellectual function of the Catholic Church in Italy dates back to the actions of Julius Caesar to centralise the

intellectual functions within Rome (Gramsci 1971, p.17). While the class that the traditional intellectuals were born with disappears, their intellectual function often remains. Organic intellectuals rise from the class that they serve, for example Gramsci identifies examples of the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie, “the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system” (1971, p. 5). The importance of this concept for Gramsci is in his belief that the proletariat would need to create its own organic intellectuals as part of the successful revolutionary project. Organic intellectuals give a class an awareness of its own function in the economic, political and social fields of society (Gramsci 1971, p.5). The assimilation of the traditional intellectuals to the new class is essential to revolutionary victory and is enhanced when the proletariat has its own strata of organic intellectuals to help this assimilation.

Regardless of their organic or traditional nature, intellectuals in Gramsci’s hegemony serve either of the two fundamental classes. The intellectuals function depending on their position within the nation, as functionaries of the hegemonic class or as functionaries of the opposing class. The intellectual function of the intellectuals of the hegemonic class is to ensure the ongoing hegemonic domination by dealing with any threats to the bloc or to the ideology. Alternatively, the intellectuals of the opposing class would seek to deconstruct the ruling class hegemony and create a new counter hegemony with the hegemonic principle of the opposing class. So while intellectuals within the Gramsci model have a privileged position and are responsible for the ideological elements of the hegemony, they are subalterns of the fundamental classes. Gramsci gives an example in a footnote of the political class as expressed by Mosca as simply the organic intellectual group of the ruling class (1971, p. 6), which of course echoes Marx’s statement that the state is merely the organising committee for the Bourgeoisie.

Laclau and Mouffe’s radicalisation of Gramsci’s hegemony changes the nature of the intellectual within the hegemonic project. While Laclau and Mouffe, and Smith, clearly see that intellectuals will still act organically for non-class democratic struggles such as anti-racism and feminist struggles (Smith 1998, p.30) a logical point of argument suggest that some groups of powerful intellectuals may perform their function not for other classes or groups, but for their own hegemonic projects. If the economic is no longer the determinist base of society, then ideology, instead,

becomes a much stronger force in the Laclau and Mouffe model. This means that intellectuals with a high degree of ideological power could form a historic bloc that places themselves as the hegemonic group, rather than either of the two fundamental classes.

This means that even if the bloc includes the Bourgeoisie it cannot be assumed that they are the hegemonic group, but might simply be articulated as part of the bloc by another group altogether. In this way, the Marxist assumption that the Bourgeoisie is the hegemonic group of the Right Wing hegemonic forces of the United States might be challenged by the idea that it is actually another group that has positioned themselves as the hegemonic group such as the political class of the Right that assumes an intellectual function within the bloc. This is an interesting concept that flows from the position of Laclau and Mouffe, but it should be noted that as a theoretical position it is not essential for this analysis of this thesis itself. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to explore the ability of superhero comics to engage in social and political commentary and take part in societal debates. The hegemonic contest between the American Right and Left provides the context for this analysis, but the debate about which group within the bloc of the Right is the hegemonic group is not a core issue of this study. Nevertheless, it does provide a consideration for examination within the superhero narratives; the potential for the superhero narratives to nominate the hegemonic group of the Right.

Crisis

In both the Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe's model the intellectuals within the hegemonic bloc have the unending task of responding to the continuous threats to hegemony that arise within society. Because threats to hegemony occur continuously, observing these ongoing responses can be difficult. They are simply the day to day intellectual processes within society. Part of the intellectual task is to patrol the ideology, identifying and responding to threats as they are perceived by each intellectual. This patrolling of the ideology by the intellectuals can sometimes be intuitive and self-conscious, rather than strategic and rational. While threats to hegemony are continuous and force the ideology to adapt and move forward, more

substantial threats can be identified as crisis. From a Marxist position Gramsci states that crisis occurs:

...either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution (Gramsci 1971, p. 212).

For Gramsci crisis is a political moment, the result of the failure of the hegemony of the Bourgeoisie over the masses that offers a revolutionary opportunity for the Proletariat.

Laclau and Mouffe state, hegemony in a democratic political space is never a completed process, not because of the ongoing class conflict within Gramsci's model, but because meaning is a process of articulation and articulation cannot reach a definitive meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, p.134), it is always contested and redefined. It is better to think of hegemony as an ongoing process, not static, but always moving but never reaching the final goal of sutured meaning. The intellectuals have the task of ensuring the process of articulation remains in the favour of the hegemony of the bloc generally (just as the ideology changes so too can the membership of the bloc) and specifically the hegemonic group, negotiating and renegotiating the meanings of the hegemonic ideology and ensuring that the necessary elements and identities are being articulated appropriately to ensure the continuing hegemony. Alternatively the intellectuals on the other side of the antagonism attempt to counter this hegemony, articulating relevant elements, concepts and identities to create an opposing ideology.

In the case of a crisis as opposed to mere threat, the danger is of a much more serious nature and presents a more serious challenge to the hegemony of the bloc. At this point intellectuals of the bloc would be more likely to come together on the issue of the crisis in recognition of its specific danger. The intellectual activity at moments of crisis increases dramatically in scope and focus and can be more easily observed.

From the perspective of the hegemonic bloc, the intellectual task would be to explain the threat from the perspective of the ideology and articulate the threat to neutralise its danger to the hegemony or even use it to enhance the ideology and hegemony itself.

Smith (1998), in expanding on the Laclau and Mouffe's model, illustrated that many of the crises in democratic societies arises from political causes within the process of hegemony. Smith, however, expands on the nature of crisis and notes that not all crises have a political origin. Smith provides the example of Norval's analysis that in the construction of Apartheid as an ideology the Afrikaans community went through a crisis in the 1930 and 40s caused by 'drought, the Depression, rapid urbanization and the Second World War' (Norval 1996 cited in Smith 1998, p82). In the case of the Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, these events were external forces outside the Afrikaans society. The drought, while an internal event, was not caused by hegemonic conflict inside or outside Afrikaans society, but was a natural disaster. Smith extends this point, noting that while these crises are not created within the process of hegemony; the meanings of these crises are created via articulation within the process of hegemony. This is an important point within the Laclau and Mouffe model. Even though hegemony is an articulated political construction, a world view, an ideology that makes sense of the world, external events can put that ideology into question. Disasters whether they are terrorist attacks or natural disasters offer a unique type of threat or crisis that can occur outside the field of articulation and hegemony. As such they can offer a unique type of crisis that can burst onto the terrain of hegemony unexpectedly, an extremely open signifier that demands immediate articulation from the intellectuals within society.

This sort of crisis, such as natural disasters goes beyond hegemony in that the danger is not only to the ideology and power structures in society, but to physical elements of the society itself, for example an earthquake or tsunami destroying a whole town. While there may be warnings of the impending disaster, they arise outside the process of hegemony and can have a tremendous effect on the narrative of the hegemony. The way in which disasters as crisis can be articulated is situational, but like the political concept of Gramsci's crisis, disasters can present a moment in which the field of articulation is more open precisely because the crisis comes from outside the ongoing narrative of hegemony.

This recognition of the special nature of disaster as crisis is an important element of this study. Within the time frame there are two specific disasters as crisis events that mark substantial changes to the narrative of hegemony in American society. These are the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Both these events are unique moments of crises that are open to articulation within the space of American civil society. One of the key points of examination within the superhero narratives is consequently: how do the superhero comics, inhabiting a cultural autonomous site within American civil society, articulate these societal crisis?

Hegemonic ideology

It is at this point in the examination of hegemonic ideology that this chapter turns from the theoretical to the methodological. This thesis needs to progress to the point that hegemonic ideology can be used to analyse the ideological content of superhero comics and speak to their ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest hegemony. Without this, the search for hegemonic commentary within comics or any media becomes cloudy and begins to rely too much on the feeling of the text and for crude indicators of overt subversion rather than on an analysis of the subtle rearticulation that is at the heart of hegemony and counter hegemony. First, it is necessary to explore the nature of ideology within the theory of hegemony, and then to identify the specific concepts of Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe, that detail the content of hegemonic ideology. Those constitutive concepts then provide a picture of the function and form of ideology which can be used as the pivot points around which the ideology is opened up and analysed; the focus directed to exposing the ideology's component elements, its articulations, the relationship of the various elements, and the privileged nodal points.

Ideology as used within the context of hegemony is a more complex concept than simply a set of ideas or beliefs. Williams states that ideology within hegemony goes beyond 'ideology and culture' in that ideology within hegemony, 'is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organised by specific dominant meanings and values' (Williams 1977, p.109). This broad definition of ideology is seen in Bocock's reference to hegemonic ideology as a philosophy or world view that is fundamental in a society (1986, p.58).

World view suggests the interpretation of the events and concepts within a society, but still lacks the active element of a lived experience. Gramsci's own definition of ideology was much broader than Bocoock's suggestion and included activity as an essential element. For Gramsci, ideology, specifically Marxist ideology, was not just an abstract concept of ideas, but included the actions of the people in step with those ideas (Kilminster 1979, p. 114). In regard to necessary ideologies in the move toward the proletariat revolution, Gramsci saw that they are psychologically valid within a society, such that the ideology organises the structure and actions of the society (Gramsci 1971, p.377). These active elements practiced by the members of a society must be an integral part of the working definition of a hegemonic ideology. Kilminster provides a powerful definition of a hegemonic ideology as "an entire conception of the world, as a general methodology of history, relating together fact and value, scientific knowledge and human practical aspirations in one total scheme" (Kilminster 1979, p. 113). This definition includes important aspects of a hegemonic ideology: it must provide a universal understanding of not only the society, but also how that society exists in relation to other societies. It must include both a sense of history as an ongoing and continuous system, but also its own history, myths of how the ideology arose, possibly entwined with how the society itself arose. If the ideology and the society can be seen to share a common origin and creation then they may be perceived to be inseparable or even as one whole entity. However, Kilminster's definition lacks the active element that is central to Gramsci's concept. While the process of hegemony is often understood to include the practices and normative behaviour of a society as vehicles for the promulgation of the hegemonic ideology, it should also include these practices and behaviours as part of the ideology itself. A hegemonic ideology needs to imbue the practices, behaviours and even rituals that the members of a society engage in. The ideology must be an active element of their lives. This, of course, helps to ensure that the ideology is seen to be 'real' and 'true' and not just one of many interpretations of societal events.

Laclau and Mouffe applaud Gramsci for conceiving ideology in this way and refer to ideology as 'an organic and relational whole, embodied in institutions and apparatuses, which welds together a historic bloc around a number of basic articulatory principles' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, p.67 cited in Ives 2005 p.458). Laclau and Mouffe go beyond this and see that 'the social *is* articulation insofar as

'society' is impossible' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 p.114). The Marxist Williams and the post-Marxist Laclau and Mouffe reach the same point through different routes, presenting the more encompassing idea of ideology in the hegemonic tradition.

Gramsci identifies two elements of a successful hegemonic ideology, *the hegemonic principle*, which is the ideological point within the ideology that justifies the position of the hegemonic group within the bloc (which in the Gramsci model can only be one of the fundamental classes), and *the national popular* which represents patriotic and nationalistic ideological content in the hegemonic ideology. With the primacy of the economic, Gramsci stated that the hegemonic ideology must provide a justification for the economic domination of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971 p.161). While the ongoing process of hegemony involves compromise in the interests of groups other than the hegemonic group, the ideological reason or justification of the economic primacy of the hegemonic group cannot be compromised or given away. In past societal structures such as monarchies, this reason may have been the act of God, the rulers of the nation were appointed by God and this justification for their rule was accepted by the population. In a capitalist society this explanation must follow a more secular reasoning, more focused on the positive actions of the hegemonic group to achieve their position. It might even give the appearance that membership of the hegemonic group is not based on birth privilege, but on the merits of the actions of the hegemonic group itself and that membership of the group is open to others within the society. The ideology must convince the society that the hegemonic group has a right to their position at the economic apex of society and while other elements of this ideology can be altered or compromised, this element must remain. The hegemonic group's position must be protected not through simply fear of violence, but through reason. Laclau and Mouffe, in rejecting the privileged position of the fundamentalist class within Marxism, reject the need for the economic hegemonic principle within a successful hegemony. However, as Smith has pointed out, that does not mean that Laclau and Mouffe's concept would reject that there could be hegemony based on class oppression (Smith 1998, p.30). It could be argued that a hegemony that attempted to have the Bourgeoisie within the bloc would need to ensure that there was a justification for their economic dominance, but that in itself is not enough to suggest that the Bourgeoisie are the hegemonic class. It might be another group that provides leadership within the Bloc, but that it has negotiated the

Bourgeoisie class interest within its hegemony in order to secure their economic power. That economic power could then be used by the group to strengthen its own social position as hegemonic.

The other element of the ideology that Gramsci notes is the “national-popular”, more commonly nationalism and patriotism. The national-popular is not an economic or class element, like the hegemonic principle and does not seek to separate and highlight a class. Instead the national popular elements seek to bring the societal groups together in the concept of national identity by focusing on shared beliefs and values about the world and themselves that push towards a unique national character. In doing this it breaks with the concepts of the separate groups and divisions within the society and is able to unite the people of one nation under a collective identity articulated in opposition to other nation states identities. The national popular also utilises the material elements of ideology and provides the society with rituals and celebrations that work to support the hegemonic ideology as a whole, for example the patriotic rituals and symbols of the United States such as the Fourth of July, the American flag and the Oath of Allegiance. The national-popular is similar in many ways to an articulation of Durkheim’s concept of the civil religion as the form of secular nationalism, that is the use of religious like symbols, rituals and language used by the state to promote a national culture or identity that unites the nation (Coleman 1970 p.69). In Gramsci’s vision of hegemony non-class elements like the national-popular could be articulated to the hegemonic principle of the two fundamental classes, the Bourgeoisie or the Proletariat (Mouffe, 1979, p.195). Laclau and Mouffe see that patriotic elements are an important part of a successful hegemony. Mouffe noted in an interview in 2001 that the Left had abandoned the hegemonic potential of patriotism, which is now dominated by the Right, for a focus on more international identities, which had the potential to damage its campaign for hegemony (Mouffe, et al. 2001).

Laclau and Mouffe add to the components of hegemonic ideology in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2001) in a way that can be slightly confusing because they see the construction of a bloc of different groups and the construction of an ideology as one process. This is, in part, because the ideological elements of the ideology themselves have intrinsic concepts of identity, where, for example, the concept of patriotism includes the identity of the patriot. The

creation of the bloc and ideology for Laclau and Mouffe is a process of articulation in which elements are articulated to each other and ultimately to the groups. They refer to the elements of the ideology as nodal points (Laclau, Mouffe 2001 p.139). Within the incomplete and contested nature of meaning, nodal points represent elements where the meanings are somewhat fixed, although not totally. These nodal points represent floating signifiers (Laclau, Mouffe 2001 p.141). For example, the concept of success within the American Dream is a nodal point, its meaning is somewhat fixed but is malleable and open to contest. These nodal points can have privilege over other elements within the ideology through their relationship in the formation. In the larger ideologies that are attempting hegemony across a political space like the United States, there are a collection of nodal points that are articulated together to form the larger ideology. One of these nodal points may act as the ultimate floating signifier for the whole collection and provide an identification for the ideology, although that may not be needed or always possible in each society.

In fact, ideology can work without being overtly identified, simply through the privileged nodal points in discourse. For example, appeals to American patriotism may not explicitly identify the American Dream in play, but might use the articulations within the ideology that link patriotism to ideas such as Equality, Freedom or Success. The justification and the expansion of the nodal points with the American Dream, and their articulation to each, are other covered in the next chapter. Gramsci's elements of the national-popular, and Laclau and Mouffe's concept of nodal points, are compatible concepts. The national-popular may represent multiple elements of a hegemonic ideology and can be seen to be a nodal point. The meaning of patriotism in society would be somewhat defined in part from past articulations and because of the material nature of hegemonic ideologies. This would include not only a concept of patriotism, but also rituals, behaviours and therefore an identity of the patriot. This patriotism, as a nodal point, is open to contestation and can have its somewhat fixed meaning changed. It could be articulated within a hegemonic ideology to the interests of a specific group in society via the process of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and so work to help bring groups that identify with the concept and identity into the bloc and ideology. Gramsci is insistent that there are other non class elements available for articulation within the society, as are Laclau

and Mouffe. Other elements can be nodal points in an ideology that forms privileged positions of meaning within that ideology.

It is at this point, with Gramsci's national-popular as a constituent ideological element, and Laclau and Mouffe's articulated nodal points as constituted ideological elements with relations of articulation, that the hegemonic ideology can be analysed. The notion of floating signifiers, past articulations and privileged nodal points are pivot points around which the ideology can be opened up and the articulations exposed. An analysis of a hegemonic ideology into its articulated nodal points, with attention to the type of articulation and privilege attached to those nodal points, allows for an examination and comparison of all kinds of texts within a political space and time with reference to the nodal points and their articulated relationships. Texts which seek to replicate the hegemony would show similar nodal points in similar articulated relationship within the text. Texts which seek to undermine, challenge or counter the hegemony may contain the same nodal points, but with differing degrees of privilege, attempting to shift the meaning of nodal points, have different relations of articulation between elements, or even include other elements from outside the hegemony. I want to argue, for example, that the concept of Success is a nodal point within the American Dream, a privileged point in that it is the ultimate goal articulated within the ideology. Within the history of the American Dream there has been an ongoing tension between two conceptions of Success, Wealth and non-material Happiness. Historically, when Wealth has achieved hegemony as the definition of Success, the articulation of Wealth as Success is a reproduction of the ideology. Texts that still praise Success as a worthy goal in American Society but substitute non-material happiness as Success are attempting to critique and challenge this ideology, shifting the meaning of the nodal point and therefore changing the articulation of the American Dream as a floating signifier. This was the sort of critique and challenge that the Captain America comics of the era of the Ronald Reagan Presidency attempted against Reagan's articulation of Wealth as the virtuous success of the American Dream (McGuire 2007).

This opposition and challenge from the differing points of articulation might be unable to be viewed until the ideology is dissected and analysed. Its subtle nature may hide a hegemonic ability that could work on the consumer in a way that is hard to detect overtly. A recent study into the effects of movies with subtle political

messages has shown that consumers' attitudes, regardless of their political orientation and position on a issue can be changed through the consumption of this media. The researchers suggest that this is possibly because consumers are not prepared to ideologically and politically defend themselves from these messages as they consume entertainment media as they would with other media (Adkins Castle 2013). This has potential ramifications for the ideological messages contained in superhero comics, which like movies are an entertainment media and would be subject to a similar lack of defence of position.

Before the close analysis of the ideology can be carried out, however, the hegemony and the ideology must be first identified. In this case the United States may represent a subject uniquely suited to this study as it has a stable, long running, although narrow space divided between a political Right and Left, an established national ideology in the American Dream, which will be detailed in the next chapter, and a society that is not subject to the hegemonic ideological content of other societies which would confuse the national hegemonic message. The American public are almost unique in the world in that they almost exclusively consume their own national popular culture (Lewis 1999).

Studies of hegemony and ideology in comic books

The theory of hegemony has been used previously in examinations of the ideological content of comic books. These previous studies have assisted in the application of hegemony in theory and method for this study not only in replicating elements of these studies but also making specific choices about the use of hegemony on the basis of absences in these studies. These studies have confined themselves in the use of hegemony as a theory to the Gramsci model. By not applying the theory of hegemony that was radicalised by Laclau and Mouffe, they have not been able to provide the deep analysis of the articulations and nodal points of hegemonic ideology that brings forth the analysed hegemonic ideology as a sociological tool that this thesis intends. The following is a critical review of the work in the field of hegemony and comic books of Williams (1994), Dorfman and Mattelart (1991) and Costello (2009).

In “Comics: A Tool of Subversion?” (Williams 1994), Jeff Williams examined seven different comic books published in the 1990s for subversion using Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Williams defined hegemony as “the ideological power structure in any given society; the status quo”, it “implies that all aspects of society and culture are tools of the current dominant order, either on a conscious or subconscious/subliminal level” (Williams 1994 p.131). This is a clear point of difference with this study, Williams’ definition of hegemony and therefore hegemonic ideology is extremely broad. There is no attempt to identify the hegemonic bloc or hegemonic group and the ideology is loosely defined as the status quo. Williams defined Subversion as anything that was counter-hegemonic, in other words anything that opposes the status quo.

The conclusion of Williams study was that mainstream superheros comic books such as Marvel’s Spiderman and DC’s Superman, who were included in the seven comics, reproduce the dominant hegemonic ideology, while independent comics that included elements such as nudity, the questioning of the reality of history versus myth, counter-culture drug stories, feminist heroes, cyberpunk, and positive representations of workers revolution can be subversive/counter-hegemonic.

The definition of hegemony as the status quo, and subversion as anything that opposes it, leads William’s study to a simplistic conclusion. With no examination of what is the hegemonic ideology beyond a broad, undifferentiated, notion of the status quo, and therefore no dissection and analysis of the ideology into nodal points, Williams’ misses the opportunity to examine the articulation of the nodal points of the ideological elements of the status quo. For Williams, if the nodal point is within the status quo, then there is no chance of subversion. This leads Williams to conclude that nudity in independent comics is subversive but the appeal to patriotism in the Superman comic is not. Williams concludes that the fact that Superman appears on the cover of the comic with the American flag is enough evidence to prove that the comics is reproducing hegemony. Williams makes the point that the Superman comic is more complex than the images of the cover, and details a story that shows American military personnel fronting a nationalistic terrorist organisation and corruption in the military. The story ends with Superman putting the concept of human life before patriotism in opposition to the articulation of the American military. While Williams acknowledges that there is something beyond the

reproduction of hegemony going on within the comic, his methodology and definition of ideology cannot allow him to get beyond the nodal point of nationalism and patriotism as part of the hegemony of the status quo (Williams 1994 p. 132-133).

Alternatively, Williams notes nudity as social deviation and therefore subversive (Williams 1994 p.137). While Williams is able to note some subversive ideological content within the independent comics that depict nudity, it is the insistence that nudity is itself subversive that shows the danger of not examining the articulation of ideological points. Nudity as an element has the potential for critique, challenge and contest of the status quo, but also for reproduction of the status quo. It is the articulation that is applied to nudity that defines its position in relation to the status quo. For example if the nudity within the comic is exclusively the nudity of young women for the gaze of the predominately male comic book reader, then in regards to a patriarchal status quo in which women are seen as commodities there is little evidence for subversion. Again this illustrates the need for a sociological tool of analysis like the analysed hegemonic ideology which goes beyond the superficial layer of rebellion and exposes true ideological resistance.

Methodologically, Williams' work makes two other important contributions. Williams' analysis of the content of the comics does go beyond the mere analysis of images and looks at the narrative of the comic book. While Williams' theoretical use of hegemony does not allow for a deep analysis of the narrative, there is a clear recognition and familiarity with comic books to emphasise the importance of this approach. Williams' approach is clearly tempered by the recognition made by Wright (2001) as well that analysis of the narrative needs to be at the level at which comic book readers themselves could expose these meanings and articulations.

Williams was limited in his study to one issue of each of the seven comic titles, but acknowledges that a more sound methodology would involve more comic books. Williams states that to come to a conclusion on the subversive nature of comic books, superheroes included, it is necessary to analyse individual titles carefully over many issues (Williams 1994 p. 142). While this study is not limiting its focus to subversion, but rather to the broader, albeit more focused, task of exploring the ability of superhero comics to engage in social and political commentary, and to take part in societal debates, this study embraces Williams' methodological point. While

an individual issue of Batman or Captain America can illustrate a perspective of the American Dream, a larger sample of these issues will allow for a deeper examination of the multiple representations that are possible within the broader narrative. Individual issues are part of larger stories, often four to six issues long, which in many cases then form part of even longer story lines. In the case of longer established superheroes like Captain America and Batman, these longer storylines are part of a decades long open narrative of the character. The nature of comic book consumption by consumers is more likely to approach the reading of longer story arcs and multiple issues than the single comic.

Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's "How to Read Donald Duck" (1991) examines the longer narrative in reviewing multiple issues of Disney's Donald Duck comics. Dorfman and Mattelart's study show a consistent engagement and promotion of an ideology that they refer to as "the American Dream of Life" (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.95) or the American Way of Life (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.59). This way of life does not show reality as it is, but a reality as seen from within American society, an ideology that supports the American dominance as natural and expands class domination beyond the domestic sphere. Dorfman and Mattelart's study, like Williams, uses Marxist theory although Dorfman and Mattelart ensure that the economic determinism of Gramsci's hegemony is at the centre of their study. They are concerned about the economic domination of the production of ideas as the theoretical starting point, "In a society where one class controls the means of economic production, that class also controls the means of intellectual production; ideas, feelings, institutions, in short the very meaning of life." (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.95). The Marxist approach ensures that they see the hegemonic group in their analysis as the Bourgeoisie, but they also insist on an American imperialist agenda within the comics. Unlike this study, they examined comic books outside of the domestic setting of the time and place of production. The comics in their study are American comics that have been translated and reproduced in South America for a South American audience. Their concern is with the promotion of American ideology to an audience of South American children. Within their work it is the American ideology of the Donald Duck comics that is antagonistic to their own anti-imperialist ideology. Their work engages in a contest

of hegemony itself, positioning Imperialist America in opposition to their own Marxist South American bloc

Dorfman and Mattelart examined the content of multiple Donald Duck comics on the points of women, non-Americans, morals and culture and used these points to expose differences between their anti-imperialist ideology and the American Dream. Dorfman and Mattelart do not make use of Laclau and Mouffe's concept of hegemony, but what they identify as ideological points of difference corresponds to the concept of nodal points within a hegemonic ideology. For example Dorfman and Mattelart noted that in the comics, the role of the mother had been removed and women had been left to fill limited roles within the narrative. While male characters have adventures, female characters are stuck with two prototype roles, Snow White or the Witch (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.38). Non American characters and their lands are ripe for exploitation by the main characters. Foreign lands, many of them obviously references to South American countries such as Aztecland or Inca-Blinca (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.54), have vast riches that they are ignorant of and are more than willing to be swindled out of for a chance of a Western lifestyle which is seen as the pinnacle of humanity with the comic. Money and the pursuit of it are at the centre of the motivation of these characters. Wealth in the Disney universe is not created by producers, but by the ideas of the Bourgeoisie, the Scrooge McDucks and the shopkeepers of the world (Dorfman, Mattelart 1991 p.69). As much as Dorfman and Mattelart are able to explore the differences between their own ideology and the American ideology of the comic, their Marxist analysis brings them back to the economic class relationship as the central point of difference. Dorfman and Mattelart argue that all the examples of difference are a product of the bourgeois American view of wealth and production.

Dorfman and Mattelart Marxist position restricts their ability to dissect and analyse the ideology of the Donald Duck comics. They are only able to perceive difference between their own projected Marxist South American ideology and the ideology of the Donald Duck comics. They situate the origin of this difference in the contrast in fundamental class position of the comic and themselves.

The anti-imperialist position is only defined in opposition to the American Dream of Donald Duck and the ideological components of the American Dream of Donald

Duck that are exposed are only those that are antagonistic. Dorfman and Mattelart do not attempt to dissect and analyse the ideology of the Donald Duck comics in full and therefore miss the opportunity to explore ideological positions that both ideologies might share.

The sample used by Dorfman and Mattelart in their analysis of the American Dream of Donald Duck mirrors Williams' suggestion of the need for examination over a large run of issues and includes multiple issues of the comic book. However, it should be noted that while Donald Duck comics contain elements of the continuity that defines superhero comics and include narratives that work as sequels to previous issues, continuity is not as important to the Donald Duck narrative and the open narrative of the comic is less pronounced. This combined with the incomplete analysis of the ideology of Donald Duck means that Dorfman and Mattelart's work does not show the narrative of hegemony, the inevitable alternation of ideology over a period of time. Even though they analyse comics over a period of publication history, from their Marxist position the ideology of Donald Duck is unchanging and unaltered,

An intriguing element of their work is the identification of the American Dream as the ideology of America and also the ideology of the narrative of the comics. Donald Duck Comics were created for an American audience before they were then translated for foreign markets. What Dorfman and Mattelart see as an imperialist ideology is an American ideology that was originally meant for an American audience. Dorfman and Mattelart are outsiders, not socialised as part of the American society. As outsiders looking in on the cultural products of America, they are able to see clearly the hegemonic potential of the American Dream.

Matthew Costello's *Secret Identity Crisis: Comic Books and the Unmasking of Cold War America* (2009) focuses on themes that are close to this study. Costello's work is concerned with the changing nature of American identity and the Marvel superhero comic books' ability to engage with this issue from 1961 to 2007. For Costello, American identity is how Americans see themselves and their nation. He is quick to label it a national identity (Costello 2009, p.14) and sees that superhero comic books do not just map this nation identity, but actually reconstruct this identity (Costello 2009, p.18). Like Kading (2005), Costello believes that comic books with

their concern with the heroic and good versus evil are the perfect medium to debate and explore the myths and reality of national identity. Costello sees three elements of the superhero comic that make 'it a particularly revealing avenue of exploration of national identity. These are the relevance of the heroic narrative to social values, the specific ideological content of the books as cultural artefacts, and the mechanism of dual identity' (Costello 2009, p.15)

While Costello does not make explicit use of hegemony as a theoretical concept within his work he notes that the American national identity has hegemonic qualities (2009, p.3) and the elements of this identity echo the American Dream as a hegemonic ideology. The American national identity includes social values shared by the society (Costello 2009 p.16), political beliefs about itself and therefore about the other nations of the world. Costello essentially sees the American identity as ideological and while he does not go as far as seeing it as an ideology his analysis of the changing nature of American identity is in line with the process of hegemony.

Costello's contribution to this thesis is a structural approach to examining the ideological content of comics within the context of their society. While the focus of Costello's work is how comics engage with the issue of American identity, he makes sure that the analysis of the engagement is within the context of its time and place, 1961 to 2007 in American society. Covering a much longer period than this study and also in chronological order, Costello starts each chapter by situating American identity within the timeframe of the chapter before analysing the content of the comics, returning to the relevant points as they emerge in the narrative of the comic. In doing this Costello is able to present the narrative of American identity, how it changes and shifts over time, alongside the superhero narrative's commentary on American identity. This shows a clear correlation between the two. However, because of the chronological breadth of Costello's project there are limitations in exploring this correlation. Costello refers to the publishing of a comic within a year at the most specific, sometimes referring to a storyline or theme over a few years. While this is understandable in a wide timeframe, it does reduce the ability of his study to explore instances of intellectual leadership within the superhero narrative, the moments when the ideological points of the comic may be months ahead of developments in the broader American society on the issue of national identity.

This thesis follows a similar structure, attempting in each chronological chapter to place the superhero narrative within the hegemonic context of American society and the ideology. However, the structure of this thesis is more specific, focussing on the months of publication of individual comic issues to allow for a more thorough examination of moments of intellectual leadership.

As can be seen from this review, previous studies that have used hegemony theoretically and methodologically to analyse the ideological content of comic books have for the most part confined themselves to Gramsci's model of hegemony and have not applied the radicalisation of hegemony by Laclau and Mouffe. As this chapter has detailed, Laclau and Mouffe's concepts allow a deeper analysis of the articulations and nodal points of hegemonic ideology that brings forth the deconstructed hegemonic ideology as a sociological tool.

Within the field of academic study of comics the use of Laclau and Mouffe model of hegemony has been limited. To be able to examine a study that adopts a similar methodology drawn from the theory of hegemony of Laclau and Mouffe it is necessary to go beyond popular culture as a subject and explore hegemony and ideology within a political contest. Nicolina Montesano Montessori's (2011) used the theory of hegemony of Laclau and Mouffe in a discursive analysis of two counterpoised political speeches, one from the former Mexican President Salinas de Gortari and one from the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. This study combined Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe through Discourse Theory focusing on the concepts of antagonistic nature, nodal points and floating signifiers within the opposing ideologies of both parties (Montesano Montessori 2011, p.173). Montesano Montessori identified weaknesses in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory in relation to its practical application in research, including the vagueness of the concept of nodal points and the lack of a clear methodological framework. Montesano Montessori chose to add elements from Critical Discourse Analysis and attempted to integrate the two methods into one process.

Nodal points cannot be made any more precise in methodological sense. The identification of nodal points comes from an immersion in the texture of the discourses themselves. The internal relationships between different nodal points are only able to be discovered in a deep exploration of their meanings and articulations.

In this thesis the process of breaking down and dissecting the hegemonic ideology into its ideological components and then untangling their relationship between those articulations is able to reveal its ideological position. It should be noted however that this study does have an advantage over Montesano Montessori's in that the political space of American society is relatively stable. The American Dream has a detailed and long history which helps in the process of identification of nodal points. The ideological components themselves that act as nodal points within the ideology also have a detailed history of articulation which assists in their identification. While Critical Discourse Analysis would be more relevant to analysing the specificity of political speeches, more broader contestations of hegemony such as in popular culture are less nuanced, and are likely to be more impressionistic, symbolic formations and identification and better suited to the methodology of this thesis.

Conclusion

Where the previous chapter sought to establish the research topic and research questions for this thesis, the ability of superhero comics to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology, the goal of this chapter was to detail the theoretical approach to the topic and begin to establish the methodological position. The theory of hegemony as detailed by Gramsci and radicalised by Laclau and Mouffe provides the theoretical approach with its focus on the role of ideology within the societal context. It is this concept of hegemony that is at the heart of this methodological approach. To be able to evaluate the nature of the ideological content of the superhero comics it is necessary to be able to compare it to the broader hegemonic ideology within political society at large which justifies the rule of the establishment. This is a complex task as the ideology first has to be identified, and then it needs to be noted that this ideology will continuously change. The latter is due to the inherently incomplete nature of meaning created through articulations, and, more specifically, due to particular threats to hegemony, including societal crisis. While it is possible to uncover the ideology through discourse analysis, other studies have had problems creating methodological approaches to this issue. Superhero comics as a form of popular culture and the specific nature of American society; its ideological history and the stability of its political space help to address these issues.

The methodological approach within this chapter creates a sociological tool of analysis based on the dissection and analysis of a hegemonic ideology into its articulated nodal points. The next chapter explores the position of the American Dream within American hegemony. When a specific hegemonic American Dream is divided into these nodal points, the privileged nature of particular nodal points can be seen in the importance they play within the totality of the ideology. This analysed hegemonic ideology can then be compared to the comic books of the same period. Within the comic books a replication of the meaning somewhat fixed by the nodal points of the currently hegemonic version of the American Dream and a similar relationship between these nodal points would suggest a comic that is reproducing the ideology of this specific hegemonic American Dream.

On the other hand, if in the comparison between the hegemonic version of the American Dream and the ideological content of the comic book, differences are observed then these differences need to be explored. Differences can manifest in conflicting meanings between the nodal points of the ideology and the comic book. The nodal points themselves could be similar, but yet are articulated into a different discursive formation with differing privileged nodal points. Additional ideological components from outside the ideology may be articulated within the ideological contents of the comic books. These deviations suggest that the superhero narrative is possibly seeking to critique, challenge or contest the hegemonic ideology in a way that could undermine the hegemony and even be part of the construction of counter-hegemony.

Chapter 3: The American Dream: Nodal points and articulations

The previous chapter detailed the theoretical and methodological position of this study drawn from the theory of hegemony as detailed by Gramsci (1971), and later radicalised by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). The chapter presented a methodological approach to the study of hegemony, the analysed ideology. Going beyond the surface of the hegemonic ideology, the method involves a breaking down of the ideology into its component ideological elements, its nodal points. Analysing the ideological content of the Batman and Captain America narratives involves comparing the analysed hegemonic ideology to the ideological content of the narratives. Similarities in the type and formation of nodal points suggest reproduction of the hegemony. Differences suggest critiques, challenges or contests of hegemony and need further analysis.

This chapter makes the case that the American Dream has the power and position to act as a hegemonic ideology within the society of the United States and that it has done so in the past. This case is approached in three ways. Firstly the American Dream is defined and its position as an ideology in the United States is explored. Secondly the American Dream is broken up into its component nodal points. The past articulations of these nodal points and their relationship to each other are explored. Lastly an example of the American Dream's use as a hegemonic ideology (the Reagan Administration of 1981-1989) is presented within the discussion of the nodal points of the American Dream. This chapter ends with the American Dream dissected and its component nodal points untangled, ready for its use in the following chapters as the key sociological tool of analysis in this study.

Defining the American Dream

The term the American Dream was first popularised by historian James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book, *The Epic of America* (Hanson, White 2011, p.3), however scholars have suggested that Adams did not invent the concept, but was instead identifying a ideology that has existed in America for hundreds of years. This idea had not been labelled, but had already been broached by thinkers and writers such as Tocqueville, Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau. (Cullen 2004, Samuels 2012). Jim Cullen in his work, *The American Dream* (2004) has argued that the roots of the ideology stretch all the way back to the Puritan Pilgrims of the Mayflower of 1620. The act of identifying the American Dream before Adams articulation of it in 1931, helps to give the ideology a historic power. The idea that the American Dream exists at the birth of America helps to bind it ideologically to American society.

Approaching the American Dream academically is problematic. The American Dream is often referenced in American popular culture, in academia, in politics and in the day to day lives of American people, but it is really defined in a broad way. It is sometimes evoked without being named through the power of its privileged nodal points. The American Dream is a floating signifier in the sense of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation within hegemony. Each American can define their own personal American Dream. The American Dream can also act as unifying ideology for American society; it is a shared cultural ideology that Americans understand. To define and understand the American Dream is to get into a 'complex idea with manifold implications that cut different ways' (Cullen 2004 p.6).

To define the American Dream it is necessary to look at a diverse sample of meanings from within American Society. American political scientist Jennifer L. Hochschild attempts to provide an overarching idea of the American Dream:

the promise that all Americans have a reasonable chance to achieve success as they define it – material or otherwise – through their own efforts, and to attain virtue and fulfilment through success (Hochschild 1995, p. xi)

At the centre of Hochschild's definition of the American Dream is the concept of SUCCESS as an ultimate goal. Success is directly articulated to the concepts of VIRTUE. The type of Success is open to articulation. Hochschild states Success can

be material or otherwise. The equation for the achievement of Success is through effort, in other words Hard Work. Her definition makes clear that the American Dream is a process that is open to all Americans. Equality is an essential element of the ideology. Within this definition the key ideological constituent components of the American Dream; the nodal points, emerge: Success, Virtue, Hard Work and Equality. This creates a starting point to explore other articulations of the American Dream.

In concert with Hochschild's definition, American film maker Kevin Smith provides a definition that is both a personal articulation of the American Dream, but is also meant offer a broad interpretation:

While its'[the American Dream] always thought to be about working hard, owning a house, getting married , and having kids, I think that even *that* dream is subject to the same laws of nocturnal whimsy: The American Dream changes *constantly* and varies from person to person... My America Dream has always been simple, and its one I encourage you to adopt as your own: Figure out what you love to do, then figure out how to get paid to do it (Smith 2012, p19).

Smith's definition also states that SUCCESS is the goal of the American dream. He makes the point that Success can mean more than just material success, such as having a family. His concept of a traditional American Dream; a house, marriage and children suggests a more restrained idea of Success that while still having a material aspect goes beyond that articulation. In the last line he indicates that Success also has a non-material articulation, doing what you love. However, in that same line the material aspect is still present in the need to get paid for doing what you love. In Smith's definition of the American Dream articulations of material Success (Wealth) and non-material Success (Happiness) are present. The other element that Smith's definition shares with Hochschild, but to a slightly lesser emphasis is that Hard Work is the path to Success. Virtue is not directly articulated within Smith's version of the American Dream. Nor is Equality, however it is clear from the text that Smith assumes that the reader shares access to the Dream as well.

The third definition of the American Dream to be considered here is the original as articulated by James Truslow Adams:

It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and to be recognised by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of their birth... it has been a dream of being able to grow to the fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class. And that dream has been realized more fully in actual life here than anywhere else, though very imperfectly even amongst ourselves. (Adams 1941 cited in Hanson and White 2011, p3)

Adam's definition makes clear that success is not just wealth, although wealth is articulated. virtue is articulated alongside Success, almost as a goal in itself. Equality is clearly articulated; the Dream is explicitly open to both genders and Adams mentions that it is not restricted by class. Within Adam's definition is an attempt to explain the unique nature of the Dream. It states that it is in America where this Dream is more fully realised, suggesting an American superiority to the rest of the world. Within that concept of American superiority over the rest of the world is a justification for patriotism, the celebration of that superiority. It also attempts to explain why the Dream is more fully realised in America by evoking the concept of freedom, that America is unhampered by the barriers of the old world, and the American people are free to reach their full potential.

The last example of definitions of the American Dream is drawn from the same timeframe as this study. In 2010 *USA Today* asked Americans in Washington DC for their definitions of the American Dream (USA Today 2010):

"Setting goals for yourself and attaining them. You can attain anything that you want. I haven't set my goals too high through life, so I've attained most of the ones I've wanted to."

-- Philip Goettsch, Crest, Calif.

"When a person who has nothing, works hard and gains something, more than what he had at first."

-- Rome Gregory, Memphis

"Just being happy."

-- Amanda Hamilton, Fredericksburg, Va.

"For me it means being able to live a healthy and happy life, to be connected with friends and family."

-- Robert Kavalek, Washington, D.C.

"To be rich."

-- Antonio Weeks, Birmingham, Ala.

Within these five short definitions the same ideological points continue to emerge. SUCCESS is articulated as Wealth; Antonio Weeks' definition of being rich. It is also articulated as Happiness; Amanda Hamilton's 'just being happy' and Robert Kavalek's health, happiness, friends and family. HARD WORK is clearly articulated by Rome Gregory, and Philip Goettsch at least articulates WORK, although his idea of restrained goals might suggest that work might not need to be that hard. EQUALITY is implied within Phillip's articulation in that he states that YOU can

attain anything you want, suggesting that the ideology is open to all. Some of these responses are clearly personal versions of the American Dream and others also reflect a broader societal aspect to the American Dream.

Combining the definitions of the historian who coined the phrase, an academic, a film director and members of the American public in Washington DC in 2010 we can see that while there are multiple expressions of the concept of the American Dream, for example some see Success as Wealth and others as Happiness (although the two need not be mutual exclusive I am told). Even within these different expressions there are common ideological components clearly visible that make up the ideology as a whole. These parts are the nodal points of the American Dream, the floating signifiers at which meaning has become somewhat fixed but is still open to articulation. Different articulations of the nodal points and different privileging of certain nodal points creates different ideologies of the American Dream. These nodal points will be examined later in this chapter but they have clearly emerged from the eight definitions of the American Dream examined here; success, virtue, hard work, equality, American superiority, patriotism and freedom.

While explicitly defining the American Dream is an uncommon task, its presence in American Society is easily observed. The American Dream is at the centre of American popular culture and has overtly informed the content of different types of popular culture, from Norman Mailer's novel *The American Dream* (1965), the television movie on the Jackson family, *The Jacksons: an American Dream* (1992) and even the Captain America comic of the 1980s in which the title page stated that Captain America was the personification of the American Dream. The narrative of the American Dream echoes throughout popular culture, from the story of the cowboy on the Western frontier and the immigrant coming to America to find success. Within the field of social issues the American Dream has been a defining framework for the understanding of social issues such as Jason DeParle's *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and a nations drive to end Welfare* (2005) . Its ability to explain the American society has seen the American Dream become the narrative of exploring biographical tales of triumph over adversity as an example of the American Dream such as John Jakes *American Dreams* (1999).

Academic research has shown the ideological power and position of the American Dream. Hochschild states that the American Dream is a central ideology of Americans (1995). British cultural critic Ziauddin Sardar and anthropologist Merryl Wyn Davies, identify the American Dream as the overriding “cultural psychosis” for Americans that defines the limits of American political debates (2004, p.v-vii). Elizabeth Long sees the American Dream as the central ideology of America throughout its history. For Long, the Dream is at the core of American “cultural assumptions, attitudes and beliefs” In her own study of the ideology of the American Dream within the popular novel, Long notes that the changing interpretations of the American Dream from 1945 to 1975 represents the changing culture within America (Long 1985, p.3). Hanson and White (2011) state that the American Dream is a dominant theme in American Culture from the beginning of the nation as does Cullen who can trace the origins of the Dream through the Puritans, the Declaration of Independence, the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the civil rights campaign of Martin Luther King Jnr. (Cullen 2004). Samuels states in his cultural history of the American Dream that the American Dream:

is thoroughly woven into the fabric of everyday life. It plays a vital, active role in who we are, what we do, and why we do it. No other idea or mythology- even religion, I believe- has as much influence on our individual and collective lives, with the Dream one of the precious few things in this country we all share. You name it- economics, politics, law, work, business, education- and the American Dream is there, the nation at some level a marketplace of competing interpretations of what it means and should mean (Samuels 2012 p2).

In light on Samuels’ points about the American Dream being woven into the fabric of American society it is worth considering how the American Dream fits the concept of hegemonic ideology. As previously mentioned Williams states that hegemonic ideology ‘is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organised by specific dominant meanings and values’ (Williams, 1977 p109). It is in this way that Samuels is describing the American Dream, as more than just a system of ideas or beliefs, but as a lived experience for Americans. Not only does it weave its way into all aspects of the

fabric of their society, but the American people live the American Dream. The American Dream is not just a justification for the social structure of American society; it is a narrative that every American is taking part in. When Americans go to work, or study at school or university they are engaging in the “Hard Work” of the American Dream narrative, living the struggle that the ideology promises will lead them to Success. While the definitions of the American Dream show divergence and personal meaning, they also show a common structure, a common social order that defines American society. Within the American Dream is both a personal narrative for each American, and an articulation about America as a nation. It is these multiple levels that give the American Dream a special power within society, a resiliency as an ideology. If the American Dream fails as a societal ideology, it still remains present in the individual’s personal narrative form.

This thesis does not state that the American Dream is always the hegemonic ideology of the United States. It attempts to firstly describe the hegemonic nature and potential of the American Dream. In later chapters it illustrates that within the period 2001 to 2008 two different interpretations of the American Dream become hegemonic within the contest of hegemony between the political Right and Left of American society.

Dissecting and untangling the American Dream: Nodal points and Articulations

The task of preparing the American Dream for use in the analysis of the ability of superhero comics to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology began with the identification of its ideological components. These component parts are the nodal points and its different articulations to each other and to other ideological elements that create different constructions of the American Dream. The definitions of the American Dream detailed previously while all being somewhat unique have shown that many of these component nodal points are shared in principle. Smith (1998) in her work on Laclau and Mouffe’s model of hegemony makes clear that floating signifiers such as these ideological components of the American Dream, are never blank spaces to be articulated freely but have some meaning, at the very least some fading meaning from past articulations. Therefore in exploring these components it is essential that their past articulations are considered.

The two key components of the American Dream already identified are success and hard work. There is an extremely strong relationship between these two elements; Hard Work is the process for achieving success within the ideology. Articulated closely to both Hard Work and Success is virtue. Virtue at times is merely implied within the ideology and its articulation is fairly open. At times it is the achievement of Success that brings Virtue, and at other times Virtue comes from engaging in the Hard Work of the process.

Within the ideological component of Success is a tension between two at times competing articulations; material Success/Wealth, and non-material Success/Happiness. This can be a difficult abstraction, as Wealth can certainly bring Happiness. However, ideologically and as articulated in American society, these two articulations are often expressed in opposition. In detailing the historical roots of the American Dream Cullen (2004) showed that overt definitions of success were not exclusively based on wealth. The Puritans concept of success was to create a religious community, a collective project. Their own individual salvation, which one would assume would be the end success, was not up to them, but to God. For the United States of 1776, success was defined ambiguously as “Happiness” and it was achievable for the individual by the individual’s actions, their own “pursuit” of it within the declaration of Independence. This concept of success, one’s own happiness, while ambiguous, is clearly individually focused. However this individual happiness is within an obvious collective context, calling for the Americans of 1776 to work together on the great struggle of defeating the British.

Cullen states that, Abraham Lincoln’s vision of success for Americans in the 1860s was one of self improvement and social status. It was around this time that Horatio Alger, the Harvard educated writer, started to publish his best selling fictional stories about young American boys born into poverty who decide to work hard and find success. While some academics focus on wealth as the end of Alger’s tales (Dohmhoff, 2006 p.63), the heroes of his stories often find only moderate wealth. More often than not their success was simply moving into the middle class, or marrying the love of their lives. While an increase in wealth was inevitable, happiness in Alger’s tales was not focused on Wealth, but on the respectability and status gained. The ‘rags to riches’ theme that is often projected onto Alger stories by modern day social observers was more ‘rags to respectability’. Self improvement

was the central point of this American Dream, and an end to itself. Alger's heroes and their mission for self improvement were imbued with Virtue; Wealth was only a by-product of that improvement and mobility. The relationship between Wealth and Virtue at times becomes so close that they become the same thing within the Dream, that possession of Wealth is Virtue.

While Adams in his original definition of the American Dream noted the presence of Wealth it was still not the dominant definition of success. By the time of the Reagan Administration of 1981-1989 material wealth had come to take a more central place within the American Dream. Reagan declared, "What I want to see above all, is that this country remains a country where someone can always get rich", (Levine, Papasortiriou 2005, p.213). Reagan's neo-liberal policies of consumption were supported by an ideology of the American Dream that narrowed the definition of Success (Kimmage 2011). For Reagan, and the new American society that the political Right ushered in, happiness was profit and wealth. This move towards Wealth as a conventional definition of Success can be seen in survey data on the meaning of the American Dream. Hanson presents data from the pollster John Zogby from 1998 to 2009 that shows a trend of Americans increasingly answering that material goods is the definition of the American Dream for them and their families (Hanson 2011 p92-93).

This move toward Wealth as the dominant definition of Success has not been without resistance from within American society. Zogby's research of belief in the American Dream during the 1990s also shows a sizable group of the American public who still defined success as spiritual happiness. Zogby asked Americans to choose between two concepts of the American Dream, material goods or spiritual happiness Results from 2001 show over half the respondents believing that the American Dream is about spiritual happiness (Hanson 2011, p.85). By January 2009 the results of the survey showed spiritual happiness down to 36% (Hanson 2011, p.93).

Zogby suggests that American electoral politics has become the site where the economic definition of success has taken hold in the battle for votes while the American people are themselves still interested in the non material concept of American Dream success (Zogby 2008, p.36). Part of the issue is that Happiness, spiritual or otherwise is itself a floating signifier and can mean many things;

hedonism, an absence of sadness or a secure place in the world. Some of these definitions can have a strong material aspect to them as well.

One interesting point about the survey question, material goods versus spiritual happiness, is the extent that both aspects were part of the American Dreams of Alger and Lincoln. As previously pointed out, the happiness that came from self improvement, which in a secular age seems to take on the spiritual concept of non material focus success, leads to financial success. The American Dream weaves these two together as one. For many Americans it may be hard to separate the Virtue that is articulated to Success from the concept as Wealth, as both Wealth and Virtue have become so closely articulated to Success.

While the most Successful in American Society according to the American Dream are the Wealthiest, there is a more moderate concept of Success, the goal of home ownership. Cullen points out that the American population have long been dedicated to achieving home ownership at some level (Cullen 2004, p.148). These more suburban dreams are a slice of the American Dream rather than a whole pie, but for many Americans to be able to own their own home is a level of financial success that makes them feel less the victims of the ideology. Psychologically an economic crisis that threatens American home ownership such as the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008, has the power to drastically affect the American people's relation to the American Dream.

Another articulation of Success within the American Dream is the nature of collective Success versus Individual Success. Hochschild has argued that the American Dream is often associated with individualism, even though in the broadest definition collective success is not excluded from the American Dream (Hochschild 1995, p.34). America during Reagan's Administration was not only seized by the concept of financial success but also by the mythology of individualism. Johnson observed within the corporate community during Reagan's presidency "a new individualism that elevated personal success above institutional success" (Johnson 2003, p.236). Success in America evoked the myth of rugged individualism; of the citizen, alone with only their own abilities and Hard Work to mould and shape their future through sheer force of will. As a former movie actor who had starred as the rugged frontier hero, Ronald Reagan was well placed to evoke a legend that many

had seen him already play on film (Johnson, 2003, p.41). In the 1980s, collective success became defined firstly by individual success. In the American team sport of basketball, where the team needed to work collectively to achieve the success of a championship, the focus in Reagan's America was the skills and abilities of the star over the rest of the team. Reagan himself undermined collective team successes by emphasising individuals within the team. When welcoming the Philadelphia 76ers as national basketball champions to the White House in 1983, Reagan praised the team as personifications of the American Dream. However, he then elevated the two stars of the team, Moses Malone and Julius Erving, associating their abilities with himself (Reagan, 1983).

The Collective Success of the basketball team or of the local community was undermined in Reagan's America, but the collective concepts of both patriotism and American superiority found strong articulations within the American Dream. Regardless of whatever definition of success is used; financial or non-financial; individual or collective, the fact that the American Dream states that America is where success is possible, suggests that there is something special about America. Something separates America from the rest of the world and makes America a unique place in which success can occur. It does not matter if there is something manifestly correct about America, or if there is an inherent fault in the rest of the world or both. It does not matter if the difference is identified as one of any other ideological concepts that explain this superiority; freedom, democracy, justice, equality or God. In any case the Dream asserts the greatness of America, an intrinsic *righteousness*. The exact reason for America's 'righteousness' is open to articulation, open to speculation by those who wish to define the American Dream for their own perspective. What is sure is American's belief in the American Dream is a belief in this righteous and superiority.

It is within the American Dream that a seed of imperialism is sown. The only hope for the rest of the world to be saved from their unsuccessful and unfree societies is to share the *righteousness* of America and ideologically become American. While all nations act in their national interest, the American Dream creates another shade to America's international policy, a missionary zeal to spread its superior ideology to the rest of the world. Sardar and Wyn Davies identify the American Dream as an explanation for why Americans see self-interested American foreign policy in an

altruistic and universal light (Sardar, Wyn Davies 2004, p.27). When trying to understand the American Government's desire to spread democracy to the Middle East, it is worthwhile to consider that this statement, devoid of the real politics of controlling oil and corporate interest, fits safely within the confines of the righteousness of America in the Dream. It points to democracy as being one of the reasons for America's righteousness, a virtue it is prepared to share with other nations.

The American Dream's promise of success and power is boosted by the actual conditions of America. The American Dream is ideologically fortified if the evidence of the ideology's inherent superiority over the rest of the world can be seen and experienced by American citizens. The stories of America's immigrants' mediocrity and unfair denial in their homelands, but outlandish success once they become American in ideology and nationality are important reinforcements of the American Dream. Arnold Schwarzenegger's origin as an Austrian enhances his tale of success in the American Dream. In this way, the practice of immigration supports the American Dream. If immigrants choose to leave their homelands and make lives in America, then American superiority must be recognised abroad. If America enjoys global status as an economic, cultural and military superpower, then the Dream must be true. Sardar and Wyn Davies suggest that this is the unique nature of American nationalism. It is not a commitment to a nation state, but a commitment to "a set of values, rights and defining characteristics," (Sardar, Wyn Davies, 2004, p.23)

For the American Dream to be triumphant, not only must success be seen to be experienced amongst the American people, but the righteousness of the American Dream must flow onto success for America on the international stage. In this way, rival interpretations of the Dream must promise greater international success. One way to suggest greater success is to wrap the appeal to a particular American Dream in the language of the outcomes of international success; patriotism and pride. The more a definition of the Dream is able to associate itself with patriotism then the more it appears to be the most successful and therefore, the most authoritative definition.

If the American Dream is in many manifestations an individual narrative, then Patriotism is the collective experience. Patriotism is the point where Americans can come together and celebrate the American Dream and its message of American

superiority. In this way, what might have been a divided ideology, pitting American against American for economic gain is able to unite American society in the collective success of their nation.

This is replicated in Gramsci's concept of the 'national-popular'. To achieve hegemony a group must be able to articulate to its position Patriotic and Nationalistic ideological elements (Mouffe 1979, p.194). The articulation of Patriotism within the American Dream makes it difficult for criticism of the American Dream to find a footing in American society. Those who wish to question the American Dream must be careful not to deny it or risk been branded 'Un-American'.

Reagan, who stands as an important figure in the dominance of the articulation of Wealth as Success, was also able to bring the power of Patriotism to his American Dream. Reagan's Presidency was marked by increased levels of patriotism and the advantages provided to a "performer" by increased access to television and radio. His own television and radio addresses were more frequent than previous Presidents and laden in patriotic language (Ehrman 2005, p.52). Reagan took advantage of events such as military celebrations and symbols such as the American Flag and American battle fields to associate himself and his position with the growing sense of patriotism that marked his time in office (Ehrman 2005, p.51). National events were used for political mileage whenever possible. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, which threatened to descend into farce with the withdrawal of the Soviet bloc nations, became a celebration of American nationalism. Instead of being seen as failure because of reduced competition, the 1984 Olympics were celebrated as American domination of the rest of the world. Reagan was a constant presence during the games, officially opening the games and publicly praising the athletes (Ehrman 2005, p.84). Reagan's appropriation of the patriotism borne out of the games went as far as commandeering the American Olympic chant, "USA! USA!" for his election rallies later that year (Ehrman 2005, p.84). Reagan's own mythology, enhanced by the failed attempt on his life in March 1981 (Johnson, 2003, p.159), his past career as an actor portraying American heroes and the genuine belief in his character by Americans worked to give him a unique popularity (Johnson 2003, p.163). It enhanced his ability to appropriate patriotism itself. Reagan unashamedly appropriated a whole nation's ideology because he believed in its Superiority. Reagan noted in his private letters that America had "that unique sense of destiny and

optimism that had always made America different from any other country in the world” (Ehrman 2005, p.21).

The articulation of superiority and patriotism, while at times making it hard to oppose the American Dream directly, instead enables a more hegemonic approach to social change. While Adam’s original definition of the American Dream suggested a level of Equality in the naming of both genders in the Dream, the Dream has not always been open to all Americans. Equality and the American Dream were the central points of the crisis of civil rights in the 1960s. While there is an ongoing historical debate about the movement for African American rights; between the collective action that won the day and the high profile actors that take central stage in the history books, it is Dr Martin Luther King Jr that has become the dominant historical figure. The movement was for African American to have a fair share of the American Dream, the right like all other Americans to not be held back unfairly in their pursuit of happiness, it was King who voiced the goal of the struggle invoking the American Dream, including his famous speech at the Lincoln memorial of in August 1963 (Cullen 2004, p.126). At the end of this speech, King made the connection between the American Dream and the Declaration of Independence. Of course, by then, the American Dream had become common currency in American society and a successful appeal to the authority of the ideology, which King provided at that movement, enabled the legislative victories of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act to sit comfortably within the social fabric of the United States. It is this ideological authority that makes America pre-Civil Rights seem the exception to the Declaration of Independence and the moral self view of the American people.

Interestingly, Alexis de Tocqueville in his study of the America of the 1830s speaks of a unique aspect to American society, “Among the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition amongst the people.”(cited in Cullen,2004, p. 112) While the America of the 1830s might have been an egalitarian society in the reality of people’s lives (obviously African Americans, Native peoples and women are excluded in de Tocqueville’s observation), the America of the following years would have to make adjustments to its social and political system to ensure an equality of opportunity.

American society accepted the changes brought by the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the Feminist movement of the 1970s. The ideology of the American Dream was able to adjust to incorporate those changes. This past articulation of Equality and access to the American Dream still resonates within the ideology. As Smith points out, Right wing forces are able to use similar appeals to equity and to the element of freedom for 'rights' such as firearms and opposition to affirmative action (Smith 1998, p178). These two elements of Patriotism and Equality have the ability to reduce the divisions within American Society and act within the logics of equivalence. Patriotism brings that nation together under one identity and the concept of equality (within the ideology as far back as Adams' original definition), suggests that these divisions are eliminated by the American Dream at its best. The divisional identity is lessened and the national identity is strengthened.

Freedom is synonymous with America's perception of itself. More so than many of the other nodal points within the American Dream, Freedom acts as an open signifier. While freedom can be seen as the reason for American Superiority and has become an important element of appeals to the American Dream, its meaning is fluid and unanchored. As Cullen shows, over the years Freedom has meant many things in America. In 1857 courts defined freedom as the right for white Americans to own African Americans as slaves, in 1905 freedom meant the right of an employer to enforce a contract with workers over any government provisions made for those workers, and in 1919 courts decided that freedom meant that the government could prosecute those whose speech it thought represented "a clear and present danger" (Cullen 2004, p.57).

The freedom of speech is one of the more venerated concepts of Freedom in America, however like all absolute values it has always been subject to the restrictions of both the government and civil society. Emma Goldman was famously arrested in 1917 for encouraging men not to register for conscription. She attempted to use free speech as a defence, but even though she was an American citizen, she was deported to Russia under the Anarchist Exclusion Act in 1919. Modern day activists note that the American media over the years has become increasingly centralised in the hands of few corporate players. This centralisation of the media has denied many Americans the ability to have their views heard. Americans who have attempted to take their points to the streets have found the state less than interested in

allowing them the right to protest. At times protests have been outright banned or restricted to “Free Speech Zones” where often they are not heard by those in power that they are trying to communicate with (Bovard 2004). In some cases the American Government has regarded the people who protest against their policies as potential terrorists themselves (Bovard 2003).

In ending the exploration of ideological components within the American Dream, it is fitting to return to the duo of often privileged nodal points, Success and Hard Work. Hard Work is not only important because with Success it is one of the key components of the American Dream, but because Hard Work represents the lived reality of the American Dream. Hard Work is the one element that is within the lives of everyday Americans. Hard Work is both the part of the narrative that Americans find themselves situated, but is also the part of the narrative that superhero narratives are rooted in as well. As Samuel (2012) states, the American Dream is not true, working hard will not guarantee success regardless how the individual defines it. But while the American Dream is not real, the element of Hard Work is a reality for Americans. Zogby’s surveys on the American Dream show that belief in achieving the American Dream had slowly been dropping from a belief of 76% in 2001, to around 55% in January 2009 (Hanson 2011, p.94). Belief is predicated not on an individual’s actual social condition, but in their belief in themselves. Zogby reports that the number one reason for belief in the American Dream is the individually focused, “I am intelligent and work hard, so I should succeed” (Zogby 2008, p.111).

Hard Work has a strong articulation with Equality. While Europe is the home of hereditary success and ‘old’ money, America is the place where people start with nothing and build success. Alger’s stories and Lincoln’s biography are only the first in the Great American story of success. Of course the hard work is much more apparent if the protagonist started with very little. So popular is the rags to riches story of hard work that many modern versions of the tale are altered so they fit within the paradigm. Dormhoff presents the reality of two American businessmen identified as living embodiments of the Alger narrated American Dream. Wayne Huizenga is estimated to be worth \$1.4 million dollars in 1996. He created Waste Management Inc. and Block Buster Video, and was until recently the majority owner on the Miami Dolphins football team. He introduced both ice hockey and baseball to Florida as the inaugural owner of the Florida Marlins baseball team and the Florida

Panthers ice hockey team. Huizenga is often depicted as starting out his business as a mere garbage collector in Florida, however the reality is Huizenga was born in Chicago, graduated from private school, had a grandfather who ran a garbage collection business in Chicago and his father was a real estate investor. While he did drop out of college to start his own business, the growth of his Florida Waste Management Company owes a lot to merging it with his grandfather's successor firms in Chicago, one of which was run by a cousin via marriage (Dormhoff 2006, p.64).

Bill Gates of Microsoft is often pointed to as another American Dream come true. A college dropout who created his own innovative company, he is now the richest man in America. However, what is not mentioned is that Gates left college early not because his grades were deficient, but because he was concerned about others beating him to the market with computer software. Gate's father was a prominent corporate lawyer in Seattle. Gates attended the top private school in Seattle and the college that he spent 2 years at, which gave him the time and resources to develop his software concepts, was the exclusive Ivy League College of Harvard (Dormhoff 2006, p.64).

For the hard working American, they are in the middle of the narrative that Bill Gates and Wayne Huizenga have completed. This narrative nature of the American Dream ensures that those who lose their Success also lose the Virtue that comes with it. Bernie Madoff was regarded as a Wall Street Legend who epitomised the American Dream. Starting with \$5,000 earned while working as a life guard, Madoff grew a firm that managed billion of dollars in assets (Washington 2010). Within the narrative of the American Dream, Madoff had reached the level of success of Gates and Huizenga. However in 2009 after the financial crisis in America, Madoff's empire tumbled revealing a Ponzi scheme which had defrauded investors. Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison. From the pinnacle of the American Dream, Madoff is now in prison with his likeness used as a Halloween costume (Clark 2009). Madoff's offense against the American Dream was not breaking the law, but was not Working Hard for his Success. More so than other nations, the rules can be a little flexible in American culture. Hard Work and Success can become more important than fairness and the law in the American Dream.

The American antihero breaks the law and the rules, but the anti-hero still Works Hard for Success. In the 1983 American movie “Scarface” the protagonist, Tony Montana played by Al Pacino, starts as many do in the narrative of the American Dream, a immigrant with nothing, in this case a refugee from Communist Cuba who comes to Miami, America to work his way to the top. The top being a drug dealing criminal empire. Montana certainly works hard for his success and is able to articulate his American Dream of success, “In this country, you gotta make the money first. Then when you get the money, you get the power. Then when you get the power, then you get the women.” (Scarface 1983). From Montana’s perspective material success leads to spiritual happiness.

The antihero is an American phenomenon. The antihero Scarface is joined by Tony Soprano, Gordon Gecko, and Vic Mackey. Even more comical antiheroes like Bart Simpson and Ferris Buller find success without regard to society’s rules. All these anti-heroes work within the ideology of the American Dream, and like the American Dreamers throughout the United States, they all Work Hard for the promise of Success.

The last observation of the articulation of the American Dream is the articulation of the ideology to the individual. As the definition of the American Dream showed, Americans are able to perceive the American Dream as both a national ideology and a personal mantra. Regardless of the position within the hierarchy of American society, all Americans are caught living the narrative of the Dream, the vast majority of them in the middle of the narrative, Working Hard. Some Americans who achieve success are able to articulate the concept of the American Dream to themselves. Success is Virtue and as Gramsci would point out, the American Dream has a hegemonic principle of the successful. To be successful in American means you must have worked hard, which means you deserve you place at the apex. The successful can become prophets of the American Dream, able to show the rest of American Society the American Way of the Dream. Those with the political ambition and the charisma to support it can find great power in this role, as did Ronald Reagan.

Reagan's own example of reaching the American Dream reinforced success as wealth. His childhood was one of poverty broken by his humble college education (Dugger 1983, p2). It was then on to California. Reagan found Hard work and

Success in Hollywood and later in the political field as Governor of California (Johnson 2003, pp.12-13). Like Lincoln, he was able to control the definition of the American Dream for his age because he claimed to have lived it. His rise from a poor boy in Illinois to a millionaire in California was reflected in his examples of personifications of the Dream. One example was the Cuban refugee businesswoman, Mirta de Perales, who Reagan praised in his speeches. For Reagan, Mirta de Perales' story of the loss of her Cuban business after Castro's revolution, her escape from Cuba and her final achievement as the owner of a \$5 million business with weekly TV appearances was the fulfilment of not only his interpretation of the American Dream but also the Dream of the civil rights movement (Reagan 1987).

Reagan's vision of America as a place that people could get rich, contrasted with his predecessor, Jimmy Carter who was more concerned with Virtue within the American Dream. Carter noted that wealth could not "fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose" (Ehrman 2005, p.43). For Reagan, confidence, meaning and virtue were the secondary partners of financial success. His last statement during the presidential debate of 1980, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" (Ehrman 2005, p.47) placed his hope of victory in the dream of individual financial success within each American. Reagan rallied against past measures to bring equality to American society. (Hochschild, 1995, p.118) His definition of the American Dream minimised the concerns of equality of opportunity of the civil rights era and replaced them with an individual concern of wealth. Reagan sensed a change within the American public. It was a change that had been growing before his Presidency and would continue after his departure. For example, studies of first year college students in the United States have tracked the growth of the importance of financial success. These show that between 1967 and 1994 students who were seeking financial success had grown from 44% in 1967 to a vast majority of the student population at 74% in 1994. (Hochschild 1995, p.271)

Reagan's 1980 election victory is a turning point in the history of the American Dream, the point at which Success and Happiness became tangled in articulation with Wealth and finance. Reagan appealed to the idea of success as wealth, his campaign centred on a call for a renewed sense of patriotism and optimism, evoking the mythology of America as the land of opportunity (Ehrman 2005, p.46). The administration's policies were directed to the purposes of increasing the wealth of

America along the lines of a Dream that rewarded the success of some and punished the losses of others. Reagan's radical economic policy of supply side economics was adopted because it fit his vision of the Dream. Supply side economics argued that the economy was not restricted by demand, as commonly believed, but by supply. People would consume as much as they were able. Jude Wanniski, a supply side theorist close to Reagan commented that everyone wanted to live like Frank Sinatra (Johnson 2003, pp.105-106). Reagan's solution to economic recession was to cut taxes and allow people to spend their way to a strong economy (Johnson 2003, p.98). This legitimised Reagan's idea of the American Dream. People wanted to be rich and rich people were good for the economy. Literally, the success of the largest economy in the world was resting on the hope of an insatiable need for financial success in the America people.

The American Dream of Security and the American Dream of Hope

The purpose of dissecting and untangling the American Dream into its ideological components; its nodal points, is to create a sociological tool that can be used to detail the hegemonic ideologies of the timeframe of this study. An understanding of the historical articulations of these ideological elements and knowledge of the relationships of articulation between these elements is an important part of this analysis as no open signifier is blank, it has some meaning from the nature of past articulations. However, hegemony and counter hegemony is an ongoing process that articulates other empty signifiers within the social and political space. The next stage of the project is to begin that process of analysis of the specific hegemonic ideology. With the hegemonic ideology exposed it can then be used to analyse the ideological content of the superhero comics in the sample.

Chapter 4 covers the years 2001 and 2002 in which the first hegemonic ideology is introduced: *The American Dream of Security* which emerges as part of the Right Wing hegemony personified in the Bush Administration after the catastrophe of the 9/11 attacks. This ideology is bound around the concept of Security as Success for American society. It is the privileged nature of this nodal point that commands the articulations of the other ideological components of the ideology; Hard Work, Virtue, Patriotism, American Superiority, Freedom, Equality and Personification. The

hegemony of the Right wanes over the years, but continues up until the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

Chapter 7 in its examination of the years 2007 and 2008 charts the rise of the other hegemonic ideology identified in this study: *The American Dream of Hope* which emerges in the election campaign of Barack Obama for the Presidency. This ideology is in many ways a renewal that seeks to revitalise the ideology of the American Dream. Within this ideology, nodal points that had been minimised during the hegemony of the Right such as Equality are revitalised and assume a more privileged position within the formation.

The analysis of both the hegemony of the Right and the hegemony of Left are only possible with an examination of the narrative of hegemony, that tells the story of the journey from one to the other. While the following chapters engage in that story, with the position of American President at the centre of the narrative, it must be remembered that this is not the centre of this thesis. The analysis of the American Dream of Security, the American Dream of Hope and the narrative of American hegemony are in the service of the research question: the ability of superhero comics to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest the dominant ideology. For the next four chapters, hegemony is the pathway for the exploration of meaning within the comic book narratives of Marvel comics Captain America and DC Comics Batman.

Chapter 4: 2001-2002: 9/11, Security and the Superhero

As the first chapter of analysis, this chapter has the role of detailing the effects of the catastrophe of 9/11 on hegemony within American society. 9/11 as a catastrophe opened up the space for articulation in American society. Because of the social structure of America and the nature of the catastrophe, the Bush Administration and the political Right in America were well positioned to construct their own hegemony. The creation of an historic bloc within America also involved the creation of an ideology for the hegemony, referred to in this study as the ideology of the American Dream of Security.

Applying the sociological tool of the analysed ideology; the dissecting and untangling of the American Dream of Security presents clear nodal points of the ideology. The privileged nature of some nodal points and the articulated relationship between them creates the formation of the ideology itself. When this is applied to the superhero comics of 2001 and 2002, their ideological position is revealed. This establishes if the superhero comics of Batman and Captain America reproduce critique, challenge or contest the dominant ideology.

The outcome of this chapter is that the superhero narratives of Captain America and Batman reproduce the ideology of the American Dream of Security post 9/11. The privileged nodal point that emerges in both the ideology and the ideological content of the comic books is Security as Success. The comics also reflect the reduced concern for Equality and the roles of women in American society which is an articulation of the ideology. However, within the Captain America narrative there is evidence of a critique and challenge to the hegemony of the Right. The Batman narrative does not offer this sort of challenge in this timeframe.

9/11 and the American Dream of Security

On the 11th of September 2001, two hijacked passenger planes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City. The first plane crashed at 8:46am. Television stations beamed the images around the United States, speculating that this might be a tragic accident. At 9:47am America saw the live feed of the second plane crashing into the North tower. Two other planes had also been hijacked, one crashed into the Pentagon in Washington DC and the other, United Airways Flight 93 crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after passengers confronted the hijackers (Footman, 2009). For American society, the events of the 11th September 2001 were unprecedented; the American mainland had not seen a conflict since the American Mexican war of 1846. America had suffered terrorist attacks in the past, but nothing on this scale. America as the world's only remaining superpower had seen the end of Communism and emerged victorious at 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1992). Now it found itself vulnerable against an enemy that did not fit the old paradigm of the hostile nation state.

On the 20th September 2001, President George W. Bush made a speech to a Joint Session of Congress. The speech was an ideological response to the catastrophe of 9/11. Within this speech is an articulation of the new American ideology that helped to establish the hegemony of the Right in American Society. I refer to this ideology as *the American Dream of Security*, because it used particular articulations of the ideological components of the American Dream. The privileged nodal point of this ideology, the central ideological component was Security of the American people as the articulation of Success.

President Bush and the Bush Administration had not achieved hegemony in the Presidential election of 2000. The 2000 election suggested that America had been politically divided into two political camps. The election had been so close that the victory was won in the courts rather than at the ballot box. The catastrophe of 9/11 had made a fundamental change in the political space. It had sent shock waves of fear throughout American society. This fear had brought the society together in a demand for leadership and certainty both personally and ideologically from the Bush Administration. The social structure of American society meant that at this time of crisis, the American people would look to the office of the President. For the nine

days after the attack the intellectuals within American society had been building up the authority of the Bush Administration and had already been articulating the ideas of this new ideology (Faludi 2008). Bush's speech was an accumulation of the collective function of the intellectuals of the Right. In this way 9/11 legitimised the Bush Presidency (Wood 2005, p.541). This combination of factors positioned the Bush Administration and the Right at a potential moment of hegemony; 9/11 had brought American society together, the social structure meant that the society would look to the President for leadership and the intellectual class of the Right had already articulated the ideological positions for a new ideology through the media after the attack.

An analysis of President Bush's speech shows the ideological components of the American Dream of Security. Bush articulated in the speech that the political division between Right and Left in America was over; this new historic bloc would include both the Republicans and the Democrats. Bush noted early in the speech that, 'All of America was touched on the evening of the tragedy to see Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol singing "God Bless America"' (Bush 2001). He went on to thank the Congress for coming together to deliver \$40 billion in aid and mentioned specific politicians of both sides by name. Bush extended this concept of the end of political division to the whole of American society. He specifically mentioned Americans who had died in the attacks, but also mentioned the multicultural and multi-religious nature of America united in response to 9/11. His speech was laden with references to 'Us', 'Our' and 'We' as the American people as a whole.

Within the speech, Bush also extended the idea of the historic bloc beyond the United States to include a concept of the bloc as civilisation more generally. He made specific reference to the British Prime minister who was in attendance; children praying in Seoul for America; people praying in Cairo; moments of silence in Australia, Africa and Latin America and 'the sounds of our national anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate' (Bush 2001). Bush's speech placed the United States at the apex of this bloc of Civilisation. By making it clear that the leadership of this international bloc rested in America, Bush was able to appeal to the concept of American Superiority in a way that made it seem organic. Bush states that the indemnity of this bloc believes in the

ideology of the concepts of 'progress, pluralism, tolerance and freedom' (Bush 2001). President Bush throughout the speech includes God within the America/Civilisation bloc. Bush states that the terrorists 'blaspheme the name of Allah' (Bush 2001), while the many different faiths of the world are praying for America and ends the speech, 'In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom and may He watch over the United States of America' (Bush 2001).

Laclau and Mouffe explain that identity is a negative process, it is a case of being something is not being something else (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 p.128). Across the antagonism there needs to be an opposing identity, opposite the identity of the bloc. In Bush's speech the opposing identity was the terrorists responsible for the attacks, Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden and their allies. This Other of the terrorist was associated in the speech with the former historical and ideological enemies of America; Nazism and totalitarianism.

The speech made clear that there were only two possible groups in the struggle; the US/American/Civilisation, or the THEM/Anti-American/Terrorist. The other nations of the world, as well as the people of American have little choice but to be part of what was expressed as ultimately a battle of Good versus Evil (Satha-Anand, 2003). President Bush directly stated in the middle of the speech 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists' (Bush 2001).

Success and Hard Work, essential ideological concepts of the American Dream are at the centre of Bush's speech. An example of the Success of the passengers of Flight 93 in overpowering the terrorist and saving the lives of others by crashing the airplane in a field is mentioned in the third sentence of the speech. This example of Success sets the tone of the articulations of Success that the speech establishes for the future. Justice as Success is articulated in the speech as the War on Terror. This is articulated in the demand that the Taliban of Afghanistan hand over all terrorist to America, but is further developed in the speech to explain that Justice will not be just catching the terrorist responsible, but will be much broader including, nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism'' (Bush 2001).

At this point the idea of Justice as Success quickly morphs into Security as Success. In the speech Bush makes clear that the War on Terror is not just a war for Justice, but a war for Security, 'From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or

support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. Our nation has been put on notice. We're not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans' (Bush 2001). The justifications in the speech are more directed at making Americans safe than apprehending the terrorist responsible for the 9/11 attacks. While Justice is an element of Success, the dominant articulation is Security. 'Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated' (Bush 2001).

Within the speech Bush makes direct reference to the equation of the America Dream, Hard Work equalling Success, 'America is successful because of the hard work and creativity and enterprise of our people' (Bush 2002). The Hard Work to achieve Success articulated within the speech is multilayered. The speech articulates that it will be the American Military which will do the majority of the Hard Work, 'from FBI agents, to intelligence operatives, to the reservists' (Bush 2001). They are called to be ready to act. Bush explained what this military action would look like to the American people:

Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes visible on TV and covert operations secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place until there is no refuge or no rest. (Bush 2001)

For the American people however, the Hard Work they are asked by Bush to contribute to this mission is simply living their lives, having faith in the values of America, returning to their routines and to keep participating in and have confidence in the economy. 'I ask you to uphold the values of America and remember why so many have come here' (Bush 2001). In essence Bush asks the American people to contribute their own Hard Work to the War on Terror by believing in the ideology that Bush was articulating.

The fundamental question that America asked after September 11 was "why do they hate us?" Because the question cannot be answered with a negative perspective of America, because of the nature of American Superiority within the American Dream, the question is more correctly phrased as "what is wrong with them?" (Bergman 2007, p87). The speech positions America's Innocence against the Evil of the terrorist Other. In doing this Bush articulates Freedom to America and to the ideology. Terrorist are for Fear, America is for Freedom. 'They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other' (Bush 2001). The United States had been transformed into the ideal of Freedom and its enemies are therefore the enemies of Freedom. (Satha-Anand 2003, p 36). These beliefs were in contrast to Bin Laden's edict against America in 1998 which made clear that his issue with America was their military bases in "the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorising its neighbours, and turning its bases in the peninsula into a spear head through which to fight neighbouring Muslim peoples" (Tan, 2003, p.89)

Only months earlier the concept of American democracy and Bush's legitimacy as American President was questioned within America after his controversial 2000 election victory against Al Gore. Within this speech, Bush positions democracy and the role of the President, and even America's ability to disagree with who is the President as targets of the terrorist's conflict with America. Bush was unable to personify the American Dream as a Presidential candidate, unlike President Reagan. Bush lacked Reagan's charisma and Reagan's personal narrative of the American Dream story. Within this speech however, by positioning his Presidency in opposition to the THEM/anti-American/terrorist, Bush had put himself at the centre of this new hegemony and ideology. 'These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life' (Bush 2001). The way of life is the American Dream.

While Bush had articulated Success, Hard Work and Freedom and had positioned the American identity in opposition to the identity of the terrorist, the speech focused little of the concept of Equality. Bush did mention the rights of women as a point of difference between the two camps, 'Women are not allowed to attend school' (Bush 2001). Bush makes reference to different faiths within the historic bloc of

America/Civilisation, but they are only mentioned to emphasize encompassing power of the overarching collective identity of American. In regards to gender there is a clear division within the speech. Aside from Osama bin Laden, twelve individuals are referenced within the speech. Each of these individuals is articulated to be on the side of America within the struggle, ten are men and two are women. The men include a heroic passenger who died on Flight 93, a police man who died in New York, four federal politicians, the Governor of New York State, the Mayor of New York City, the British Prime Minister and the head of the new Department of Homeland Security. The two women who are named are the grieving wife of the passenger of flight 93 and the mother of the policeman from New York. Within the speech the role for women is limited to either wife or mother, while men stand as the heroes of the past, present and the future. While this is only one speech, the position of women within this text echoes Faludi (2008) research to be covered later in this chapter on the reduction of women's roles in America society post 9/11 and the hostility to feminist causes and female intellectuals within the media.

The analysis of this speech, the untangling of the ideological components and the exposing of the relationships between these nodal points presents a picture of American hegemony after 9/11. The ideological points of the American Dream are articulated in specific ways. Success is articulated as both Justice and Security, although Security emerges from the speech as the dominant articulation. Hard Work is articulated as the Military campaign that will be conducted in the Middle East to fight a War on Terror. The Hard Work for the American public is to return to normality, which in itself is linked to the articulation of Success as Security. The relationship of these two nodal points suggests that Security as Success is more correctly Security of the normality of the Way of American Life, the lived reality of the American Dream. This is reinforced by the other task of Hard Work that the speech articulates for the American people, simply to continue to believe in American values, in the American Dream itself. In opposition to the antagonistic identity of the THEM/anti-American/terrorist is the US/American/Civilisation. As well as the privileged nodal points of Success and Hard Work this US/American/Civilisation identity includes the ideological points of progress, pluralism, tolerance and freedom' (Bush 2001). Of reduced focus is the concept and issues of Equality as the hegemonic identity subsumed other divisions, and the issue

of gender equality. It is the /anti-American/terrorist who treats women unequally within this paradigm, not the American society. This specific formation of these ideological components drawn from the American Dream, of the privileged nodal points of Hard Work as belief and military action and Success as Security is *the American Dream of Security*. While the bloc is articulated in the speech to include all of Civilisation, this thesis focuses on the bloc within American society.

The American Dream of Security was the ideology of this new bloc in American society, a bloc that included the vast majority of Americans in the shadow of 9/11. After his speech on the 20th September, Bush's popularity was beyond 80% (Footman 2009, p.5). Those who disagreed with the new ideology were subject to attack in an intellectual environment of hostility to those who refused to conform to the new hegemony (Bergman 2007, pp.220-222). It was this hegemony that empowered the Bush administration's War on Terror that included the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (Fiorina, Abrams, Pope 2011, p51).

America before 9/11

The changed nature of American society under the hegemony of the Right can be seen clearly in the narrative of American society of 2001 before 9/11. An examination of the ideological content of the superhero comics of 2001 pre9/11 shows an American society concerned with division. In the months before 9/11, America was still dealing with the crisis of the Bush/Gore 2000 election. This crisis was internal and divisive. The narrow Presidential election win of Bush over Gore in November 2000 suggested an America divided politically in two. Gore had won the popular vote 48.4% to Bush's 47.9%, but Bush won more electoral votes. With the Presidency ultimately decided in the courts and not by the voters, there was a suggestion that the democratic system was broken which left Bush with an air of illegitimacy. Political protest of the result extended to the joint session of congress on the 6th January 2001 to certify the result when 20 Democratic congressmen, mainly members of the Congressional Black Caucus filed objections to the Florida votes that gave Bush his victory (Gore Urges Black Congressmen To Help Heal Nation During Caucus Ceremony, 2001).

The result of the 2000 Presidential election presented America as politically divided and gave rise to the idea of America ideologically divided into two. Research suggests that this divide was not truly ideological. Fiorina, Abrams and Pope's (2011) study of American society suggests that Americans on the Right and the Left are much closer to each other on issues and the values that they believe in. In an attempt to win power from each other, the Republicans and Democrats have worked to polarize the political choices, attempting to create clear division between each other focusing on a strategy that Smith (1998) has observed as the logics of difference. In this strategy the political player does not attempt hegemony across the national space, but instead creates a smaller bloc of their own party and allies in opposition to their opponent.

The superhero narratives of 2001 before 9/11 present concerns about division in America. In the Batman narrative of the JLA comic book the issue of division in multiple ways. In *JLA #50* (Waid et al. 2001), published in January of 2001, the JLA dealt with the ramifications of a democratic decision by its superhero members to expel Batman. A plan that Batman had developed to deal with each superhero if they went rouge had fallen into the hands of the supervillain Ra's Al Ghul and almost destroyed the JLA. This democratic decision to expel proved to be an ongoing issue within the team. Two feuding camps within the JLA formed over the issue of Batman's exile. The theme of division continued in the following JLA storyline. The superheroes discovered that they had become magically separated from their civilian identities into two separate identities. Liberated on both sides, the civilian identities returned to their everyday lives, no longer needing to deal with the stresses and dangers of being a superhero. Likewise the superheroes no longer needed to deal with the limitations of hiding their true selves and the demands of social lives and families. This division, while successful at first ultimately fails as both the civilian identity and the superhero identity discovered that they need each other in *JLA #54* (Waid, Hitch 2001). Superman lost his root in humanity without the identity of Clark Kent and Batman lost his motivation without the anger of Bruce Wayne.

The *Captain America* comic books of 2001 were also concerned with division in American society; however it is division that resonates with the ideological component of equity in the American Dream and the American Dream as a solution to division. In the story line "America Lost" from issue #45 to #48 (Jurgens 2001),

the Red Skull working with another villain named Hate Monger, attempted to turn America on itself by igniting racial hatred. Hate Monger has the ability to inspire hate and with the assistance of psychological technology stolen from SHIELD, he is able to disguise himself as union boss Adam Hausler and convince a group of white American men that their jobs are under threat from illegal Latin American workers. After leading them on a massacre of Latin Americans at a local hotel the reader discovered that the Latin Americans were actually school teachers on a fact finding mission in the US. By issue #46 Hate Monger has rallied another group of white Americans to attack African Americans this time. In issue #47 (Jurgens 2001) Hate Monger's alter ego of Hausler is now seen by other racial groups such as Latin Americans, Africans Americans and Asian Americans as their leader calling on them to attack the other groups which hold them back. Red Skull makes his goal clear in issue #45, "The complete and total destabilization of America. It collapses from within rather than without," and in #46 (Jurgens 2001), "America is a cauldron of hate waiting to erupt. A cesspool of violent thoughts looking for release". In the final battle of issue #48 (Jurgens 2001) Captain America must address the American Dream to the hate filled Americans that have been turned on each other in an attempt to win, "If this country stands for anything it's that anyone can succeed. Not only do we allow for diversity---but we embrace it because the whole system is greater than the sum of the parts. Don't give up your freedom! Don't tear apart what people spent 225 years building." Likewise when his sometime ally Namor, Prince of Atlantis made the point that this is not his or his people's battle in issue #47 (Jurgens 2001), Captain America pleaded with him to focus not on his identity, but on what is right, referencing the soldiers of World War II who died on foreign soil, not because of their identity, but because of their beliefs. Captain America's rhetoric was successful on both counts and both Namor and the American people turn on the hate and division promoted by the Red Skull and he is defeated. For the *Captain America* comic, it is the American Dream and its values that can unite America over other divisions such as ethnic tensions.

Both the Batman and Captain America narratives in the JLA and Captain America comics of 2001 pre-9/11 presented division in America as dangerous. In both comics the ending of division and a return to a united America, and metaphorically for the JLA a united superhero team, was only possible because of an external threat that

forced the divided parts to come together, to overcome their enemies. In an example of Life imitating Art, or at least life imitating comic books, the political divided America did come together, but only after the catastrophe of 9/11 and under the new hegemony of the Right. In the comics American had metaphorically united in opposition to supervillians, in the real world American society united in opposition to the terrorist.

Superhero Comics' immediate response to 9/11

The production process of a comic takes between three and four months from the writing of the plot to its release on newsstands and in comic shops. This does affect comics' ability to respond quickly to issues within society, comic writers either need to be psychic, prepared, or lucky in tapping the zeitgeist of social issues three months into the future.

Within the process of hegemony, intellectuals have the task of dealing with the ideological consequences of societal threat and crisis. These moments create opportunity for intellectuals to contribute to the hegemonic process. In these moments the opportunity for intellectual leadership and ideological experimentation can be quite short as the hierarchy of the intellectual stratum seeks to establish order. The parameters of the ideology are established, in the case of 9/11, by Bush's speech of the 20th September the ideological limits of the new hegemony had already been set and intellectuals that breach those limits were censured (Faludi 2008).

Comic creators would struggle to meet that time frame, but some comics did manage to provide immediate responses to the 9/11. While superhero narratives as a form of popular culture are at some distance from the heart of the political process and hegemony, as a form of popular culture they too were drawn into the ideological understanding of 9/11 as an event. As Chapter 1 indicated, superhero comic books are product of a collective of intellectuals. The comic book responses to 9/11 were presented as representative of the industry. While these immediate responses are outside the sample of this study they are worth noting. They were *The Amazing Spider-man vol.2 #36* (Straczynski, Romita 2001) published in October 2001 by Marvel and two volumes of collected comics dedicated to the attacks titled *9-11*

Artist respond volume one (2002) and *9-11 The World's finest comic book writers and artists tell stories to remember volume two* (2002). Both the 9/11 volumes were published in January 2002, but clearly included works which were completed immediately after 9/11. Many of the ideas concepts and values that are expressed in these comics about America after 9/11, which include issues like fear of increases in domestic racism, feelings of helplessness, the need for retribution, anger and expressions of American society bearing the blame for the tragedy had little chance of being party of the ideological response to 9/11 by the time they were available to the public and little chance to effect the ideology of the American Dream of Security.

Marvel Comics and DC Comics responded differently to 9/11 in their monthly ongoing comics. While DC had published *9/11 Volume two*, the 9/11 attacks and its effects were not at the forefront of their comic books. Instead they continued with their storylines already in progress. In a letter to the editor in *Batman #598*, published in December 2001 a reader commented that the comic had given them some way to get away from the news of the invasion of Afghanistan. This gave the editor a chance to explain their philosophy regarding comic books post 9/11:

When we first got back to the business of comic books after the horrific events of September 11, a lot of us found it hard to concentrate on making comics when so many important things were happening in our world (and in our beloved New York City). The one thing we sort of rallied around was the idea that what we do provides a means of escape, which everyone needs from time to time. (Editor Michael Wright in *Batman #598* Brubaker, McDaniel 2002, p.40)

In contrast, Marvel attempted to discuss 9/11 in their monthly comics via the metaphor of superhero stories. Kading suggested that the narrative of 9/11 and the War on Terror mirrored the superhero narrative and made use of superhero conventions such as the struggle of good versus evil and concept of supervillians (Kading 2005, p.217). Marvel Comics embraced this within the Avengers comic as story of supervillian Kang's attack on Earth started to emulate 9/11, providing scope for commentary and metaphor. On the other hand, Marvel chose to cancel *Captain America* in December 2001. In a slightly confusing *Captain America vol.3 #50* (Jurgens 2002), Captain America was seemingly killed which created a 9/11 like

sense of loss and mourning within the narrative of the comic. The confusion was complicated by the fact that Captain America was alive and well within the rest of Marvel Comics' titles including *The Avengers*.

Comics and the American Dream of Security: American Superiority and Freedom

In examining the ideological content of the Batman and Captain America narratives post 9/11, the analysed ideology of the American Dream of Security drawn from Bush's speech of the 20th September is applied to the narrative of the comics. The privileged nodal points of Security as Success and Hard Work as military action and belief are central points of comparison, but how the other ideological components, for example Equality and Freedom are articulated is important as well. Other ideological components that are articulated to the nodal points within the superhero narratives can also have an effect on the ideological outcome.

One of the first ideological components to emerge from a reading of the superhero narratives post 9/11 is American Superiority. American Superiority was not only a part of the ideology of the American Dream of Security as detailed earlier, but became an important part of the justification for the policy of unilateral military action. There is little change in regard to American superiority in the Marvel Comics' *the Avengers* comics of 2001. The pre-9/11 comics show the Avengers team as representative of the United States in its international role and shows that the concept of American Superiority is within the narrative pre-9/11. The Avengers have assumed the role of the world's policemen; prepared to address issues in foreign countries without the need for the permission of the foreign government. In the first half of 2001, all of the Avengers' major operations occur outside of the United States. When, the supervillain Kang attacks the Earth pre-9/11, all the battles are on foreign soil and America remains isolated from the conflict. The foreign protagonists seem thankful for the Avengers intervention except for one Russian villain who laments the fall of his country and the rise of the United States. While the Avengers work with the UN and its military force SHIELD from which they gain some authority, they do not feel the need to be hemmed in by the rules of the UN. In solving a crisis in Greece where Greek people turn into version of the Hulk, the

Avengers bring in Bruce Banner, the real Hulk to help. In *Avengers #40* (Busiek, Davis 2001) after the operation is complete they issue Banner with a special communicator and whisk him away, even though he is wanted by the law to answer for the crimes of the Hulk. In their view Banner will serve their purposes better if he is free rather than locked in a jail cell. The Avengers are prepared to work with and accept the help of the UN and SHIELD when it suits them, but when the rules do not, they are prepared to act unilaterally and in their own interests.

After 9/11, the ‘Kang Dynasty’ storyline changes dramatically. Before September, Kang destroyed the UN building in New York, but ensured that all the workers were teleported to safety. After September in *Avengers # 49* (Busiek, Dwyer 2002) published in December 2001, Kang destroys and kills all the people in Washington DC. This is a direct metaphor that is meant to invoke the 9/11 attacks. One issue earlier Ms Marvel, kills another villain, the Master shown in figure 4.1, who attempted to use Kang’s tilt at world domination to take the United States for himself. The interesting aspect is that this comes as the Master has seemingly defeated the Avengers and goads Ms Marvel for the Avengers policy against lethal force. In response she stabs him to death and says, “The rules have changed!” Her actions are supported retrospectively by the Avengers in *The Avenger #54* (Busiek, Dwyer 2002) as this was a time of war and the old rules no longer apply, reinforcing the concept that 9/11 changed America. In this new battle, against Kang, Captain America assumes leadership of the Avengers. The nations of the world unite behind the Avengers in their battle against Kang including the Russian villains that opposed the Avengers only a handful of issues before. In *Avengers #54*, it comes down to a battle of Captain America against Kang. The Avengers attempt to join Captain America, but Thor holds them back, “This doth be Captain America’s battle”. Kang suggest to the Captain that it is an honour to be defeated by him to which Captain America responds. “If there was honor to be had in this, any honor at all, it’d be in making the world a better place.. building a better future so that there will never again be men like you! Never!” With Captain America’s final blow Kang’s helmet is ripped to show a man with Arab complexion and a full grey beard.

In regards to the nodal point of American Superiority within the hegemonic ideology of the American Dream of Security, the Avengers comics of 2001/2002 before and after 9/11, present a similar ideological position. In both timeframes American



Figure 4.1 Avengers #48 (Busiek, Dwyer 2002, p.26)

leadership is unquestioned in the narrative. A narrative difference is that the battle against Kang shifts from an international setting to an American setting after 9/11 and there is a clear attempt at metaphor and commentary which highlights this narrative for further examination. It is clear that American Superiority as an ideological concept that justifies the Bush unilateral policy were present in the *Avengers* before 9/11.

A similar narrative is explored in the 'Golden Perfect' storyline in *JLA* #62, #63 and #64 (Kelly, Mahnke 2002) post-9/11 in which the JLA invade a nation caught between the cultures of the sub continent and the Middle East called Jarhanpur because of the abduction of a child from his mother. Wonder Woman is caught between two "truths", the need for the child to be with his mother and his role as the future leader of Jarhanpur, without him Jarhanpur as a nation with a mystical link to the Earth will crumble. This dilemma causes Wonder Woman to break her lasso of truth and therefore destroy the concept of truth in the world. As confusing as this storyline gets, in the end Martian Manhunter and Batman see it as the necessary destruction of a 5,000 year old culture to save the world, the displacement of 80,000 versus the dissolution of 7 billion. In the end Wonder Woman and the JLA oversee the destruction of Jarhanpur, with the mystical nation itself agreeing to the destruction. Wonder woman spends the last page standing in the wasted city lamenting on what had to be done, "...what we did down there... we did in the golden perfect light of truth. Without agenda, without malice. With hope that tomorrow will bring better times because we tried to do right. Today, at least... that has to be enough" (*JLA* #64, Kelly, Mahnke 2002, p.22). In this narrative the America's right to invade another nation is justified if the reasons for invasion are honest and positively motivated. The fact that the nation of Jarhanpur, itself as an Earth Deity, acknowledges the right of the JLA to destroy it echoes Bush's own articulation of God on the side of America. Within the JLA like the *Avengers* sits a representation of the United States and a justification for its actions, that its agenda and needs override those of other nations.

Freedom is explored in most of the comics as the traditional freedoms of the superhero versus the tyranny of the villain. The above example of Kang's attack on America from *Avengers* is meant to invoke 9/11, but the JLA invasion of Jarhanpur also comments on the freedom of action that superheroes are meant to have, to do

what they think is moral and right. One of the few exceptions to this is a point of Freedom that the character of Captain America makes. In *Avengers #50* (Busiek, Dwyer 2002) Captain America is confronted with a situation in which a group of cultists had launched a spaceship to confront an evil being. He is not happy to learn that the ship is powered by drained human psyches, but he seems more upset that the Avengers came to this knowledge by spying on these people. When fellow Avenger, the Vision tries to justify the action based on the information they discovered has helped their mission, Captain America responds, “it’s always easy to justify things after the fact” (*Avengers #50*, Busiek, Dwyer 2002, p.14). This is an exception in the comics of this period, most points about freedom concern the freedom of the superheroes to act and if there is commentary about the freedom of everyday citizens, it is their freedom from supervillians, not their freedom from surveillance that is articulated.

Women and Equality after 9/11

Susan Faludi in her study of the affect 9/11 on American culture and society noted that almost directly after the attacks there was a massive reaction against feminism and issues of ethnic equity in American society. Bush’s 20th September speech had little in the way of roles for women in the new American Dream of Security, but Faludi noted that the change in the role of women went far beyond this. After suffering 9/11 there was a feeling that America had become feminized and lost touch with its masculine history. The cowboys of the Wild West had been replaced with fresh faced metrosexuals and dotcom geeks. A belief grew that the quest for equality in America had feminized America, reducing its military effectiveness and letting the patriarchal culture of the Arab world gain the upper hand (Faludi, 2008, p8-25).

What replaced the concerns of equality was a return to the established gender roles of the past. The lionised heroes of 9/11 were men, the manly men of the New York City Fire Department who received the praise in the media (Faludi 2008, pp.65-66). The common image of these new heroes was a reflection of the images from the masculine John Wayne movies of the past, of rugged men saving helpless women (Faludi 2008, pp.58-65). The reality is that the vast majority of victims of 9/11 were male office workers; in fact men outnumber women in the death toll 3:1. The image

of female victimhood was further reinforced with the heightened role of the 9/11 widows who had lost their partners in the attack (Faludi 2008).

Even the image of the feminized businessmen became emblazoned with the powerful man of action image with the story of the passengers of Flight 93 who seemingly crashed their hijacked plane rather than see it used as a weapon. With little evidence available about who had done what on the flight deck of Flight 93, the media quickly latched on to the identities of the men on the flight with athletic backgrounds and physically imposing statistics. In the retelling of this story to the American people it was these men who had led the attack on the cockpit, even though there was little evidence to support the extensive role these men had been given (Faludi 2008, p.88). The role of hero that women could fill in the popular culture was as the caregiver, the doctor or the nurse.

This reduction in concerns of equity post 9/11 is shown in the comparison of the roles of female super heroes in 2001, before and after the 9/11 attacks. Before 9/11, female super heroes had established positions of leadership in the Avengers comic. The Wasp, one of the early Avengers had risen to the position of co-leader with Captain America, taking on the lion's share of leadership responsibilities in *Avengers #38* (Busiek, Davis 2001). Other female superheros also held positions of power; the Scarlet Witch was Deputy Chair and Ms Marvel had become a battlefield leader. In battles, it was made clear that these female Avengers were the equal of their male counterparts and had not been given these positions through some sort of charity.

It was the villains of this period expressed antifeminist views that were out of step with the Avengers progressive position. For example the Deviants, a group of mutants/aliens living underground were challenged by Ms Marvel to a battle of leadership which they almost refused to accept because she was a women and unworthy of defeat. She won the battle and made a point about gender equality. Likewise Kang, the time travelling super villain warned his son in *Avengers #45* not to take the women too seriously, suggesting that they should not have an equal status with men, they are distractions and should just remain mothers. This echoes Bush's comments in his 20th September speech in regards of the sexism of the terrorist Other. Some of the male superheros had changed their roles as well suggesting that physical strength is not the most valued skill that men could offer. Tony Stark in the

first half of 2001 had put aside his role of Ironman to focus on his technological developments on behalf of the Avengers, with his fellow Avengers happily noting that they did not need his strength, but rather his mind.

The role of women was also at a high point in other comic books. In *Batman and Detective Comics*, Batman had surrounded himself with female superhero allies like Batgirl. The main storyline of both books saw his female body guard; Sasha Bordeaux also join his band of female colleagues. In the Gotham police department long time white male leaders, Commissioner Gordon and Detective Bullock made way for an African American commissioner and a lesbian detective shift commander. Women were playing a bigger role in the nature of the story telling as well. *Detective Comics* #763, published just after 9/11 in October 2001, but written before, is a good example of this. The issues focused on the new Detective shift commander Margret Sawyer filling Bullock's role and on Sasha joining Batman on a superhero mission (Rucka, Martinbrough 2002). In the issue, Sasha served as the narrator and it is her perspective and opinions of Bruce Wayne that informs the narrative from a position of authority. The backup story which was part of the Detective Comics format at the time was focused on yet another new female character, psychic police officer Joise Mac (Winick, Chiang, 2002).

After 9/11 the role of women changes in the comic book to match the changed ideology within American Society. In the Batman narratives in the comic, the female centric nature of the Batman stories is not repeated after the Sasha Bordeaux storyline ends. The Avengers comic continued with the storyline of Kang's attempt to take over the world, using it as a chance to reflect on the 9/11 in both scale and metaphor. In these comics the strong women of the Avengers go from leaders of the superhero team to weaker characters that need the support of the men around them to function. The Wasp as leader is officially responsible for surrendering to Kang after he destroys Washington DC. Even after she is freed by the other Avengers she is defeatist and fearful. In *Avengers* #52 (Busiek, Reis 2002), it is President Bush who is depicted as the strong leader in contrast to the Wasp. This is the first time Bush appears in the story, although pre9/11 after it was insinuated that his 2000 election victory was part of the plot of a super villain to weaken America in *Avengers* #46. Figure 4.2 shows the fictional Bush convincing the Wasp to keep fighting rather than



TM & © 2006 MARVEL

Figure 4.2 Avengers #52 (Busiek, Reis 2002, p.10)

give up. In *Avengers #52* (Busiek, Anderson 2002) the Scarlet Witch is captured by Kang, and even though she is one of the more powerful members of the team with the ability to alter reality, she defers to male superhero Wonderman in the prison, helping him to escape so he can continue the fight. She elects to stay in the prison camp, “I can help people- people who badly need it. Help keep them alive until they can be freed. Someone should stay to do that” (Busiek, Anderson 2002, p.31). The role of the female superhero is now to be nurses and support the men in their fight against Kang. The men’s role to fight is further reinforced by Tony Starks return to the Ironman costume and to the battle against Kang. The only female hero that escapes this reduced role is Ms Marvel, although her character as a former military officer offers a different type of female hero (which the thesis will return to in Chapter 6), the military woman.

The expressions of equality and the role of woman within the superhero narratives of the sample support Faludi’s observation of the anti-feminism of American society after 9/11. Before 9/11 female superheroes played larger roles in the narratives and issues of equality were explored. After 9/11, the stories of women diminish in number and the individual roles of women in the narrative narrow. The reduction in the focus of women reflects the reduced focus on equality as a nodal point within the new hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security.

Security as Success

After 9/11 the achievement of Security and Protection of the American people became a legitimate definition of success. Security had long been a personal goal, individual and family protection from street crime personified in superheroes like Batman. 9/11 brought the concepts of collective security as success, saving American society from another terrorist attack. The recipe for this type of success was still the same as before, perseverance, diligence and sacrifice and superheros continued to provide these examples, even if at times they needed to be reminded of this recipe by the new heroes of America, the men of President Bush’s administration (Faludi 2008) as the Wasp was by the President in the Avengers. Even though DC comics in their own words was trying to provide escapism and not explicitly comment on 9/11 as Marvel had, DC hero Batman provided his readers with an example of how

America could achieve the goal of Security. The turning point in Bruce Wayne's life is the murder of his parents at the hands of criminal; it is this single event that makes him become Batman. At times his motivation to fight crime has been seen as one of revenge for their murder. In issue #765 of *Detective Comics* (Rucka, Burchett 2002) published in December 2001, Sasha explains to the reader that Batman is not motivated by revenge, but by the goal of protecting people from harm as shown in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. This articulation of Batman's mission both associates it with Bush's concept of Success as Security but also presents a moral justification for America's War on Terror, it is not revenge for 9/11 but for saving American lives.

In *Batman* #601 and #602 (Brubaker, McDaniel, 2002), published in March and April 2002, a new villain Nicodemus, is introduced. Nicodemus carries out a campaign of terror, burning to death certain individuals and threatening to destroy the whole of Gotham City that he sees as evil. The Mayor of Gotham response to Nicodemius' threat invokes the tone on his real life counter parts after September 11 2001. The Police Commissioner refers to Nicodemius as a terrorist and the Mayor states that, "This is Gotham City. We don't cancel our lives and hide in dark corner because some fruit cake wants to destroy us". After Batman foils Nicodemius' attack on the Mayor it is revealed that Nicodemius is actually Councilman Thomas Hart. It is in Hart's motivations that a clear comparison is made to Batman reinforcing his positive example for American society post 9/11. Like Bruce Wayne, Thomas Hart's parents were murdered as a child. However, rather than this motivating him to become a hero, it motivated him to seek revenge, not only on those that killed his parents but also on all those involved in the botched investigation. In the end he came to not only blame the individuals responsible, but the whole city itself. The lesson for America is clear: be like Batman and protect the innocent and not like Nicodemius and seek revenge. The message is further reinforced by the story of the following issue #603 (Brubaker, Phillips, 2002). Batman is called to the death bed of a retired Police officer who wants to hand over one last case that he was never able to solve. It turns out to be the case of Bruce Wayne's murdered parents. The former police officer is unaware of Batman's true identity and the rest of Gotham believes that Bruce Wayne has escaped from prison after being charged with the murder of an ex-girlfriend. The former police officer feels that he owes Wayne, believing that his parent's murder fundamentally changed him; however he does not believe that it



Figure 4.3 *Detective Comics #765* (Rucka, Burchett 2002, p.21)

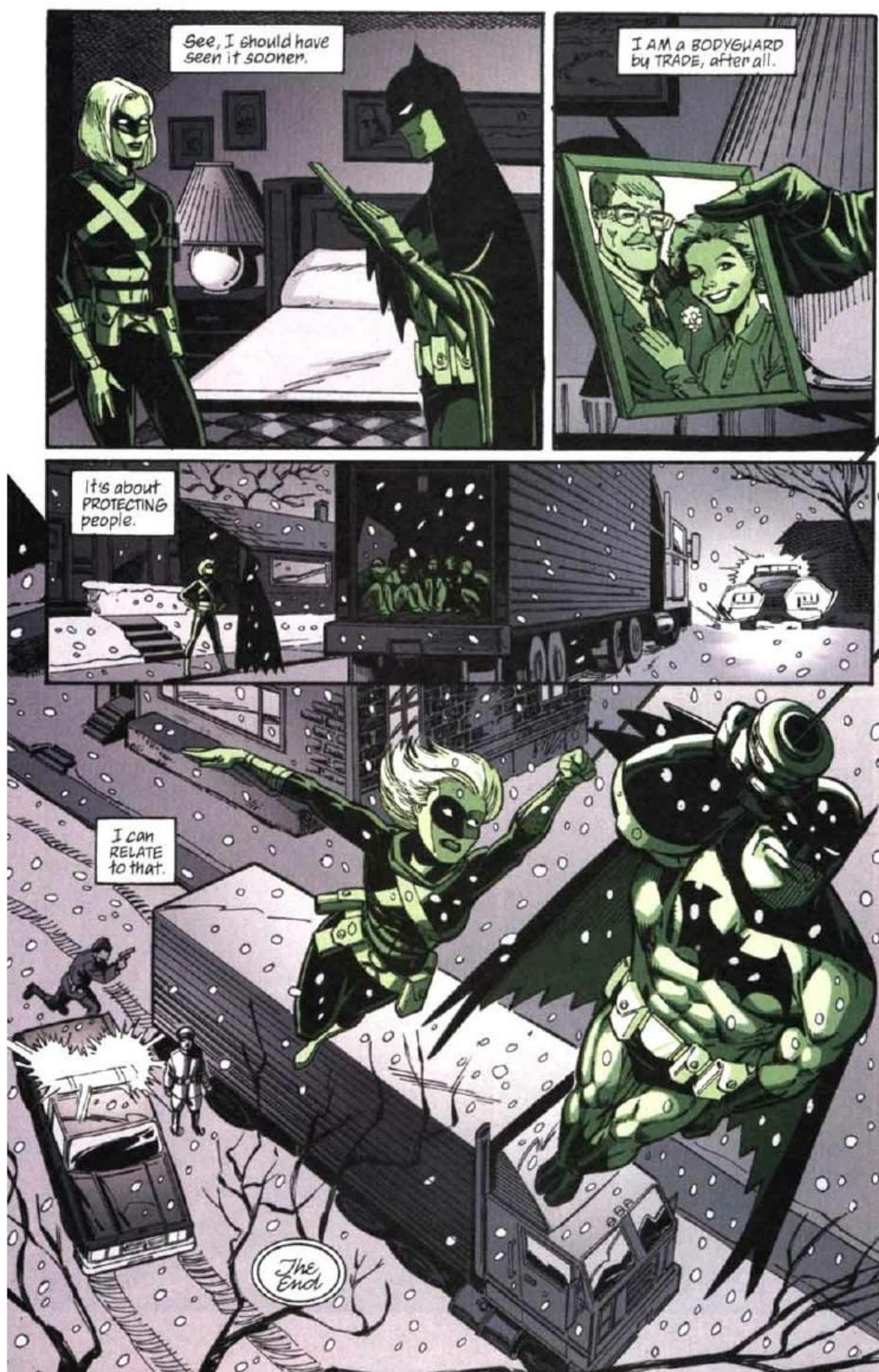


Figure 4.4 *Detective Comics #765* (Rucka, Burchett 2002, p.22)

made Wayne a killer, “Most of us have defining moments in our lives, things that make us who we are. Mostly these moments are tragedies.” The message is clear again, the tragedy of September 11 can be a defining moment for America and Americans just as Wayne’s parents murder was for him.

The recipe for Batman’s success is presented in August 2002’s *Batman: Gotham Knights #32* (Grayson, Robinson 2002), part of the ongoing storyline of Bruce Wayne: Fugitive which ran through both Detective Comics and Batman. The comic is a day in the life of Bruce Wayne. It starts at 8:17am with Wayne reading all the days papers before breakfast. At 9:03am he is in a board meeting at Wayne Enterprises. His day in the office involves convincing another tough businessman to join up with Wayne Enterprises’ environmental division which exceeds governmental standards. He feeds twenty six elderly citizens lunch, reminds one of his young employees that there is a corporate scholarship program that will pay his whole college tuition, dedicates a memorial to rescue staff of a previous disaster in Gotham, convinces another member of the Gotham ruling class to include community buildings in his development and drops in on the family of one of his ill staff members. In the evening he assumes the Batman identity, foiling crime not just through his actions but through his reputation, perseverance and dedication to his role as Batman. For much of the time we see Batman not apprehending criminals, but patrolling the city vigilantly, protecting its citizens, prostitutes, police officers and shop owners alike. A police officer notes that the city is especially safe between 11pm and 3am because of Batman. Wayne’s night ends when he finally returns to his home at 5:03am. The last page shows the grave site of Wayne’s parents, again showing that this horrible event paired with the hard work of Wayne both as a member of the bourgeoisie and as Batman brings the goal of security and protection to the citizens of Gotham.

While Hard Work was an important element of Bush’s speech of the 20th September and of the American Dream of Security, as an articulation within the superhero narratives it was not as pronounced as the idea of Success. Part of the issue is that the narrative of superheroes always involves the element of Hard Work; they are always struggling to achieve their mission. The battles that the superheroes engage are the same sort of Hard Work that they had always engaged in.

Patriotism and the New Captain America Comic

Like other forms of American media, superheroes saw an increase in the use of patriotic imagery after 9/11. While comics are caught in a production process of three to four months the Marvel comics that were published in the month of September 2001 after the 11th, acknowledge the event with an image on the cover of a commemorative ribbon in front of the Twin Towers. The cover of *Avengers #46* published in September 2001, shows the Avengers in front of a giant American flag with flames in the background. This cover is not at the same quality of the previous Avengers comics and suggests that it was quickly added to the comics to acknowledge 9/11. Marvel's decision to cancel the Captain America comic and kill the character with Captain America vol.3 #50 published in December 2001 was an interesting choice. Of course, Captain America was not really dead as his continued appearance in Avengers would show. It only took three months and Captain America was back with his own comic again, *Captain America vol.4 #1* (Rieber, Cassaday 2002) published in April 2002, this time under the Marvel Knights imprint at Marvel, a place for more mature superhero stories. This new Captain America series made use of patriotic imagery on its covers, reflecting the increased patriotism of post 9/11 America. Its first story arc however, running thorough the first six issues, separates itself from the other American media of its time by its challenge to some of the ideological elements of the American Dream of Security. This is in contrast to other forms of media that had effectively shut down opposition to the hegemony of the Right in the months after 9/11.

Commentary that attempted to challenge the hegemony of the Right post 9/11 was often attacked and silenced in the American media. *Politically Incorrect* was a late night political talk show hosted by Bill Maher. The show's format had Maher lead a group of public intellectuals; pundits and celebrities in discussing the news of the moment. On broadcast of the 17th of September 2001, Maher agreed with one of his guests that it was wrong to refer to the 9/11 attackers as cowards for crashing the planes into the Twin Towers, suggesting that launching missiles from hundreds of miles away was more cowardly (Der Derian 2002, p.183). Maher came under fire from other intellectuals for his statement, as is often the case when one intellectual strays too far from the hegemony. After corporate sponsors including Sears and

FedEx pulled their funding from the show, affiliate stations across America stopped showing it and it was cancelled altogether by ABC in 2002.

The same thing happened to other intellectuals. In the aftermath of 9/11 Susan Sontag wrote, “a few shreds of historical awareness might help to understand what has happened and what may continue to happen.” In response New York Post columnist Rod Dreber wrote he wanted to grab her by the neck and force her to ground zero to repeat her statement, the New Republic magazine ranked her with Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden as an ally of evil and the National Reviews Jay Nordlinger stated that Sontag had always hated America, the west, freedom and democratic goodness (Faludi 2008 p.27).

This was a process that Bergman noted continued into the timeframe of the war in Iraq. Media personalities that opposed the war lost their jobs such as Phil Donahue with NBC, while the media took part in staged interviews asking questions that had been written by the Bush Administration. The news media saw that its job in this time of war was to support the Bush Administration to the hilt including silencing and attacking the voices of dissent in America (Bergman 2007 pp.220-222). This silencing of the voices of dissent went as far as poets and academics. The academic Ward Churchill lost his position at the University of Colorado at least in part because of the negative attention received by his essay, “Some People Push Back: the justice of roosting chickens” which questioned the innocence of the office workers in the Towers as part of the global financial empire (Wegener, 2009, p.82). The poet Amiri Baraka’s lost his position as Poet Laureate of New Jersey after it was discovered that he had written a poem about 9/11 that blamed white capitalist ideology as the villain (Roza, 2009, p.111).

It is in this environment of censures and attacks that *Captain America vol. 4 #1-6* (Rieber, Cassaday 2002) stand out. These comic books were the first to put the realistic picture of terrorists into the pages of ongoing superheroes, the first issue even includes an image of Osama Bin Laden and his colleagues celebrating 9/11. The comic begins with Captain America sent to Centerville USA, seven months after retrieving bodies from ground zero and resisting SHIELD’s attempts to send him to Afghanistan. Centerville, a literal Middle American town, has been taken hostage by a terrorist called Al-Tariq. In the battle with Al-Tariq, Captain America appears to

kill him. Captain America reveals his identity of Steve Rogers to the world to ensure that America is not blamed for the actions of one man. Concerned that the terrorists' possess special CAT tags, a new dog tag for American soldiers, he demands that SHIELD give him information on the production of the tags. After another terrorist attack targets Captain America, he realises that it was not he that killed Al-Tariq, but it was the CAT tag. He then travels to Germany where the tags originated and confronts the leader of the terrorists, the Master (no relation to the Avengers villain of the same name). In the battle Captain America discovers the CAT tags were a plan to kill American soldiers, but also must deal with the truth of America's past military history.

The story arc has a clear narrative structure that starts with 9/11 and builds towards a questioning of America's responsibility for the attack and a final call for America to not repeat its foreign policy and military mistakes of the past. Much is made of America's past foreign policy with the motivations of the villains explained in their battles. In Centerville, Captain America is forced to fight boys who have lost limbs to American landmines in their homelands. Al-Tariq attacks the double standard of American values, noting that when Americans die it is a tragedy and when his people die it is collateral damage. In Germany, Captain America reminds the reader of the horror committed by the allies during the Dresden bombings of World War II in which innocent civilians were killed and compares it to September 11. He notes that he did not understand the horror of what the allies did to the people of Dresden until September 11. In the battle with The Master, The Master reveals that as a boy, guerrillas killed his family with American weapons as part of an undeclared civil war America was sponsoring. He demands that Captain America name his homeland and of course Captain America cannot because it could be any one of any number of countries throughout the world.

The comic does not just attribute blame for 9/11 to the American governments past and present, but also questions the role played by American people themselves. The town of Centerville is chosen by Al-Tariq because its local economy is supported by weapons manufacture. When one of the hostages asks her husband if he feeds his baby by making bombs, he says no, he makes components. The comic clearly asks the reader to consider their own part and responsibility in a system that uses cluster bombs on children and creates death in foreign lands for America's own purposes.

Within the comic are some reflections of the nodal points of the American Dream of Security. Security as Success is a reoccurring theme as even through the Captain America narrative looks to attribute blame for 9/11 within American society, it still reinforces that there are actual terrorists who are seeking to destroy it. *Captain America* vol.4 #4 shows the American Dream that Captain America is protecting, the American Dream of suburbia where he would be able to relax with his lover and enjoy the suburban weekend. But this is an American Dream that Captain America cannot enjoy yet. He must first engage in the Hard Work which is protecting America from terrorists.

But whereas Bush called for Americans to engage in the Hard Work of believing in the American Dream of Security, the Captain America comic called for a different type of task for the America people. The cover of *Captain America* vol.4 #4 shown in figure 4.5 calls for the reader to “Never give up”, while the cover of issue *Captain America* vol.4 #5 calls for the reader to “Honor them” showing a collection of grey faces which includes a woman in a hijab. Issue #5 deals not just with the dead from 9/11, but also the dead from Dresden 1945. The comic makes the point that the half the deaths in World War II were civilians. Captain America’s mission is articulated to be beyond Security as Success for just Americans, but for the entire world. He claims and he is trying to avoid World War III. The final issue, #6, contains Captain America’s confrontation with the Master and his pledge made on behalf of the reader; that America has learnt from its own innocent dead. It will not pursue the same policies that cause innocent dead in other lands. He finally appeals to the reader, “But we can stem the tide of blood. Defy the shadow. Defend the dream We, the people—We, all have the freedom and the power—to fight for peace” (*Captain America* vol.4 #6 Rieber, Cassaday 2002, p.37). The cover shows Captain America in front of a flag and golden eagle on a platform with the relief “Liberty... Justice... For All.” The comic suggests that the *ALL* includes more than just the citizens of America, but the other peoples of the world as well. In this way the comic states that the American ideology and the rights that it offers should be understood to include the whole world. Within the core of this argument is the concept of American Superiority.

As Eco and Chilton (1972) point out, super heroes are powerless to change their worlds, but here is Captain America attempting to change his world by appealing to

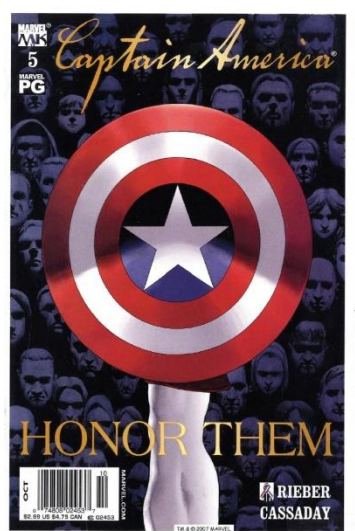


Figure 4.5 Covers of *Captain America* Volume vol.4 #1-6 (Rieber, Cassaday 2002)

the readers to change the real world. At the core of the comic's message is Captain America's American Dream of a secure suburban middle class life of friendly neighbours, and family which he calls for the reader to share with him, a life of liberty and justice. But this dream cannot exist in a world where America is as guilty of the same level of atrocities as the terrorist who attacked it on 11th September 2001. The comic book presents an argument that America bares some guilt for its actions against the peoples of other nations, it has profited from the death and maiming of these people. The comic suggests that 9/11 is a result of these actions. The message is that it is not acceptable for the American people to stand behind their Governments and ignore these actions; Americans must acknowledge what has happened and ensure that their nation acts with concern for liberty and justice for all people to break the cycle of terror. This message seems unexpectedly complex for a superhero comic book. In the context of the silencing of dissent within the American society of 2002, in which other public intellectuals such as Susan Sontag were being attacked for similar points about American society the publishing of this comic book seems almost heroic.

The patriotism of both the character and the iconic style of the covers shown in figure 4.5 might have helped the subversive nature of the narratives message fly under the radar of mainstream American society. Dittmer's concept of the nationalistic superhero suggests that they are unable to escape the nation state within their narrative. Dittmer stated that subversion is more likely in comics that parody the nationalistic genre, although Dittmer noted that this is possible within comics like *Captain America* (Dittmer 2013, p.179). A comparison with the nodal points of the American Dream of Security does put the subversion of this comic series into context. The comic supports the concept of Security as Success and legitimises the Hard Work of militarily confronting the terrorist Other. It is in its rejection of the innocence of America and its call for Americans to take the responsibility of holding their government to account within the context of the narrowness of discourse in American Society that makes it an exception to the superhero narratives support for the hegemony of the Right.

Conclusion

The superhero comics of this study, the Captain America narratives in *the Avengers* and the Batman narratives in *Batman* and *Detective Comics* show the support for the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security after 9/11. Superheroes ability to express ideological positions through the narratives is shown quite strongly. The open narrative ensures that superheroes are always in the middle of the Hard Work necessary for any interpretation of the American Dream and the world that they inhabit is meant to relate and represent the American of the reader in the perpetual now. Pre 9/11 the superhero comics show an ability to express the issue of division after the Bush/Gore 2000 election and attempted a logic of equivalence, a uniting of the American nation under a common identity and ideology. In response to 9/11, the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security articulated by Bush in the 20th September speech, superhero comics show an ability to reproduce Security as Success.

The superhero narratives also reproduce the reduction in concerns of Equality that is part of the American Dream of Security. The progressive position of women within the comic narratives before 9/11, dramatically changed after 9/11. In *Avengers*, women lost their roles as leaders. No longer self confident, they needed the reassurance of the men around them. In reflection, the men who had given up their masculine roles such as Ironman, returned to those role after 9/11. In following the narrative of hegemony in American society throughout the rest of this study, the role of women within the superhero narratives will be an important issue to return to.

While the superhero narratives of post 9/11 2001 and 2002 reproduced the American Dream of security, there was some critique and challenge to the ideology. The Captain America narrative of 2002 is the exception to the comic books of the immediate aftermath of 9/11. While it critiqued American foreign policy of the past and present, it still reproduced the privileged nodal point of Security as Success. Part of its qualification of subversion is the fact that the space for intellectuals to comment had narrowed considerably after 9/11. Popular culture and superhero comics in particular are at more of a distance than the comments of intellectuals within the news media. This distance might have help the comic avoid serious

censure for expressing similar ideas to Susan Sontag. The patriotic covers of the comics that would appear to support the Bush Administration and the American Dream of Security may also have helped to mask the subversive content. However, the other power that the Captain America comic has, certainly over other pro-social superheroes such as Batman is its innate ability to articulate patriotism and other national popular elements of the American Dream to itself through the power of its nationalistic connection and its past articulation of 'America' over the last seventy years.

It is clear that American superhero comics are part of rectification of the hegemony of the American establishment, however the Captain America narrative of 2002 suggest that they may also have the ability to challenge hegemony as well. The next timeframe of the study covers the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Bush/Kerry election of 2004. This next chapter will be able to explore this issue further and see if in a period in which the Bush hegemony and the American Dream of Security are still dominant enough to secure Bush's second term, but are waning in power, could superhero comics offer more of a resistance to hegemony or would they continue to offer support to the American Dream of Security.

Chapter 5: 2003-2004: Superheroes and Villains in a time of War

After the Right wing success of the hegemonic American Dream of Security in the invasion of Afghanistan, the Bush Administration sort to extend the idea of American Security as a justification for an invasion of Iraq. As early as the 17th of September 2001, Bush had directed the Pentagon to begin preparing for military action against Iraq. In January 2002 Iraq was included with North Korea and Iran in the Axis of Evil (Berman 2007). Throughout 2002, the Bush administration sort to demonise Iraq and create the image of a nation that was a threat to both America and the rest of the world. The administration stated that Iraq was allied to Al-Qaeda and was on the cusp of acquiring nuclear weapons as well as already illegally possessing weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration was successful in positioning Iraq as a threat to American Security and invaded Iraq on the 20th March 2003, an action that was supported by the majority of the American people (Bergman 2007, p.217). The Bush Administration and their intellectual allies were so successful in the demonising of Iraq that in a Washington post poll in September 2003, less than six months after the invasion of Iraq, 70% of the Americans surveyed believed that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had been directly involved in the attacks, that the 9/11 hijackers had been Iraqis, and that Saddam had used chemical weapons against US troops. A June 2003 poll showed that 41% thought or were not sure if weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq and 75% thought that President Bush has showed strong leadership on Iraq (Bergman 2007 p212). While the war with Iraq was never as well supported as the invasion of Afghanistan had been after 9/11, it proved popular at the outset with Bush enjoying approval ratings of around 70% at the start of the conflict and 60% when Saddam Hussein was captured on 13th December 2003 (Gallup 2014). Exit polls show the Bush Administration's hawkish policies against terrorism and the fear of terrorism in the American electorate as well as support for the Iraq within the Bush voting bloc were enough of a factor to ensure a second term

in the Presidency for Bush in the November 2004 election (NBC 2004 Presidential exit poll).

Superhero comics had embraced the nodal point of Security as Success as part of the American Dream of Security directly after 9/11, helping to reproduce the hegemonic content of the Right wing hegemony. The *Captain America* comic of 2002 was able to offer some resistance to the American Dream of Security within the narrative of the comic, but it was the exception to the rule with the Batman and Captain America narratives in comics like *Batman*, *Detective Comics* and *The Avengers* reproducing the articulation of Security as Success, reflecting a return to the gender roles of the past, justifying American superiority and showing the Bush Administration from a positive perspective. In 2003 and 2004, there was a waning of support for the Bush Administration. However, Bush and the ideology of the American Dream of Security still proved popular enough for there to be support for invasion of Iraq and for Bush to win 2004 Presidential election. With the hegemony of the Right reducing in power and ideological contest becoming more accepted than after the silencing of dissent immediately after 9/11, the comics have more space to make commentary. This measure of hegemonic and counter hegemonic content frames the analysis of the comics of this chapter. One specific issue that is addressed is Kading's (2005) suggestion that superheroes would be well positioned to explore a war on terror framed in the concepts of Good versus Evil and that the superhero paradigm could give narratives that make sense of terrorism and the effort to combat it (Kading 2005).

Superheroes have a long history of ideological anti-American villains in times of war, such as World War II Nazi supervillians and Soviet villains during the Cold War. With this in mind, as well as exploring the ideological content of comic through the nodal points of the American Dream, this chapter will look at the role of the supervillian within the Batman and Captain America narratives of 2003 and 2004.

The wanning of Security as Success

While the super hero comics in the months after 9/11 emphasised protection and security as a legitimate form of success in American society, the comics in the time

period after 2002 moved away from that definition. Security has problems within a narrative structure that is rooted in the real life experiences of the reader. Security at its essence is conservative; it is about keeping things as they are. Success within Security means that nothing happens that everything is safe. Within the superhero narrative this causes some problems. One approach in a narrative on Security is to show the work that goes into providing Security, the action that goes into ensuring that there is no action (such as avoiding terrorist attack). This is the sort of narrative that was in the television show *24* in which a US agent must work to ensure that terrorist attacks does not occur, with a focus of showing the processes and actions that this agent must go through. However, narratives like this can only keep the threat of action at bay for a certain period of time and *24*, eventually succumbed to including an attack in its narrative season 6 of 2007 when the explosion of a nuclear device destroys the real life Californian community of Valencia.

As open narratives in which the reality of the fictional America of the comics is representative of the real America of the reader, superhero comic books faced a problem exploring Security. If within the narrative an event like the destruction of an American suburb by terrorists was used in the comic book to explore the concept of Security as Success it would move the narrative beyond the representation of the world of the reader. This sort of narrative was used later in the time frame of the study in *Civil War #1* (Millar, 2006) of 2006, however by then, as Chapter 6 shows, American society had moved beyond the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, DC Comics has attempted to exclude 9/11 from their comics and focus on providing escapism for their readers. If they had detailed an event like the destruction of Valencia as *24* did, then it would be seen as a commentary on 9/11 rather than a simple exploration of the nodal point of Security as Success. Quite possible in the American society of 2003/2004 it was so close to the event of 9/11 any similar attack in the comic would be seen as a metaphor for 9/11 itself. It should be noted that *24*'s use of a nuclear explosion destroying an American community occurred in 2007, 6 years after 9/11.

With an inability to depict successful attacks on America within the superhero narrative, superhero comics were left with few plot devices to explore Security as Success in 2003. Security as a narrative theme is problematic because essentially it is a process of making sure nothing happens. Success is the absence of action. But

these successes make for poor narratives. They lack the excitement of the traditional forms but also put doubt on the actions of the heroic actor. The great American narratives like the Westerns of the 20th Century are about observable action, shootouts and revenge, not about check points, colour codes and random searches.

Some superhero comics did embrace the narrative of the superhero battling behind the scenes to ensure Security in a number of Black Ops style secret teams that emerged after 2003. Captain America was part of the *Secret War* (Bendis, Dell'Otto 2004/2005) limited series of 2004 in which the character is press ganged into joining a SHIELD black ops team which invades the rogue foreign nation of Latveria to stop weapons of mass destruction falling into super villains' hands. In *JLA* #100 (Kelly, Mahnke 2004) of June 2004, Batman and JLA oversee the creation of a JLA Black Ops team, the Justice League Elite to deal with the dirty issues that the JLA cannot. There are clear problems with this type of superhero team. Would superheroes who are already mostly vigilantes with secret identities, who work outside the laws of the states need to add another layer of secrecy and vigilantism with secret black ops teams that work in secret outside the laws of the state? These teams are able to act in even more violent and illegal ways to deal with the issues that the established superheroes cannot due to their commitment to seemingly outmoded ideas of morality and civil rights. It is possible for these storylines to be able to provide subversive commentary against this concept of extra legal special operations teams and secret government activities and question the concept of how far the American government can go in regard to its secret activities in the war on terror. Later, in comics that are included in the timeframes of the following two chapters, 2005 to 2008, the black op team in the comic becomes an opportunity to critique the concept with official black ops teams under the control of villains, but in the timeframe of this chapter, the black ops teams are seen in a more positive light, supporting the hegemony of the American Dream of Security and a shifting of morality toward American military actions. It is at this point that it is worth noting that superhero comics are a capitalist venture. If Security as Success was a problem within the narrative, then the shift away from this articulation is not a case of challenging or contesting to the hegemony of the Right, but simply a case of economics. Unable to create compelling stories with Security at the centre, superhero comics continued to

support the ideology of the American Dream of Security by shifting focus to the other nodal point of the ideology, the militaristic Hard Work in the War on Terror.

In this way the Batman comics of 2003 and 2004 moved away from Security as definition of Success. As the previous chapter showed, in the aftermath of 9/11, Batman was the superhero that most embraced the concept of Security as Success. His motivations for his war on crime were explained as a mission to make the citizens of Gotham safe, rather than a personal mission of revenge. From 2003, the Batman narratives kept the focus on Batman's Hard Work, but lost the intensity of the articulation of Security as Success.

Batman fails to save the victims of the crime he fights and instead the stories become about his desire to bring perpetrators to Justice, another ideological element from Bush's original articulation of the American Dream of Security (Bush 2001). The change is quite swift, in issue #776 of *Detective Comics* (Bolles, Rosado 2003) the story deals with a father's desire to save his former undercover police officer son from the gang he infiltrated. The father's sacrifice makes his son's life safe and reinforces Security as Success worth sacrificing and working for. By issue #781 (Brubaker, Castillo 2003), the narrative has changed. Batman fails in his attempts to save an innocent actor who seems to be caught up in a plot to kill him; however the Joker reminds the Batman, "Bah, civilians. Welcome to the 21st Century, Batman. There are no more civilians anymore... and really there never were!" (Brubaker, Castillo 2003) Of course the actor is not innocent, but is driven to villainy by Batman's failure to save a police officer he shot years ago. In both *Detective Comics* and *Batman*, Batman fails to save people. In the Hush (Leob, Lee 2003b) storyline his childhood friend is seemingly killed by the Joker, but turns out to be a new villain, Hush who then kills Batman trusted tech expert Harold. In the Broken City storyline that follows Hush in *Batman* #620-625 (Azzarello, Riso 2003/2004), a young woman is murdered by Killer Croc and her mother is murdered by Scarface in front of Batman.

In all the stories Batman meets with little success, he fails to stop the murders and even struggles to solve the crime itself with the conclusion of the crime often playing out in front of him and revealing the villain of the piece. Success as Security are not part of the narrative as they were in the months after 9/11. The focus is instead on the

misery and hardship of Batman and his battle against crime, on his process of hard work rather than his successes. It is now a story of struggle against villains and of personal and inevitable loss for Batman. The only levels of success that Batman illustrates are his own survival and overcoming his enemies. The comic suggests, but does not name a new ultimate success in the distance, which means immediate measures of success are temporary and worthy of little, if any celebration. Similar developments occur in the Captain America narratives, with the Avengers falling to save American civilians from a biological attack by the Red Skull in *Avengers #65* of March 2003 and later are themselves destroyed and disbanded after a 9/11 inspired event in which a plane is crashed into their mansion killing four Avengers in the renumbered *Avengers #500* (Benids, Finch 2004) of July 2004.

Success delayed and faith in the American Dream

With Security no longer the articulated form of Success within the superhero comic books, the concept of Success changes and becomes more ambiguous and deferred. This sits within the superheroes comics as an ongoing narrative, forever caught in the Hard Work of the ideology of the Dream, never reaching completion. In the comics of the previous chapter, the 2002 Captain America narratives had already explored this theme somewhat with Captain American imaging his future Success under the American Dream of a heterosexual suburban life of BBQs and relaxing with his girlfriend Sharon Carter but realising that work was needed in facing terrorism before that goal could be achieved. In the Broken city storyline of *Batman #620* to *#625* (Azzarello, Risso 2003/2004) of October 2003 to March 2004, Batman makes the point that the hard working people of Gotham's Chinatown, immigrants from other countries, were working hard, not to achieve their own American dream, but to make the American Dream possible for their children in the future.

While success becomes the absent element of the American dream, projected into the future, the comics still reinforce the American Dream as the American societal ideology and insist on its belief and role in American Society. The Batman/Green Lantern storyline of *Detective Comics #784-786* (Brubaker, Zircher 2003) (published in July-September 2003) reinforces the American Dream as a historically shared ideology and reminds the reader of the need to commit to it beyond the immediate

setbacks and hurdles that are faced by Americans. In the narrative, Batman investigates a fifty year old string of murders that ends up in present day Gotham. These murders involve reference to the Green Lantern Alan Scott, the former champion of Gotham. It turns out that the original crimes were a form of revenge by a small businessman whose shop was destroyed by the Green Lantern during the course of a battle with a villain in the late 1940s. His grandson finds out about this in the present day and recreates the murders as an ongoing revenge against the Green Lantern for his own family's failures in American society.

The explanation of the motivation behind these murders reinforces the need for belief in the American Dream even if there is an absence of Success. The grandfather is driven to murder by witnessing the Green Lantern's own failure against a villain, failure which results in his failure to keep his American dream of success in business. His grandson blames his failures on his grandfather's failure and therefore on the Green Lantern's failure in battle. When the Green Lantern confronts the murderous grandson, he explains to him that his misunderstanding of the nature of failure, "I've failed a lot. I failed that day when your Grandfather lost his store. That's what people do, Francis. They try their best and they still fail sometimes. You Grandfather didn't understand that because he was ill. He had a chemical disorder in his brain... I think you have it too Francis." While the story is about superheroes solving a decades old serial killing, the underlying message is that Americans must believe in the American Dream regardless of the real life situation. Letting the reality of your material condition, the fact that you have failed or have not achieved success make you doubt the American Dream is a form of mental illness. This echoes Bush's call to the American public on the 20th September that their Hard Work in the American Dream of Security is to keep believing in it.

Violence and torture: Hard work in the American Dream

With Security losing the power of articulation to Success, but a continued insistence that the American Dream is still valid, the power of the nodal point of Hard Work emerges as an important ideological element at this time. Within the Batman comic there is an escalation of the level of violence in general and specifically associated with Batman's Hard Work in the narrative.

Historically depiction of violence in superhero comics has been restricted by the Comics Code. Since its inception in the 1950s the Code had underwent substantial revisions (Nyberg 1998) and while it was in use by DC Comics during the timeframe of this study, it has lost much of its power to censor comics. The violence of the Batman comic had at times been able to work around the Comics Code by focusing on the adult direct market and avoiding newsstands for some of the comics such as *Batman: The Dark Knight* commonly known as *The Dark Knight Returns* (Miller, Janson 1986) by Frank Miller. Violence and intimidation has been at the heart of the Batman character since its creation. Although the character of Batman would not kill his opponents in the modern version of the character, maiming and injuring opponents was part of character. The Batman character originally chose the image of the Bat in an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of superstitious villains and would use this appearance to intimidate villains into answering questions as well as the threat of violence. While violence in Batman comics is not a new phenomenon or unique, the Batman comics of 2004 and 2005 increase the level of violence, introducing new types of violence for both Batman, his allies and his opponents. The following two tables compare the level and types of violence depicted in two lots of Batman comics five years apart. Table 5.1 shows the types and number of violent incidents in 12 *Batman* and *Detective Comics* comic books from October 1998 to March 1999; *Batman* #560 to #565 and *Detective Comics* 727 to #732. Table 5.2 shows the types and number of violent incidents 12 *Batman* and *Detective Comics* comic books from October 2003 to March 2004, *Batman* #620 to #625 and *Detective Comics* #787 to #792. In both cases the comics were simply analysed for individual incidents of violence depicted within the comic

Table 5.1 Types and number of violent incidences depicted in Batman Comics October 1998-March 1999

<i>Batman #560 - #565, Detective Comics #727 - #732</i>			
Batman and allies		Villains	
Assault	13	Assault	5
Physical Torture	0	Physical Torture	1
Psychological torture	0	Attempted Rape	0
		Attempted Murder	1
		Murder	10

Table 5.2 Types of and number of violent incidences depicted in Batman comics October 2003-March 2004

<i>Batman #620 - #625, Detective comics #787 - #792</i>			
Batman and allies		Villains	
Assault	15	Assault	11
Physical Torture	3	Physical Torture	0
Psychological torture	3	Attempted Rape	1
		Attempted Murder	5
		Murder	18

As the tables show, the number of violent incidents in the sampled comics increases in the years 2003/2004 in comparison to five years earlier. While most of the increase in violence is by the villains of the narrative there is a significant change to Batman's behaviour. During this time, Batman adds a new element to his war on Crime, legitimatised torture. In *Batman #620* (Azzarello, Riso 2003) (October 2003) the beginning of the 'Broken City' storyline, the comic begins with Killer Croc hanging upside down suspended from a ceiling, Batman interrogates him about the murder of a woman by punching Killer Croc repeatedly in the face (see figure 5.1). Batman's narration assures the reader that Croc is tough and does not feel these punches too much, but the representation of questioning under torture is made clear. In the storyline this torture is repeated multiple times with Killer Croc and also with the scalding of the villain Scarface. Both characters are safe options for torture within the narrative, Killer Croc has tough scaly hide and Scarface is a wooden puppet. The Batman comic also shows examples of psychological torture, were Batman threatens serious physical harm if questions are not answered. In *issue #621* (Azzarello, Riso 2004), Batman questions a petty criminal while holding his arm over a car engine, threatening to cut the man's hand off if he does not answer Batman's questions. Part of Batman's modus operandi has been the use of fear, intimidation and physical violence, however the way it is expressed in the comics of 2003 and 2004 and the overall level of violence in the comic is different. Batman's new approach to torture sits within the context of an American nation in the midst of its own internal debates about the role of torture in the war on terror.

Within this time frame other forms of violence which had been unusual within comic books become more common. For example, rape which in the comic books of the past was avoided or at the very least only alluded to becomes part of the narrative of crime. The 'Broken City' storyline of 2003 depicts an attempted rape and Batman himself threatens a criminal with the rape they can expect in prison. The normalising of rape continues in the comic to the point that the best selling DC Universe event limited series; *Identity Crisis* (Meltzer, Morales 2004/2005) of 2004 includes the rape of Sue Dibny, (Wife of the superhero the Elongated Man) by the villain Doctor Light as a major plot point.



Figure 5.1 *Batman #620* (Azzarello, Risso 2003, p.8)

This increase in the level of violence depicted in the comic can be explained from a few perspectives. In an America that suffered the 9/11 attacks, that feared further violent attacks and now was engaged in wars in the Middle East, violence, horror and death becomes a more everyday element of media. The fear of another attack became a persistent theme in the lives of the American people with government warnings and a colour coded warning system regularly update on the news and in the media. Both the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq received significant support from the American public, in part clearly motivated by the fear of terrorism on American soil. While opposition existed to both the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the pro-war intellectuals were successful in making opposition to the war seem a protest against the soldiers themselves. Cries of “support the troops” managed to confuse the motivations of the anti-war lobby for the American people. In the same way that Regan during the 1980s was able to use patriotism to support his political position, the Bush Administration and its intellectual allies were able to use patriotism to support their position. International opposition to the war was framed against the “with us or against us” rhetoric of the Bush administration’s war on terror which meant any critique of America’s actions in the Middle East become un-American. This descended to the ridiculous point that French Fries were renamed “Freedom Fries” in many American dinners and restaurants (Berman 2007 p.27). American society in this time of fear was more willing to accept the mistreatment of prisoners of war, water boarding and rendition. Torture and its use become a legitimate topic of debate in American society and the hypothetical question of information gained from torture stopping a terrorist attack popular in American media.

The photographs that emerged in 2004 of American military personal abusing Iraqi prisoner at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq put the issue of legitimate torture front and centre for the American public. Part of the debate about Abu Ghraid in America focused on the question of who was to blame for the abuse against the prisoners; individual military personal, the Military leadership, or the Bush Administration. Sontag made the point that other voices in the America media put the scandal into a context of American at war with a terrorist enemy and spoke in support of the abuse and the military personnel (Sontag 2004). Christopher Hitchens (2005) in particular made the point that the conditions at Abu Ghraib had improved under the US military in comparison to the Hussein regime. Many of the American public showed

an acceptance of this type of abuse. The military personnel who were ultimately held responsible for the abuse and served minor sentences and were welcomed home by their home towns as war heroes, not war criminals (Berman 2007).

9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had been articulated in a way that shifted the concepts of morality. Torture was not a clear issue anymore. War brought a new morality, looser around the means to success. The Batman narratives of 2003 and 2004, took on this theme in the narrative, reflecting the idea that torture was a legitimate process in the Hard Work of the war against terrorism. When Batman engaged in psychological and physical torture for information the comic was on the side of the new morality in the war for Security. The hard work in this American dream was clear; it was dirty and violent. It was the hard work of fighting terror with terror.

While the Batman narratives showed support for the concept of legitimate torture as part of American society's Hard Work to fight the War on Terror, the Captain America comic was for the most part silent on this issue within this time frame. In the 'Homeland' storyline in *Captain America vol.4 #21-25* (Morales, Bachalo 2004) of 2004 (which is explored a little later in this chapter), there is commentary that expresses concerns about the treatment of Iraq prisoners by the American Military. The comic is quick to show however that while there may be some Military personal who seek to abuse the prisoners, there are others who act morally. Within the sample of 2003/2004, there are both articulations that support torture and articulations that oppose it. This reflected an issue that did cause division within American society at the time.

Emerging critiques and challenges to Right Wing hegemony

Chapter 4 made the point that within the media after 9/11 in 2001 and 2002, opposition to the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security was actively silenced within American society. While Bush still enjoyed historically high approval ratings of between 50% to 71% in 2003 and 46% to 60% in 2004, they were nothing like his rating of 90% on the 21st September 2001 after he had articulated the American Dream of Security (Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush). As

Bush's popularity dropped to more reasonable, but still high levels during 2003 and 2004, opposition to Bush, the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security became more common. Within the superhero narratives of 2003 and 2004 some limited but direct critiques and challenges emerge within specific comic books. However, another issue that emerged in the superhero comics was a lack of support for the War on Terror in comparison to the support comics had traditionally offered at times of war.

Historically superheroes had offered ideological support and propaganda for the United States in times of war. As Chapter 1 detailed, the original *Captain America Comics* was part of the propaganda support of World War II. The villains of the comic books of World War II were caricatures of the real enemies of the United States in the war. The villain filled the role of the Anti-American Other, just as the previous chapter showed that the terrorist had filled that role for Bush in his speech on the 20th September. The ideological Other was represented in other time periods in American history in superhero comics. For example, Tony Stark the American capitalist created Ironman to escape from Vietnamese Communists in 1963 and Captain America confronted Soviet supervillians in the Cold war (Wright 2001). After 9/11 it was predicted that American super hero comics would return to the patriotic style of stories in the years of the Second World War. Kading (2005) saw that superhero comics were well positioned to explain the war on terror because it fitted the paradigm of the super hero adventure. One of his main points was that Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida network fitted the archetype of the Super villain.

The Bush Administration sort to invoke the simplistic projection of the superhero Good versus Evil paradigm in their campaign against Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Even though it was on record that Bin Laden's issues with the United States stemmed from the treatment of Muslim people in the Middle East and US bases in the holy lands (Tan 2003), the Bush Administration stated that his and his network's ultimate motivation was hatred for the US. As Bush famously noted, they hated America's freedom, was jealous of its achievements and wanted to destroy it (Woods 2005). America had seen enemies before that had desired new territories or dictatorship of their own country and the limited wealth and power that it gave them. Bin Laden had no desire for wealth. In fact, furthering the image of a super villain, he came from a family of the super wealthy and he had used his own wealth to

support the Mujahedeen's war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The Osama Bin Laden that the Bush administration sketched for the American people had a new goal, a goal more in common with the mad villains of the superhero comic book than the real historic opponents of the United States; the ending of the American way of life and the destruction of the American Dream. Bin Laden's escape into the mountains further enhanced his super villain credentials. Bin Laden like the fictional super villain had managed to avoid capture by the heroes and was allegedly hidden in a secret base in a hollowed out Afghan mountain. America had created a real life Supervillain.

In the push to invade Iraq, the Bush administration followed the same super villain archetype with long time enemy Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. Like the comic book super villains, Hussein had a detailed back story that involved previous conflicts with the United States, and then he was back just like the Joker or the Red Skull, for another attempt at the hero. His back story involved his previous attempts to take over other nations and the repression of his own people. The Bush Administration alleged a super villain team-up with Bin Laden and Hussein sharing resources and an anti-American ideology (Bergman 2007). In reality the secular Iraq was as unlikely to get support from Al Qaeda. The Bush Administration spent a considerable amount of time building a case that Hussein had attempted to create nuclear weapons and had weapons of mass destruction in an attempt to justify an invasion. Bush even went as far as to evoke the Batman like motivation of revenge; Hussein after all had attempted to assassinate his father (SMH 2002). These two super villains were presented in a broader frame work that was pulled from the pages of the comic books, Good vs. Evil, the Axis of Evil, beyond the Axis of Evil and even the outposts of tyranny.

As the previous chapter mentioned, in the aftermath of 9/11, the comic book superheroes took on the role of representing America within the comic. It was not just the patriotic heroes like Captain America, but the non-nationalistic heroes like Batman who showed American society how it could embrace security and protection as legitimate goal of success. In the team books like *The Avengers* and *JLA*, the individual heroes represented individual aspects of American society. For example the female Wasp and Scarlet Witch of the Avengers reverted to the more traditional gender role of nurturing and caring and gave up their positions of leadership to the

male heroes. If the heroes were acting in this way, then this gave the super villains the chance to represent the anti-thesis of America, the threats that it was facing in a post 9/11 world, both the threats external and the threats internal to American society. Just as Hitler and his Nazi henchmen the Red Skull, represented the external threat to American society of the late 1930s and early 1940s, so to would the threats to post 2001 America be personified in its super villains. These threats however were not the zealot terrorists and fanatical dictators that the Bush Administration was arguing for but something much closer to the Bush Administration itself.

Muslim villains: the disappearance of Ras al Ghoul and the heroic Fernand Hedayat

Of all the super villains that could represent Osama Bin Laden, the most likely is Ra's al Ghul. A Batman villain, Ra's al Ghul debuted in 1971 and became a supervillain that could cross into other DC comics such as the *JLA*. Ra's al Ghul's success as a supervillain in the comics led to his film debut as the main villain in the *Batman Begins* motion picture of 2005. Ra's al Ghul like Bin Laden is a terrorist, although Ra's al Ghul is more correctly an eco-terrorist who seeks to return Earth to an Eden like state and sees genocide as the only solution. While his goals are ecological, Ra's al Ghul's concept of Eden suggests a Biblical outlook. Like Bin Laden, Ra's al Ghul is from the Middle East, his name is Arabic for 'The Demon's Head'. He too is a man of wealth, although Ra's al Ghul built his up through his prolonged life. And like Bin Laden, Ra's al Ghul is the head of his own army of fanatical followers, for Ra's al Ghul the League of Assassins with his own personal body guard, the Ubu. Whereas Bin Laden's secret base was in the Afghan mountains, Ra's was in North Africa.

After September 11 Ra's al Ghul seems to drop out of the rotation of Batman villains, only making a cameo appearance as part of the villain ensemble of the 'Hush' storyline in *Batman #616* (Leob, Lee 2003a) of 2003. Ra's al Ghul was featured in the limited series *Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman: Trinity* in 2002 by Matt Wagner. In this storyline a connection to Bin Laden is made clear when Ra's al Ghul like Bin Laden attempts a similar terrorist attack on Metropolis by flying two planes into the Lexcorp towers. In the 2004 miniseries, *Batman: Death and the*

Maidens (Rucka, Janson 2003/2004), Ra's al Ghul was killed by his estranged Jewish daughter Nyssa. This meant that at the time of the release of the *Batman Begins* (2005) movie, Ra's al Ghul who was the villain of the movie was dead within the DC Comic universe. This is a very unusual circumstance for an industry that often sought cross promotion opportunities between the films and comic books. Just as the Middle Eastern Ra's is replaced in the comic by his Jewish daughter, in the 2005 movie, Ra's al Ghul is played by two actors, the Japanese Ken Watanabe and the Irish Liam Neeson. Any link to his Middle Eastern origin, aside from his Arabic name is lost. By doing this, DC were able to separate Ra's al Ghul from comparison to Osama Bin Laden in the movie and took him out of the comic book universe altogether with his death. No writer was able to use Ra's al Ghul as a representation of Osama Bin Laden or Al Qaeda within the *Batman* narrative.

Al Qaeda did appear in the *Captain America* narrative in 2004. In the 'Homeland' storyline from *Captain America #21-25* (Morales, Bachalo 2004), Captain America is asked to sit on the Military Tribunals of captured members of Al Qaeda who are held in Guantanamo Bay. In the comic, the American Government attempt to regain the American people's trust in the Military Tribunals system by having Captain America involved. Within the narrative there are concerns raised by Captain America about the conditions in the camp and the fairness of the Tribunals. One prisoner that Captain America is most concerned with is Iranian born historian, Fernand Hedayat. A group of prisoners escape and plan to use the Weapons of Mass Destruction that Saddam gave to Al Qaeda to attack Cuba and blame in on the Americans. Captain America working with the Cubans saves the day and Hedayat contributes to the victory. In his hospital bed after being offered asylum by Fidel Castro, Hedayat insists that he will return to America. It is revealed at the end of the comic that the 'crime' for which Hedyayat's American citizenship was revoked as punishment, was that he supported an international legal defensive fund for Arab peoples.

The storyline make some interesting points. It does not seek to condemn the US for the invasion of Afghanistan or Iraq, in fact it assumes that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction are real and will turn up in time. The comic supports the allegation that Saddam was in league with Al Qaeda. It does however question the conditions in the prison camps in Cuba and questions the reality of justice in the trials that the enemy combatants were to face. The comic does not deny that there are real terrorists

in the prison camps, but it does suggest that some innocent men are there and it doubts their chance at true justice. Hedayant represents these innocent Muslims, fearful of their treatment by American society and in need of support from Captain America to preserve their place in American society. Hedayant himself makes the point that the majority of Muslim Americans are supporters of the Republican Party and believe strongly in the American ideology.

What is most striking about both these superhero narratives at this time is that they do not present a Supervillain Muslim extremist terrorists Other within either narrative. In a stark difference to the propaganda of superhero comics of the past, the Batman and Captain America narratives of 2003 and 2004 specifically avoid these types of depictions. More common are characters like Fernand Hedayat, Muslim characters who prove to not be villains but heroes of the narrative. Much more common are the political villains inside American society

Political villains

Lex Luthor is the arch nemesis of DC's Superman, but in that role he has come to take on a broader role in the DC storylines as the de-facto leader of the DC Super villains. Where Superman is an alien that possesses a super body and super morality, Luthor is a human being with a super brain, normal body and a lack of morality. Luthor dates back almost as far as Superman, with his first appearance in 1940. During his comic book life, Luthor has evolved and changed to embody the perceived threats to American society for each of his relevant time periods. Luthor started out as genius scientist using technology and knowledge for his own selfish and illegal means. Luthor's early stories are about immorally using power and knowledge for personal gain versus the societal good, and the danger of science and technology. In a cold war context, the danger of the scientific advances of the non-American, for example the Soviet Union putting a man into space or Luthor inventing a new death ray encouraged America to be at the head of these advances. In the 1980s Luthor's character was rebooted and became a super villain corporate executive heading up his own company, LexCorp (Greenberger 2008). Luthor's evolution from scientist to business man illustrates the changing perception of danger in America. Corporate Luthor becomes the new internal threat to American society.

In the scandal of George Bush's election victory over Al Gore, DC changed Luthor yet again; he became the President of America in the DC universe in 2000. 9/11 stymied DC opportunity to use Luthor's new villainous identity as President of the United States to explore political corruption and abuse as a threat to American society. Post 9/11, the fictional President Luthor fades from prominent view in the Batman and JLA comics.

It is not until *JLA* #83 (Kell, Cross 2003) published in July 2003 that President Luthor takes centre stage again in a story that speaks against the danger of the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq of March 2003. In the comic, President Luthor tries to convince Superman, Batman and Wonderwoman, that they need to invade the nation of Qurac in the Middle East because Qurac is acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Luthor show the superheroes evidence, although none of it is compelling. One by one, the voices of dissent against the war are silenced as Wonderwoman has her diplomatic credentials cancelled and Batman disappears after he sees that Luthor is restricting the rights of the public to protest the war under the guise of public safety. Figure 5.2 shows that, Superman is left alone, still unsure if he should support or oppose the war with Qurac. When Superman wonders where his team mates have gone, Luthor states, "I don't know, I just know that they were confusing you with unpatriotic talk. It's unbecoming to question your President during times of international unrest" (Kelly, Cross 2003, p.16). Finally after Luthor publicly states that he is prepared to go against the UN, that America will bear this burden of war with Qurac alone if it has to, Superman decides to oppose Luthor, "I will know the truth, and I will not be ashamed or called un-American for demanding it." But Luthor is ready for him and attacks him with a kryptonite weapon dissolving him. Luthor states that it's too late "The war has already begun. You can't be for America and our troops, but be against the war. That's not logical. Don't be upset . There's a plan. We're taking care of it" (Kelly, Cross 2003, p.19). Superman wakes yelling that it's never too late and it is revealed that this was a simulation. Superman notes that without a clear vision of the truth, he was paralysed and unable to stop Luthor taking the US to war despite the protests and the UN. Without the truth that Luthor was able to destroy all that the heroes stood for. The comic ends with Wonder Woman reassuring him that the truth always comes to light, but Superman still fears what will happens if the truth comes too late.



Figure 5.2 JLA #83 (Kelly, Cross 2003, p.16)

The anti-war and anti-Bush message of this comic is clear. The arch villain of the DC universe replicates the Bush Administration's own evidence for the need for war, even showing the superheroes images of aluminium tubing as Secretary of State Colin Powell did at the UN (Berman 2007 p.206). While President Luthor's motivations are not clarified in the comic, it is clear that he is misleading the superheroes, the UN and the American people and is attempting to silence dissent. The comic explains that the missing element of the societal debate on the need for war in Iraq is drawn from Superman's own personal mantra of the American Dream; truth, justice and the American way. The comic suggests that it is the corrupt political class manipulation of the truth which derails the American society and leads it wrongly into war, and also suggests that truth as an important element of the American fabric will come to light in the end and solve the crisis. The issue of the need for truth arises again in the superhero comics during this time as a critique against the Bush Administration.

JLA is not the only comic narrative to explore American politics for villains in the timeframe of 2003-2004. the Avengers in *issue #65 to #70* (Johns, Coipel 2003) in the storyline 'Red Zone' of 2003, deals with what appears to be a biological terrorist attack on US soil that leaves 1875 Americans dead. A red gas that kills all those it comes in contact with emerges from a national park. After investigation, Captain America discovers that it was actually a secret US government weapons manufacturing plant that was developing a biological weapon which would kill only non-white people. The Avengers discover that the person responsible in the US Secretary of Defence, Dell Rusk, which is of course an anagram of the Red Skull. Figure 5.3 shows the Red Skull in an ironic reflection of the iconic image of Captain America; standing in front of an American flag expressing his love of the country. The Red Skull had infiltrated the American Government and as well as developing chemical weapons of mass destruction, he was intending to force America into war with foreign countries, Egypt, North Korea and Wakanda (the fictional African homeland of the Avenger, the Black Panther). The Red Skull and Captain America battle physically, but also philosophically for America. The Red Skull no longer wants to destroy America, instead he sees the potential in America for the nation he wants to see, a new American Dream, "Freedom must feel fear and fear leads to

control... American just needs a little push in the right direction” (#69 Johns, Coipel 2003, p.21). The Skull now believes in the America Dream, with the biological weapon wiping out Americans, it is only a matter of time until the levels of fear are so strong that he can convince the American people and President to attack any nation he holds responsible. Of course the Avengers and Captain America defeat the Red Skull saving the day. President Bush returns to the Avengers comic, this time not to inspire them, but to thank them for, “You Avengers stopped this country from making a terrible mistake. You saved lives, you prevented a war” (Johns, Coipel 2003, p.30) When Captain America seeks assurances from the President that there are no more biological weapons factories in America, the President responds that he hopes The Avengers will be there to correct any mistakes the Government makes in the future.

More of the Red Skull’s plans as Secretary of Defence come to the surface in *Avengers #82-84* (Austen, Kollins 2004) of the storyline ‘Once an Invader’ of mid 2004. Under his orders, former Avenger John Walker AKA the US Agent is tasked to put together a Super team under the name of the Invaders to deal with issues of American interests internationally. Walker once was the superhero the Super Patriot, who challenged Captain America’s right to be the American nationalistic hero during the Reagan Administration. When the US Government sacked Captain America for not following their direction, Walker replaced him for a time as Captain America. In the Marvel Universe, Walker is a jingoistic superhero, positioned well to the Right of Captain America politically. Walker and the Invaders (which includes British nation superheros Union Jack and Spitfire) plan to overthrow the leadership of the Middle Eastern country of Mazikhandar. This action is justified by Mazikhandar’s sinking of APEC oil tankers and their many human rights violations, but in reality, as revealed by their ally Namor, it is because the US wants Mazikhandar’s oil. The Invaders with the assistance of their Atlantean allies take the country by force, but the Avengers step in to defeat the Invaders and protect the innocent people that the Invaders were prepared to see die to achieve their objective. However, that was part of Walker’s plan and the Avengers get to see US regime change up close. The new US handpicked leader thanks them all for saving his country and referencing the need for swift justice executes the deposed leader himself with a bullet to the head, shocking the Avengers.



Figure 5.3 *The Avengers* vol.3 #68 (Johns, Coipel 2003, p.40)

Whereas the *JLA* story suggests Truth as an element of the American Dream that can solve the issue of the Bush Administration, the Avengers Red Zone story calls for American people to reject fear and hold the Government to account. The ‘Once an Invader’ storyline suggests an economic explanation for the motivations of the Bush Administration’s policies.

The Captain America comic is creatively inconsistent during this timeframe. Individual writers work on the title for short runs of no more than 6 issues and then move to other comics. Storylines are developed and then quickly dropped as the new creative team takes over. While there is a lack of an overarching storyline, one consistency in the publication is that the American political class provides Captain America with many of his villains. In *Captain America #17* (Gibbons et al 2003), Captain America discovers information that suggests that his memories of Bucky’s death and his being frozen near the end of World War II are fabrications. The US Government froze him on purpose because they feared that he would not support the dropping of the nuclear bombs on Japan and would attempt to stop them. In issue #29 (Kirkman, Eaton 2004), an aspiring political candidate for the presidency is kidnapped by the terrorists Hydra and then saved by Captain America; however the kidnapping is merely a stunt to help the politician secure his party’s nomination for the next election. There is a general antigovernment tone throughout the Captain America comic, but these specific critiques that are unique and separated from the others. There is no overarching approach to challenge the hegemony of the Right within the comic.

The last comic to depict villains coming from the political class is the ‘Rules of Engagement’ story line for *JLA #78* and *#79* (Kelly, Mahnke 2003) of February and March 2003. The story concerns an invasion of the planet Kllaq by a military collective called the Paciforce. The Paciforce attacks other planets in pre-emptive strikes to eliminate threats to their way of life. The JLA intervene in the conflict seeing that Kllaq lacks the weapons of mass destruction that the Paciforce has. They attempt to broker a peace between the two sides, but are uneasy when they discover that the Kllaq minister of defence is the intergalactic Supervillain Kanjar Ro. In opposition to the articulation of legitimate torture in the Batman comic of a year later, this narrative asserts Kanjar Ro’s villainous nature by showing him torturing prisoner as seen in figure 5.4. The JLA are left with a dilemma, if they forcibly

disarm the Paciforce and halt the conflict there, Kanjar Ro will simply lead a coup and take over Klaw. In the end the JLA do disarm the Paciforce and send them back to their world and deal with Kanjar Ro by broadcasting his torture of Paciforce prisoners of war to the people of Klaw. With the truth of Kanjar Ro revealed, the citizens of Klaw turn against him. Superman tells the Chairman of Klaw, "A Government must make difficult decisions in times of conflict... but it must never forget that its people bear the weight of its choices. We do not have to become monsters to defeat monsters... not even in war" (Kelly, Mahnke 2003, p.19). Again the element of Truth as a solution to the Bush Administration and in a direct contradiction of the Batman narratives, a rejection of the shifting of morality on torture to defeat terrorism comes through in the comic. The timing of the publishing of the story, February and March of 2003 in the weeks before the US lead invasion of Iraq of March 2003 helps lend context to its metaphors and meanings. The comparisons are intentionally complex. The Peacemaker and the Paciforce and their leader the Peacemaker are also villains of the piece with references to their weapons of mass destruction and the Peacemaker's military uniform and physical shape are references to Iraq and Saddam Hussein, one of the few exceptions to the depictions of America's opponents during this time. However, their motivation in invading Klaw is itself the same as American invasion of Iraq, a pre-emptive strike against threats to their way of life. Likewise Klaw itself can work as both a representative of Iraq in the similarity of its name and in Kanjar Ro as a representative of dictatorship. These complexities ensure that neither side is seen too closely associated with either America or Iraq in the conflict. What does make the message of the story clear is Kanjar Ro's fate after the expulsion of the Paciforce. While the comic predates the invasion of Iraq, by this time rumours of the use of torture by the United States in the conflict in Afghanistan and its attempt to avoid the Geneva Convention by labelling captured Afghans as enemy combatants rather than soldiers, was public knowledge in the United States. The *JLA* by showing the Klaw people the truth of Kanjar Ro's torture of Paciforce combatants brings into the narrative ideological element of America strongly associated with the character of Superman; the truth of the *Truth, Justice and American Way*. While these concepts are not the privileged nodal points of the American Dream of Security, they are within the field of American ideology and show some attempt to engage in a challenge to the hegemony of the Right within a limited ideological contest. History shows *JLA* #78 and #79 to be naive in that



Figure 5.4 JLA #79 (Kelly, Mahnke 2003, p.2)

when the truth of Abu Graib emerged a year later, the American people did not turn on their government as the people of Klad did.

The 2003 and 2004 Batman and Captain America narratives do not utilise Bin Laden like supervillains, instead they were more likely to present US political villains. This was not what Kading predicted would happen within the medium of superhero comics during the War on Terror. Instead superhero comics are more able to overtly explain the perspective of the crisis in American democracy than the fight of the US/American/Civilisation/Good versus OTHER/Anit-American/Terrorist/Evil. The American political class has from time to time been a site for villains in the long history of superhero comics. One of the earlier academic research articles on the ability of comics to explore societal issues was McDonald and McDonald's (1976) observations mentioned in Chapter 1, about the representation of President Nixon within the Captain America narrative during Watergate.

Similarly, the superhero comics on 2003-2004 that express positions in opposition to the Bush Administration and the hegemony of the Right attempt to do so from a limited ideological position. While they do not engage in a counter articulation of the privileged nodal point of Security as Success, they do attempt to articulate other ideological points in opposition; Justice and Truth for example. These are hopes for these articulations. Again like the Captain America comic of 2002 they call for the reader to see the truth and suggest that the reader will act and solve the crisis of the Bush Administration. The narratives suggest that in the end American civil society will right the wrongs of the hegemony of the Right.

The other emerging theme is explanations of the Bush Administration's Wars in the Middle East. The Invader's storyline suggests that it is the corporate interests of the ruling class that are leading America astray which makes it slightly different from the other narratives in this explanation and that it does not end with the crisis solved by the American people but suggests the issue is ongoing.

Conclusion

The Captain America and Batman narratives of 2003 and 2004 show more diversity and complexity in regard to responses to the hegemony of the Right than the comics of 2001 and 2002. Whereas *Captain America vol.4 #1-6* were the only comics that offered a limited critique of the American Dream of Security in 2002, this timeframe offers multiple critiques. However, in examining the ideological content of these comics that offer critiques, they do not engage with either of the privileged nodal points at the heart of the hegemonic ideology; Security as Success or the militaristic Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror. Instead they engage in articulations of ideological points like Truth and Justice, which while part of the American culture, are not strong enough to truly challenge the hegemony of Right.

On the other hand there is a strong ideological recognition within many of the comics that the Hard Work of fighting Terror is necessary. Even in the critiquing of the demonising of Muslims as terrorist within the Captain America narrative, the comic acknowledges that there are real terrorists. The articulation of Security as Success wanes within the superhero comics of Batman and Captain America, but is replaced by a focus on Hard Work that is within the articulation of the American Dream of Security.

The most striking elements of the ideological content of the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America are counter posed. The first which is only within the Batman narrative is an articulation that supports the use of torture as part of the Hard Work of the American Dream of security. It is metaphoric, but shows that Batman as a natural personification of Security as Success and Justice will use torture to achieve Success. The nationalistic Captain America narrative does not share this articulation.

The other element is shared in both narratives and is the absence of the Islamic terrorist as the Supervillain Other as articulated in the American Dream of Security. While the Bush Administration and the Right in general worked to personify Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as real life villains, these articulations of the Other are absent from the comics. In fact, it seems that the publishing companies specifically attempted to avoid these depictions. This is in contrast to the history of superhero comics as war time propaganda.

Superhero comics were a site for both the American Dream of Security and for emerging challenges to it. The dominant version of delayed future success and the immediate violent and morally questionable militaristic Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror sat alongside the emerging critiques of those positions. While these emerging critiques had not condensed in the comics into a coherent and consistent critique, their existence suggested a more hotly contested battle for hegemony in the years to come. As Bush's popularity began to wane, so did the Bush's administrations ability to dominate the ideology of the American Dream. Change was coming to America and superhero comics would prove to be a site for that battle as they had been for the domination of Bush's American Dream up to the beginning of his second term in January 2005.

Chapter 6: 2005 -2006: Decline and Resistance

The years 2005 and 2006 are crucial turning points in the narrative of American hegemony. The Bush Administration was able to secure a second term in the November 2004 Presidential elections; however, by the end of the timeframe of this chapter in January 2007 President Bush's approval rating of had dropped to only 37%. Throughout the next two years of the final term of the Bush Administration, Bush's approval would never best 37% (Gallup 2014). At the same time as President Bush became increasingly unpopular, so did the War in Iraq. According to the Pew Research Center in September 2004, 53% of Americans surveyed thought the war in Iraq was going very or fairly well and 53% also thought that military intervention in Iraq was the right thing for America to do (Pew Research Center 2004).

From early 2005 there was a clear shift in public opinion against the War in Iraq. The Pew Research Center's report on January 2005 showed that Americans had started to change their views and more Americans were starting to see military intervention in Iraq as a mistake (Pew Research Center 2005). The Pew Research Center reported that perceptions on the War had changed in the beginning of 2006 with an increase in Americans seeing the conflict as civil war; from 30% in December 2005 to 42% in March 2006 (Pew Research Center 2006a). By October 2006 the majority of Americans surveyed had turned against the War with 58% stating that the war was going not too well or not at all well (Pew Research Center 2006b). Through the rest of the Bush Administration's second term, the American public saw the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq as wrong (Pew Research Center 2008).

Pollster John Zogby's (2008) analysis of American society supports the data from the Pew Research Centre that the Iraq War was a major factor in the loss of support of the Bush Administration. Zogby makes the point that the Iraq war that was the not the only factor in the swing against the Right in American society, instead Zogby points to the effect the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina had on the Bush

Administration. Zogby believes that 'historians will ultimately treat Hurricane Katrina as a more significant moment in American history than 9/11' (Zogby 2008, p.59).

Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans and the surrounding areas on the 29th August 2005, causing at least 1833 deaths, the displacement of over a million people and over \$80 billion in property damage making it one of the biggest disasters in American history (Powell 2007).

The Bush Administration was widely blamed for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) not doing enough to protect people from the hurricane or to help them in the wake of the disaster. In addition the Government was seen to be manipulating and controlling the information that was made available about the realities of the disaster (Zarek 2005) and awarding million dollar contracts in cleanup and rebuilding to politically connected corporations (Powell 2007). The failure of FEMA in dealing with Hurricane Katrina was broadcast across the American media, with the media themselves actively attributing blame to the Bush Administration. As Zogby and Nicholls and Pichu note, it was Bush's statement that FEMA Director Micheal Brown was doing a 'Heck of a job' when the outcomes of the failure were clearly being seen by the American people (Zogby 2007 p 157, Nicholls Pichu 2012 p.352). The images in the wake of the hurricane of what appeared to be a third world country in the midst of disaster, not the United States were unimaginable to many Americans. For many Americans this systematic failure was compounded by the fact that after 9/11 America should have been prepared for this sort of disaster (Simmons 2009, p.478).

Zogby states that Hurricane Katrina taught the American people that their Government could not protect them from natural disaster and it would not be able to succour them when disaster hit (Zogby 2007, p58). In the months after Hurricane Katrina, President Bush's disapproval rating hit 60% for the first time in his Presidency (Gallup 2014). Zogby's point about the American people no longer believing that the American Government could protect them and Simmons point that in a post 9/11 world Americans were shocked that the Government failed in New Orleans touches on the nodal point of Security as Success in the American Dream of Security. The ideology that had justified the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Hard Work

which had not just cost American lives and resources, but also a moral cost in the support of torture and abuse of prisoners and unlawful combatants; this ideology was proven false by the failure of FEMA in New Orleans. The ideology had promised that American would achieve Security as Success if the American society engaged in the Hard Work of the military action of the War on Terror and the Hard Work of believing in the American Dream of Security. American Society had engaged in both tasks, but Hurricane Katrina had shown them that the hegemony of the Right had not made them safe. Once Hurricane Katrina showed that Security had failed, the ideology of the American Dream of Security was damaged and lost its hegemonic position. While the crisis on 9/11 had enabled the Right to assemble hegemony in American society, the articulations of Hurricane Katrina struck a blow to that hegemony and to the project that the Bush Administration and the Right had born from that hegemony, the War in Iraq.

The Pew Center's data shows that while public opinion had been moving against Iraq, it is only after Katrina in late 2005 and early 2006 that the majority of Americans turned against the War ideologically. At this time the state of the War in Iraq had actually begun to improve, but Americans now saw the decision to go to War, a decision made by the Bush Administration, as a mistake. The hegemony of the ideology of the American Dream of Security had lost its power and the project of the War in Iraq therefore lost its support. Whereas the Bush administration had been well positioned directly after 9/11 to assume hegemony through the authoritative position of the President, post Hurricane Katrina there was no group in the automatic hegemonic position, the Bush administration had ruined their chances of assuming the hegemony in this case by their failure. The Bush Administration would continue to wield political power from the office of the Presidency, but the hegemony of the Right was gone. The bloc of the hegemony of the Right became fragmented. The media which had been part of the hegemony of the Right after 9/11 (Bergman 2007) were a major factor in the articulations against the Bush Administration in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (Atkeson, Maestas 2012p.65-66). Even some members of the political class that identified with the Right left the bloc after Hurricane Katrina and voiced opposition to the War in Iraq (Zogby 2008, p.35). At the end of 2006 the contest for hegemony was more open in American than it had been since the 11th September 2001.

The narrative of hegemony of 2005 and 2006 offers interesting contrasts within the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America. Hurricane Katrina at the end of August 2005 splits the time period into two very different moments. Firstly Pre-Hurricane Katrina when the hegemony of the Right was still functional, although waning. Secondly, Post-Hurricane Katrina, when the field of articulation and hegemony is more open in American society. Comics Pre-Hurricane Katrina can still be evaluated on the ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest the American Dream of Security. Comics published Post-Hurricane Katrina, need to be approached with the knowledge that this ideology was not in the same hegemony position. As well as looking for responses to the ideology of the American Dream of Security, the analysis needs to consider the emerging articulation of American ideology that have the potential to fill the sort of vacuum of hegemony, the more open field of articulation. In both cases the ideological components of the American Dream are still used to position the ideological content of the comic books.

Equality: differences in ethnicity and gender

As Susan Fauldi's (2008) research shows after 9/11 there was a societal shift against issues of equality in American society led by Right Wing intellectuals as part of the American Dream of Security. As was covered in Chapter 4, Bush's speech to the joint session of congress on the 20th September 2001 only gave the roles of wife and mother to women while men were presented in multiple heroic roles. In the American Dream of Security and the step back it represented for gender roles, women were now victims to be protected by men whose collective masculinity had been threatened by the 9/11 attacks. The Batman and Captain America narratives had been caught in the misogynistic nature of this heroic masculinity after 9/11 with a reduction in the focus on women within the Batman comics and the reduction of the role of female superheroes in the Avengers, both of which were covered in Chapter 4.

Fauldi also noted that issues of ethnic equality also became less important to American society at the same time. The issues of equal access to the American Dream which had defined the civil rights and feminist movements of the 20th Century no longer held as important a position as an ideological component of the

American Dream of Security as it had in articulations of the American Dreams of the past. Within the Batman and Captain America narrative in the years after 9/11 there had been movement on issues of ethnicity. In Marvel Comics African American superheroes increased their profile. In the Avengers comics of this time Luke Cage, the African American superhero joined the Avengers in the restarted *New Avengers #1* (Bendis, Finch 2005) published in December 2004, assuming a leadership role within the primer team. The African American Falcon took on a significant role in both the Avengers and Captain America storylines including sharing a new short running comic title with Captain America, *Captain America and the Falcon* in 2004 and 2005. On the DC side African American characters also took on important roles. After his death, Gotham African American police detective Lucius Crispin took on the role of the superhero the Spectre and in the JLA, African American Green Lantern John Stewart returned to a regular role in 2003 after being little used in the DC universe since the early 1990s. DC Comics also included two Native American superheroes in the JLA in 2003. As part of the 2006 *Infinite Crisis* (Johns, Jimenez 2005) series DC Comics replaced the Blue Beetle, Ted Kord, a white male bourgeois business man with a Latin American teenager named Jamie Reyes.

While the issue of ethnic diversity and equality had come back somewhat from the negative articulation of the American Dream of Security since 9/11, the role of women in the superhero comics of Batman and Captain America did not. A comparison of the female characters of the Avengers 2001 cast and their position in 2005 and 2006 shows both a continuation of Faludi's backlash against women. In Chapter 4, the devolution of Avengers leaders the Wasp and the Scarlet Witch were detailed after 9/11, with the Wasp failing in her leadership role and moving aside for the male superheroes and the Scarlet Witch choosing a nurturing and supporting role of caring for the wounded and deferring to the less powerful male heroes who took on the actual fight against Kang. Both characters continue to be articulated in a negative way in the narrative of this time.

In the years after 9/11 the Wasp lost all positions of leadership and served as little more than a love interest for her ex-partner Henry Pym, missing the pivotal 'Avenger Dissembled' storyline which ends the series in issue #503 in November of 2004. Unlike Captain America, the Wasp is not included in the new incarnation of the Avengers in *New Avengers #1* published in December 2004 and is not an active

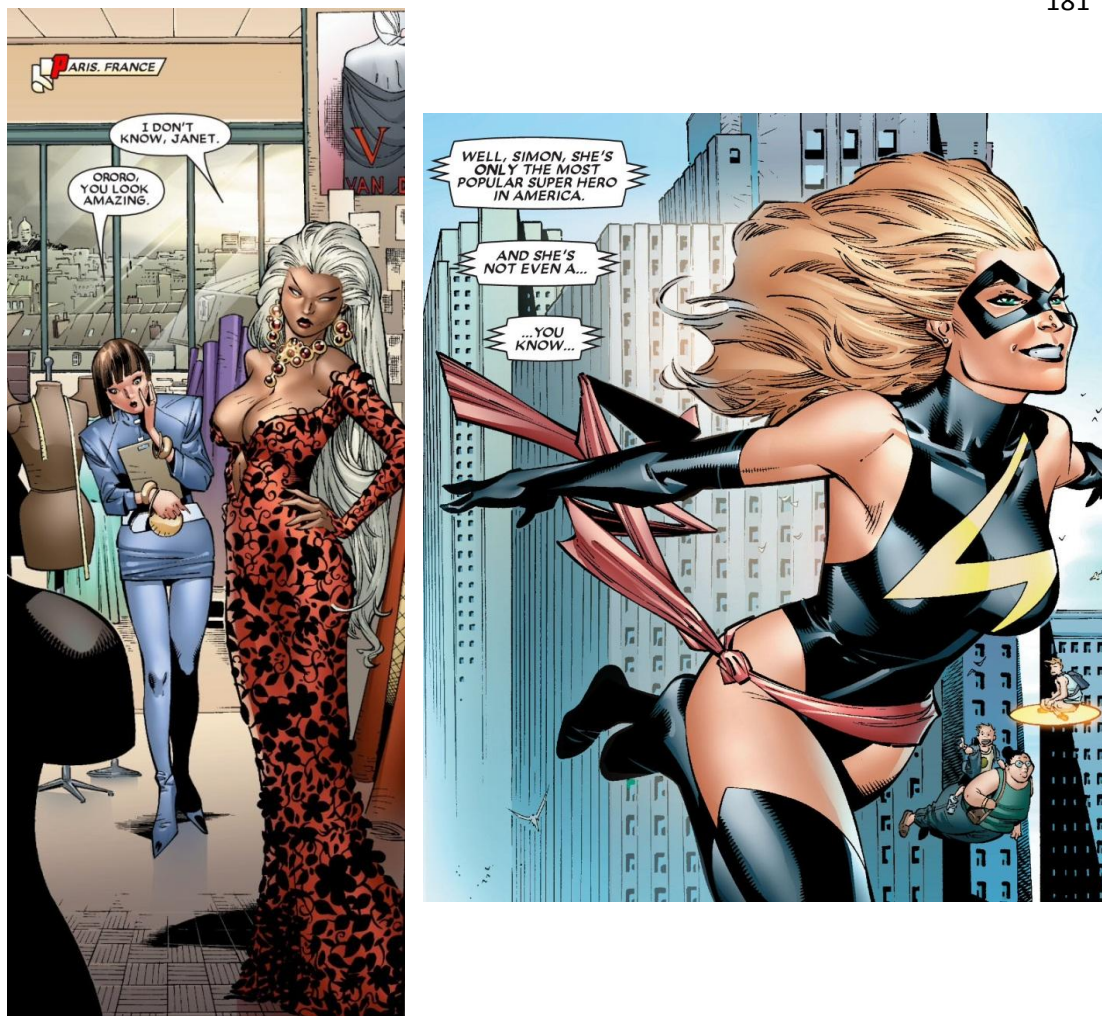


Figure 6.1 *House of M* #2. The Wasp's American Dream is to be a fashion designer (Bendis, Coipel 2005, p25.), while Ms Marvel's is to be the world's greatest superhero (Bendis, Coipel 2005, p.8)

member of the narrative again until the character plays a cameo role in the *House of M* series of 2005 (Bendis, Coipel 2005). In *House of M*, many of the Marvel superheroes achieve success as they personally defined it as reality was altered. While other superheroes imagined saving the world, the Wasp's dream role is to be a non-superhero fashion designer to the other high profile superheroes as shown in figure 6.1.

The Scarlet Witch's story arc echoes the Wasp in that she gives up her role as an Avenger, but also starts to lose her grip on reality as she cannot control her reality altering power. She turns out to be the cause of the violent attack that ends the Avengers comic in 2004, killing four Avengers, including her former husband. At the beginning of *House of M* #1, (Bendis, Coipel 2005) the Avengers and the X-men

debate if she should be executed for the safety of all, as she seems to have descended to insanity. In contrast at the same time, the New Avengers actively recruit and assist a male superhero suffering from similar mental health issues in the character of the Sentry. The Sentry like the Scarlet Witch is extremely powerful, however whenever he uses his powers he unconsciously becomes a supervillain called the Void that seeks to destroy the world. In *New Avengers #7-10* (Bendis, McNiven 2005) (July-September 2005), the New Avengers including Captain America help the Sentry to deal with his mental condition and provide him with ongoing support for what seems like a long term challenge to return to normal mental health on the basis of the value of his enormous power. Not only does the Scarlet Witch's character lose her position as a superhero like the Wasp, but her mental instability becomes a danger to her former friends, while a new hero in an almost identical position with the exception of his gender is supported and brought into the superhuman community. The narrative of the Wasp reproduces the restricted gender roles of the American Dream of Security. The narrative of the Scarlet Witch comments on the primacy of men in American society at the time, in the unequal treatment that the Scarlet Witch receives in relation to the comparable Sentry. The Scarlet Witch narrative also speaks to unacceptability of female power at this time.

DC has an advantage in the portrayal of strong women in the character of Wonder Woman. Wonder woman is one of the few female superheroes who have managed to break into the American mainstream without the need of being a member of the supporting cast of a predominately male super team, but as their own character, including the Wonder Woman live action series of the 1970s. Gloria Steinem, famous feminist and academic praised Wonder Woman and her female supporting class as a strong role models for young women in the 1970s (Wright 2001, p.250). Wonder Woman with Batman and Superman shares a position of leadership in the DC Comics superhero community. In the *Infinite Crisis* (Johns, Jimenez 2005) series of 2006, Wonder Woman is ostracised from her fellow leaders when she kills supervillain Maxwell Lord to save Batman from a mind controlled Superman, with the killing unknowingly broadcast to the world. While there is commentary within the comic about the taboo of killing within superhero morality the true issue is the lack of emotion that Wonder Woman's actions seem to portray, a cold heartedness which does not sit with the unspoken role of women as the emotional gender.

Wonder Women's crime is not the murder of Lord, but the fact that she does not react emotionally to it. The narrative shows again uncomfortability with female power in the American Dream of Security, this time with Wonder Woman caught between two restrictive roles that emerge for women in the narratives of Captain America and Batman, the victim and the military woman.

Both the Captain America narrative and the Batman narrative present woman, specifically teenage white women as the victims of explicit torture, that in both cases caused strong negative reaction from readers of the comic (Dittmer 2013 p.34, Johnson 2011). In the Batman crossover series War Games of 2004-2005, the supervillian Black Mask tortures (see figure 6.2) and kills the teenager superhero Spoiler/Stephanie Brown over a series of issues. In *Captain America vol.5 #15* (Brubaker, Perkins 2006) published February 2006, the villain Cross Bones after abducting the Red Skulls teenage daughter Syn, from a SHIELD reduction facility conducts a brutal torture of her that fills the whole issue. Dittmer makes the point that Crossbones misogynistic violence against Syn is meant to reinforce the villainy of Crossbones and by contrast the heroiness of Captain America, as a nationalist hero around the protection of female bodies (Dittmer 2013, p35). Dittmer's point can equally be applied to Black Mask and Batman as Spoiler the victim of Black Mask, like Syn is a teenage girl tortured by a male villain. The articulation of women as victims which is strongly articulated in Bush's speech of the 20th September 2001 is still expressed within the comic.

An interesting element that Dittmer and Johnson point out is that this articulation and especially the misogynistic and graphic nature of the torture became an issue of debate within the comic book community of both creators and readers, suggesting that the articulation of women in the reduced role of victims was met with resistance and that the comic might have been expressing an articulation of a nodal point that was under stress within American society. Johnson shows that the decision to have Spoiler killed after she had become for a short time the first female Robin was not made by the writers of the comics of War Games themselves but through a writers meeting that involved executives from Time Warner as well as executive editors of DC comics (Johnson 2011). It is worth noting that the vast majority of the victims of Hurricane Katrina were not white teenage women, but were the elderly, African Americans or both (Simmons 2009, p.478).



Figure 6.2 *Robin* #130 (Willingham, Proctor 2004, p.30)

In contrast to women as victims, the Captain America narrative detailed a different articulation of women post 9/11, the Military woman. Ms Marvel, the other female leader of the Avengers of 2001, does not share the reduced role of the Scarlet Witch and the Wasp post 9/11, but actually increases in exposure and roles within the Marvel comic books.

Whereas the roles of Wasp and Scarlet Witch were receding during the Kang story line after 9/11, Ms Marvel became part of the response to 9/11 when she broke the superhero taboo of killing when she stabbed the Master to death in *Avengers #48* (Busiek, Dwyer) published in November 2001 (See Chapter 4). In *Avengers #55* (Busiek, Zircher 2002), rather than face the disapproval of her fellow superheroes as Wonder Woman would do four years later, the Avengers ruled that Ms Marvel was justified in killing the Master because the Avengers were in a state of war and referencing Ms Marvel's Military background, that she had acted as a proper soldier. Ms Marvel's articulation as a member of the military and its connection to Security as Success enables the character to avoid the fate of the Wasp and Scarlet Witch and articulates a new role for women in the American Dream of Security, the Military woman. Whereas the Wasp's definition of personal success is to be a fashion designer in *House of M* series, Ms Marvel's American Dream is to be the top superhero in American Society as shown in figure 6.1. Ms Marvel in the New Avengers series of 2005 series is one of only two women to join the team, the only other is Jessica Drew/Spiderwoman, like Ms Marvel, a Military woman who is an agent of SHIELD.

While the military woman offers a positive role for women in post 9/11 society, it is very specific and narrow. This role has the potential to quickly revert back to the articulation of female victim. Private Jessica Lynch is an example of this case. Captured by Iraqi forces in March 2003, Lynch was then very publicly liberated by US military Special Forces on the 1st April 2003 (Sheppard 2003). Lynch was at times articulated as a Rambo styled warrior woman and then at other times as a female victim of the Iraqi military. An allegation that she was raped while unconscious was included in her own biography released later in 2003 (Bragg 2004). The articulation of military woman can quickly revert to woman as victim as Lynch's story shows.

Zogby's analysis of women and the American Dream during this time period speaks to the sort of narrow roles that are shown in Faludi's work and articulated in the superhero comics. Since 1998 Zogby has been surveying the American people on a question of life goals of the American Dream broken up into four answers, material success, non-material success (spiritual fulfilment), material success deferred to their children, and lastly an inability to achieve the American dream regardless of how success is defined. The last two responses, the deferred and unachievable dreams have ranged collectively from 15% to 21% of responders since 1998. In 2007 it was women who were more likely to see the American Dream as unachievable, one in seven women compared to one in eleven males. In 2004 it had only been only one in fourteen women that saw the American Dream as unachievable (Zogby, 2008, p. 122-123). The reduction in the roles of women in the American Dream of Security correlated with women's belief in achieving success within the American Dream.

While the American Dream of Security and the Right loses its hegemonic position after Hurricane Katrina, the articulation of the limited roles of women and women as victims in the superhero narratives continues beyond this time period. While Dittmer and Johnson noted tensions within the comic book creators and readers over the depiction of women, the articulation which was grew from 9/11 was solidified within the comics. Issues of ethnic Equality returned to somewhat normal levels, but Equality in regards to women did not. While the hegemonic ideology is a formation of different ideological components; different nodal points, the articulation of those nodal points can out live the ideology itself. In this case within the superhero narratives the marginalisation of women outlives the ideology of the American Dream of Security that established it.

Hard Work, resistance to torture and violence

The previous chapter showed that within the Batman narrative torture had been shown in a supportive way with positive examples that rooted the narrative in support for torture as part of the Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror. This was in some way reflective of the narrative of the comics focusing more on the Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror rather than the nodal point of Security as Success which had some narrative problems. As already mentioned in this chapter, the

Batman and Captain America narratives returned to the issue of torture in 2005 and 2006 with depiction of the torture of teenage women in both narratives. This time however, for the most part torture was only the tool of the supervillain, not the superhero. There is still an exception in this period. Torture is presented as a legitimate tool in the 4 issue *War Crimes* series in the Batman narrative of August and September of 2005. *War Crimes* shows that the issue of torture was still contested in both the comics and in American society, however within the comics at least most articulations on torture opposed it as a legitimate part of the militaristic Hard Work of the War on Terror.

Hand in hand with the rejection of torture as a legitimate weapon of the Superhero and therefore as legitimate tool of America as well, the comics also engaged with a discussion about the limits of violence that America should respect. In contrast to Ms Marvel's killing of the Master in 2001, the Captain America comic of 2005 makes it clear that assassination of villains is not supported by either SHIELD or Captain America himself. In *Captain America vol.5 #1* (Brubaker, Epting 2005), published November 2004, the Red Skull is assassinated moments before he can unleash coordinated terrorist bombing across American and Western Europe. In issue #2 (Brubaker, Epting 2005) of January 2005, Captain America is shocked to discover that SHIELD Commander Nick Fury, suspects him of being the assassin. It is not Captain America who speaks in his own defence, but SHIELD Agent and love interest Sharon Carter who had been tasked with investigating Captain America, "I know, I told him there was no way. No matter what's going on inside your head right now, you are not an assassin and you never would be."

The Batman narrative contrasts Batman's methods with the methods of torture and murder of the villainous Black Mask, but also in the tactics of one time Robin Jason Todd, who is now The Red Hood. Todd was famously killed off in *Batman* #428 (Starlin, Aparo 1988) in 1988 by the Joker after fans were given the choice to have him live or die via dialling a phone number, but was resurrected post 2001. From *Batman* #635 (Winick, Mahnke 2005) of December 2004 and concluding in #650 February 2006 (Winick, Battle 2006), which means it is mostly published before Hurricane Katrina, both Batman and the Red Hood battle the Black Mask and crime in Gotham city, but they represent two distinct approaches for American society. Whereas Batman refuses to kill or torture his enemies and refuses to negotiate with

them, the Red Hood is prepared to cross all these lines and more in his battle. Todd takes over some of the mob territory of the Black Mask. He is prepared to tolerate drug dealers if they stick to his rules of not selling drugs to children. While his main goal is the destruction of Black Mask's criminal empire, Todd is prepared to create his own empire. The Black Mask at times cannot tell if Todd is a hero or a fellow gang lord and tries to negotiate with Todd. Todd is prepared to torture and kill in his pursuit of the Black Mask and for his own personal desires, including torturing and attempting to kill the Joker for 'killing' him in *Batman #428*. The final conflict between Todd and Batman is over the fate of the Joker. Todd demands to know why Batman did not revenge Todd's death at the hands of the Joker and kill the Joker, why was the Joker's right to life more important than revenging his death? For Todd, the position is that the innocence and crime done to the victims outweighs and negates any rights that the villains have.

Batman's explanation (see figure 6.3) to Todd fundamentally changes the focus of the question of American society post 9/11. For Batman it is not a question about deciding the rights of the villain versus the rights of the victim. Instead, it is an ethical and moral question but with a practical concern. If Batman crosses the line and kills the Joker, he fears that he will not be able to come back from that action. If Batman righteously kills the Joker, he may not be able to stop killing. The comic articulates that an idea that it may be moral right to kill your enemy, but in doing so you may do irreparable damage to yourself. In a metaphoric way, the comic suggest that the motivations of revenge, rather than security in regard to the War on Terror are legitimate. But if the militaristic Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror breaches a moral level of acceptable violence then American society may be irreparably damaged. In this way these Batman comics attempted to engage in an ideological contest around the privileged nodal points of Success and Hard Work, not attempting to challenge their hegemonic articulation directly, but to articulate them in a different way.

In the War Games crossover series in the Batman narrative, previously mentioned in the torture of the teenage female superhero spoiler, idea of militaristic Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror was also the subject of the narrative. Whereas the Todd storyline focused on internal damage to America morality and psyche personified in



Figure 6.3 *Batman* #650 (Winick, Battle 2006, p30.)

Batman, War Games presented a more practical metaphor; the damage that the Iraq War was doing to America internationally.

War Games, published in 2004 and 2005 crossed over into other Batman related titles such as *Robin* and *Batgirl*. It began with the teenage Spoiler, trying to prove her worth to Batman after she was sacked by Batman after she replaced Robin as his sidekick. She secretly initiates Batman's contingency plan to unite all of the organised crime gangs in Gotham under the secret leadership of Batman. Without the full understanding of the contingency plan, her attempt at redemption fails and results in gang war on the street of Gotham. In fighting to stop the gang war, Batman and his allies are caught in a reactionary battle against the different ethnically based gangs. Batman realised the nature of the contingency plan too late and is unable to solve the crisis. At the conclusion of the series organised crime in Gotham has become a more serious threat to the city. The gangs of Gotham are now united under the ruthless and sadistic Black Mask. Batman is now alienated from his superhero allies and the Gotham Police force. The media and the people of Gotham City no longer support Batman. Personally Batman himself has to deal with the guilt of the death of Spoiler as well as the other people who died during the War Games series.

War Games present a metaphor for an Iraq War that was only beginning to be seen by many Americans as a civil war between different factions in Iraq (Pew Research Center 2006a) The titles of the comics reinforce the link to the War in Iraq with example such as "Behind Enemy lines", "Rules of engagement", "Collateral Damage", "Good intentions", "the road to hell", "Casualty of war", "Multiple fronts", and the 9/11 echoing "Ground Zero". Metaphorically, just as America had to manage the different political and ethnic factions in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam, so does Batman have to manage the different ethnic gangs who are vying to fill the power vacuum in Gotham. This is a task that Batman proves unable to complete and in the end it is his hubris which results in the failure of his plan and the rise of the Black Mask as the new head of Gotham.

Characters within the narrative provide representations of different groups around the War in Iraq. The Penguin represents the military industrial complex that seeks to profit from the war. While the other underworld figures are fighting amongst themselves, the Penguin acts as an arms dealer, selling weapons and super powered

henchmen to the highest bidder, “War is business and Business is good!” (*Batman Legends of the Dark Knight* #182, Lieberman, Walker 2004, p.4). Penguin’s attempts to profit from the war are only stopped by Batman who forces the Penguin to leave town and abandon his business. Within Batman’s allies are metaphors for American allies in the coalition of the willing. While the usual former sidekicks and protégées make up the bulk of Batman’s allies, he is in such a desperate situation that he is prepared to accept other allies. One ally, the female Latin American superhero Tarantula had killed a supervillain and had been ostracised by the other superheroes. Batman is prepared to accept her support even though she is not far removed from the gang bosses that he is fighting. The voice of dissent to American policy in Iraq and Batman’s policy in Gotham comes from the pacifist Doctor Leslie who runs a health clinic in Gotham. Leslie speaks out against Batman violence as only continuing the cycle of violence in *Catwoman* #34 (Brubaker, Gulacy 2004) and in *Robin* #130 (Willingham, Proctor 2004). The narrative presents a counter point to Batman’s violence as the solution to the gang war and shows Robin’s father as a positive example. Robin’s father volunteers to assist Leslie in the health clinic with the injured from the war.

War Games presents a metaphoric critique of the War in Iraq that goes beyond attempting to provide entertainment and escapism and tries to articulate a political message. Its opposition to the War in Iraq is not so much ideological, but more practically oriented. The ideological points do engage with the nodal points of the American Dream of Success, but in a very practical way. The comic suggests that the militaristic Hard Work of fighting the War on Terror will not lead to Security as Success, but to failure and a more dangerous world. As Johnson (2011) has mentioned, the writing of the *War Games* series, was a collective process that involved not just the writers, but executives from Time Warner as well as executive editors of DC Comics. The clear metaphoric commentary of *War Games* that is expressed within all 8 individual comic titles suggests that this is a form of collective intellectual leadership within the comic book industry. This is more than the work of one writer, but is a work that had heavy involvement from the Executives of not just DC Comics, but Time Warner as well.

The idea of DC Comics as an organisation taking a political position against the War in Iraq in 2005 is undermined by the sequel to *War Games*, the much smaller 4 issue

War Crimes published in August and September of 2005 in *Batman* #643-644 (Willingham, Camuncoli 2005) and *Detective Comics* #809-810 (Gabrych, Woods 2005). The *War Crimes* series presents a representation of Batman that again supports torture, amongst other questionable tactics such as tampering with evidence, and bribing journalists to give up sources, as legitimate tactics. This is a very different Batman from *War Games*, a Batman that is prepared to undermine journalistic freedom, prepared to break the law and is prepared to torture. This is the return of the militant Batman of the American Dream of Security.

In the original *War Games* the journalist Arturo Rodriguez starts as a great admirer of Batman, but turns against him after he sees that Batman contributes to the death and destruction in Gotham. In *War Crimes*, Arturo is no longer an honest journalist, but is now a villain himself working with Black Mask to use the media and his own TV show to frame Batman by trying to kill Stephanie Brown's grieving mother. From a voice of independent dissent against Batman/America in Gotham, Arturo becomes the representation of a media manipulating truth to smear Batman/America for its own financial gain. Leslie, the doctor at the health clinic who has the moral centre of *War Games* is undermined as well. The major twist in *War Crimes* is not that Black Mask killed Stephanie Brown, who tragically dies at Leslie's clinic with Batman at her bedside, but it was Leslie who killed her, denying her medical care in hope that her death would steer Batman away from his violent mission. Stephanie's death is no longer Batman's fault, but is the result of the crimes of a pacifist who opposes the war in Gotham and Iraq.

While *War Crimes* is the exception in regard to ideological content of superhero narratives within the sample of this chapter, its existence poses some questions. It firstly suggests that within the superhero comic book industry there was space for diverse ideological commentary in 2005 and 2006. Secondly, and more quite interestingly it suggests that comic book publishers were inconsistent with the political stances in their products. This could of course be because of the diversity of political of comic book creators itself, it could be accidental or it might be intentional. As chapter 1 showed with the Captain America Tea Party scandal, publishers are keen to use political commentary within comic books, but attempt to deny the reality of this commentary to keep the image of an apolitical form of entertainment. In this way *War Crimes* could represent the 'balancing' of the anti-

war message of War Games. Whatever the reason, this does illustrate that within the superhero narratives of this sample of 2005 and 2006 multiple articulations of hegemony were possible.

Security versus Freedom: an articulation of resistance and challenge

In the Captain America narrative of 2006 after Hurricane Katrina, the nodal point of Success as Security is directly challenged and positioned into opposition with another ideological component of the American Dream, Freedom. The narrative is played out in the Captain America comic and the limited series *Civil War* which runs from May 2006 to February 2007 with associated cross over issues throughout Marvel's monthly comics. *Civil War* follows on from the previous event titles, *Secret War* (Bendis, Dell'Otto 2004/2005) and *House of M* (Bendis, Coipel 2005) to create a meta-narrative that runs throughout many of the Marvel comics including Captain America and beyond the time frame of this study into 2009 and 2010. The *Civil War* section of the meta-narrative ends with the assassination of Captain America in *Captain America vol.5 #25* (Brubaker, Epting, 2007) published in March 2007.

Civil War begins with a 9/11esque crisis when a young superhero team, the New Warriors ambush supervillians while filming a reality television show which results in the villain Nitro, a human bomb exploding and killing over 600 innocent people in the suburb of Stamford. From this a political movement is created in American society that sees superheroes as dangerous. In response the President proposes legislation that superheroes must register with the Government. The superhero community divides on this issue with some being pro registration and others opposing it. Those who oppose it become outlaws as the registration act is passed and all superheroes are legally obliged to reveal their identity to the Government and later in the narrative agree to be part of the new superhero teams set up in each state by the Government. From the outset, Captain American opposes this idea, on the basis of principle rather than practicality as he is already registered with SHIELD and the US Government. He states that superheroes need to stay above politics and that registration will mean that it will be Washington telling them who the supervillians are. On the opposite side is Iron Man who assumes leadership of the pro-

registration forces. Ironman is motivated by the political will of the American people personified in the relatives of the victims of the Stanford disaster.

In *Captain America vol.5 #22* (Brubaker, Epting, 2006), the ideological nodal points of Security and Success are articulated in a way that critiques and challenges the American Dream of Security. Captain America's lover Sharon Carter/Agent 13 tries to convince him to give up his opposition to superhero registration in a conversation about the ideological basis of American society.

Sharon: It's against the law and the rule of law is what this country is based on

Captain America: No... it was founded on breaking the law. Because the law was wrong.

Sharon: That's semantics Steve, you know what I mean...

Captain America: It's not semantics, Sharon. It's the heart of the issue. The registration act is another step towards government control. And while I love my country, I don't trust many politicians. Not when they are having their strings pulled by corporate donors. And not when they are willing to trade freedom for security.

Sharon: Now you're going to quote Benjamin Franklin at me? Give me a break.

Captain America: How about Thomas Paine? "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must undergo the fatigue of supporting it." (*Captain America vol.5 #22* Brubaker, Epting, 2006 pp.18-19)

The narrative attempts to find authority for its articulation of the incompatibility of Freedom and Security as Success in the American Dream through appeals to the ideas of the founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. The articulation continues in the Civil War series in which the pro-registration forces are forced to act further and further from a position of morality. The ideas of the pro-registration side alter from just superheroes registering their real identities with the Government. Superheroes are now put into Government sanctioned and run teams, one for each American state and are trained by other superheroes in their abilities. Those superheroes who oppose the registration are hunted down by pro-registration superheroes, military personal called cape-killers and supervillians who have been injected with nanotechnology that can be used to punish them and are utilised as a

resource by the pro-registration forces. Once captured anti-registration superheroes are placed in a special prison in the negative zone. In issue #4 it is revealed that the pro-registration side have cloned missing superhero Thor and insert him into a battle with the combined anti-registration forces in which he murders African American superhero Goliath. It is at this point that Spiderman regrets his support for registration in which he revealed his real identity on television and joins the rebels and Mister Fantastic's wife, the Invisible Woman also leaves calling the pro-registration side a fascist plan.

In the final battle between pro and anti-registration forces in *Civil War #7* (Millar, McNiven 2007), Captain America and Ironman engaged in combat and just as Captain America is about to win the battle he is tackled by a group of American emergency workers including police officers and firemen (see figure 6.4). It is at that point that Captain America realises that the American people of the Marvel comic want the Registration act, that they have made the choice for Security over Freedom. Captain America admits an ideological defeat and in tears agrees to be arrested. The following month in *Captain America #25*, the character of Captain America is assassinated while in hand cuffs on the steps of an America court house. *Civil War* ends with the superhero community still divided, the rebels now working in an underground and the pro-registration superheroes receiving the admiration and support of society. Ironman becomes the new head of SHIELD. On the last page, a mother of one of the Stanford victims who earlier in the series spat on him as he was at the memorial for the death tells him that he is a good man and he promises that he has even more plans for the future.

The *Civil War* series and the associated issues of Captain America contest the importance of the privileged nodal point of Security as Success by counter posing the importance of an articulation of Freedom. This is a direct contest of the American Dream of Security as a hegemonic ideology and the hegemony of the Right. However, the timeframe of the publishing of *Civil War* tempers this ideological challenge. Published in May 2006, 9 months after Hurricane Katrina, *Civil War* enters an ideological contest with the American Dream of Security after it had been discredited by the failure of the Bush Administration in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Rather than attempting to confront the American Dream of Security in a hegemonic contest, *Civil War* and the Captain America comics are attempting to put



Figure 6.4 *Civil War #7* (Millar, McNiven 2007, p.21)

the ideology and the hegemony of the Right into a historical contest. *Civil War* is an examination of why America chose Security over Freedom. In revisiting this recent history of American society the comic is caught in explaining the discredited former hegemonic ideology. This is itself an important part of the process of ideologically moving beyond the moment. At the time that it was published, American society was in a sort of hegemonic vacuum. The Bush Administration was still in a position of political power, but the political Right were no longer able to exert ideological power as they had between 11th September 2001 and 29th August 2005. In an attempt to move beyond this ideology and build a new national ideology *Civil War* takes on the task of explaining ideological what had happened between 2001 and 2005. This understanding is a necessary part of a broader social mission of building a new consensus. In essence *Civil War* ideological is part of the new intellectual effort to construct a new societal ideology after the failure of the hegemony of the Right. This is possible with the more open field of articulation and hegemony in 2006.

House of M and the emerging American Dream of the Secular Spiritualists

Marvel comics *House of M* (Bendis, Coipel 2005), an 8 issue event series published in June-November 2005, like *Civil War* engaged in an ideological contest with the American Dream of Security, but did so before Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina occurred half way through the *House of M* series. This timeframe and nature of the ideological contest within *House of M* places it in a unique context.

One of the main points of Zogby's analysis on public opinion of the American Dream is that while material success is acknowledged by many in society as the dominant definition of personal Success (Bergman 2007 p.284; Davis 2006, p.22), non-material Success still has a strong articulation amongst the American people. Zogby argues that this articulation of material success is emphasised by the political class in the quest for democratic power, but in reality there is a sizable proportion of Americans who define success in the American Dream as spiritual fulfilment (Zogby 2008).

Zogby's use of the term 'spiritual fulfilment' is misleading, as his data concludes that the American's who support this definition of the Dream are no more religious than

other groups of Americans and as such he refers to them as Secular Spiritualists. Part of the problem is the framing of the identity of non-material Success. It is defined in opposition to material Success which means it lacks descriptive elements. Many things can be non-material Success; family, education, happiness. Zogby in using the term Secular Spiritualists tries to overcome this descriptive issue.

Zogby data suggests that the category of non-material Success was at first an opposition to materialism. It included many different groups of Americans who were looking for non-materialist fulfilment of the American Dream, not explicitly spiritual fulfilment. Within this group are Americans whose economic expectations have been reduced by changes in the economy, forcing them to redefine the American Dream away from materialism, but also Americans who have achieved economic success and have found it unfulfilling. It also includes younger Americans who are more concerned with non-personal materialistic issues such as the environment and human rights in a global community (Zogby 2008, p.194).

Zogby's prediction is that these divergent groups and their different articulations of non-material Success will grow within American society. As a group they will come together in the future⁷ and exert an articulation of the American Dream as non-material Success that will become hegemonic. The trends that Zogby identifies to support this prediction are wide ranging, but within his work it is clear that post-Hurricane Katrina America represents an important shift in the movement to non-material Success as the dominant articulation of the American Dream.

This ties into the *House of M* series in that it was published at the time of Hurricane Katrina and it engages with the concept of Success within the American Dream. However, it does not directly challenge the concept of Security as Success. Instead *House of M* articulates the concept of non-material Success in opposition to material Success with no engagement with the concept of Security. In this way *House of M*, like *Civil War* is looking beyond the ideology of the American Dream of Security to the construction of a new consensus in American Society, but at a point in time before the American Dream of Security has been discredited by the failure of the Bush response to Hurricane Katrina.

⁷ Zogby as a pollster is interested in predicting trends. While he acknowledges that nothing is given in polling and events can affect the future unexpectedly, he indicates 2020 as a year in which non-material Success could be the dominant articulation of the American Dream (Zogby 2008, p.214).

The narrative of House of M involves the Scarlet Witch changing reality. In this new reality most of the superheroes achieve their own personal goals of Success. For most of the superheroes their American Dreams personified are either the suburban middle class American Dream of professional employment and comfort, or the Dream of celebrity fame and fortune. For example, X-men Cyclops and the White Queen becomes a middle class married couple in House of M, Cyclops a pilot and the White Queen a counsellor for troubled teens. Spiderman on the other hand has his life transformed and is a successful professional wrestler, movie star and popular celebrity. Some heroes find little change to their social position, for example Ironman's back story is changed but he remains a wealthy CEO in the House of M reality. Some of the X-men and younger New Avengers eventually learn of the change in reality and have to make a tough decision; do they give up their lives of personal and economic success and overturn the House of M reality? In issue #6 of September 2005 (Bendis, Coipel 2005), Spiderwoman Jessica Drew on the verge of the battle against Magneto the father of the Scarlet Witch, openly questions if they should try to change the world back. She makes the point that they deserve the success that they now have, invoking the element of Hard Work into their American Dream. While other heroes like Spiderman are clearly upset at having to give up their economic and personal success, the group commits to reversing the House of M reality and eventually succeeds.

Within the narrative Captain America cannot take part in the battle against the Scarlet Witch, but his tie-in story in *Captain America* #10 (Brubaker, Weeks 2005) (published September 2005) works to reinforce the non-materialist articulation of Success. In the House of M reality, Captain America is not frozen in arctic ice in the last days of World War II, but instead he succeeded in his mission and captured Hitler and brought him to justice. After the war, and with the President's blessing for some well deserved happiness, Captain America married his War love Peggy Carter. Steve Rogers gave up the Captain America identity when he refused to go along with the McCarthy hearings which are re-imagined as being about Mutant and not Communist activities. He later became an astronaut and became the first person to walk on the moon. In his later years he lost relevancy as the pro-mutant movement pushes forward and he openly critiques Magneto as another Hitler or Stalin. In the present day House of M, he is an old man who has not had the financial success of

the other heroes and his life had not been perfect, his wife had left him for example, but he is happy with his success of capturing Hitler and walking on the moon and he acknowledges that he got everything he wanted. Captain America is the example of the Secular Spiritualist Dream; he finds happiness not in financial success, but in his other achievements, achievements that have concepts like justice at their core such as the capturing of Hitler, but also his success as an astronaut, itself a reference to the non-materialist American Dreams of American generations past.

The counter hegemonic position of House of M is not that it confronts the articulation of Security as Success, but instead that it attempts to articulate Success to two different ideological positions, each of a non-material nature. In the series itself, the superheros place Justice above material Success, and in the Captain America tie in issue it articulates the non-material aspects of personal achievement and happiness as Success.

The ignoring of the American Dream of Security within the narrative suggests that in the months before Hurricane Katrina, Security as Success and the hegemony of the Right were waning. In this way the House of M looks beyond the articulation of Security as Success. As part of the movement to a new American ideology that asserts non-material Success, the ideological contest is not between Securities but with material Success. As was stated in Chapter 3, material success has a long history within American society. The fact that it was opposed explicitly within House of M suggests recognition of the opening up of articulation and hegemony in mid 2005.

Conclusion

The ideological content of the Batman and Captain America narratives of 2005 and 2006, show more opposition to the hegemony of the Right than they did in the preceding years. This opposition is presented in a diverse number of ways such as metaphoric representations of the Iraq War and torture for the most part becoming the tool of the villain and not the superhero. Ideological challenges to the American Dream of Security involve critiques of the militaristic Hard Work of the War on Terror which is different from the comics of the previous chapter.

While the comics of the sample which engage in ideological discourse are for the most part critical of the hegemony of the Right, there are exceptions. The War Crimes crossover series in the Batman narrative returns to articulations that are supportive of the American Dream of Security in regard to both legitimate use of torture and the idea of Security as an ends justifying immoral means.

Within the Batman and Captain America narratives there is a significant ideological shift in late 2005. Overall the comics of 2006 are less ideologically engaged than the comics of 2005. Data from the Pew Research Center and pollster John Zogby supports the idea that the failure of the Bush Administration to adequately respond to the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina spells the end for the hegemony of the Right. The few comics of the sample that do engage with ideological positions after Katrina, *House of M* and *Civil War*, focus on a project ideological construction rather than challenge. This is possible in an American society in which the field of articulation and hegemony had opened up after Hurricane Katrina.

While the Batman and Captain America narratives of 2005 and 2006 progressively challenged the hegemony of the Right and took part in the potential construction of a new societal ideology, they continued in many cases to reflect the reduced role of women which had been part of the hegemony of the Right.

On the ideological point of Equality in the American Dream, African American superheroes had grown in representation, but women were still minimised from their much stronger historical position pre 9/11. This shows that the ideological components of a discursive hegemonic formation may outlive the formation itself. The discrediting of Security as Success did not automatically end the anti-feminist positions expressed in the comics. However more positively, the misogynistic torturing of teenage women, who occurred in both narratives, did not go unchallenged by the comic reading and creative community. Within the superhero narrative emerged a valued role for the female characters of the comic, the Military Woman. While there was a danger of articulations of victimhood to the female characters, the Military Woman stood out as a positive articulation for women post 9/11.

Chapter 7: 2007-2008: Hope, Ideology and Captain Obama

Barack Obama's campaign for the American Presidency found support within the superhero comic industry. In September 2008, Erik Larsen industry stalwart and the writer and artist of *Savage Dragon*, had his character endorse Barack Obama for President on the cover and within the pages of his comic. Creators within the industry even went as far as formalising their support for Obama with an organisation fundraising for the 2008 Campaign called 'Comic Industry for...Obama'. However the creators made the point that their support for Obama was personal and did not reflect the whole industry and that they kept their own political views out of the comics they created (Elkstrom, 2008). Contributing to the industry's support for Obama was the fact that Obama was revealed to be a lover of superhero comics himself collecting both *Spider-man* and *Conan* comics (Swaine 2008). In a campaign speech at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner in New York City in response to controversy about his place of birth Obama made the joke that he had been born on Krypton, referencing the home planet of Superman (Speigel 2008). When Barack Obama won the election in November 2008, the superhero comic industry joined in the celebration. In January of 2009, Marvel comics created a special *Amazing Spider-man #583* comic (Wells, Nauk 2009) to commemorate Obama's inauguration. In DC's *Final Crisis #7* (Morrison, Mahnke 2009) published that same month, the President Obama of another dimension was depicted as Superman.

This chapter looks at the narratives of Batman and Captain America in the final time period of this study, 2007 to 2008. Whereas the previous three Chapters have focused on superhero narrative's response to the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security, this chapter is focused on the emerging new ideology that was part of the Obama phenomenon. As the previous chapter illustrated, the hegemony of the Right and the American Dream of Security had become undone by articulations

about Hurricane Katrina. The concept of Security as Success had been discredited by the fact that the Bush Administration did not make the people of New Orleans safe before or after the Hurricane hit. While the Bush Administration remained in the political position of the Presidency and still had a measure of political power, they no longer had the ideological power of hegemony.

This thesis holds the position that the ending of the hegemony of the Right at the end of 2005 created a type of vacuum of hegemony in American society. The ideology of the American Dream of Security had been discredited, but no new ideology had emerged to take its place. This is what Gramsci and Laclau and Mouffe refer to as an organic crisis; a crisis of both leadership and belief. Gramsci believed that these moments were dangerous within a society, moments in which a charismatic leader might seize power. At these points ideological and hegemonic change might be swift (Gramsci 1971, p.211). As such the methodology of the analysed hegemonic ideology needs adjustment for this timeframe. The ideology that emerges with the victory of Barack Obama, referred to in this study as the American Dream of Hope for its rhetoric of renewal, cannot be understood as hegemonic until near the end of the Presidential election. As such the narrative of American hegemony at this time is one of construction of ideology. This means that with the American Dream of Hope hegemonic at the end point of this time frame, the ideological content of the comics is being compared to an emerging hegemony, not one that is in place. Chapter 6 already showed within the event series House of M and Civil War from Marvel comics that different articulations of the ideological components of the American Dream were being expressed in the comics. While this chapter will still contribute to the answer of superhero comics' ability to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology, its approach will be slightly different. This chapter examines the amount of intellectual ideological contributions that superhero comics offered to the emerging ideology and hegemony of the Left personified in the election of Barack Obama.

This chapter will first examine American society to detail the idea of an ideological organic crisis in this timeframe. It then presents the Obama phenomenon drawing out the ideological and hegemonic points of the election campaign of Barack Obama. This enables an identification of the American Dream of Hope as a new American

ideology. At this point the Batman and Captain American narratives are analysed for their ideological content.

Organic Crisis in America

America had gone through significant change since 9/11 in 2001. The political class had previously enjoyed the support of the American people, but by 2007 faith in politicians in America had fallen dramatically. Bush had enjoyed approval ratings of near 90% in late 2001, but only managed an approval rating of 31% in December 2007. The people's lack of faith in politicians extended beyond the Bush Administration and included the Congress as a whole. 70% of people surveyed had an unfavourable view of congress and 67% stated that they would not re-elect most members of Congress (Pew Research Center 2011). The tide had turned against the Bush Administration and Congress in part because of the War on terror. The majority of the American people by 2008 saw the original decision by the Bush Administration to go to war in Iraq as a mistake and wanted America to reduce its role in the broader world both militarily and in regard to international goals like reducing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (Pew Research Center 2008a). The wars in the Middle East were not the only issue that the political class had to face. The American public also saw a reduction in confidence and support of politics and politicians in general (Pew Research Center 2007a). One often over looked aspect of this disillusion in politics is the failure of Government in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The lesson that many Americans took was that the government could not or would not help them (Zogby 2008, Pew Research Center 2011). The American public had lost faith in Government by 2007 with only 31% believing 'they could trust the government in Washington to do the right thing always or most of the time' (Pew Research Center 2011).

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press' report of Trends in political values and core attitudes of the American public 1987-2007 published in March (2007b) provides a social snap shot of American society in 2007 and shows the trends in values, attitudes and opinions of the American people at this time. In addition to the lack of faith in the political class and the Bush administration in particular, the report show two other changes in the American public's view of their

society. The first was economic concerns; the report detailed an increasing unease amongst Americans with their everyday economic situation. 44% of respondents stated that they did not have enough to make ends meet, up from 35% in 2003. More Americans agreed that the rich were getting richer and the poor getting poorer in the American economy in 2007, 73% up from 65% in 2003 (Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2007b).

The American public continued to become more pessimistic about the national economy and their own personal economic situation throughout 2008. In February 2008, 81% of respondents to another Pew survey viewed the American economy as fair or poor and 53% viewed their own personal finances the same way (Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2008b). By then the American economy had been caught in the beginning of the financial crisis which had wide ranging effects from the collapse of manufacturing industries and the subprime mortgage crisis which saw many Americans lose their homes. By December 2008 public pessimism had risen to 92% for the future of the national economy and 61% for their personal finances (Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2008c).

The second change in the public's view of American society from the Pew Trends in political values and core attitudes of the American public 1987-2007 (2007b) was that the American people had started to lose faith in themselves. Specifically the report stated that Americans had begun to doubt that they could make the right decisions politically for the future of the nation.

The Pew Research Center's report paints a detailed picture of American society and American ideology in 2007. The American people's lack of belief in the political class shows that there was a real crisis of political leadership in society. Success for American society, both individually and collectively seemed out of reach. Americans' were dealing with a financial crisis in which they were either losing financially or were worried that they would. The subprime mortgage crisis had struck a nerve of the American Dream of Home Ownership that was covered in Chapter 1. This more reasonable definition of Success in the American Dream, owning your own home was now under threat. While not all Americans lost their homes, the amount of homes that were lost made those who still had their homes uneasy.

Internationally the War against Terror and specifically the War in Iraq seem less likely to end in Success as well. There was a perception that the American Dream had been broken. The concern that the rich were getting richer while the poor got poorer suggested that the equation of Hard Work equalling Success had broken down. At this time in American history the American people doubted their leaders, their ideas and philosophy and even themselves. This description of American society fits the concept of Gramsci concept of organic crisis:

If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer “leading” but only “dominant”, exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe (Gramsci 1971, pp.275-276)

There could be an argument that the Bush Administration and Congress were not ruling by coercive force alone, that American society still accepted the legitimacy of their political power. Smith suggests there is a step beyond crisis to full-scale crisis (Smith 1998, p.65). In this case American society had not entered the point of full-scale crisis, but had entered a level of crisis that needed to be resolved

The Obama Solution

Gramsci suggested that an organic crisis can have a non-organic solution in the leadership of a charismatic individual (Gramsci 1971, p.211). The 2008 election process boasted a handful of candidates who could fill that role for American society. The issues of the election that stand out in regards to hegemony is the issues of ethnicity and gender in the candidates for president, the ideology of Obama and finally Obama’s ability to personify the American Dream.

The Obama campaign and victory had the feel of revolutionary moment for American society, so much so that Rowland refers to it as the Obama insurgency (Rowland 2010, p204). The demand for fundamental change was not just Obama’s unique message, but was a major theme throughout the campaign. In regard to race and gender both the Democrats and Republicans presented legitimate non-white and female candidates for the office of President and Vice President. This presidential campaign included women as high ranking players, not as the wives of male

candidates, but as legitimate candidates for the highest office. Republicans McCain and Palin positioned themselves as mavericks outside the political establishment in an attempt to distance themselves from George W Bush, but also in recognition of the demand for change from the American electorate (Rowland 2010). The importance of this in regards to American hegemony is this very action by American society as a whole, to seriously consider African American and female candidates for the positions of President and Vice-President, suggests a rejection of the reduced roles of women that emerged as part of the hegemony of the Right in 2001 (Faludi 2008). The previous chapter showed that this articulation of the reduced role of women, of women as victims was still articulated within the superhero comics of the sample after the ideology that had birth it had been discredited.

Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin represented a fundamental change in regards to the issue of Equality which had been diminished in the American Dream of Security. In this way each of these three candidates ideologically represented change by the simple fact that they were not white men. But it was not only Obama's representation as a member of one of the most historically marginalised and excluded ethnic groups in America's short history that accounts for his victory in the November election.

It was Obama's ability to articulate his concept of change to the American Dream as the national ideology. He was able to at once create and to lead a new American Dream that due to the contradictory nature of national ideology, also seemed to have always existed throughout American history. The hope that Obama's campaign stirred within Americans drew heavily on a renewal of the American Dream made change seem exciting and yet not seem radical or revolutionary, but in fact a conservative throwback to the ideas of a more successful America of the past. As a modern presidential election, the emphasis of Obama's campaign was not so much on policy, but on vision of a reconstitution of community, with the American Dream as the core value of American society.

Obama contrasted the Bush articulated American Dream as a failure to value the whole community that had left many Americans excluded (Rowland 2010), with his own more communitarian American Dream (Jenkins, Cos, 2010, p197). While there was a strong theme of change within Obama's rhetoric that positioned the American

people as the agents of this change, the ideas of change were drawn not outside of the American ideology, but conservatively from the ideas of the past of America. In a sense it was a renewal and a change that returned the American ideology to the safety of the past. This bears some similarity to Faludi's observation that in the aftermath of 9/11, American society reverted to the gender roles of the past (2008).

Obama articulated that America's solutions were within itself, the American people and the American ideology of the Dream. His campaign drew on his ideas of the American Dream which he clearly stated in accepting the democratic nomination of President, "It is that promise that has always set this country apart—that through hard work and sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family, to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams as well" (Obama's speech accepting the Democratic nomination 2008 cited in Jenkins, Cos, 2010, p189).

As Jenkins and Cos make clear, the reconstitution of the American community and the renewal of the American Dream were not revolutionary ideas for a Presidential candidate. At a moment where Americans might have started to look for revolutionary change outside of their political system and ideology, Obama returned Americans back to faith in the political system with the ideological strength of the renewed American Dream. It was the American people who were looking for change and were willing to look towards non-white, non-male candidates for the position of President. And while the election of an African American President is indeed change, it was on the back of a rearticulated new American Dream that still sat within the paradigm of the broad established ideology, rearticulated but safely within the confines of the 'narrative parameters of the American Dream myth' (Jenkins, Cos 2010, 198).

Obama had used his own story to articulate the American Dream to himself well before the presidential campaign in his first book *Dreams of my Father* published in 1995 and his next *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* in 2006. This is an important point to make as the ideas about the American Dream that Obama articulated for the American society in crisis were not specifically designed for that situation, but had been the consistent ideology that Obama had been articulating since 1995. In a way it was not that Obama specifically articulated an

ideology for the moment as the Bush Administration had in 2001, but that the moment suited the articulations of Obama.

His own story of his American Dream as an African American, born of a Black Kenyan father and a white American mother reasserted organically the idea of an America that included all races. In his speeches to the American public he used the authority of his own experiences to reassert the concept of access to success of others, at time referring to them as groups of Americans and other times as individuals (Jenkins, Cos 2010). It was Obama's ability to show that the problems of America 'were undercutting that dream for ordinary Americans and then his ability to show that the ultimate solution to those problems lay in a return to the basic values of the American Dream that energized his message' (Rowland, 2010, p205).

To a certain extent, Obama gave the American people the task of writing the immediate end of his narrative. The American Dream that Obama was able to command would find ultimate fulfilment and personification if he became President. Just as Ronald Reagan had been able to personify the American Dream in his Presidential campaign⁸, Obama was able to do the same. The American people could reassert their belief in the renewed American Dream by making it real for Barack Obama. In the end they had the power to make belief reality, and by doing this looked to their own American Dreams becoming real again as well.

Essentially the American Dream of Hope was just a renewal in belief of the American Dream more broadly. Obama's articulation of the American Dream of Hope was intentionally open and broad to allow inclusion of people's personal American Dreams, such as Amanda Hamilton's Dream of Happiness, and Antonio Weeks' Dream of Wealth which were detailed in Chapter 1 (USA TODAY 2010). Material and non-material Success were included in the American Dream of Hope. Obama articulated Individual Success and specifically a Collective Success of a society that could be handed on to the American children. The nodal points of the American Dream of hope are much more open than the American Dream of Security ever was. However, there are few specific articulations around the concept of the American Dream of Hope that Obama does clearly articulate. Firstly Obama's speeches insisted that the ideology is valuable and real. Secondly, Obama articulated

⁸ See Chapter 3 for Reagan's personification of the American Dream.

that the American Dream equation of Hard Work equalling Success was broken under the Bush Administration. Obama suggested that the American people were already doing the Hard Work of the promise. And the last articulation was the personification of the American Dream which is closely related to its reality and the evidence of that reality that Obama's election would give the American society.

In returning to the crisis of leadership and ideology of 2007, of an American people that doubted their leaders, their ideology and even themselves, the solution was the charismatic leader Barack Obama who answered all three of the issues in both himself and the American Dream of Hope.

Brief points about the comics of this chapter

In Chapter 1 it was noted that this study would attempt to approach superhero comics as cultural products. The complexities of authorship were noted as an issue, with each comic book in reality being the product of a team of individuals. The ability for company executives to exert pressure on the narrative direction of the superhero narrative was mentioned. One of the approaches in this study was to avoid the writers' commentary on the meanings of their works, as at times those commentaries can be used to submerge interpretations, hide intentions and also generate sales. As such this thesis has not focused on the identities of the creators, referencing them as is the convention, but placing the focus squarely on the superhero comic book as a cultural product. While this has served the thesis to this point, the nature of the Batman and Captain America comics of 2007 and 2008 force a change in approach in this chapter.

Undoubtedly there are creators who actively intend to comment on society and do make commentary that expresses a clear attempt at intellectual leadership within American society through their work and have the power within publishing companies of Marvel Comics and DC Comics to this. This is more apparent in the time period of this chapter as the three comic book titles that are at the core of this study, *Captain America* from Marvel, and *Detective Comics* and *Batman* from DC experienced years of creative stability and as such the writers had much longer story

arcs as opposed to previous years in which creative teams would come onto titles for short runs of around six issues and then move on to other titles.

This change had much to do with comics as a consumer product. Writers had long been important stars in the comic book industry and both Marvel and DC were keen to give readers longer story arcs by fan favourite writers on their more prestige titles. Ed Brubaker had been writing the Marvel *Captain America* comic since late 2004 and would continue through to 2012. For the time period of this chapter Brubaker wrote every *Captain America* comic detailing the aftermath of the death of Captain America in issue #25 (Brubaker, Epting 2007) published in March 2007 and the rise of his former side kick Bucky Barnes as the new Captain America. Brubaker, as was pointed out in a Chapter 1 with the example of the negative Tea Party depiction in *Captain America* #602 (Brubaker, Ross 2010) published January 2010, is a writer who is prepared to use his mainstream superhero comics to make political points

Grant Morrison started his long run on the character of Batman with issue #655 of *Batman* in July 2006. Morrison's work has been described as ambitious and is seen as the high water mark for intellectual content within the mainstream of superhero comics. Douglas Wolk notes that, 'The point of his (Morrison's) comics isn't to subvert or invert the traditions and clichés of the mainstream; it's to revel in them and amplify their power through art, with the ultimate goal of making his readers' world evolve' (Wolk 2007, p.259). Morrison like Brubaker, clearly sees that comics have a hegemonic power which he has described as 'pop magick'. For Morrison, superhero comics present a great way to express ideas and concepts through popular culture. When the work is entertaining then the ideas contained within them can reach a wide audience and have a greater chance to change the world (Wolk 2007). Before his run on *Batman*, Wolk saw that Morrison's work had two distinct categories, action adventure stories in which 'conceptual gestures are largely peripheral' and 'metafictional/mystical head spinners for which the crazy adventure stuff is mostly window dressing' (Wolk 2007 p278). Wolk claims that the synthesis of these two categories happened in Morrison 2006/2007 work for DC before they gave him the reigns to *Batman*, the limited series *Seven Soldiers of Victory*. Morrison's work on *Batman* certainly shows signs of both categories and with Brubaker's *Captain America*, presents concepts and ideas that are rooted in the crisis that faced the American society its time.

Detective Comics also had a consistent writer for the time period of this chapter. Paul Dini is another high profile comic book creator. His most famous work is within the superhero genre, but outside the comic book medium. Dini was one of the main writers behind the critically acclaimed cartoon series *Batman: The Animated Series* and is jointly credited with the creation of the Batman villain Harley Quinn. Dini's run as writer of *Detective Comics* during the time period of this chapter was a little more sporadic than Morrison's on *Batman* with a few more fill in issues by other writers. His first *Detective Comics* issue was #821 of July 2006 and his run ended with issue #852 in January 2009. Dini's *Detective Comics* stories have a similar feel to his work on *Batman: The Animated Series*, many of the stories like the episodes of the cartoon are self contained, although they do advance a very broad storyline and at times works in service of Morrison's run on *Batman*.

Dini's and the other writers on the title, explore some of the similar Batman themes from past chapters, such as the idea that Batman refuses to kill to serve justice in *Detective Comics* #830 (Moore, Clarke 2007) when that difference is made clear when Batman confronts the terrorist Vox, who claims to be fighting for justice by threatening to kill innocent people. Rozum and Dini also explores Batman engaging in torture and threats of torture in some of his stories, although he makes commentary via Robin feeling uncomfortable with Batman's actions in #835 (Rozum, Mandrake, 2007) and the Joker approving and admiring them in #849 (Dini, Nguyen 2008) that shows further complexity over the validity of the issue of torture explored in previous comics already covered in this study. It would be wrong to suggest that there is no political commentary in Dini's work, but compared to Morrison and Brubaker's *Batman* and *Captain America*, Dini's *Detective Comics* has less of feeling of hegemonic challenge and more of the reflection of values that Wright suggests is more common in superhero comics (Wright 2001). Dini's work brings up issues but does not explore them too deeply or make overt commentary. As such it is specifically *Batman* written by Morrison and *Captain America* written by Brubaker that has the most to say about the crisis of American society and the renewal of the American Dream.

In past chapters attention has been paid to the adventures of the characters of Captain America and Batman in the limited event miniseries that have become an important part of the comic book industry. While Batman has a major role in the Morrison

written DC event *Final Crisis* of 2008/2009, the new Captain America character Bucky Barnes has a far reduced role in the broader Marvel Universe. This absence of Captain America in the Marvel meta-narrative allows for a further exploration of the themes and ideas that follow from the event comic series *Civil War*. As such, this meta-narrative is worth noting alongside the *Captain America* comic from time to time as part of this chapter.

Similarities and Differences in the narratives

Concerns were raised in the comic book reader community over Morrison's *Batman* storyline and its similarities to Brubaker's *Captain America*. In both comics the main character 'dies' and is replaced by their former sidekick, Bucky in *Captain America*, and in 2009 (after the timeframe of this study) by Nightwing in *Batman*. In both cases the original hero did not die, but had been zapped into the past and emerged at a later date (Sacks 2010). Brubaker publicly stated that he and Morrison had arrived at the similar plotlines totally separate from each other. Some internet conspiracy theorists pointed to the similar plots as proof that something was going on (Sacks 2010). An examination not only of the similarity in class of the villains, but in the nature of the battle for authority over the identity and idea of the superhero that characters of each story went through suggest something beyond a mere common plotline. Both of them were saying something about the process of change and renewal in culture and hegemonic ideology, *Captain America* more directly and more explicitly about American society than *Batman*.

The direct nature of the ideological content of *Captain America* is partially explained by Dittmer's (2013) point that nationalistic superheroes that identify as representatives of a particular nation-state have narratives that directly involve the nation state they represent. *Captain America* in this case is more concerned with internal issues of American society. *Captain America* narratives are more likely to be a comment on American issues, either international or domestic by the very nature of the characters identification with America. *Batman* narratives have more freedom to pursue other representations.

Another reason why the ideological themes in Morrison's *Batman* are not as direct as Brubaker's *Captain America* is Morrison's style and approach to comic book writing. As already mentioned, Morrison's work is regarded as one of the more intellectual and symbolic of modern mainstream comic book writers. Morrison writes in a way that invites readers to carefully deconstruct and explore his work in the search for meaning and understanding. As Wolk (2007) made the point, at this stage in Morrison's career he had made the synthesis of both action adventure and metafiction. As such, Morrison's work demands a higher degree of examination than puts into question Wright's idea that analysis of superhero comics needs to stop at themes that are easily understood by the reader (Wright, 2001).

Representations of Crisis and the Broken American Dream

There are clear differences between the representation of crisis in *Batman* and *Captain America*. In *Batman* crisis is of a personal nature. The attack by the villains of the comic, the Black Glove is specifically on Batman himself. As such the issues of broader American society are more or less absent from the narrative. One exception is in *Batman #678* (Morrison, Daniel 2008), Bruce Wayne suffers amnesia, is left homeless on the street and befriends a homeless man named Honor Jackson who saves him. This issue shows some depictions of life on the street and Honor makes the point that even the highest can fall, but there is little here that roots the comic in the economic crisis of America of the time

In contrast, *Captain America* provides direct reference points to American society. The economic crisis is a major plot point in the story. The Red Skull stars as the arch nemesis throughout the *Captain America* comic of this time frame. Through his control of an international company, the Kronas Corporation is able to push America into financial crisis. For example Kronas crashes the stock market by doubling the price of petrol and uses its subsidiary Peggy Day Finances to foreclose on thousands of American mortgages in *Captain America vol.5 #34* (Brubaker, Epting 2008). This is reference to the real world subprime mortgage crisis and the Federal National Mortgage Association known as Fannie Mae. The economic crisis leads to protests on the streets of Washington which are further made violent by Kronas drugging the protesters. Within the narrative the fictitious American politicians make decisions not

in the interest of American society, but in the interest of the Kronas Corporation from which they receive political donations. The lack of faith in the political class is shown in *Captain America* as the politicians are unable to act against corporate interests. Similar themes are mentioned in *Batman* in regards to the political class, although they are not as active players as they are in *Captain America*.

Ironman, who had risen to the leadership of SHIELD post *Civil War*, is shown to struggle with his new position. In the meta-narrative across the Marvel universe, Ironman is eventually sacked by the President after the *Secret Invasion* event series when he ultimately fails in his role as head of SHIELD and is replaced by super villain Norman Osborn. This is a continuation of the *Civil War* theme detailed in the previous chapter which attempts to put the American Dream of Security and the hegemony of the Right into a historical context.

The Captain America comic more so than the Batman comic explores the state of American society. The representation of America within the Captain America comic reflects the views within American society detailed earlier in the chapter. In the Captain America narrative the economic crisis occurs, the American people lose faith in their political leaders and are forced onto the streets to protest. It also shares the same viewpoint as Barack Obama that the reason for the crisis in American society is that the American Dream has been broken; the equation of Hard Work Equalling Success has been damaged, the rich are getting richer while the poor get poorer. While Barack Obama put the blame of the Bush Administration, the Captain America comic puts blame on the American politicians, Corporations and the Red Skull.

Villains of the narrative

Chapter 5 made the point that when examining the ideological content and political direction of comic books, attention should be paid to the role of the supervillain. In the creation of the American Dream of Security President Bush articulated the terrorist as the anti-American Other. Chapter 5 showed that in the later years of the hegemony of the Right, 2003 to 2004, superhero comics did not support the ideology with the sort of propaganda they had in wars of the past.

Corporations and American politicians have already been shown to be part of the villains in *Captain America*. The two main villains that are associated with the Corporations and Politicians are The Red Skull who is a Nazi from World War II, and Aleksander Lukin is a former Soviet General before he was CEO of the corporation Kronas. This is the same tactic that Bush employed in his speech of the 20th September 2001, to associate the Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda with Nazism and Communism. In the case it is the American political class that is now the Other by their association as well as their action.

The villains of *Batman* again do not make such overt connections with American society of its day as *Captain America*. However, it is worth noting that the main villains, the Black Glove have some elements in common with both villains of *Captain America*. The Black Glove, with the exception of Jezebel Jet (who is used to infiltrate Bruce Wayne's life via a love affair), are all middle aged men. More importantly they represent members of the ruling class and are shown to have the power to direct newspapers to publish whatever they want, to control politicians, to change medical records and bribe witnesses. They make the point that their wealth vastly exceeds that of Bruce Wayne.

Ruling class villains depicted in the comics align with an American public who had lost faith in their leaders and felt that the rich were gaining more of advantage in American life. However, ruling class villains are not uncommon in superhero comics. Superheroes often have to face adversity and facing a villain who has more resources because of their higher class position is a convenient device.

In comparison to *Batman* and *Captain America*, *Detective Comics* of the same time period does not have the same type of ruling class villains. In *Detective Comics*, Batman faces off against costumed villains such as the Scarecrow and organised crime bosses like Sabatino rather than members of the ruling class. While it needs to be acknowledged that powerful ruling class villains are a big part of contemporary superhero narratives, it is interesting to note that the *Detective Comics* stories which focus on the more traditional costumed villains and organised crime archetypes also do not have strong representations of America society or crisis within their narrative.

Multiple representations of the superhero

Both superhero narratives explore the concept of change and competing representation. The ideological representation of both Captain American and Batman is explored in a way that reflects the idea of change within American society, but with slightly different focuses.

What is the ideal of Captain America is explored in a narrative in which the real Captain America has been killed. The protagonist who explores the concept of Captain America is his former side kick, Bucky Barnes who eventually creates a new Captain America identity. In *Captain America*, Bucky faces two representations of Captain America that stand in opposition to him. The first is the shadow of the dead Captain America, Steve Rogers. Bucky fears that he cannot meet the legacy of Rogers and fears to even try. However, he is also prepared to defend this idea of this Captain America and gets involved in bar fight when a thug accuses the dead Rogers of being a traitor, because he didn't follow public opinion, to which Bucky makes the point that American public once through slavery was right as well (*Captain America vol.5 #26* Brubaker, Epting 2007). Bucky's relationship with this idea of Captain America is not antagonistic. Bucky's admiration for Rodger's and his mission are clear within the comic and in the end when Bucky adopts his own Captain America identity it is seen to be in honour of Rogers and as a progression forward with the concept.

The other Captain America that Bucky has to contend with is the Captain America of the 1950s. This is an interesting character in the history of Captain America as functionally; the character was retconned to explain two Captain American comics that were published in the 1950s subtitled, 'Captain America- Commie Smasher'. In *Captain America # 156* (Englehart, Buscema 1972) it was explained that these stories where not Steve Rogers who was frozen in the arctic at the end of WW2, but was a school teacher who took on the role of Captain America, had reconstructive surgery to look like Rogers and took a version of the Super Soldier serum with a new version of Bucky. However, the new serum drove the new Captain America insane and rather than fighting communism, he started to see the enemies of America everywhere and had to be put in suspended animation. *Captain America #38* of May 2008, makes it clear who these enemies were in a flash back showing the 1950s Captain America

beating up African American men. So while 1950s Cap explains two very rarely seen *Captain America* comics, it also is a device to explain and show that the American Dream and American society had changed over time. This is further reinforced when the 1950s Captain America is seen to support the new and villainous presidential candidate for the Third Wing party when he states, “because no one has the courage to do what must be done... to make the American future the dream it was meant to be.” (Captain America vol.5 #39 Brubaker, de la Torre 2008, p.12) In that same issue 1950s Captain America notes that 2008 America is not his America, but it could become his America, in that he could see it change. The 1950s Captain America is representative of the American ideology of the past and the idea that this conservative ideology should not become dominant today.

The concept of Batman representing an idea owes some parentage to the Christopher Nolan Batman films. Darren Mooney has noted that Morrison’s stories make use of the Nolan’s films and expand on the ideas in the Dark Knight trilogy that has Bruce Wayne create Batman as a symbol, as more than a man but an ideal (Mooney, 2011). Morrison’s Batman stories focus on the contest for this ideal between Batman and other players in his world, but interestingly do not spend much time defining what this ideal is. In other Batman narratives Batman overtly defines himself by showing how he differs from other seekers of justice. In *Detective Comics* #829 (Moore, Clarke 2007) of March 2007 Batman separates himself from the terrorist Vox by making it clear he will not kill innocent people in his fight for justice. In the *Batman* Grotesk storyline that breaks up Morrisons run (#659-652 Ostrander, Mandrake 2007) Batman again defines himself by the fact he will not kill for justice as Grotesk does and makes the point that Grotesk is seeking vengeance, not justice. In Morrison’s Batman narrative, it is not Batman that overtly defines the ideal of Batman, but other characters who attempt to articulate the meaning of Batman to themselves.

In *Batman*, the issue of competing representations is explored differently than in Captain America. Batman faces many more representations of the idea of Batman, but only some are antagonistic, attempting to articulate the concept of Batman to themselves. The most obvious example of the competing representations are Three replacement Batmen that had been trained by the Gotham police Department and Doctor Hurt in case Batman ever stopped fighting crime. The element that each of

them have of the Batman ideal is the fight against crime which they use to articulate the Batman ideal to themselves. The first replacement Batman fails when he shoots the Joker in the head in issue #655. The second replacement Batman seen in figure 7.1, articulates elements of the Batman villain Bane in both appearance and in use of Bane's steroid like venom which boost his physical strength. The most successful of the replacement Batmen is the third, who includes another element of the Batman ideal that the others lack, namely the tragedy of the loss of his family who were killed by Satanists which references the murder of Bruce Wayne's family as a child.

Batman #656 (Morrison, Kubert 2006) of August 2006 introduces a different type of character who attempts to claim hegemony over the Batman ideal, Bruce Wayne's biological son Damien. Handed over by his mother, Ra's Al Ghul daughter Talia, Damien sees himself as the automatic heir to Batman because of his intensive training and his genetics. In *Batman #657* (Morrison, Kubert 2006) of September 2006 Damien attacks and defeats Tim Drake, the current Robin in the Batcave and kills the supervillain the Spook, in a belief that he will replace Robin and fight by his father's side. *Batman #666* (Morrison, Kubert 2007) of July 2007 presents a one issue glimpse of the future in which the adult Damien is Batman after the death of Bruce Wayne and seemingly Dick Grayson. The battle shown in figure 7.2 of #666 is between Damien and the Third replacement Batman who has returned to Gotham claiming to be the anti-Christ. The story shows that the ideal of the Batman has changed under Damien. He no longer works with the Gotham police force and has no problem killing his foes. In his final confrontation with the Third replacement Batman Damien reveals that he knew he would not be as good as Bruce Wayne or Dick Grayson and so has specialised in cheating and made a deal with the Devil at the age of 14 when Bruce Wayne was killed to save Gotham city in the future.

The fact that both narratives include multiple representations of the superhero that compete for authority echoes the same process of articulation within the concept of hegemony. It is at this point that these two specific superhero narratives separate themselves from the sort of comics that have been presented in this thesis. Some comics have attempted to reproduce, or critique, or challenge or contest hegemony. Morrison's Batman and Brubaker's Captain America differ in that they *explore and explain the process of hegemony and articulation* at a time in which the field of articulation is open within American society.



Figure 7.1 *Batman* #664 (Morrison, Kubert 2007, p.27)



Figure 7.2 *Batman* #666 (Morrison, Kubert 2007, p.28)

The outcome of explanations of the process of hegemony

For Bucky, the struggle for hegemony over the identity and authority of Captain America is reasonably simple. Bucky has a physical confrontation with the Captain America of the 1950s shown in figure 7.3. The moment that the fictional American society accepts him as the new Captain America is when he saves both Presidential candidates at the first Presidential Debate in issue #42 published in September 2008.

In past situations where Captain America had been replaced by a new character (such as the 1950s Captain America and the 1980s replacement of Steve Rogers with a more Right Wing Captain America in John Walker) the Captain America uniform did not change. As far as the Marvel community knew, this was the same Captain America and a continuation of the same idea and identity. With Bucky's assumption of the Captain America idea, it is clear that this is a new man under the Captain America mask and a new type of Captain America. Bucky does not just adopt the same costume that Steve Rogers wore, instead Bucky takes elements of the Captain America ideal and then adds other elements that are representative of himself and the society that he comes from. The new Captain America shown in figure 7.4, wears a red, white, blue and black costume that instead of being made with chainmail is made of a smooth metallic material and with a different stars and stripes design. Bucky also adds a gun and knife to his weapons as well as the use of his bionic arm. This action itself marks Bucky Captain America as something new and yet makes claims on the historical Captain America idea. Bucky adopts the Shield and the heroic mission of Steve Rogers, teaming up with Steve's best friend in the Falcon and working to save Steve's girlfriend Sharon from Steve's enemies.

Bucky's transformation into the new Captain America is metaphoric and complex. In one way he is indeed a new Captain America, but yet he retains elements of the original. Within the context of Obama's mantra of change you can be in and renewal of the American Dream the Captain America comics is complementary to the Obama campaign. Taking into account the articulation of the messages of the Obama campaign on the causes for American's crisis, the Bush administrations broken American Dream and the similar narrative in the Captain America comic in regard to the crisis and the villains it is clear that this narrative is ideological supportive of Barack Obama. The ability of Obama to personify the American Dream and the



Figure 7.3 *Captain America* vol.5 #39 (Brubaker, de la Torre 2008, p.24)



Figure 7.4 *Captain America* vol.5 #41 (Brubaker, Epting 2008, p.24)

concept of Bucky finally personifying the identity of Captain America help bring the two ideas even closer together.

The complexity of Morrison's work might delay understanding in many ways, but also allows for a deep exploration of the contest for hegemony that is dealt with much more simply in *Captain America*. Morrison's work can be seen as both an exploration of meaning and ideas within the medium and genre of comic book superheroes, and attempt to use the medium and genre to explore the concept of hegemony, ideology and culture. At the core of Morrison's *Batman* is the issue of Batman's history and continuity. As mentioned previously, DC has more of a concern with the issue of a consistent continuity than Marvel because of its more complex Universe structure. In recent times many of DC major events have sort to deal with continuity, rewriting history and ruling certain stories in or out of the 'official' continuity. Morrison's *Batman* takes on this task and includes important references to the sort of superhero stories from the 1950s that are often excluded from continuity. After an investigation by Senate Subcommittee into Juvenile Delinquency in 1954/1955 into the effect comic books had on children and the success of campaigns to ban and restrict comic books the industry adopted a Code that ensured that comics would only be products for children and remain locked in preadolescent tastes (Wright 2001 p.179). Morrison took some of the most maligned of these stories such as a superman like Batman from the planet Zur-En- Arrh, the batmite and a club of superheroes drawn from the Batmen of all nations and made them important reference points in his Batman tale. In defining the Batman ideal, Morrison resisted using the familiar overt comparisons between other characters to define Batman, but instead drew on the past to try and show that there is and had been a consistent concept of the Batman identity.

Morrison's creation of a consistent Batman in his work draws parallels with the academic work of Uricchio and Pearson (1991). They explored the idea of multiple concepts of Batman in popular culture, who share key character traits, events, supporting characters, settings and iconography (Uricchio, Pearson 1991, pp.186-187). In contrast to that is the Batman of continuity that is patrolled and controlled by the comic book publishers. Like Morrison, Uricchio and Pearson see that the character is in many ways informed by these multiple expressions. What Morrison attempted to do is to bring many of those divergent Batman stores and identities into

the one continuity. For Morrison the multiplicity of Batman can be articulated into the consistent Batman of continuity. It is worth reflecting on the radical nature of Morrison's work here. As Ford and Jenkins pointed out multiplicity and continuity co-exist in superhero comics broadly (2009), but they do not intersect in the main continuity of the character. What Morrison does in his run on *Batman* is force them to intersect as they do in the reader's consumption of the character in multiple forms, and then (as explained later in this chapter) gives the authority for deciding on the 'real' Batman to the reader.

In a counter point to this idea of a consistent Batman, but in line with the intersection of multiplicity and continuity, Morrison presented a very revolutionary justification for the historical differences in the character of the Joker. Like Batman, the Joker had gone through many incarnations as relevant to the state of the comics themselves. He had been a gangster and then in the more child oriented period of the 1950s and 60s he had become a clown with humour based crimes, as harmless as all the other villains of the time, and then again in the darker 1980s a terrorist and serial killer. In *Batman #663* (Morrison, Fleet 2007) published in February 2007 Morrison presents a prose story that explains that every few years the Joker goes through a total recreation of character, a rebirth and becomes a new personality. In the issue, the new Joker kills his former circus based minions and attempts to murder his lover Harley Quinn to show that he is no longer the same person and had no attachments to the Joker identity of the past.

Following the theme of a consistent idea of Batman and the concept of the Joker creating totally new and unconnected ideas of the Joker, Morrison explored the contest for ideology through the character of Doctor Hurt and his role as the creator of the comic. While Batman has to physically confront the three replacement Batmen and has to exert control over Damien to ensure that his eventual appropriation of the Batman ideal is within the parameters of the Batman paradigm, his conflict with Doctor Hurt is about the ability to articulate and control the Batman ideal politically. Doctor Hurt with the resources of the Black Glove seeks to ruin Batman, the ultimate noble spirit body and soul (#680), his first attack is a psychological attack to make Batman fear that he has lost his mind and become paranoid about an opponent that knows all of his secrets and can strike at will. Hurt's second attack is to control the



Figure 7.5 *Batman* #678 (Morrison, Daniel 2008, p.31)

Batman ideal by planting a phrase in Batman's mind, Zurh En Arrh, that when Bruce Wayne hears it shuts off the Batman identity.

Batman's solution was to be prepared for this sort of attack and hide a back up personality, the Batman of Zurh En Arrh (shown in figure 7.5 with the batmite) within his mind. In this way, Batman foils Hurt's attempt at controlling the Batman ideal.

The third attack is to alter the ideal of Batman by changing his history. Hurt is able to get the media to publish stories that suggest that Bruce Wayne was not Thomas Wayne's son, but was a product of an affair between Martha Wayne and Alfred. Hurt then adds to this by insisting that he is actually Thomas Wayne and he organised the death of Martha Wayne and faked his own death, the event that created the Batman. In his last act, Hurt reveals to Batman that the Gotham media will have access to documents and photographs that prove that his father, mother and Alfred were all drug addicts and perverts, unless Batman agrees to serve the Black glove and dedicates his life to corruption and vice (*Batman #681*, Morrison, Daniel 2008). Within the plot of the story, this is Hurts attempt to control the Batman ideal, to use his own power to make the ideal of Batman work for him and his interests.

On a deeper level, this is Morrison's own exploration of the ability of those in power to articulate ideologies to their service, but in one way it is Morrison articulating elements of the Batman ideal to his own ends of creating a shocking twist to his story. In the story Batman refuses to believe Hurt is his Father, but all the evidence within the narrative points to Hurt telling the truth. In the end Batman rejects the revision of his origin, not based on reason but on faith and emotion. Taken a step further and drawing on the relationship between reader and superhero, Morrison is able to say something more detailed about the negotiation of ideas and ideology. Morrison as the writer of the comic has the power to attempt an articulation of the Batman idea with Hurt as Thomas Wayne, but his power is not absolute. The readers themselves have the power to accept or reject Morrison's articulation, as will the future writers on the comic. The readers collectively have some power to decide what Batman is through their consumption of the stories that they prefer and to a lesser extent through their discourses about Batman on internet fans sites. Creators can attempt to articulate new, old and original elements to Batman, but in the end

they can only attempt them, it is the Batman consuming community that they must negotiate with for true meaning of what Batman is and means. If an element becomes cannon and takes pride of place in continuity, then it must be navigated through both the readers' beliefs and also the corporate agenda and editorial desires of the comic book corporation. This is taking the metaphors of Morrison's *Batman* beyond the easily understood positions that have defined the methodological approach of this study and should at the very least be considered to have a less of an immediate recognition in the comic book reader community.

Conclusion

The analysis of the comics of this chapter presents important points that should be considered when evaluating the ability of superhero comic books to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology. First, not all comic books engage in ideological commentary in times of crisis. While *Captain America* and *Batman* have content that engages in commentary, *Detective Comics* has very little during the timeframes of this chapter. Comic books are firstly a consumer product that are designed to make profit and they do that by creating stories that consumers wish to read which may or may not involve overt or covert commentary on society. While every story presents assumptions about society, not all of them explore ideology directly.

The commentary on America's ideological crisis is much clearer in *Captain America* than it is in *Batman*. This can be attributed to the nationalistic elements that *Captain America* must present, but it is also due to a difference in style in the writing of both comics. Brubaker's *Captain America* presents meanings and ideas that are much easier to see at first glance. The use of capitalist villains, the direct commentary on the relationship between corporations and American politicians is overt and works to enhance the metaphor of the birth of a new *Captain America* as the process of articulation of the American Dream personified in Obama. The setting of the final victory of the new *Captain America* at the 2008 Presidential debate in which *Captain America* is accepted by the American public helps to make the commentary on America's way forward extremely clear. On the other hand, Morrison's *Batman* has a deeper exploration of a similar concept, the contest and negotiation for authority and

hegemony over ideology and ideals, but is presented in a way that is much harder to grasp at first reading. The articulation can be much more subtle, a way of explaining the need to protect core ideological concepts, an explanation of how change is possible, how ideologies can be defended and advanced.

This begs the question, which is slightly outside of this study, of the need for overt recognition of the themes and concepts within popular culture by consumers. There has been significant research around fan culture to show that many consumers of popular culture texts like superhero comic books have a deep and developed understanding of the social and political meanings of the products that they consume. Hills' study of fan cultures shows that consumers of popular culture actively engage in analysis of cultural meanings in a rational, reflexive and academic way. Hills points to the use of new media such as discussion boards as the place for the dissemination and collective practice of this analysis. Interestingly Hills also sees a less rational and more religious element to the fan culture in addition to rational analysis (Hills 2002). Pustz's work on comic book culture shows a shared fan culture, sometimes intelligible to those outside it, that actively seeks to analyse meaning within comic books. He also sees that comic book fans are part of the process of creation of culture through their own actions such as conventions, homemade costumes, homemade action figures and even their own reflexive mini-comics (Pustz 1999, p.211). Fiske in using Bourdieu's ideas of cultural capital sees fandom as a unique type of culture that takes the official culture of the text and reworks it and its meanings (Fiske 1992). Evidence in support of Fiske's creation of an unofficial culture can be seen in the fan interaction in the issue of narrative continuity which was covered in chapter 1. This research supports the idea that readers of the *Captain America* and *Batman* comics could be reasonably expected to interpret the social and political meanings of the narratives, although to what level would need further research.

Do the themes and concepts of popular culture needed to be overtly by the consumers, or can it work on a more subconscious level? Both *Captain America* and *Batman* present an explanation of the contest of ideology in American society at the time in which American was going through ideological change, towards the Obama led American Dream of Hope. Could this help readers respond to these ideas without having them need to overtly recognise them, but have them reaffirm or push the

reader into looking for ideological rearticulation of the American Dream and also help them see their own role in this process?

Regardless of how the ideas presented in the comics are absorbed by the readers, there is a significant issue with timeframes for these comics. The meta-narrative of the Marvel universe which explores America's reaction to 9/11, security becoming dominant over liberty is a detailed and rich commentary. However, its hegemonic ability is limited by its timeline. *Civil War*, which shows the victory of security over liberty, is published in 2006/2007. *Secret Invasion* which ends showing that the preoccupation with security does not guarantee safety and opens the door for villainous oppression is published in 2008, with the last issue published in December. While this meta-narrative engages in the debate about the primary values in American society, its authoritative conclusion occurs after the Presidential election, reducing its claim to intellectual leadership. This meta-narrative in the Marvel Comics universe is more about putting the recent history of the American Dream of Security into an historical context. This contributes to the ideological movement forward, not in as direct way as Brubaker's fable of the new Captain America.

Likewise Morrison's run on *Batman* shows a contest for the ideal of Batman, but the aftermath of the death of Batman which shows Nightwing taking on the Batman ideal, keeping elements of it but rearticulating new elements that mark this as a new Batman occurs in 2009, again after the election of Obama. The production of a comic from start to finish takes around four months, with many storylines plotted out well before that in consultations with editorial committees and other writers of the company (Sacks 2010) which does effect comics books ability to provide hegemonic leadership. *Captain America* however, did fit within the timeframe of the Presidential election. The issue that ends with the acceptance of Bucky in the role of Captain America and by the American community at the Presidential debate is published in September 2008, months before the Presidential election on the 4th November 2008. This gives the *Captain America* comic a much better opportunity to provide intellectual leadership than the other comics in this chapter. However, it should be noted that the concluding points of both the Marvel meta-narrative and Batman may have occurred after the election of Obama, but the un-concluded stories still could contribute to the ideological change. Concluding after the election helps them to

appear as simply apolitical comic books. In the case of Morrison's work, it is worth noting that his concluding chapter of *Final Crisis #7* (Morrison, Mahnke 2009) began with an alternate dimension in which an African American President is actually Superman. As the issue was released Morrison confirmed that it was meant to be Obama, "I thought it would be a fitting end to all the darkness in America recently. All the comics have been dealing with darkness recently and, having defeated evil, it's now time to celebrate" (Lyon 2009).

This brings forward a final point for this chapter, while it can be seen that Captain America, Batman and the Marvel meta-narrative are engaged, each at a different intensity, with the rearticulation of the American Dream that was happening in America, personified in the political victory of Barack Obama against a version of the American Ideology that had its roots in the Bush Administration after 9/11, this in itself is not revolutionary from a Gramsci or Marxist perspective. From the perspective of the Laclau and Mouffe model however, there is a change of ideology. The articulation of Security as Success is substantially weakened and the more traditional articulations of material and non-material success regain the strength of their articulations. The nodal point of Equality, of equal access to the American Dream for all people within American society, becomes much more of a privileged nodal point once more. The reduction in societal roles for women and ethnic minorities that was a part of the hegemony of the Right from 2001-2005 is ideologically at least eliminated from American society.

While the Captain America comic stands out in this time frame as providing the most ideological support, it should also be noted that there is no direct ideological opposition to the new American Dream of Hope within the narratives of both Captain America and Batman.

Chapter 8: Discussion of theoretical outcomes

In attempting to explore the ability of superhero narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest hegemony within American society, this thesis has made use of the theory of hegemony. The results of this study (which will be concluded in more detail in the next chapter), show that superhero narratives do engage in the complexities of the process hegemony. In using hegemony theoretically and methodologically in this study, certain theoretical points are observable within the process of analysis. By applying the analysed hegemonic ideology and following the broad narrative of hegemony in American society this study did not just identify the points at which superhero narratives engaged ideologically with hegemony, but also showed where they struggled to engage with the ideology and were silent. The most glaring absence in the superhero narratives is the lack of engagement within the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As Chapter 6 showed Hurricane Katrina marks the crucial moment when the American Dream of Security is proven invalid to American Society and the hegemony of the Right is undone. This chapter takes this absence of Hurricane Katrina within the superhero narratives as the starting point to explore the theoretical considerations of both popular culture's engagement with the process of hegemony and the process of hegemonic change itself within contemporary society.

The Crisis of Catastrophes: 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina

In the years 2001 to 2008 two American disasters stand out as important moments in the history of the United States; the 9/11 attacks of 2001 and Hurricane Katrina of 2005. Both these disasters play crucial roles in the process of hegemony. As Chapter 4 has shown the hegemony of the Right and ideology of the American Dream of Security emerged in response to 9/11. That same hegemony and ideology comes to an end with the disaster of Hurricane Katrina as detailed in Chapter 6. While these disasters make physical and material changes to American society, it is the

articulations of these disasters within the process of hegemony that creates ideological change. While both disasters create a force for hegemonic change, they are very different events and have very different hegemonic outcomes and expression within popular culture. Exploration of these differences and similarities and examination of how the events were detailed in superhero narratives leads to theoretical considerations about the concept of hegemony and its role in contemporary society.

In both cases these events are on a scale that Rhee points out are catastrophic in terms of death, tragedy and financial loss (Rhee 2006 pp.582-584). The death toll of 9/11 was around 2,700 (Hartocolis 2011 p.A20). The death toll for Hurricane Katrina is more problematic because there is a degree of confusion because of the much higher number of people who were caught in the disaster, however the toll is currently at 1833 (Newman 2012). In physical space and people affected by the disaster Hurricane Katrina is of a larger scale. The area of devastation, the blast zone, of Hurricane Katrina was bigger than the atomic bombings of Hiroshima or Nagasaki (Wells 2006 cited in Perkins Izard 2010 p.2). Hurricane Katrina resulted in the displacement of 1.2 million people who left before the Hurricane hit and a second wave of evacuees of 100,000 to 120,000 people who were unable to leave before the Hurricane hit (Nigg, Barnshaw, Torres 2006 p.113). The economic costs of both catastrophes are difficult to measure. However the insurance industry ranks Hurricane Katrina as the most costly single event in US history (Rhee 2006 p.584). The Insurance Information Institute claims that insurance losses for 9/11 totalled US \$40 billion while the insurance losses for Hurricane Katrina totalled US \$45 billion (in 2010 dollars) (Insurance Information Institute 2011). \$80 billion in property (Powell 2007). Hallegattae claims that the losses of fixed capital for Hurricane Katrina was US \$107 million, however the unique nature of each disaster makes clarifying financial cost difficult (Hallegatte 2008, p.786). While 9/11 resulted in more deaths and had a more dramatic narrative, it is Hurricane Katrina that was economically bigger.

9/11 as an historic event is well represented in the superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America. It was articulated immediately after it occurred in the 2001 and 2002 Avengers comics detailed in Chapter 4 in which the supervillian Kang attacked America and destroyed Washington DC. 9/11 was the starting point for the

relaunched 2002 *Captain America vol.4 #1* which depicted 9/11 and its aftermath in the comic. While DC Comics took a different approach to Marvel and did not specifically mention 9/11 within the Batman narrative, Chapter 4 has shown that the Batman narrative was ideologically supportive of the American Dream of Security after the 9/11 attacks. 9/11 was also represented in later superhero comics that reflected on the event, for example Marvel Comics *Civil War* series of 2006-2007 which used the Stanford disaster as a metaphor for 9/11. While the articulations about what 9/11 has meant has changed within the superhero narratives over time, it has been well represented and articulated.

While 9/11 has been represented within the superhero narratives within this sample, Hurricane Katrina was not. Trying to explain why an ideological point or event was not presented is an inherently open task. Analysis of popular culture text often look at societal reasons based on power on why certain narratives and perspectives are not covered, for example a lack of focus of women's perspectives such as can be seen in the comics of this study could be explained by the patriarchal nature of society and the minimisation of women's experiences. In this case it simply might be that superhero narratives that focus on Hurricane Katrina would not be popular and therefore not sell comics. With this openness in mind, this chapter will keep its attempts to explain the absence of Katrina within the theory of hegemony and articulation. Within the Batman and Captain America narratives there are few articulations that could provide any sort of representation of Hurricane Katrina as an event. This is somewhat surprising in that the narrative of natural disasters is well within the scope of the superhero narrative.

Kading made the point that superhero narratives are well positioned to explore the Good versus Evil paradigm of the War on Terror (Kading 2005). Likewise superhero narratives are well positioned to explore natural disasters. In the natural disaster superhero narrative the superheroes are able to represent the combined efforts of society to confront a mindless force of great power. The mindless villain archetype can be found throughout the history of the superhero narrative, for example the mindless villain Doomsday who killed Superman within the Death of Superman storyline from 1992. The genre of superhero comics have often borrowed from the horror and monster genres using the Lovecraftian tradition of monsters from other dimensions whose motivations are incomprehensible to humanity, and the giant

monster such as Godzilla who can act as direct metaphors for disasters, manmade or natural.

This type of narrative is presented within the timeframe of this study in the 2001 pre-9/11 *Avengers vol.3 #39* and *#40*. In this narrative the Avengers saved a Greek town in which the residents had been turned into versions of the Hulk and later combined to create a Hulk of monstrous size. The giant Hulk represents the mindless and forceful nature of a natural disaster while the Avengers represent the combined efforts of society when confronted with disaster. In their attempt to defeat this Hulk the Avengers were mindful of the innocent Greek residents of the town who made up the Hulk, reinforcing the point that society in the face of disaster should focus on saving lives.

Different considerations need to be taken into account in understanding why superhero narratives did not explore Hurricane Katrina as an event. The lack of direct commentary and representation of Hurricane Katrina in superhero narratives needs to be considered alongside the issue of the production process of superhero comics. The production timeframe of superhero comics is from three to four months so a logical argument could state that Hurricane Katrina is absent because there was no time to respond to the event within the comics. *Detective Comics*, *Batman* and *Captain America vol.5* were in the midst of major storylines which would have had to be suspended, abandoned or altered to provide space for commentary on Hurricane Katrina. However, it should be noted that the same restrictions were in place during 9/11 and Marvel managed to present representations of 9/11 within *the Avengers vol.3* storyline of 2001 and 2002 and provide direct commentary in *Spider-man vol.2 #36*. This focus on production timeframes also does not explain why Hurricane Katrina is not represented later in this study. Whereas the comic book Industry came together to mark 9/11 and raise money with *9-11 Artists respond volume one* and *9-11 The World's finest comic book writers and artists tell stories to remember volume two*, in January 2002, no such action occurred for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

It is possible that Marvel and DC Comics approached the disaster of Hurricane Katrina in the same way that DC Comics approached 9/11, avoiding direct commentary and providing escapism from the disaster for the reader. However, even though DC Comics approached 9/11 in this way, the Batman narrative still

reproduced the hegemony of the Right and the ideological articulation of Security as Success after 9/11.

Schama (2010) suggested the question should not be why did superhero narratives not explore and represent Hurricane Katrina, but more broadly why has Hurricane Katrina been so rarely represented in American popular culture in general. Writing five years after the disaster, Schama observed that fictional representations of the event were almost non-existent with the exception of a few films. In trying to answer the question of this absence Schama suggested that the themes and protagonists of Hurricane Katrina as a narrative; governmental mismanagement and nature, make for poorer fictional material than the terrorists of 9/11 (Schama 2010). While superhero narratives might struggle with government mismanagement, nature as a protagonist is within the conventions of the superhero narrative.

Schama's point about the narrative weakness of the themes and protagonists of Hurricane Katrina leads to a consideration of the narrative suitability of articulations of the event. In natural disasters of the past such as the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, Rhee saw the common articulation of disasters as random events or acts of God (Rhee 2006). Rhee noted however that the perception of these events had been changing in contemporary society, influenced by the concept of risk (Rhee 2006 p.581). Rhee's point was that society and government in particular needed to be prepared for catastrophe. In his analysis the Bush Administration was deserving of the blame of the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina because it had the responsibility and ability to prepare for it.

What Rhee is referring to is the notion of Beck's Risk Society (1992). Beck's work suggests that in modern society how risk is perceived has changed, technological advances have put society both at risk of more manmade catastrophes, but also has changed the perception of natural catastrophe. Natural catastrophes are now perceived through a lens of society's ability to respond to them. The technological advances of modern society suggest that natural disasters should be mitigated by society. Beck makes clear that this perception has become part of the 'everyday consciousness of risk' (Beck 1992, p.28). Beck makes the point that as 'risks multiply, the pressure grows to pass oneself off as *infallible*' (Beck 1992, p.176), however that position

ensures that when catastrophe occurs, regardless if it is manmade or natural then, that the *infallible* will be blamed.

It is the concept of risk which altered the nature of the articulation of Hurricane Katrina in comparison to the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. In the years between these events social perception of the responsibility of governments to be prepared and respond to catastrophes had grown. The Bush Administration had contributed to this growing perception of responsibility by positioning itself at the heart of the concept of Security as Success after 9/11. Rhetorically the Bush Administration spoke of the safety of Americans and in its policies it assumed the responsibility for major disasters as issues of national security (Sylves 2006 p.29). It was this ideological and political linkage with Security and the changing nature of risk which made the Bush Administration particularly vulnerable to articulations of incompetence and mismanagement in the wake of Katrina.

In a vulnerable position around the concept of risk, the Bush administration had also lost its hegemony over the news media. The news media in the aftermath of 9/11 and the war in Iraq had been drawn into the hegemonic bloc of the Right. The news media saw its role at this time as providing support for the Bush Administration during war and worked to silence dissent (Berman 2007 p.220-222). In this closer relationship the news media had advantages such as having journalist embedded with military units in the invasion of Iraq. The news media sustained criticism of their closeness to the Bush Administration within civil society. When the extent of the misleading and misinformation that had lead to the Iraq war become public, the news media became more critical of the Bush Administration. In the reporting of the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, the new media were quite open in their articulations of attack against the Bush Administration, abandoning objective reporting and embraced advocacy in reporting (Perkins, Izard 2010 p.6-8)

The media coverage of Hurricane Katrina developed over time. The first 24 hours were dedicated more to stories of compassion and survival (Stemple 2010). As the images of Americans in New Orleans in chest deep water, huddling in groups and pleading for rescue (Dyson 2006) reached the American people, the magnitude of FEMA and the Bush Administration's failure to respond to the crisis become clear. The media reporting on Hurricane Katrina had significant issues. At the beginning of

the catastrophe there seemed to be some political division within the stories that were being reported (Man 2010 p.73). False information that demonised the survivors of Katrina was reported by both politicians (Valery White 2006 p.41-42) and the new media (Tierney, Bevc, Kuligowski 2006). However, the articulation of the Bush Administration as ultimately responsible became a dominant theme of the media (Atkeson, Maestas 2012p.65-66) and eventually united both the Right and Left of the American news media.

The Bush Administration had faced similar articulations before. In the wake of 9/11 opponents of the Administration had attempted to articulate an argument of incompetence and mismanagement contributing to the crisis of 9/11. An example of this discourse within the timeframe is Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004). In response to the articulation of blame for Hurricane Katrina the Bush Administration praised the efforts of FEMA (Zogby 2008 p.157), attempted to shift blame to other levels of government (Man 2010 p.78) and in a last ditch attempt to resist the articulation of blame offered a limited apology (Fisher Liu 2007). While the Bush Administration was able to combat this articulation after 9/11, it was not successful in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Political mismanagement and incompetence within the framing on natural disasters has little to offer the superhero narrative. Other forms of popular culture however could make use of the plot points of political mismanagement and incompetence. One issue that might affect representations of Katrina is the complexity of the concept of risk within the narrative of natural disasters. Popular culture has explored the idea of corruption contributing to disaster, for example the film *The Towering Inferno* (1974) in which an electrical engineer of the world's tallest building cuts corners on its construction to save money which directly contributes to the fire that engulfs the building. In the case of the articulations around risk and blame in Hurricane Katrina, the issue is not corruption but failure by incompetence which might simply lack the drama needed for a protagonist in popular culture. In the same way that Chapter 5 showed that Security as an articulation of success is problematic for the open narrative of superhero comics, risk is a problematic concept for not only superhero narratives possibly but other mediums of popular culture.

News Media and the end of the Bloc of the Right

The news media's deference to the Bush Administration after 9/11 and during the Iraq War (Berman 2007 p.220-222) helped to secure and maintain the hegemony of the Right up until Hurricane Katrina. The advocacy in the wake of Katrina and the articulation against the Bush Administration had a major effect on the hegemony of the Right. With the Bush Administration wrong footed, possibly because they did not perceived the narrative of risk that would separate Hurricane Katrina from 9/11, the news media's articulation was able to effect the hegemony of the Right. The nature of the manoeuvre involved the changing nature of the antagonism within American society and the positioning of the Bush Administration as the Other. After 9/11 the Bush Administration were positioned in opposition to the Other; the terrorists responsible for the attacks. This positioning enabled the Bush Administration to articulate the American Dream of Security and assemble the hegemony of the Right after 9/11. With this hegemony in place the Bush Administration was able to conduct the War on Terror as the project of this hegemony.

Historically the Other in the case of natural disaster is the disaster itself. This articulation has such a strong history that after Hurricane Katrina this articulation of the Other could be seen on t-shirts sold to tourists in New Orleans that gendered and sexualised the Hurricane (Mascomer, Mallinson, Seale 2011).

In the case of 9/11 the terrorists were strong candidates for the position of Other. The terrorists had articulated their opposition to America and their terrorist act was intended. Their agency was recognised within the explanation of the attack and Bush in his speech of the 20th September had referenced their hate for America. On the other hand, Hurricane Katrina was unable to articulate a position as a storm had no intent. The only possible way to articulate intent for the Hurricane would have been to invoke the intent of God. Positioning God as the Other would have been a ridiculous articulation for the Bush Administration. However, God's intent had been articulated previously by Bush. After 9/11, God was articulated on the side of American hegemony. The weakness of Hurricane Katrina's potential for the role of oppositional Other in addition to the growing perception of risk were significant vulnerabilities of the Bush Administration's ideological leadership of American society.

This manoeuvre by the news media to position the Bush Administration as the Other in opposition to American society illustrates Smith's explanation of the concepts of equivalence and difference in the Laclau and Mouffe model of hegemony. Smith states, 'In some contexts, political forces that have become stabilized in terms of a logic of equivalence representation will be displaced by other forces attempting to impose a logic of difference counter-representation' (Smith 1998 p.89).

The hegemony of the Right was based on an American US versus a terrorist THEM in opposition across the antagonism. The ability of the hegemony of the Right to include so much of American society within the Bloc was based on the discursively constructed terrorist as the anti-American, a purely negative identity (Laclau Mouffe 2001 p.128). The hegemonic bloc in America is an articulated chain of equivalence (Smith 1998 p.89). In the years after 9/11 the strength of this hegemony and the constituted groups of the bloc waned as the articulated concept of the THEM/terrorist/anti-American lost some saliency in American society. This weakening of the bloc and the articulation of the THEM/terrorist/anti-American is in part caused by groups within American society that were within the bloc after 9/11, positioning themselves in opposition to the Bush Administration (although not necessarily attempting to articulate the other elements in opposition into an opposing articulated chain of equivalence). This study has shown that some superhero narratives covered in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 were part of this opposition. This explanation of the process of hegemony in American society sits within the concept of Gramsci's war of position. What occurs after the articulation of Hurricane Katrina is what Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe would refer to as an organic crisis.

The war of position from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina shows the hegemony of the Right waning, but it is the news media's hegemonic manoeuvre of positioning the Bush Administration in opposition to American society that ends the hegemony of the Right. Ideologically Hurricane Katrina as articulated by the American news media proves that the hegemonic ideology of the American Dream of security is not psychologically valid. This articulation is only possible because of the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina.

Superhero comic books, like other forms of fictional popular culture engage in the war of position, but in the end they are not involved in the articulation of Hurricane

Katrina that causes the end of the hegemony of the Right. It is possible that Hurricane Katrina acted as a catalyst in this change, but regardless, this case study casts doubt on the ability of superhero narratives to be part of actual hegemonic change. They contribute to opposition to the hegemony of the Right, but at the moment of opportunity for change they are not part of the process. They do not express the articulation of the Bush Administration's blame for the catastrophe that is Hurricane Katrina.

Popular culture and hegemony

A possible explanation for the lack of articulation and representation of Hurricane Katrina in popular culture has already been offered in this chapter, that timeframes of production mean that they are too slow to respond to events that shift the hegemonic discourse. Another explanation is that popular culture is more focused on ideological progression and construction.

The superhero narratives of this study have shown a clear ability to engage in reproduction of hegemony as was seen in the reproduction of Security as Success. Both the Captain America and Batman narratives presented the articulation of the superhero mission as saving Americans. Both narratives also showed the ability to critique and challenge later in the timeframe of this study with critiques of the war in Iraq and ultimately challenging the idea of legitimate torture. While the comics do not express the articulation which ends the hegemony of the Right that emerges after Katrina, that the American Dream of Security is invalid and the Bush Administration has failed, they do engage with ideology after Hurricane Katrina.

Superhero narratives engage with Laclau's concept of the 'myth' in the process of hegemony after Hurricane Katrina. Myth is where a vision of an alternative hegemony and ideology that is not yet 'real' is presented in the narrative (Montesano Montessori 2011 p.172). After Hurricane Katrina the Captain America and Batman narratives focus on the ideological components of the American Dream, engaging in a more open contest of articulation of meaning. For example, the House of M narrative uses the changing of reality to articulate against wealth and fame as legitimate success. The *Captain America* and *Batman* comics concern themselves

with ideological change, in *Captain America* the creation of new Captain America representing the creation/renewal of the American Dream and in *Batman* the concept of a core ideal of Batman that must resist challenge and outside articulation. Even the more reflective *Civil War* which attempt to put the years of the American Dream of Security into a historical context does so in an attempt to move beyond these articulations looking to a promising future.⁹

In the case of superhero comics there are narrative conventions that can work to restrict this engagement with myth. As Chapter 1 noted Dittmer (2007), Eco and Chilton (1972) made the point that superhero comics cannot move beyond the need to represent the world of the reader which means it struggles to present a future world within the parameters of concept of Laclau's myth. That does not mean that it is impossible, it is just that the narrative cannot stay within the myth, but must return to the representation of the world of the reader. For example, in *Captain America* Bucky becomes the new Captain America and is accepted by the fictional American society within the comic in 2008. This manages to present a positive message about change and hope in American society that supports the renewal of the American Dream within the Obama campaign and election. The fact that it is inevitable that Steve Rogers will return from the dead and reclaim the role of Captain America does not dilute the power of the message of the Captain America comic in 2008 within that moment.

Even in storylines in which the myth is not temporally achieved, the open narrative of the superhero and the inability of the superhero to achieve their mission (the permanent achievement of the myth) intersect to create an ongoing tension within the narrative. This tension is personified in the struggle of the superhero to achieve their mission which articulates that the mission is worth fighting for. The superhero cannot make the myth real, but the ongoing struggle to achieve the myth gives it a sense of worth for the reader. The results of this case study into popular culture suggest that popular culture does not give a full picture of the process within hegemony. Partially this is because popular culture is forward looking, engaging in the depiction of myth in the process of hegemony.

⁹ Outside of the timeframe of this study the Civil War narrative continues in three more storylines, Secret Invasion, Dark Reign and Siege. Siege ends with the start of the Heroic Age in which the superheroes are returned to their position on the side of a positive American hegemony.

Crisis and the vacuum of hegemony

The Bush Administration losing its position of intellectual leadership within American hegemony post Hurricane Katrina creates a crisis of authority. The exposure of the ideology of the American Dream of Security which had justified the actions of the Bush Administration as invalid creates a crisis of ideology. Historically we know the outcome of this crisis, the ideology of the American Dream of Hope becomes hegemonic with the election of Barack Obama in November 2008. Before the emergence of the American Dream of Hope in 2008 America is caught in a period of crisis that Gramsci described as, 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born' (Gramsci 1971 p. 276). There is a vacuum of ideological leadership and of clear ideology. Gramsci suggested that these moments of crisis within a society are dangerous, that if they are not resolved it creates the space for charismatic leaders to seize control (Gramsci 1971 p.211). Smith saw that within these moments of crisis, ideological positions within society become more fluid and 'vulnerable to political interventions' (Smith 1998 p.65). What ensures that America does not descend into a deepening crisis is the ideological and historical strength of the American Dream within American civil society.

Smith states that even though the field of articulation is more open at the moment of crisis and logically an infinite number of articulations are possible, the reality is, articulations have limitations:

Some interpretations will have more credibility than others thanks to the ways in which they draw upon already normalized common-sense ideologies and traditions of domination and resistance, and thanks to their embodiment within authoritative institutions (Smith 1998 p.65).

In the case of American society post-Katrina it is the tradition of the American Dream, its embodiment in the social and civil structures of American society and its progressive history that ensures a level of stability. The ideological component of Equality within the American Dream becomes a privileged nodal point within the articulation of Hurricane Katrina. The majority of victims of Hurricane Katrina were poor African Americans (Dyson 2006 p.2). The images that Americans saw of Hurricane Katrina, of people huddled on street corners, dead bodies floating down

streets were predominately images of African Americans. These images served to reignite Equality as an issue in American society, as issue that had been minimised within the hegemony of the Right after 9/11.

The ideological concept of Equality has had a powerful position within the American Dream historically. As Chapter 3 of this thesis detailed, issues of Equity in American history stretch all the way back to the War of Independence, the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement (Cullen 2003). Each of these moments called upon Equality as a powerful part of the functional ideology. Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream' speech specifically evoked the American Dream and helped to strengthen the issue of equality's place within the national ideology (Cullen 2003 p.126). The issue of Equality and access to the American Dream went beyond the articulations of the Left, but became a central element of the ideology shared across American society. On the Right Ronald Reagan's championing of the success of Cuban born refugee Mirra de Perales who became the owner of a \$5 million business (Reagan 1987) strengthened his own articulation of success as wealth by drawing of the nodal point of Equality. George W. Bush was also part of this narrative in his appointment of Colin Powell as the first African American to the position of Secretary of State and Condoleezza Rice as the first woman to the position of National Security Advisor after his 2000 election victory. Equality as a powerful element of the American Dream that can articulate the American Dream as progressive project is a part of mainstream American society. The images of the victims of Hurricane Katrina reminded American society that Equality was still an issue.

In the vacuum of leadership and ideology, this element of the American Dream becomes the nodal point. In this way an understanding of American history can be presented that challenges the idea of Barack Obama as the driving force of the American Dream of Hope and instead privileges the power of the concept of Equality. In the democratising of hegemony it is other elements of American society including superhero comic books to a degree, who make Equality the nodal point, that create the political landscape post-Hurricane Katrina. Jenkins and Cos state Obama's articulations and ideology of the American Dream had been consistent throughout his political career (Jenkins, Cos 2010) dating as far back as his book *Dreams of my Father* published in 1995. In other words it is not Obama who articulates the American Dream to suit the landscape of American hegemony, but

American hegemony that shifts towards the position of Obama. As such it can suggest that deeper understanding of the Obama election victory needs to include the movement in American society to reassert the hegemony of Equality post Hurricane Katrina. This suggests that in studies of hegemony the ideological components, the nodal points, need specific attention for a deeper understanding of the process and outcomes of hegemony.

This approach is consistent with the direction of Laclau and Mouffe's concept of hegemony. Their work seeks to remove the contest of hegemony from the exclusivity of the fundamental classes. This case study suggests that specific focus on the history, content and narrative of the ideology of hegemony over time will reveal a deeper understanding of the process. Studies in hegemony such as Williams' examination of subversion in superhero comics (1994) make the error of not identifying the ideology. Identification of the ideology and its deconstruction into ideological components allows the narrative of the ideology to be followed which in turn reveals the relationships and strength between and of ideological components and the groups involved in society.

This approach helps to answer a question that arises from the result of this study, why did superhero narratives restrain themselves in the ideological support of America at war? In the past superhero narratives had been at the forefront of wartime propaganda that sought to dehumanise and position America's opponents as the Other. In World War II superhero comics presented the Japanese as racist caricatures, 'Ghastly yellow demons with fangs, claws or buck tooth little monkeys with oversized spectacles' (Wright 2001 p.45). During the the Korean War Communist officers were depicted as inhuman and brutal (Savage 1990 p.54). Even in the unpopular Vietnam War the Vietnamese were shown to be brutal including *Tales of Suspense Vol 1 #61* of 1965 in which Captain America defeats a Viet Cong general who is also a sumo wrestler.

Chapter 5 shows that superhero comics during the war in Afghanistan and Iraq actively avoided the sort of racist and dehumanising depictions of America's enemies that had been common in the history of the medium. America had changed and the comics had changed with it. In a multicultural America of 2001 the ideological concept of Equality had become so powerful that the sort of propaganda of

America's war time past did not have a place in superhero comics in the War on Terror. Even though the ideology of the American Dream of Security was at the height of its hegemony the superhero comics were still restrained by the historic power of Equality as an ideological concept.

Catastrophe, Crisis and Hegemony

The last theoretical discussion point that is drawn for the results of this study is the importance of catastrophe. The results of this study show the process of hegemony, the reproduction of ideology, the critique and challenge and the construction of a new ideology. While superhero narratives do not show the whole progression of hegemony, this study attention to the contest of hegemony outside of the comics has shown the boarder narrative of hegemony. Within this case study, the two catastrophes of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina are the only moments when hegemony is established or when it ends. The usually process of articulation within American society are not able to create or usurp hegemony; it is only the articulations around catastrophe that make fundamental hegemonic change.

A question can be raised about what would have been the progression of American hegemony if Hurricane Katrina did not occur. The popularity of the Bush Administration had declined, but the issue of Security had been strong enough for to secure another Presidential term in 2004. Would the hegemony of the Right have continued to wane if there had been no Hurricane on the 29th August 2005? Was Hurricane Katrina merely a catalyst of hegemonic change that was already going to occur?

The fact that moments of catastrophe mark the only points at which that hegemony can be defeated or can be born in this case study suggest that this should be looked at more closely when examining the contest that is articulation within society. The ideological and political horizons of contemporary society have narrowed since the end of history as detailed by Fukuyama (1994). The ideological space between the Left and the Right has narrowed to the point that at times the two sides seem indistinguishable. As such it might mean that there is simply not much ideological ground for these two groups to contest. In western society both the mainstream Left

and the Right have adopted similar political and economic ideologies. This narrowing of the ideological parameters may make hegemonic change such a difficult process that change is only possible in catastrophic moments. The narrow ideological contest is opened up by catastrophe that cuts across the articulations within society.

There is a significant difference between the hegemonic effects of both catastrophes on American society. The articulations of 9/11 create both a new hegemony of the Right and a new ideology of the American Dream of Security with the privileged nodal point of Security as success. The articulations of Hurricane Katrina however end the hegemony of the Right and discredit the concept of Security as Success. In the case of an emerging hegemony there is a need amongst the intellectual class to explain the new ideology to the society. As such the event, but more specifically the ideology that has been articulated from the event, needs to be expressed by the intellectuals in society. This can be seen in the DC Comics after 9/11. Even though DC chose to not present the event of 9/11 and instead provided escapism, the DC Comics still presented the ideology of the new hegemony within their comics. For example after 9/11 there was the articulation that Batman's mission was not revenge, but Security for the people of Gotham.

In the case of a hegemony coming to an end, such as the articulation of Hurricane Katrina in American society, there is no new ideology for intellectuals to express. As such the intellectual task becomes the creation of ideology, the use of myth to imagine the next ideology to develop in society. With no new ideology form in the articulation of a catastrophe, the catastrophe is less likely to need to be articulated. In the case of 9/11 it can be argued that a depiction and explanation of 9/11, in accordance with the emerging hegemony is something that the society would both need and want to consume. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, there is no need to depict Hurricane Katrina or explain the event to consumers. Rather, for the comic books that do engage with societal ideology directly it would be more likely that they would engage with the hegemonic task at hand, the use of myth to imagine the next ideology. In other words the reason that Hurricane Katrina is not represented ideologically in the superhero narratives of this study is that there is no hegemonic ideology that emerges from the articulations of Hurricane Katrina.

Conclusion

In the quest to answer the research topic of this thesis, the ability of superhero narratives to reproduce, critique challenge and contest dominant ideologies, hegemony as a theoretical concept was used. The case study of this these involved both the examination of superhero narratives but also broader analysis of the narrative of hegemony in American society. The analysis of this study has brought forward some theoretical contributions involving the role of popular culture within hegemony, hegemony as a tool of analysis and hegemony as process in contemporary Western society.

While superhero comic books, specifically the narratives of the characters of Batman and Captain America were the sample of this study, the results suggest that the role of popular culture in the process of hegemony can have restrictions not just because of the narrative conventions of the specific medium, but because of the theme and concepts of the discourse itself. Certain articulations within the hegemony may not suit the narratives of popular culture which therefore restricts the ability of popular culture to engage the ideology. When analysing popular culture it is not simply a matter of what the product presents about dominant ideology, but also what it cannot present, it cannot engage with. To be able to explore this within popular culture it is necessary to adopt the methodology of this thesis and identify and deconstruct the hegemony ideology. This identifies the articulations in play of the ideological components, which can be used as a tool to see if they are able to be part of the particular medium of popular culture that is being examined.

The production processes of popular culture as consumer products also need to be taken into account when evaluating their engagement with hegemony. If hegemony undergoes quick changes then the production time of popular culture products may mean that they are not able to engage with the issues within the time of change.

Superhero comics' inability to engage with Hurricane Katrina as an event does suggest that popular culture might be more suited to an engagement with hegemony that is forward looking, that seeks to work within the vein of the Laclau's concept of Myth, presenting potential ideologies of the future. As such the reason that popular

culture does not engage with Hurricane Katrina is that the event marks the end of the hegemony of the Right. Because of this, popular culture is quick to move forward and build toward the next ideology, in this case the American Dream of Hope. Popular culture is best suited to this role because of its narrative issues and production. In addition then, to the concepts of reproduction, critique, challenge and contest; the concept of construction should be added. Even when popular culture seems to be reviewing the past, it is doing so in a way that seeks to contribute to the construction of the ideology of the present through the myth of the future.

In regard to studies of hegemony, the results suggest that Laclau and Mouffe's liberation of hegemony from the two fundamental classes should be continued in a practical way to a further focus on the narrative of hegemony itself. This study has shown that superhero narratives and possibly popular culture in general, do not give a full narrative of the process of hegemony. An examination that focuses on two specific groups in conflict also may not present the full narrative of hegemony as is shown in this case study of the political class of the Left and Right. Other groups within society are involved in the contest of hegemony but might not seek the position of hegemonic group, such as the news media after Hurricane Katrina. Superhero comics clearly engaged in critiques and challenges that contributed to the opposition to the American Dream of Security, but in the end it was the news media that was responsible for the hegemonic manoeuvre that ended the hegemony of the Right. This study suggests that an examination of ideology within the process of hegemony is needed to expose the full narrative of hegemony in society at anytime. This means that studies into hegemony need to ensure that the ideology is both identified, and deconstructed. Putting the ideology at the centre will then ensure that the changes and the groups that come to play major roles in the broad battle for hegemony are seen within the process.

Lastly, this case study suggests that the societal effect of catastrophes within the process of hegemony needs further research and attention. The concept of risk has changed the way catastrophes are perceived within society. The results of this study show that creation and ending of hegemony within the timeframe of this study only occurs in relation to a catastrophe. As the political spectrum within society has narrowed, the battle for hegemony is played out over a reduced ideological territory.

This might mean that hegemonic change is now only possible when an outside event of a catastrophic magnitude opens up the field of articulation that is hegemony.

Conclusion

This study sought to make contributions to the understanding of the societal role of superhero narratives and comic books as forms of popular culture, the process of hegemony in contemporary society and the position of the American Dream as a unique and powerful ideology of American society. The central issue of exploration was the ability of superhero narratives to reproduce, critique, challenge and contest dominant ideology. The specific superhero narratives of Batman published by DC comics, and Captain America published by Marvel Comics made up the sample of this study. Through an analysis of both the narrative of hegemony in American society and the ideological content of the comic books within the sample, a broader picture of both hegemony and superhero comics was made apparent. The superhero narratives' engagement with the process of hegemony has shown a multitude of examples of comic books that supported and reproduced dominant ideology; that resisted and challenged dominant ideology, and even at times was part of the construction of future ideologies. Before examining how the comics engaged with hegemonic ideology there are three points of note that have arisen from this thesis.

Firstly there is the question comic book fans always ask: Marvel or DC? In regards to engagement with hegemony, both publishing companies had very similar approaches. At times the products of both companies reproduced, critiqued and challenged the dominant ideology. In most cases the approach within the narratives of one company was reflected in the product of the other. Two specific differences do stand out, the Batman narratives ability to articulate support for torture and the Captain America narrative's overt engagement with the ideology of Barack Obama in 2007 and 2008. In both cases this difference might be due more to the specifics of the character and the creator, than the specific comic book publishing company. At the same time that some Batman comics were showing positive representations of torture, JLA comics also published by DC, were opposing torture. In regards to the

unique nature of the Captain America comics' engagement with Obama, it seems that the power of the writer Ed Bubaker, within the Marvel organisation may have given him more scope for individual agency to express his own political beliefs (Huston 2010) than is often the case in the collective creation of comics.

A disappointing observation within the study was the significant reduction and minimisation of women throughout the superhero narratives after 9/11. Faludi (2008), stated that this was a broader issue and trend in American society after 9/11, which means the superhero comics experience is not unique. However the difference in the articulation of female superhero characters before and after 9/11, was dramatic. As was mentioned in the thesis the Avengers female leaders like the Wasp and the Scarlet Witch lost their position of leadership directly after 9/11. Instead of showing leadership they sought behind the scenes to support the male superheroes in their work to fight supervillians, and were shown to need the support of men to perform the tasks they had comfortably done before 9/11. Both characters in the years that followed were articulated in ways that both reduced the role of women within the comics and were generally negative in regards to female equality. The representation of Military women in characters like Ms Marvel, Spiderwoman and later the Black Widow, provided some positive perspectives of women. Disheartening is the observation that at the end of this study in both the Batman and Captain America narratives, women had not yet regained the position of positive articulation and leadership that they had enjoyed before 9/11.

The last point of note to mention before examining how the comics engaged with hegemonic ideology is an observation of one of the ways in which they did not. Murray (2011) shows that superhero comics were a major part of propaganda within America during World War II. Before the war, superheroes were more likely to combat street based criminals and thugs in the comics. Once the war started they were in combat with Axis military leaders as supervillians (Murray 2011, p.187). The enemies of America in the war were present in the comics as demonic racist caricatures (Wright 2001 p.45). Superhero comics during World War II provided 'some of the most extreme examples of caricature and rhetorical exaggeration found in propaganda and popular culture of the period' (Murray 2011, p.182).

These depictions in the comics were part of a process of Othering the enemy (Murray 2011 p.183). Bush in his speech of the 20th September 2001 (Bush 2001) engaged in a similar process of Othering of America's enemies in the War in Terror, as superhero comics had with America's enemies of World War II. As Chapter 4 detailed, the speech did not engage in racist caricatures but did position the terrorist as the Other associating them with totalitarianism and Nazism. Across the antagonism stood America, associated with Civilisation, Freedom, the other nations of the world and God. Kading suggested that superhero comics would be uniquely positioned to not only provide understanding of the event of 9/11 and the War on Terror, but the terrorist themselves through the character of the supervillian (2005 p.217).

As this thesis has shown, superhero narratives of Batman and Captain America did not engage in the process of Othering America's enemies in the War on Terror. While this might be somewhat understandable in the timeframe of the divisive issue of the War in Iraq, it is less understandable in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 when the American Dream of Security was at its apex. The one comic that does make use of Islamic terrorists as villains is *Captain American vol.4 #2* (Rieber, Cassaday 2002), which does not Other them, but more humanises them to a certain extent and attempts to explain how American had wronged them in the past.

The reason why superhero comics did not provide the propaganda support of Othering the enemy in the War on Terror is another area of study for exploration. This study is limited by its sample of the Captain America and Batman narratives. There may be other examples of the Othering of Islamic terrorists in superhero narratives that are not covered here. However, in attempting to answer why it is that Batman and Captain America comics do not engage in Othering the enemy, this thesis returns to the theory of hegemony and articulation of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). Since World War II the American Dream had undergone significant articulations of Equality, such as in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s. This articulation of Equality had emphasised an opposition to racism within American society that was not as strongly in place during World War II. Even though the American Dream of Security undermined the ideological concept of Equality, it did not totally remove it from American society. As Smith has pointed out, past articulations still have strength within society (Smith 1998, p.78). This strength of a

past articulation can be asserted on other articulations of the nodal point, restricting the potential of the new articulation. Hence, while issues of Equality had been minimised in the hegemony of the Right, it was still not possible to use racism and caricature to Other the terrorist enemy. This however does not still explain why superhero comics did not seek to Other the enemy in more ideological ways.

Mouffe makes the point that all art is political, it is just a matter of does it reproduce the ideology of the establishment or does it seek to critique and deconstruct it? (Mouffe et al 2001, p.99). This thesis suggests that there are degrees of reproduction. This study examined the superhero narratives of Captain America and Batman from 2001 to 2008. The core of the sample of the study involved 283 individual issues of *Detective Comics*, *Batman* and *Captain America*. Outside the core of the sample, but included in the analysis were the team books of the narratives of these two characters, *the Avengers* and *the JLA*, as well as the event series the characters starred in. This makes up an additional 240 comics. Not all of these comics engaged directly in the reproduction, critique, challenge or contest of dominant ideology. Those that did not show engagement with hegemony, with the articulations of the nodal points of the hegemonic ideology were not mentioned in the thesis. Because of this thesis specific focus on the American Dream and the hegemony of the Right from 2001 to 2005, other ideas of reproduction of the establishment were not covered. Undoubtedly, the comics of the sample that did not engage with the ideology in focus here, reproduced other elements of American society; for example the reproduction of the social normality of heterosexual relationships or the reproduction or the normality of the Western education system. In these ways these comics could reproduce the establishment. But in this study, the concept of hegemony examined always had a political orientation; it was concerned with ideology as part of political power. As such the diverse and multitude of expressions of establishment dominance were not the subject of this thesis.

Reproduction of the American Dream of Security and its privileged nodal point of Security as Success dominated the examples of reproduction in this study. This is of course affected by the fact that for most of this study the American Dream of Security was the dominant ideology and was therefore the ideology subject to reproduction. Within the comics of post 9/11 2001 and 2002, the subject of Chapter 4, there were many examples of the reproduction of both the event of 9/11 and the

ideology of the American Dream of Security as detailed in Bush's speech to the joint sessions of congress on the 20th September 2001. While DC Comics attempted to avoid depicting 9/11, the character of Batman was well suited to represent the ideology of the American Dream of Security. Of particular note as an example of reproduction was the articulation of Batman's mission as not revenge, but ensuring the safety of others. This was clearly articulated in *Detective Comics #765* (Rucka, Buchett 2002) published in December 2001. This articulation seems well suited to the superhero genre. The nodal point of Hard Work, specifically the militaristic Hard Work of the War on Terror was reproduced as well within both the Captain America narratives and Batman narratives after 9/11 and into 2003 and 2004.

Uniquely within the Batman narratives there was a positive representation of torture as part of the Hard Work to win the War on Terror. This was represented multiple times in the Batman narratives of 2003 and 2004 and appeared as late as August and September of 2005 in the War Crimes cross over series in *Detective Comics #809* and *#810* (Gabrych, Woods, 2005) and *Batman #643* and *#644* (Willingham, Camuncoli 2005). This representation did not appear in the Captain America narratives.

Dittmer's work has illustrated that nationalistic heroes like Captain America have the nation state at the centre of their narrative (2013). This thesis has certainly shown that the Captain America narrative was more likely to engage with hegemony than the Batman narrative. However, the fact that it was the Batman narrative that was able to explore torture as a positive element of the War on Terror suggests that nationalistic heroes such as Captain America might at times not be able to articulate these types of concepts because of the conflict with the personification of national morality. However, this needs further research and analysis beyond the limits of this study. While Captain America in the ongoing narrative did not suggest torture as a legitimate tool in the War against Terror, there are other versions of Captain America beyond the ongoing original that is the subject of this study. Exploration of the limits on nationalistic superheroes to explore immoral actions for moral ends would need further examination of other nationalistic superheroes.

The need to believe in the American ideology which was a task that President Bush gave to the American people in his 20th September 2001 speech, was illustrated

within the comics. Mostly this was through less direct articulations of superheros coming together in storylines such as the Avengers 2001 9/11 like battle with supervillain Kang for the World. It was also dealt with more directly such as in *Detective Comics #784 and #786* (Brubaker, Zircher 2003) of 2003 in which losing faith in the American Dream was described as a mental illness.

The intensity of the reproduction of the American Dream of Security in the superhero comics reduced as the hegemony of the Right waned within American society. By the end of 2005 the reproduction of the American Dream of Security had ceased within the superhero comics.

Critiques of, and challenges to the American Dream of Security, followed the opposite timeframe of the reproductions of the hegemony of the Right. They were extremely rare in 2001 and 2002, but became more common from 2003 until late 2005. The first critique chronologically was in *Captain America vol.4 #1 to #6* (Rieber, Cassaday 2002) which was published from April 2002, less than 8 months after 9/11. The substance of the critique, the questioning of America's innocence in relation to 9/11 calls for restraint in the Hard Work of the War on Terror, is enhanced by its context. Fundamentally the comic did not oppose the idea of Security as Success or the need for militaristic Hard Work in the War on Terror. The subversive point that the narrative makes, that America had contributed to the 9/11 attacks by conducting action overseas that were comparable to 9/11, was unusual in the context of American intellectual culture. In the broader media such articulations were dealt with harshly in an attempt to silence dissent (Berman 2007, pp.220-222). The critique in *Captain America vol.4 #1 to #6* was a unique articulation within the medium superhero narratives, and a rare articulation in media and popular culture at the time as well.

The critiques within the comics a little later in 2003 were clearly informed by the threat of war with Iraq and later by the war itself. These critiques were seen in *JLA #78, #79* (Kelly, Mahnke 2003), *#83* (Kelly, Cross 2003) and in *Avengers #65 to #70* (Johns, Coipel 2003) of 2003. These comics attempted to challenge the Bush Administration directly over the issue of the War in Iraq. Their challenge was not so much ideological, but more practical. These comics however articulated the concept of Truth as an important part of American society. They insinuated that the Bush

Administration was lying to the world about Iraq's supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction. These comics illustrate the points drawn from Dittmer (2007) and Eco and Chilton's works (1972) that the superhero comic cannot progress beyond the reality of the reader. In the cases of these challenges to the Bush Administration over the War in Iraq, each story explored some sort of dystopian occurrence, sometimes metaphorically like another planet at war, or less so such as the Red Skull directing American's foreign policy. However, in each case the issue is resolved by the superheroes and normality returns. However the normality depicted deserves more attention, it is often the normality of America without the threat of War with Iraq. The resolution itself also bears more attention as in most cases it is a call to the reader to act. In both the JLA narratives referenced here it is suggested that once the truth is known, civil society will address the issue and solve the problem of the militancy of the Bush Administration (metaphorically represented in both President Luther and the Alien dictator of another planet). The same sort of solution is mentioned in the Avengers story referenced here in which the Avengers pledge to keep the American Government accountable after the Red Skull is defeated. While the superhero narratives end at the same place they start, with a representation of the reader's world, the journey itself presents not only a critique of the problem at hand, but a solution.

These critiques however are more focused on the practical rather than the ideological. The Iraq War is the problem and American civil society is the solution. Within these narratives there is little challenge to the ideology of the American Dream of Security. Similarly, the Captain American story of *Captain America vol.4 #21-25* (Morales, Bachalo 2004) critiques the Bush Administration's military tribunals of illegal combatants and makes the case that Muslim people are important part of American Civil society. However, at the same time it justifies the War on Terror, even suggesting that Iraq did indeed have Weapons of Mass Destruction that could fall into the hands of terrorists.

In late 2004 and 2005 comics emerged that did more than critique the Bush Administration. They actively engaged in an ideological resistance to the hegemony of the Right and the articulation of the American Dream of Security. Specifically two Batman narratives, War Games of 2004 and 2005 and the Jason Todd storyline of 2005, challenged the notion of Security as Success and the militaristic Hard Work of

the War on Terror. *War Games* is drawn from the realities of the state of the Iraq War at the time of its publication. It articulates, via an obvious metaphor of Batman dealing with a gang war in Gotham, that the militaristic approach to the War on Terror (Iraq in particular) will make Americans less safe. The Jason Todd story articulates that the approach to the War on Terror that lacked both restraint and morality would have a damaging effect of the nature of American society itself. Most of the Batman and Captain America comics of this time also rejected torture as a legitimate tool in the War on Terror¹⁰.

The intensity of the critiques of the Bush Administration and the ideology of the American Dream of Security in these comic books entered the realm of ideological challenge. In both the *War Games* and Jason Todd storyline alternative articulations for the Hard Work of defending the American society are made.

Hurricane Katrina is the point at which American society ultimately turned against the Bush Administration. It is at this point that the ideological engagement within the superhero narratives changed as well. There were still articulations about the American Dream of Security after 2005 such as in the Civil War event series and Captain America comics. In these connected comics the fictional American society embraced Security over Freedom after a 9/11 like catastrophe. In a powerful metaphor Captain America was assassinated while in the custody of the American Government. The ideology of the American Dream of Security is not reproduced in Civil War in the hegemonic sense, but is presented from a position of hindsight. Published after Hurricane Katrina, Civil War sought to put the years of 2001 to 2005 into a historical context. In the real America, the concept of Security as Success which Civil War presented had already been discredited.

After Hurricane Katrina the superhero comics that engaged with ideology approached ideology within American society constructively. For example the *House of M* series within the Captain American narrative engaged in an ideological presentation of non-material Success. This sort of articulation of American ideological concepts engaged in the Laclau and Mouffe's concept of the *myth*. Myth is where a vision of an alternative hegemony and ideology that is not yet 'real' is

¹⁰ Within the Batman narrative there was still a pro-torture articulation in the aforementioned War Crimes series.

presented in the narrative (Montesano Montessori 2011 p.172). This was possible in the comics because the ending of the hegemony of the Right and the restrictive ideology of the American Dream of Security meant that the field of hegemony and articulation were more open.

The last superhero comics analysed in this study, the Captain American comics of 2007 and 2008 written by Ed Brubaker and the Batman comics of the same time written by Grant Morrison, further illustrated the use of myth in the construction of hegemony. Without a restrictive ideology both narratives were free to explore the process of hegemony within the comic. The open space for articulation and hegemony eventually gave way to the articulation of the Obama personified American Dream of Hope. The Captain America narrative worked metaphorically in line with the rise of Obama. The new Captain America, the former sidekick Bucky, created a new Captain America identity drawing on both the valued elements of the original and elements of Bucky's character. These combined to create a Captain America that was at the same time new and but also drawn from the historic Captain America ideal. Morrison's Batman comics also explored the concept of articulation and the ideal of America metaphorically. Batman battled against competing versions of his ideal represented in other characters, both villains and heroes. Morrison's work however is more elusive and less direct than Brubaker's making the analysis of Batman's metaphorical position much harder to interpret and much more unstable.

That is partially caused by the time frame of this study. The end date of December 2008 for the sample of comics was originally chosen because this study was interested in the ability of superhero comics to respond to dominant ideologies, but specifically interested in examples of superhero comics providing intellectual leadership on social and ideological issues.

By December 2008, Obama had assumed a position of hegemony and the more open ideology of the American Dream of Hope was common currency in American society. Therefore if superhero comics had contributed to this in some way, only the stories published before this date can be considered.

This deadline cuts across both the meta-narrative of the Marvel Universe and Morrison's run on Batman. The meta-narrative of the Marvel universes continues beyond the articulation of Security as Success in Civil War, to the failure of the

establishment to save the fictional America from alien invasion in *Secret Invasion* (2008-2009), to the emergence of villains in control of the hegemony of Marvel in *Dark Reign* (2008-2009), to the return of status quo of superheroes in their rightful place in *Siege* (2010) and the *Heroic Age* (2010). Likewise, Morrison's Batman extends beyond December 2008 in a narrative in which Batman is 'killed' and his former sidekick, Night Wing takes up the Batman identity. Like Bucky in Captain America, Night Wing takes the idea of Batman, that Bruce Wayne had protected in the Morrison comics, and adds his own unique elements (such as a flying batmobile). The same ideological message of renewal that works as a metaphor of Obama and the American Dream of Hope in Captain America is within the Batman narrative post 2008.

The important difference between the two for this study is the timeframe. This is where Brubaker's Captain America differs from these other narratives. Brubaker's final piece of the story *Captain America vol.5 #42* (Brubaker, Epting 2008) in which the transformation of Bucky into Captain America and the renewal of the American Dream is completed, is published in September 2008. This is two months before the Presidential elections in which Obama is elected. It is this timeframe that give Brubaker's Captain America a claim of intellectual leadership that both Morrison's Batman and the Marvel meta-narrative cannot match.

In conclusion, this study has shown that superhero comics can engage in the reproduction of dominant ideology, but also can at times critique, challenge and contest dominant ideologies within their narratives. By no means do all superhero comics do this, but there is enough evidence to suggest it is not an uncommon feature of the medium. Resistance to dominant ideology within comic books is within the same sort of limits as other forms of popular culture. They are likely to support dominant ideology in a society in which that ideology has become the norm. However, the distance of comics from the contest for hegemony and the niche element of the medium, gives superhero comic books an ability to fly under the radar of censure in their resistance to hegemony. They are likely to engage with social issues practically as well as ideologically. Occasionally superhero comics are able to attempt intellectual leadership and contribute to the process of hegemony in society.

References

Adkins, T & Castle, JJ 2013, 'Moving Pictures? Experimental evidence of cinematic Influence on Political Attitudes' *Social Science Quarterly*, viewed 3 January 2014, DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.12070

Atkeson, LR & Maestas, CD 2012, *Catastrophic Politics: how extraordinary events redefine perceptions of Government*, Cambridge University Press, New York

BBC News 2007, 'Comic hero Captain America dies', *BBC News*, 8 March 2007, viewed 2 February 2010 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6431619.stm>>

Beck, U 1992, *Risk Society: towards a new modernity*, Sage, London

Berman, M 2007, *Dark Ages America- the final phase of empire*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York

Bocock, R 1986, *Hegemony*, Ellis Horwood/Tavistock Publications, Sussex

Bovard, J 2003, 'Free-Speech Zone. The administration quarantines dissent' *The Conservative American*, 15 December 2003, viewed 3 December 2011 <<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/free-speech-zone/>>

Bovard, J 2004 'Quarantining dissent / How the Secret Service protects Bush from free speech' *San Francisco Chronicle* 4 January 2004, viewed 3 December 2011 <<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/Quarantining-dissent-How-the-Secret-Service-2816927.php>>

Brady, M 2009, *Marvel Sets Revenue Record for 2008*, *Newsarama*, 24 February 2009, viewed 3 Jan 2012 <<http://www.newsarama.com/comics/020924-MarvelQ4.html>>

Bragg, R 2004, *I Am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story*, Vintage Books, New York

Brooker, W 2000, *Batman unmasked : analysing a cultural icon*, Continuum, London

Bush, GW 2001 'Transcript of President Bush's Address', *CNN*, last modified 21 September 2001, viewed 12 January 2012, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>

Carpenter SW 2005, 'Authorship and the Creation of the Black Captain America', In J McLaughlin (ed) *Comics as Philosophy*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, pp.46-62

Clark, A 2009, 'Bernard Madoff set to spook partygoers this Halloween' *The Guardian*, 15 October 2009, viewed 4 November 2013, <<http://www.theguardian.com/business/andrew-clark-on-america/2009/oct/15/bernard-madoff-new-york>>

Coleman, J 1970, 'Civil Religion', *Sociological Analysis* , Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1970) , pp. 67-77

Comic Book Resources 2001, 'Marvel bids farewell to the Comics Code Authority, reveals the origin of Wolverine', *Comic Book Resources*, 17 May 2001, viewed 6 March 2014, <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=232>>

Coogan, P 2006, *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre*, MonkeyBrain Books, Austin.

Costello, M 2009, *Secret Identity Crisis: comic books and the unmasking of cold war America*, Continuum, New York.

Crehan, K 2002, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*, Pluto Press, London

Crockatt, R 2007, *After 9/11: Cultural dimensions of American global power*, Routledge, Abingdon

Cullen, J 2004, *The American Dream: the short history of an idea that shaped a nation*, Oxford University Press, New York

Cyriaque, L 2010, 'Ed Brubaker Talks Secret Avengers, Receiving Death Threats For Writing Captain America', *io9*, 24 April 2010, viewed 3 January 2012 <<http://io9.com/5523704/ed-brubaker-talks-secret-avengers-receiving-death-threats-for-writing-captain-america>>

Dallmayr, F 1987, 'Hegemony and democracy: a review of Laclau and Mouffe: hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics', *Philosophy Social Criticism*, July 1987 vol. 13 no. 3, pp.283-296

Davidson, A 1977, *Antonio Gramsci: towards an intellectual biography*, Merlin Press, London

Davis, W 2006, *Death's dream kingdom: the American psyche since 9-11*, Pluto Press, London

DeParle, J 2004, *American Dream: three women, ten kids, and a nation's drive to end welfare*, Viking, New York

Der Derian, J 2002 '9/11: before, after and in between' in C Calhoun, P Price & A Timmer (ed), *Understanding September 11*, New Press, New York, pp.177-190

Diez, T 2013, 'Normative power as hegemony', *Cooperation and Conflict*, June 2013, vol. 48, no. 2 pp.194-210

Dittmer, J 2005, 'Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics' , *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol.95, no.3, pp.626-643, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8306.2005.00478.x

Dittmer, J 2007, 'The Tyranny of the Serial: Popular Geopolitics, the Nation, and Comic Book Discourse.' *Antipode*, vol. 39, no.2, pp. 247-268

Dittmer, J 2011, 'Captain Britain and the narration of nation', *The Geographical Review*, vol.101, no.1 pp.71-87

- Dittmer, J 2013, *Captain America and the nationalist superhero: metaphors, narratives and geopolitics*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia
- Domhoff, WG 2006, *Who Rules America? Power, Politics and Social Change fifth edition*, McGraw Hill, Boston
- Dorfman ,A & Mattelart, A, 1991, *How to read Donald Duck: imperialist ideology in the Disney comic*, I.G. Editions , New York
- Dubose MS 2007, 'Holding out for a Hero: Reaganism, comic book vigilantes, and Captain America', *The Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol 40, no 6, pp.915-935
- Dugger, R 1983, *On Reagan: the man and his presidency*, McGraw-Hill , New York
- Dyson, ME 2006, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the color of disaster*, Basic Civitis, New York
- Eco, U & Chilton, N 1972, 'The Myth of Superman. Review of The Amazing Adventures of Superman.' *Diacritics*, Volume 2, Issue. 1, pp. 14-22.
- Ehrman, J 2005, *The Eighties: America in the age of Reagan*, Yale University Press, New Haven
- Elkstrom, S 2008, 'Taking Sides: Comics Industry for Obama', *Newsarama*, 1 Oct 2008, viewed 21 December 2013, <<http://www.newsarama.com/1164-taking-sides-comics-industry-for-obama.html>>
- Faludi, S 2008, *The Terror Dream: fear and fantasy in post 9/11 America*, Scribe Publications, Carlton North
- Fettinger, J n.d., *DeFlowering Gwen: Norman Robs the Cradle*, viewed 1 February 2014 <<http://www.spideykicksbutt.com/GreenwithEvil/DeFloweringGwen.html>>
- Fiorina, MP, Abrans SJ & Pope, JC 2001, *Culture War? The myth of a polarized America*, 3rd edition, Longman, Boston
- Fiske J 1992, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', In Lisa Lewis (ed), *Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Routledge, London, pp.30-49

Footman, T 2009, *The Noughties, a decade that change the world*, Crimson, Surrey

Ford S, Jenkins H 2009, 'Managing Multiplicity in Superhero Comics' in Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin (ed), *Third Person: Authoring and exploring vast narratives*, MIT Press, Cambridge

Fukuyama, F 1992, *The end of History and the last man*, Free Press, New York.

Gallup 2014, 'Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush', *Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush-Gallup Historical Trend*, view 16 February 2014, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>>

Gore Urges Black Congressmen To Help Heal Nation During Caucus Ceremony, 2001, *Jet*, 22 January 2001, Vol.6 no.4, p.4, retrieved from <<http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.uws.edu.au/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA69698430&v=2.1&u=uwsydney&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=1c00ac4a92d8b1d5cc9023d9c617ff27>>

Gramsci, A 1971, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, London

Greenberge, R 2008, 'Lex Luthor', in M Teitelbaum, S Beatty, R Greenburger, D Wallace, *The DC Comics Encyclopaedia*, DK Publishing, New York, pp.241-215

Gustines, G 2007, 'Captain America Is Dead; National Hero Since 1941', *The New York Times*, 8 March, viewed 2 February 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/08/books/08capt.html?_r=2>

Hack BE 2009, 'Weakness is a crime: Captain America and the Eugenic ideal in early Twentieth-Century America', in R Weiner (ed.), *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero*, MacFarland & Company, North Carolina, pp.79-89

Hallegatte, 2008, 'An Adaptive Regional Input-Output Model and its Application to the Assessment of the Economic Cost of Katrina', *Risk Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp.779-799, DOI: 10.1111/j.1539-6924.2008.01046.x

Hanson SL, White JK 2011 ‘ Introduction: the meaning and persistence of the American Dream’, in SL Hanson and JK White (ed.), *The American Dream in the 21st Century*, Temple University, Philadelphia, pp.1-16

Hanson, SL 2011 ‘Whose Dream: Gender and the American Dream’, in SL Hanson and JK White (ed.), *The American Dream in the 21st Century*, Temple University, Philadelphia, pp.77-104

Hartocollis A 2011, ‘ New Death Is Added To the Toll From 9/11’ , *The New York Times Late Edition (East Coast)*, 11 June, p.A20

Hayton C, Albright D 2009, ‘O Captain! My Captain!’, in R Weiner (ed), *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero*, MacFarland & Company, North Carolina, pp. 15-23

Hills M 2002, *Fan Cultures*, Routledge, London

Hitchens C, 2005, ‘ A War to Be Proud Of’, *The Weekly Standard*, viewed 16 February 2014, <<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/995phqjw.asp>>

Hochschild, JL 1995, *Facing Up to the American Dream: race, class and the soul of the nation*, University Press, Princeton

Insurance Information Institute 2011, *9/11 the tenth anniversary*, viewed 16th March 2014 <<http://www.iii.org/articles/911-the-tenth-anniversary--.html>>

Ives P 2005, ‘Language, Agency and Hegemony: A Gramscian response to Post-Marxism’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol.8, no.4, pp.455-468, DOI: 10.1080/13698230500204980

Jakes, J 1999, *American Dreams*, Signet, New York

Jenkins, KB, Cos, G 2010, ‘A Time for Change and a Candidate’s Voice: Pragmatism and the Rhetoric of Inclusion in Barack Obama’s 2008 Presidential

Campaign', *American Behavioral Scientist*, November 2010 vol. 54 no. 3, pp.184-202, doi: 10.1177/0002764210381706

Johnson, H 2003, *Sleepwalking through history: America in the Reagan years*, W.W. Norton, New York

Johnson, R 2011, 'Spoiler Was Gonna Die – Inside The DC Writer Meeting That Killed Stephanie Brown', *Bleeding Cool*, 15 July, viewed 1 August 2013 <<http://www.bleedingcool.com/2011/07/15/%E2%80%9Csome-kind-of-gang-war-in-gotham%E2%80%9D-and-%E2%80%9Cspoiler-was-gonna-die%E2%80%9D/>>

Jones, G 2005, *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters and the Birth of the Comic Book*, William Heinemann, London

Kading, T 2005, 'Drawn into 9/11, But Where Have all the Superheros Gone?', In J McLaughin (ed) *Comics as Philosophy*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson

Kaplan, A 2006, *Masters of the comic Book Universe Revealed!*, Chicago review Press, Chicago

Kilminster, R 1979, *Praxis and method : a sociological dialogue with Lukács, Gramsci and the early Frankfurt School*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London

Kimmage, MC 2011 ' The politics of the American Dream, 1980 to 2008' in SL Hanson and JK White (ed.), *The American Dream in the 21st Century*, Temple University, Philadelphia, pp.27-40

Klock, G 2002, *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why*, Continuum International, New York

Laclau, E & Mouffe, C 2001, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*, Verson, London

Levine, P & Pappasotiriou, H 2005, *America since 1945: The American Moment*, Palgrave, Macmillan

Lewis, J 1999, 'Reproducing political hegemony in the United States', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, vol.16, no.3, pp.251-267, DOI: 10.1080/15295039909367095

Liu, BF 2007, 'President Bush's major post-Katrina speeches: Enhancing image repair discourse theory applied to the public sector', *Public Relations Review*, 2007, vol.33 no.1, pp.40-48

Long, El 1985, *The American Dream and the Popular Novel*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston

Luckhurst, R 2010, 'Science Fiction and Cultural History', *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1 (March 2010), pp.3-15

Lyons, B 2009, 'Exclusive: Comics writer Grant Morrison turns Barack Obama into Superman', *The Daily Record and Sunday Mail*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/entertainment/celebrity/exclusive-comics-writer-grant-morrison-1007392>>

MacDonald, A & MacDonald, V 1976, 'Sold American: The Metamorphosis of Captain America.' *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol.10, no.1, pp. 249-258

Macomber, K, Mallinson, C, Seale, E 2011, "Katrina That Bitch!" Hegemonic Representations of Women's Sexuality on Hurricane Katrina Souvenir T-Shirts', *Journal of Popular Culture*, June 2011, vol.44, no.3, p.525(20

Mailer, N 1965, *An American Dream*, Andre Deutsch, London

Man, R2010, 'Government and Journalism in Crisis: blame to share', in R Izard, J Perkins (ed.), *Covering Disaster: Lessons from media coverage of Katrina and Rita*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, pp.71-84

Mannen, A 2014, '6 Fan Ideas So Good They Were Adopted by the Creators', *Cracked.com*, 7 January, viewed 1 February 2014 <http://www.cracked.com/article_20793_6-fan-ideas-so-good-they-were-adopted-by-creators_p2.html>

McAllister, M 1990, 'Cultural Argument and Organizational Constraint in the Comic Book Industry', *Journal of Communication*, vol.40, no.1, pp. 55-71

McAllister, M 2006, 'Ownership Concentration in the U.S. Comic Book Industry', in M McAllister, EH Sewell Jr, I Gordoan (ed.), *Comics and Ideology*, Peter Lang, New York, 99.15-38

McGuire J, 2007, *Holy Hegemony Captain!: Opposition to the dominant ideology of the American Dream in the Captain American comic book during the Reagan Era, 1980-1989*, Honours Thesis submitted to the University of Western Sydney.

McWilliams, OC 2009, 'Not Just another racist honkey: A history of racial representations in Captain America related publications', in R Weiner (ed.), *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero*, MacFarland & Company, North Carolina, pp 66-78

Miller, J 2010, 'Tea Party Jab to Be Zapped From Captain America Comic, Writer Says', *Fox News*, 10 February, viewed 3 January 2012, <<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/02/09/tea-party-reference-captain-america-removed/?test=latestnews>>

Montesano Montessori, N 2011, 'The design of a theoretical, methodological, analytical framework to analyse hegemony in discourse', *Critical Discourse Studies*, vol.8, no.3, pp.169-181

Mooney, D 2011, 'The Idea of Batman: Thoughts on Christopher Nolan and Grant Morrison's *Batmen...*', *Comic Buzz*, viewed 21 December 2013, <<http://comicbuzz.com/2011/06/the-idea-of-batman-thoughts-on-christopher-nolan-and-grant-morrison-batmen/>>

Morgan, D 2009, 'Captain America Killed Outside Courthouse', *CBS News*, 11 February, viewed 2 February 2012 <http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-207_162-2542461.html>

Morrison, G 2011, *Supergods: our world in the age of the superhero*, Jonathan Cape, London

Moser, J 2009, 'Madmen, Morons and Monocles: The Portrayal of the Nazis in Captain America', in R Weiner (ed.), *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero*, MacFarland & Company, North Carolina, pp. 24-35

Mouffe, C 1979, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in C Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci & Marxist Theory*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London

Mouffe, C 2002, 'Which public sphere for a democratic society?', *Theoria* (June 2002) p.55

Mouffe, C, Deutsche, R, Joseph, BW, Keenan, T 2001, 'Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension', *Grey Room*, No. 2 (Winter, 2001), pp. 98-125

MSNBC 2007, 'Death to 'America': Comic-book hero killed off', *MSNBC TV*, 8 March, viewed 2 February 2012 <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/17499797#.T3kIX9WaJ8F>>

Murray, C 2011, *Champions of the Oppressed?: superhero comics, popular culture, and propaganda in America During World War II*, Hamilton Press, Cresskill

NBC 2004, Exit poll - Decision 2004, *NBCNews.com*, 2014, viewed 16 February 2014, <<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/5297138/>>

New York Business Wire 2003, 'Global Sales of Marvel-Licensed Consumer Products Exceeded \$2 Billion in 2002', *New York Business Wire*, viewed 31 December 2011 <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=1875>>

Newman, S 2012, 'Hurricane Sandy vs. Hurricane Katrina', *New York Times online*, viewed 16 March 2014 <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/hurricane-sandy-vs-hurricane-katrina/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0>

Newsarama 2006, "Civil War" Comic Book - Joe Quesada Newsarama.com Interview - Article #13445', *wedon.info*, viewed 19 March 2014, <<http://www.whedon.info/Joss-Whedon-Civil-War-Comic-Book.html>>

Nicholls, KJ & Picou, S 2012, 'The Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Trust in Government', *Social Science Quarterly*, vol.94, Number 2, DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2012.00932

Nigg, JM, Barnshaw, J & Torres, MR 2006, 'Hurricane Katrina and the Flooding of New Orleans: Emergent Issues in Sheltering and Temporary Housing', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 604, Shelter from the Storm: Repairing the National Emergency Management System after Hurricane Katrina, (Mar., 2006), pp. 113-128

Nyberg, AK 1998, *Seal of Approval: the history of the comics code*, University Press of Mississippi, Mississippi

Obama, B 1995 *Dreams from my father: a story of race and inheritance*, Times books, New York

Obama, B 2006, *The audacity of hope : thoughts on reclaiming the American dream*, Crown publishers, New York

Olshevsky, G 1979, *Heroes from Tales of Suspense, Book one: Captain America*, Marvel Comics Group, New York.

Perkins, J & IZard, R 2010, 'In the Wake of Disaster: lesson learned', in R IZard, J Perkins (ed.) *Covering Disaster: Lessons from media coverage of Katrina and Rita*, Transaction Publishers, New Bruswick, pp.1-18

Pew Research Center 2008, *Public Attitudes Toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008*, March 19, viewed 1 August 2013 <<http://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/>>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2004, *Iraq Support Steady in Face of Higher Casualties*, 17 September, viewed 1 August 2013 < <http://www.people-press.org/2004/09/17/iraq-support-steady-in-face-of-higher-casualties/>>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2005, *More Optimism on Iraq, But Most Expect Long U.S. Stay*, 24 February, viewed 1 August 2013

<<http://www.people-press.org/2005/02/24/more-optimism-on-iraq-but-most-expect-long-us-stay/>>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2006a, *Pessimism Grows As Iraq War Enters Fourth Year*, 16 March, viewed 1 August 2013 <<http://www.people-press.org/2006/03/16/pessimism-grows-as-iraq-war-enters-fourth-year/>>

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2006b, *Iraq Looms Large in Nationalized Election*, 5 October, viewed 1 August 2013 <<http://www.people-press.org/2006/10/05/iraq-looms-large-in-nationalized-election/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2007, *A Summer of Discontent with Washington*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2007/08/02/a-summer-of-discontent-with-washington/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2007b, *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2007/03/22/trends-in-political-values-and-core-attitudes-1987-2007/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2008, *Declining Public Support for Global Engagement*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2008/09/24/declining-public-support-for-global-engagement/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2008b, *Economic Discontent Deepens as Inflation Concerns Rise*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2008/02/14/economic-discontent-deepens-as-inflation-concerns-rise/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2008c, *Psychology of Bad Times Fuelling Consumer Cutbacks*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2008/12/11/psychology-of-bad-times-fueling-consumer-cutbacks/>>

Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press 2011, *In 2007, Mood Just Beginning to Sour, Democrats Better Regarded*, viewed 21st December 2013, <<http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/20/in-2007-mood-just-beginning-to-sour-democrats-better-regarded/>>

Phegley, K & Quesada, J 2010, 'Political Controversy & The Heroic Age', *Newsarama*, 10 February, viewed 3 January 2012, <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=24784>>

Powell Lawrence, N 2007, 'What Does American History Tell Us about Katrina and Vice Versa?', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 94, no. 3, (Dec 2007), pp. 863-876

Pustz, M 1999, *Comic Book Culture: fanboys and true believers*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson

Reagan, R 1983, 'Remarks on Greeting the Philadelphia 76'ers, the National Basketball Association World Champions June 8, 1983', *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, viewed 3 August 2010, <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/60883c.htm>>

Reagan, R 1987 'Remarks at a White House Briefing for Minority Business Owners July 15, 1987.' *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, viewed 3 August 2010, <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/071587a.htm>>

Reynolds, R 1994, *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology*, University Press of Mississippi, Mississippi

Rhee, RJ 2006, 'Catastrophic Risk and Governance after Hurricane Katrina: A Postscript to Terrorism Risk in a Post-9/11 Economy', *Arizona State Law Journal*, vol.38, no.2, pp.581-615

Robinson, B 2007, 'What the Death of Captain America Really Means', *ABC News*, 8 March, viewed 2 February 2012 <<http://abcnews.go.com/US/Story?id=2934283&page=1#.T3kKctWaJ8F>>

Rowland, RC 2010, 'The Fierce Urgency of Now: Barack Obama and the 2008 Presidential Election', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp.203-221

Roza, M 2009, 'America under attack unity and division after 9/11', in D Rubin, J Verheul (ed.), *American multiculturalism after 9/11: transatlantic perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp.105-117

Sacks, E 2010, *The Politics of Dying*, Unwinnable life without culture, viewed 21 December 2013, <http://www.unwinnable.com/2010/12/01/the-politics-of-dying/#.Ut9g_LR9JaQ>

Samuel, LR 2012, *The American Dream: a cultural history*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse

Sardar, Z & Wyn Davies, M 2004, *American Dream: Global Nightmare*, Icon Books, Cambridge

Sassienie, P 1994, *The Comic Book: the one essential guide for comic book fans everywhere*, Chartwell Books, New Jersey

Satha-Anand, C 2003, 'Mitigating the success of terrorism with the politics of truth and Justice', in U Johannan, A Smith, J Gomez (ed.), *September 11 and political freedom, Asian perspectives*, Select publishing, Singapore, pp.30-45

Savage Jr, WW 1990, *Commies, Cowboys, and Jungle Queens: Comic books and America, 1945-1954*, Wesleyan University Press, New England

Schama, C 2010 'Why Don't Novelists Care about Katrina?', *New Republic*, viewed 15 March 2014 <<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/77532/why-dont-novelists-care-about-katrina-september-11-chloe-schama>>

Sheppard, R 2003, *Saving Private Lynch*, Rogers Publishing Limited, Toronto

Simmons, LM 2009, 'Justice Mocked: Violence and Accountability in New Orleans', *American Quarterly*, vol.61, no.3, September 2009, pp. 477-498

Simon Joe & Simon Jim 2003, *The Comic Book Makers*, Lebanon New Jersey

Smith, K 2012, *Tough Sh*t, Life advice from a fat lazy slob who did good*, Gotham, New York

Sontag, S 2004, 'Regarding the Torture of Others', *New York Times*, viewed 18 December 2012, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/23PRISONS.html?ei=5007&en=a2cb6ea6bd297c8f&ex=1400644800&partner=USERLAND&src=pm&pagewanted=1>>

Spiegel, L 2008, 'Obama and McCain Yuk it Up at Al Smith Dinner', *ABC News*, viewed 21 December 2013, <<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2008/10/obama-and-mccai-3/>>

Stemple, GH 2010, 'Hurricane Katrina: flooding. Muck and human misery', in R Izard, J Perkins (ed.), *Covering Disaster: Lessons from media coverage of Katrina and Rita*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, pp.19-31

Swaine, J 2008, 'Barack Obama: The 50 facts you might not know', *The Telegraph UK*, viewed 21 December 2013, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/3401168/Barack-Obama-The-50-facts-you-might-not-know.html>>

Sylves, RT 2006, 'President Bush and Hurricane Katrina: A Presidential Leadership Study' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 604, Shelter from the Storm: Repairing the National Emergency Management System after Hurricane Katrina (Mar.2006), pp.26-56

Tan, A 2003, 'The "New" terrorism: how Southeast Asia can counter it', in U Johannan, A Smith, J Gomez (ed.), *September 11 and political freedom, Asian perspectives*, Select publishing, Singapore, pp.86-113

Tierney, K, Bevc, C & Kuligowski E 2006, 'Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 604, Shelter from the Storm: Repairing the National Emergency Management System after Hurricane Katrina (Mar.2006), pp. 57-81

Uricchio W, Pearson R.E. 1991, 'I am not fooled by that cheap disguise' in Roberta E. Pearson (ed), *The Many Lives of Batman: critical approaches to a superhero and his media*, Routledge, New York, pp.182-213

USA TODAY, 'What is the American dream?', *USA TODAY*, 19 July, viewed 20 December 2013, <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/613673226?accountid=36155>>

Valery, W 2006, 'The Persistence of race politics and the restraint of recovery in Katrina's wake', in DD Troutt (ed.), *After the Storm. Black intellectuals explore the meaning of Hurricane Katrina*, The New Press, London, pp.41-62

Voger, M 2006, *The Dark Age: grim, great & gimmicky post-modern comics*, Twomorrows publishing, North Carolina.

Wegener, P 2009, 'The dead are our redeemers: Culture belief and Untied 93', in D Rubin, J Verheul (ed.), *American multiculturalism after 9/11: transatlantic perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp.81-92

Weiland, J 2006, 'Hasbro Awarded Marvel Toy License, Toy Biz Out', *Comic Book Resources.*, viewed 5 Jan 2013, <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&old=1&id=6428>>

Williams, J 1994, 'Comics: A tool of subversion?', *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, vol.2, no.6, pp. 129-146

Williams, R 1977, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford Press, Oxford.

Wolk, D 2007, *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge

Woods, RB 2005, *Quest for Identity. America since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, New York

Wright, BW 2001, *Comic Book Nation: the transformation of youth culture in America*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore

Yearly Rankings for Comic Book Sales. 2014. *Yearly Rankings for Comic Book Sales*, viewed 2 April 2010, <<http://www.comichron.com/yearlycomicssales.html>>

Zarek, C 2005, *Katrina Clampdown*, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Washington

Zogby, J 2008, *The Way we'll Be: the Zogby report on the transformation of the American Dream*, Random House, New York

Television and Film

24, season 6 episode 4, 'Day 6 9:00am-10:00am', 2007, Television program, directed by Brad TURNER, Twentieth Century-Fox, USA

Batman Begins, 2005, Film, Directed by Christopher NOLAN, Warner Bros., Syncopy, DC Comics, USA

Blade, 1998, Film, Directed by Stephen NORRINGTON, Amen Ra Films, Imaginary Forces, Marvel Enterprises, New Line Cinema, USA

Catwoman, 2004, Film Directed by PITOF, Warner Bros., Village Roadshow Pictures, DiNovi Pictures, Frantic Films, Maple Shade Films, Catwoman Films, USA

Constantine, 2005, Film, Directed by Francis LAWRENCE, Warner Bros., Village Roadshow Pictures, DC Comics (Vertigo), Lonely Film Productions GmbH & Co. KG., Donners' Company, Branded Entertainment/Batfilm Productions, Weed Road Pictures, 3 Art Entertainment, Di Bonaventura Pictures, USA

Fahrenheit 9/11, 2004, Film Directed by Michael MOORE, Fellowship Adventure Group, Dog Eat Dog Films, USA

Ironman, 2008, Film, Directed by Jon FAVREAU, Paramount Pictures, Marvel Enterprises, USA

Scarface, 1983, Film, Directed by Brian DE PALMA, Universal Pictures, USA

Spider-Man, 2002, Film, Directed by Sam RAMI, Columbia Pictures Corporation, Marvel Enterprises, Laura Ziskin Productions, USA

Superman Returns, 2006, Film, Directed by Bryan SINGER, Warner Bros., Legendary Pictures, Peters Entertainment, Bad Hat Harry Productions, DC Comics, USA

The Dark Knight, 2008, Film, Directed by Christopher NOLAN, Warner Bros., Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, DC Comics, USA

The Incredible Hulk, 2008, Film, Directed by Louis LETERRIER, Universal Pictures, Marvel Enterprises, Marvel Studios, Valhalla Motion Pictures, MVL Incredible Productions, USA

The Jacksons: An American Dream, 1992, Film, Directed by Karen ARTHUR, De Passe Entertainment, USA

The Towering Inferno, 1974, Film, Directed by John GUILLERMIN, Warner Bros. and Twentieth Century-Fox, USA

V for Vendetta, 2005, Film, Directed by James McTEIGUE, Warner Bros, USA

X-men, 2000, Film, Directed by Bryan SINGER, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Marvel Enterprises, Donners' Company, Bad Hat Harry Productions, USA

Comic Books

9-11 Artist respond volume one, 2002, DC Comics, New York

9-11 The World's finest comic book writers and artists tell stories to remember volume two, 2002, DC Comics, New York

Austen, C (w), Kollins, S (a) 2004, 'Once an Invader, Part One', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue #82, Marvel Comics, New York

Austen, C (w), Kollins, S (a) 2004, 'Once an Invader, Part Two', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue #83, Marvel Comics, New York

Austen, C (w), Kollins, S (a) 2004, 'Once an Invader, Part Three', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue #84, Marvel Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2003, 'Broken City, Part One', *Batman*, Issue 620, DC Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2004, 'Broken City, Part Two', *Batman*, Issue 621, DC Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2004, 'Broken City, Part Three', *Batman*, Issue 622, DC Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2004, 'Broken City, Part Four', *Batman*, Issue 623, DC Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2004, 'Broken City, Part Five', *Batman*, Issue 624, DC Comics, New York

Azzarello, B (w), Risso E (a), 2004, 'Broken City, Conclusion', *Batman*, Issue 625, DC Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 1, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 4, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 5, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 6, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 7, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (a), Coipel O (a), 2005, 'House of M', *House of M*, Volume 1, Issue 8, Marvel comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Dell'Otto, G (a) 2004, 'Book One of Five', *Secret War*, Issue 1, Marvel Comics New York

Bendis, BM (w), Dell'Otto, G (a) 2004, 'Book Two of Five', *Secret War*, Issue 2, Marvel Comics New York

Bendis, BM (w), Dell'Otto, G (a) 2004, 'Book Three of Five', *Secret War*, Issue 3, Marvel Comics New York

Bendis, BM (w), Dell'Otto, G (a) 2005, 'Book Four of Five', *Secret War*, Issue 4, Marvel Comics New York

Bendis, BM (w), Dell'Otto, G (a) 2005, 'Book Five of Five', *Secret War*, Issue 5, Marvel Comics New York

Bendis, BM (w), Finch, B (a) 2004, 'Chaos, Part One of Four', *The Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 500, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Finch, B (a) 2005, 'Breakout!, Part One', *New Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 1, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), McNiven, S (a) 2005, 'The Sentry, Part 1', *New Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 7, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), McNiven, S (a) 2005, 'The Sentry, Part 2', *New Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 8, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), McNiven, S (a) 2005, 'The Sentry, Part 3', *New Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 9, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), McNiven, S (a) 2005, 'The Sentry, Conclusion', *New Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 10, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 1, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 4, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 5, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2008, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 6, Marvel Comics, New York

Bendis, BM (w), Yu, LF (a), 2009, *Secret Invasion*, Volume 1, Issue 7, Marvel Comics, New York

Bolles, P (w), Rosado, W (a) 2003, 'Orphan', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 776, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Castillo, T (a), 2003, 'Dead Reckoning, Part Five', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 781, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), de la Torre R (a), 2008, 'The Death of Captain America Act 3, the Man Who Bought America: Part Three', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 39, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2005, 'Out Of Time Part One', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 1, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2005, 'Out Of Time Part 2', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 2, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2006, 'The Drums of War Part One of Three', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 22, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2007, 'The Death of the Dream: Part One', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 25, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2007, 'The Death of the Dream: Part Two', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 26, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting, S (a) 2008, 'The Death of Captain America Act 2, the Burden of Dreams: Part Four', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 34, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting S (a) 2008, 'The Death of Captain America Act 3, the Man Who Bought America: Part Five', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 41, Marvel comics New York

Brubaker, E (w), Epting S (a) 2008, 'The Death of Captain America Act 3, the Man Who Bought America: Part Six', the Man Who Bought America: Part Five', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 42, Marvel comics New York

Brubaker, E (w), Gulacy, P (a) 2004, 'War Games, Act 1, Part 7 of 8: Cold Hard Facts', *Catwoman*, volume 3, Issue 34, DC Comics , New York

Brubaker, E (w), McDaniel, SA (a) 2002, 'Santa Klaus is Coming to Town', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 598, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), McDaniel, SA (a) 2002, 'Bruce Wayne: Fugitive, Part Three: Turning the Town Red, Part One of Two', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 601, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), McDaniel, SA (a) 2002, 'Turning the Town Red, Part Two of Two', *Batman* Volume 1, Issue 602, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Perkins, M (a) 2006, 'Red is the Darkest Color', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 15, Marvel Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Phillips, S (a) 2002, 'Bruce Wayne: Fugitive, Part Eleven: The Turning Point', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 603, DC Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Ross, L, (a) 2010, 'Two Americas', *Captain America*, Volume 1, Issue 602, Marvel comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Weeks, L (a) 2005, 'House of M', *Captain America*, Volume 5, Issue 10, Marvel Comics, New York

Brubaker, E (w), Zircher, P (a) 2003, 'Made of Wood, Part One of Three', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 784, DC Comics New York

Brubaker, E (w), Zircher, P (a) 2003, 'Made of Wood, Part Two of Three', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 785, DC Comics New York

Brubaker, E (w), Zircher, P (a) 2003, 'Made of Wood, Conclusion', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 786, DC Comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Anderson, BE (a) 2002, 'Prisoners a Love Story', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 52, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Davis, A (a) 2001, 'Above and Beyond', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 38, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Davis, A (a) 2001, 'THOOM', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 40, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Dwyer Avengers (a), 2002, 'War Plan A', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 48, Marvel Comics, New York

Busiek, K (w), Dwyer, K (a) 2002, 'There Are No Words...', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 49, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Dwyer, K (a) 2002, 'Book of Revelations', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 50, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), Dwyer, K (a) 2002, 'A Good Day to Die', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 54, Marvel comics New York

Busiek, K (w), ReisI (a), 2002, 'Counter Attack', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 52, Marvel Comics, New York

Busiek, K (w), Zircher, P (a) 2002, 'The Last Farewell', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 55, Marvel Comics, New York

Dini, P (w), Nguyen, D (a) 2008, 'Batman R.I.P.: Heart of Hush, Part 4 of 5: Scars', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 849, DC Comics, New York

Englehart, S (w), Buscema, S (a) 1972, 'Two Into One Won't Go', *Captain America*, Volume 1, Issue 156, Marvel Comics, New York

Englehart, S (w), Buscema S (a), 1974. '... Before the Dawn!', *Captain America*, Volume 1, Issue 175, Marvel Comics (as Marvel Comics Group), New York

Finger, B (w), Kane B (a) 1939, 'The Case of the Chemical Syndicate', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 27, DC Comics (as Detective comics Inc), New York

Finger, B (w), Kane B (a) 1939, 'The Batman Wars Against the Dirigible of Doom', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 33, DC Comics (as Detective comics Inc), New York

Finger, B (w), Kane B (a) 1940, 'Introducing Robin the Boy Wonder', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 38, DC Comics (as Detective comics Inc), New York

Gabrych, A (w), Woods, P (a) 2005, 'War Crimes, Part 1: To the Victor Go the Spoils', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue #809, DC Comics, New York

Gabrych, A (w), Woods, P (a) 2005, 'War Crimes, Part 3: A Consequence of Truth', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue #810, DC Comics, New York

Gage, CN (w), Uy, S (a), 2009, 'Missing Links', *Avengers: The Initiative Featuring Reptil*, Volume 1, Issue 602, Marvel comics, New York

Gibbons, D (w), Cassaday, J (a), Kirby, J (a), Romita Snr, J (a), Weeks, L (a) 2003, *Captain America*, volume 4, Issue 17, Marvel Comics, New York

Gillis, P (w), Broderick, P (a) 1980, 'What If Spider-Man Had Stopped The Burglar Who Killed His Uncle?', *What If ?*, Volume 1, Issue 19, Marvel Comics (as the Marvel Comics Group), New York

Grayson DK (w), Robinson, R (a) 2002, '24/7', *Batman: Gotham Knights*, Volume 1, Issue 32, DC Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Buscema, J (a) 1986, 'Love & Death', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 7, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Dwyer K (a), 1988, 'Don't Tread On Me!', *Captain America*, Volume 1, Issue 334, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1985, 'The Utopia Principle', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 1, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1985, 'A Small Sacrifice', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1985, 'Showdown', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1985, 'Change Of Heart', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 4, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1986, 'Turn-About', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 5, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Hall, B (a) 1986, 'The Clash', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 8, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Ryan, P (a) 1986, 'Inner Circle', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 6, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Ryan, P (a) 1986, 'Borrowed Time', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 9, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Ryan, P (a) 1986, 'The Dark From Within', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 10, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Ryan, P (a) 1986, 'Betrayal', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 11, Marvel Comics, New York

Gruenwald, M (w), Ryan, P (a) 1986, 'The Dregs Of Victory', *Squadron Supreme*, Volume 1, Issue 12, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'Panic Attack', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 65, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'Infections', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 66, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'Whirlwinds', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 67, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'The Great Escape', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 68, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'The Great Escape', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 69, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Coipel O (a), 2003, 'The Great Escape', *Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 70, Marvel Comics, New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2005, 'DC Comics Proudly Presents: Infinite Crisis', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 1, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'The Survivors', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 2, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'Divine Intervention', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 3, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'Homecoming', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 4, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'Faith', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 5, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'Touchdown', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 6, DC comics New York

Johns, G (w), Jimenez, J (a) 2006, 'Finale', *Infinite Crisis*, Volume 1, Issue 7, DC comics New York

Jurgens, D (w&a) 2001, 'America Lost Part I of IV', *Captain America*, Volume 3, Issue 45, Marvel Comics, New York

Jurgens, D (w&a) 2001, 'America Lost Part II of IV', *Captain America*, Volume 3, Issue 46, Marvel Comics, New York

Jurgens, D (w&a) 2001, 'America Lost Part III of IV', *Captain America*, Volume 3, Issue 47, Marvel Comics, New York

Jurgens, D (w&a) 2001, 'America Lost Part IV of IV', *Captain America*, Volume 3, Issue 48, Marvel Comics, New York

Jurgens, D (w&a) 2002, 'Silent Night, Silent Morning', *Captain America*, Volume 3, Issue 50, Marvel Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Cross C (a), 2003, 'American Nightmare', *JLA*, Issue 83, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2002, 'Golden Perfect, Part 1', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 62, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2002, 'Golden Perfect, Part 2', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 63, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2002, 'Golden Perfect, Part 3', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 64, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2003, 'Rules of Engagement, Part 1', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 78, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2003, 'Rules of Engagement, Part 2', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 79, DC Comics, New York

Kelly, J (w), Mahnke D (a), 2004, 'Elitism', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 100, DC Comics, New York

Kirkman, R (w), Eaton, S (a) 2004, 'Super Patriot Part 1', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 29, Marvel Comics, New York

Lee, S (w), Kirby, J (a) 1964, 'Captain America Joins... The Avengers!', *The Avengers*, Volume 1, Issue 4, Marvel Comics, New York

Leob, J (w), Lee, J (a) 2003a, 'Hush, Chapter Nine: The Assassins', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 616, DC Comics, New York

Leob, J (w), Lee, J (a) 2003b, *Batman: Hush Volume One*, DC Comics, New York

Lieberman, AJ (w), Walker, B (a) 2004, 'War Games: Act 1, Part 2 of 8: Behind Enemy Lines', *Batman: legends of the Dark Knight*, Volume 1, Issue 182, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2004, 'Chapter One: Coffin', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 1, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2004, 'Chapter Two: House of Lies', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 2, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2004, 'Chapter Three: Serial Killer', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 3, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2004, 'Chapter Four: Who Benefits', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 4, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2004, 'Chapter Five: Father's Day', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 5, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2005, 'Chapter Six: Husbands and Wives', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 6, DC Comics, New York

Meltzer B (w), Morales, R (a), 2005, 'Chapter Seven: The Hero's Life', *Identity Crisis*, Issue 7, DC Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part One of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 1, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part Two of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 2, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part Three of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 3, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part Four of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 4, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part Five of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 5, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2006, 'Civil War, Part Six of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 6, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar M (w), McNiven S (a), 2007, 'Civil War, Part Seven of Seven', *Civil War*, Issue 7, Marvel Comics, New York

Millar, M (w), Johnson, D (a) 2003, 'Red Son Rising', *Superman: Red Son*, Issue 1, DC Comics, New York

Millar, M (w), Johnson, D (a) 2003, 'Red Son Ascendant', *Superman: Red Son*, Issue 2, DC Comics, New York

Millar, M (w), Johnson, D (a) 2003, 'Red Son Setting', *Superman: Red Son*, Issue 3, DC Comics, New York

Miller, F (w), Janson, K (a) 1986, 'The dark knight returns,' *The Dark Knight*, volume 1, Issue 1, DC Comics. New York

Miller, F (w), Janson, K (a) 1986, 'Hunt the dark knight,' *The Dark Knight*, volume 1, Issue 3, DC Comics. New York

Miller, F (w), Janson, K (a) 1986, 'The dark knight falls,' *The Dark Knight*, volume 1, Issue 4, DC Comics. New York

Miller, F (w), Janson, K (a) 1986, 'The dark knight triumphant,' *The Dark Knight*, volume 1, Issue 2, DC Comics. New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1986, 'At Midnight, All the Agents...,' *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 1, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1986, 'Absent Friends', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 2, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1986, 'The Judge of All the Earth', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 3, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1986, 'Watchmaker', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 4, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'Fearful Symmetry', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 5, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'The Abyss Gazes Also', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 6, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'A Brother to Dragons', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 7, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'Old Ghosts', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 8, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'The Darkness of Mere Being', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 9, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'Two Riders Were Approaching...,' *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 10, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'Look On My Works, Ye Mighty...,' *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 11, DC Comics, New York

Moore, A (w), Gibbons, D (a) 1987, 'A Stronger Loving World', *Watchmen*, Volume 1, Issue 12, DC Comics, New York

Moore, S (w), Clarke, A (a) 2007, 'Siege, Part one', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 829, DC Comics, New York

Moore, S (w), Clarke, A (a) 2007, 'Siege, Part 2', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 830, DC Comics, New York

Morales, R (w), Bachalo, C (a) 2004, 'Homeland Part One', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 21, Marvel Comics, New York

Morales, R (w), Bachalo, C (a) 2004, 'Homeland Part Two', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 22, Marvel Comics, New York

Morales, R (w), Bachalo, C (a) 2004, 'Homeland Part Three', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 23, Marvel Comics, New York

Morales, R (w), Bachalo, C (a) 2004, 'Homeland Part Four', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 24, Marvel Comics, New York

Morales, R (w), Bachalo, C (a) 2004, 'Homeland Part Five', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 25, Marvel Comics, New York

Morrison G (w), Daniel T (a), 2008, 'Zur En Arrh', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 678, DC Comics New York

Morrison, G (w), Kubert, A (a) 2006, 'Batman & Son, Part 2: Man-Bats of London', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 656, DC Comics, New York

Morrison, G (w), Kubert, A (a) 2006, 'Batman & Son, Part 3: Wonderboys', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 656, DC Comics, New York

Morrison G (w), Kubert A (a), 2007, 'Three Ghosts of Batman', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 664, DC Comics New York

Morrison G (w), Kubert A (a), 2007, Batman in Bethlehem, *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue #666, DC Comics, New York

Morrison, G (w), Daniel, T (a) 2008, 'Hearts in Darkness', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 681, DC Comics, New York

Morrison, G (w), Fleet, JV (a) 2007, 'The Clown at Midnight', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 663, DC Comics, New York

Morrison, G (w), Mahnke, D (a) 2009, 'New Heaven, New Earth', *Final Crisis*, Issue 7, DC Comics, New York

Ostrander, J (w), Mandrake, T (a), 2007, 'Grotesk, Part 1', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 659, DC Comics, New York

Ostrander, J (w), Mandrake, T (a), 2007, 'Grotesk, Part 2', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 660, DC Comics, New York

Ostrander, J (w), Mandrake, T (a), 2007, 'Grotesk, Part 3', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 661, DC Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Enemy, Chapter One: Dust', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 1, Marvel Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Enemy, Chapter Two: One Nation', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 2, Marvel Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Enemy, Chapter Three: Soft Targets', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 3, Marvel Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Warlords Part 1', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 4, Marvel Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Warlords Part 2: Above the Law', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 5, Marvel Comics, New York

Rieber JN (w), Cassaday J (a), 2002, 'Warlords Part3', *Captain America*, Volume 4, Issue 6, Marvel Comics, New York

Rozum, J (w), Mandrake, T (a) 2007, 'Absolute Terror, 1 of 2', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 835, DC Comics, New York

Rucka G (w), Burchett R (a), 2002, 'Vacancies', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 765, DC Comics, New York

Rucka G (w), Martinbrough, SC (a) 2002, 'La Cucilla' , *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 763, DC Comics, New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2003, 'Chapter One', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 1, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2003, 'Chapter Two', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 2, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2003, 'Chapter Three', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 3, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Four', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 4, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Six', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 6, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Seven', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 7, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Five', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 5, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Eight', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 8, DC comics New York

Rucka, G (w), Janson, K (w) 2004, 'Chapter Nine', *Batman: Death and the Maidens*, Issue 9, DC comics New York

Schiff, J (w), Kane, b (a) 1942, 'Case Of The Costume-Clad Killers', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 60, DC Comics (as Detective comics Inc) , New York

Shorten, S (w), Norvick, I (a) 2002, *America's 1st Patriotic comic Book Hero, the Shield*, Archie comics, New York

Simon J (w), Kirby J (a) 1941, 'Meet Captain America', *Captain America Comics*, Issue 1, Marvel comics (as Timely Publications), New York

Starlin, J (w), Aparo, J (a) 1988, 'A Death in the Family, Book Three, Chapter 5' , *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 428, DC Comics, New York

Straczynski, JM (w), Romita Jnr., J (a) 2001, *The Amazing Spider-man*, Volume 2, Issue 36, Marvel comics, New York

Tomasi, PJ (w), Gleason, P (a) 2012, 'Knightmoves', *Batman and Robin*, Volume 2, Issue 3, DC Comics, New York

Waid, M (w), Hitch, B (a) 2001, 'United We Fall', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 54, DC Comics, New York

Waid, M (w), Hitch, B (a), Jimenez, P (a), Mahnke, D (a), Pajarillo, M (a), Templeton, T (a) 2001, 'Dream Team', *JLA*, Volume 1, Issue 1, DC Comics

Wells, Z (w), Nauk, T (a) 2009, 'Spidey Meets the President!', *Amazing Spider-man*, Volume 1, Issue 583, Marvel Comics, New York

Willingham B (w), Proctor J (a), 2004, 'War Games, Act 2, Part 5 of 8: The Only Light in Gotham', *Robin*, Volume 1, Issue 130, DC Comics, New York

Willingham, B (w), Camuncoli , G (a) 2005, 'War Crimes, Part 2: Minor Discrepancies', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 643,DC Comics, New York

Willingham, B (w), Camuncoli , G (a) 2005, War Crimes, Part 4: Judgment At Gotham', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 644, DC Comics, New York

Winick J (w), Battle, E (a), 2006, 'All They Do is Watch Us Kill, Part 3: It Only Hurts When I Laugh', *Batman*, Volume 1, Issue 650, DC Comics, New York

Winick, J (w), Chiang, CW (a) 2002, 'Josie Mac: Lost Voices, Part One', *Detective Comics*, Volume 1, Issue 763, DC Comics, New York

Winick, J (w), Mahnke, D (a) 2005, 'Under the Hood, Part 1: New Business', *Batman*, volume 1, Issue 635, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'The Summoning', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 1, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'Time And Time Again!', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 2, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'Oblivion Upon Us', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 3, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'And Thus Shall the World DIE', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 4, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'Worlds In Limbo', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 5, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, '3 Earths! 3 Deaths', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 6, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'Beyond The Silent Night', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 7, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'A Flash Of The Lightning!', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 8, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1985, 'War Zone', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 9, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1986, 'Death at the Dawn of Time', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 10, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1986, 'Aftershock', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 11, DC Comics, New York

Wolfman, M (w), Perez, G (a) 1986, 'Final Crisis', *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Volume 1, Issue 12, DC Comics, New York