

The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl – Unbeatable Role Model

Honors Project by Diane Maxwell

Introduction

This project is about how a pop culture figure can be used to present a positive role model in today's society. Squirrel Girl is a comic book superhero who demonstrates that being a strong individual is less about physical strength and more about strength of character. She is a positive role model because she exhibits positive self talk, an appropriate body shape, and presents a positive, female STEM presence,

Positive Self Talk

Tweens are at a formative age and easily influenced, often filled with self-doubt and confusion resulting from pressure from the media and their peers. They are constantly bombarded with images of what society says they *should* look like as opposed to what they *actually* look like, creating, in some, a dissatisfaction with their bodies. Squirrel Girl demonstrates positive self-talk for females of all ages to emulate. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: Positive Self Body Image.

Positive Female STEM Role Model

As a STEM major in college, Squirrel Girl shows that girls *can* be good at math, (Fig. 2) dispelling the myth that 'girls can't do math' which seems to take root early in childhood and often results in fewer females entering STEM fields later in life. (Tables 1, 2 & 3)

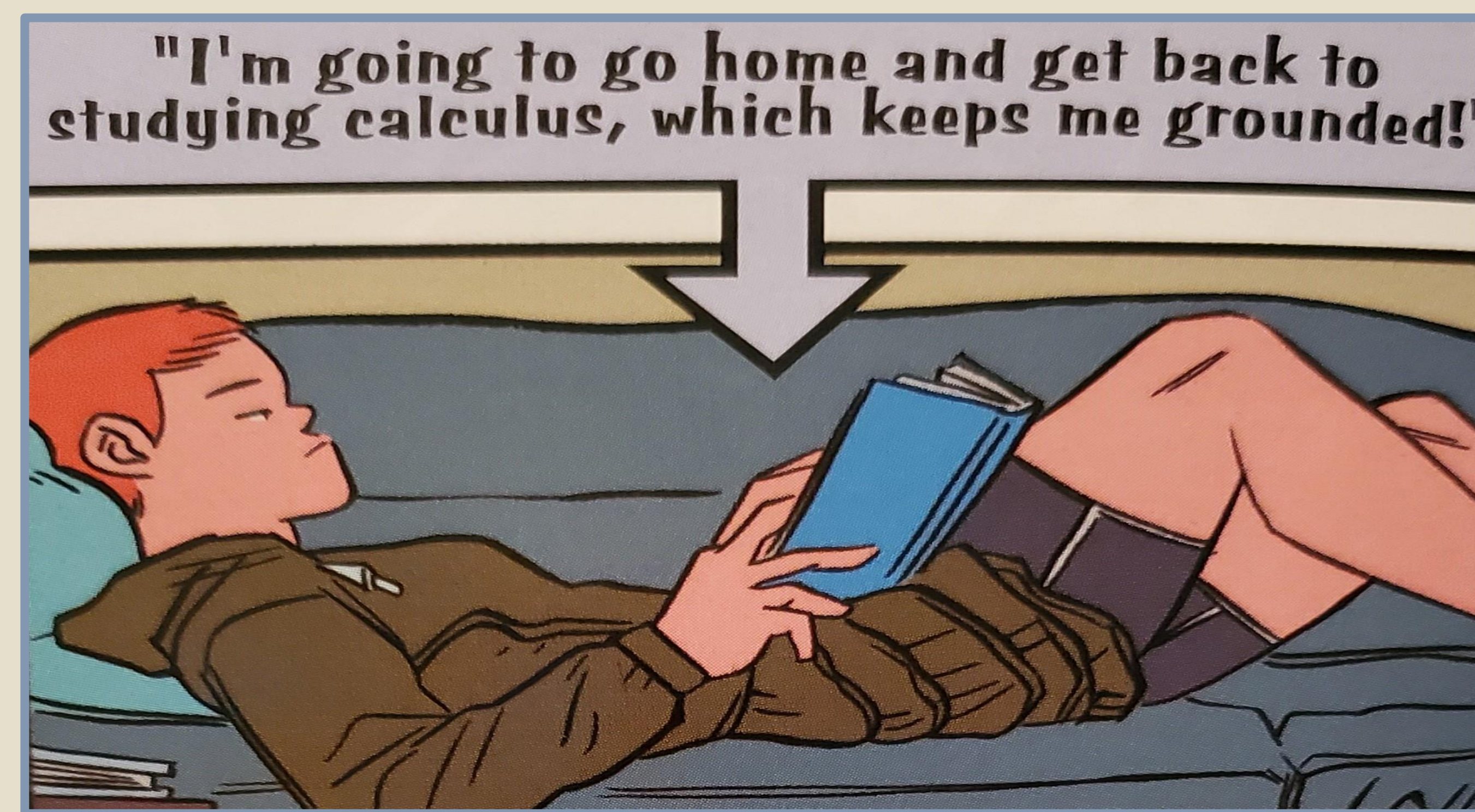


Figure 2: Squirrel Girl demonstrates positive study habits

Appropriate Body Shape

Many females, from pre-adolescents to senior citizens, struggle with having a positive body image. Squirrel Girl is illustrated with a body shaped like that of a gymnast. This is not surprising due to her being half squirrel. She is never illustrated in scant, or revealing clothing, but rather as a young woman with a stocky body and minimal curves – a less conventional body shape many women can identify with. (Fig. 3)

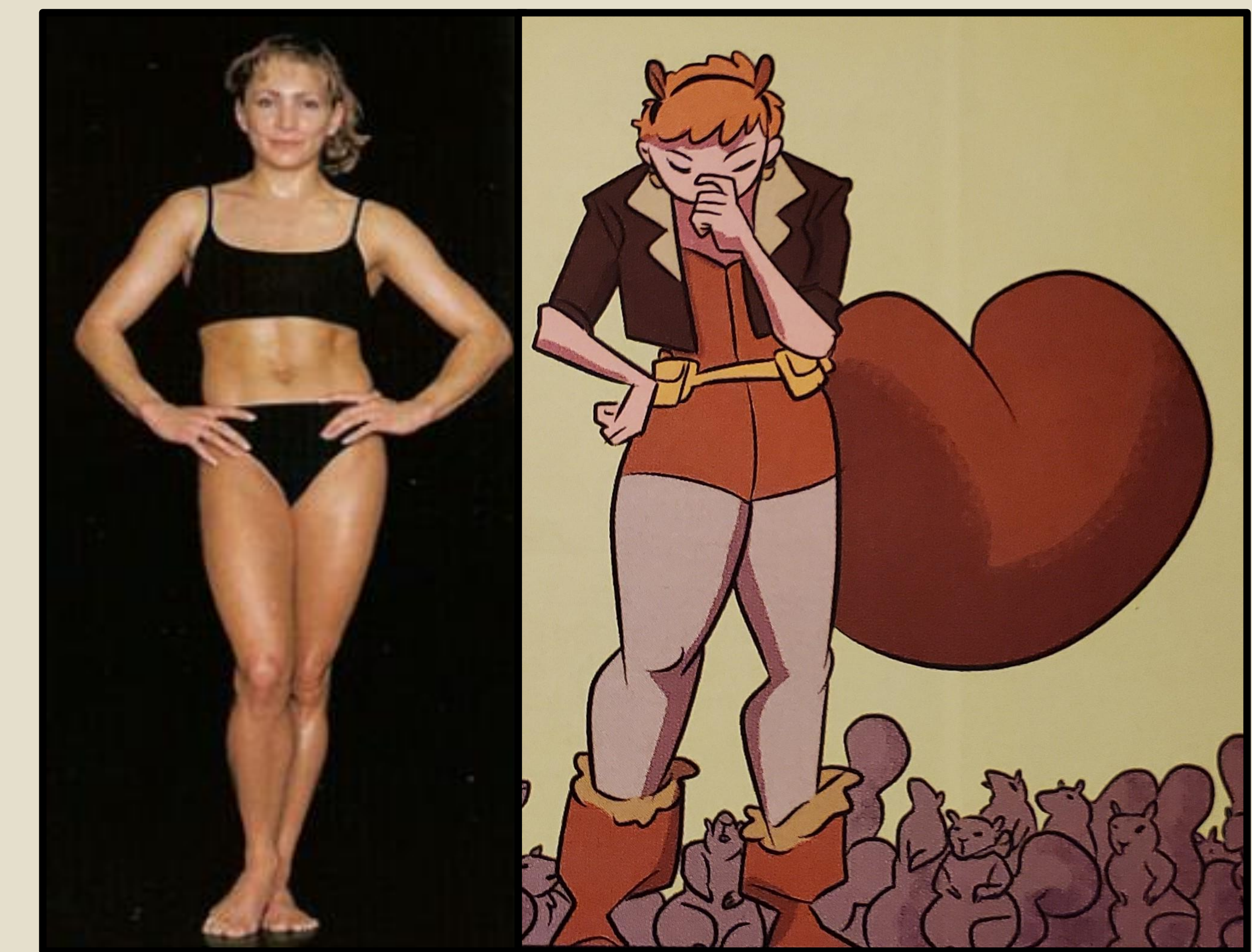
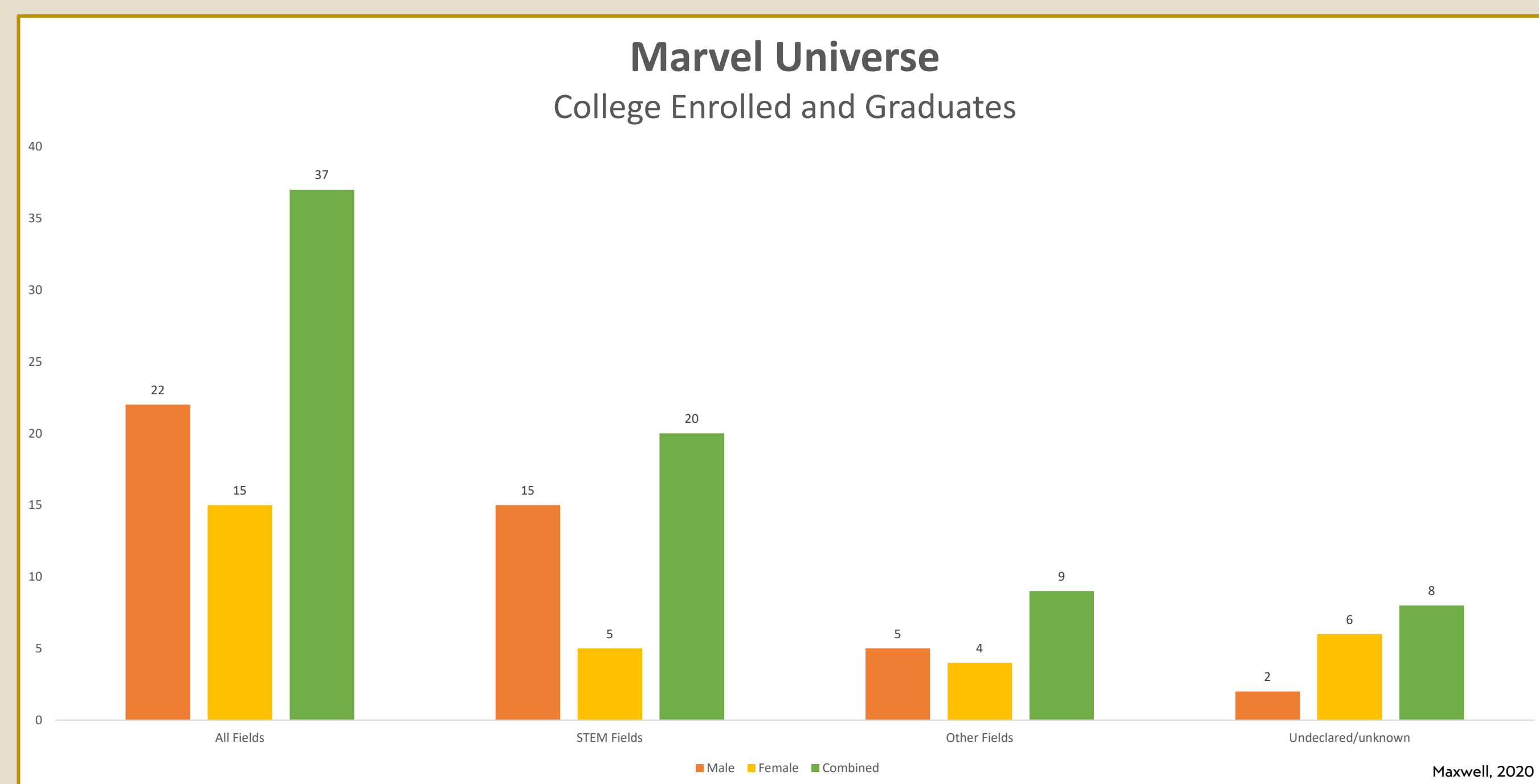


Figure 3: Olympic Gymnast body shape

Table 1: Comparison of 37 Known Marvel Universe Character's College Attendance



Methods

Squirrel Girl author, Ryan North, was kind enough to grant me an interview for this project. Through this interview and my subsequent research into female body image, self-talk, and the shocking lack of females in STEM fields I gained an even greater appreciation for Squirrel Girl as a role model.

Results

Table 2: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions Survey.

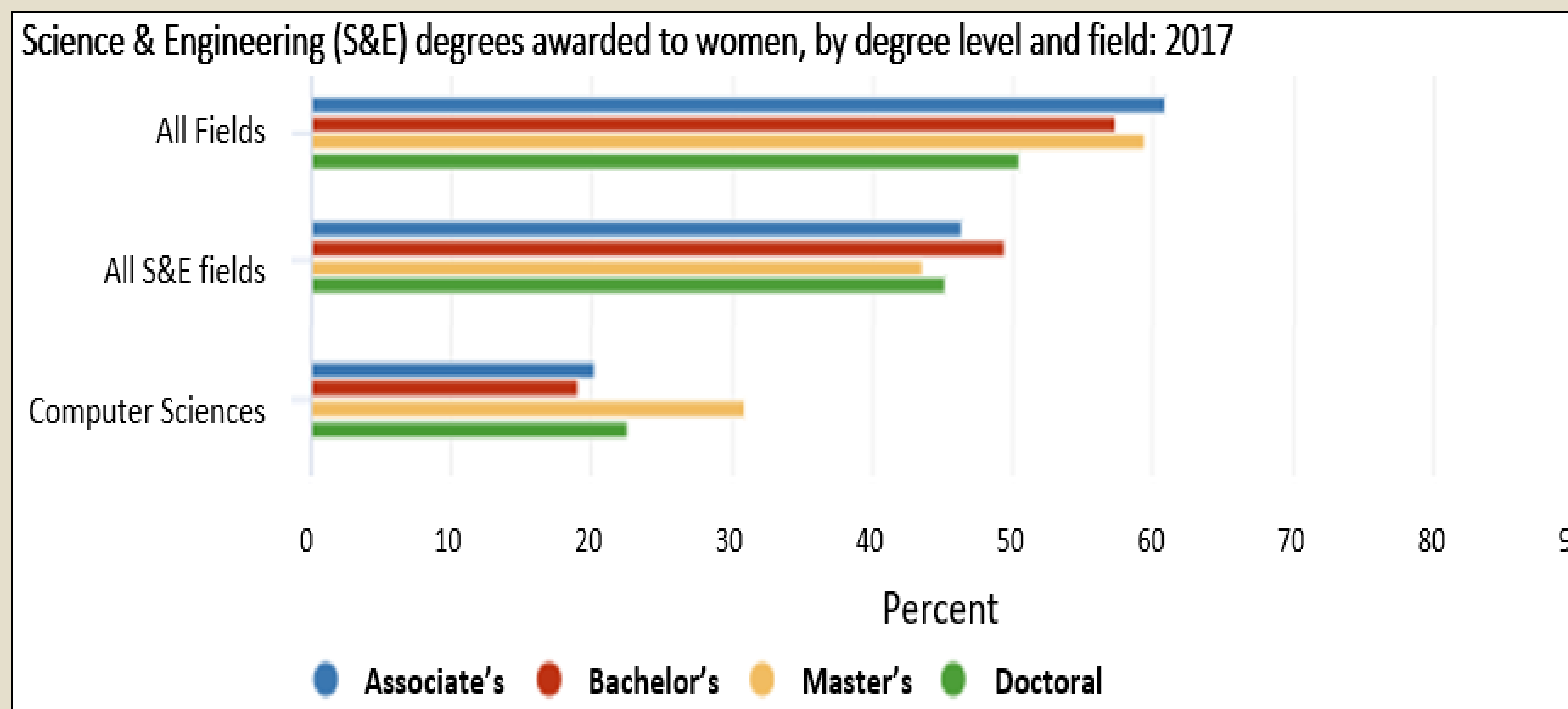


Table 3: Male and Female enrollment in Computer Science as a major, ISU Fall 2020

Curriculum/Major	Freshmen		Sophomores		Juniors		Seniors		Grand Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Computer Science	163	21	115	23	123	20	181	19	665

Special thanks to my project advisors Carolyn Gonzalez and Dr. Michael Rentz, PhD, author Ryan North, Sarah Dubois of the ISU WiSE Program, Jill and Brent Ritch for introducing me to this amazing character, and especially Squirrel Girl for being a personal inspiration for me.

