Youth Enrichment Services Comic Book Project (YES CBP): Comics Creation with LGBT/Q Youth

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ABSTRACT

Youth Enrichment Services Comic Book Project (YES CBP):
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As an arts-informed qualitative case study, this thesis is positioned at the intersection of comics, community art education and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBT/Q) youth studies. Specifically, it examined a comics creation program entitled the Youth Enrichment Services Comic Book Project (YES CBP) that I taught as a community art educator at a youth centre in New York City serving LGBT/Q youth. The research illuminates the issue of adapting comics pedagogy to the specific interests of two learners and to the safe space social context of an LGBT youth centre. A sociological lens – Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice – was employed to understand comics pedagogy and comics creation as social practices within community art education. The study employed a customized methodology combining qualitative case study research and arts-informed research, leading to the use of comics creation as a form of thematic analysis that rendered data into a series of large comics pages. With its customized methodology, the thesis also investigated methodological intersections between qualitative research and comics practices. This thesis broadens conceptualizations of CAE practice and pedagogical relations through Bourdieusian concepts of field, capital, habitus and interest.

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I owe tremendous gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Kathleen Vaughan. She has always pushed my academic and artistic development to the next level while giving me the space to be myself. Her insight, dedication and professionalism are extraordinary. I also owe thanks to my committee members, Anita Sinner and Lorrie Blair, for their supportive and critical eyes.

This thesis would not have happened without the enthusiasm and participation of Passive War and L. Teaching comics and working with them during my research was a transformative experience that will resonate with me far beyond this thesis. Similarly, my thesis would not have occurred without the enthusiasm and support of the staff at Youth Enrichment Services who dedicated time and energy to my comics program above and beyond the busy schedule of a youth community centre. Michael Bitz connected me with Youth Enrichment Services, encouraged my implementation of The Comic Book Project there and acted as a valued research mentor. Beth Brooks provided wonderful help in the making of a digital comic book that compiled the comics art of youth who participated in the program.

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A boarder perspective on life and the universe can sustain one through the hard work and personal frustrations of learning research and writing a thesis. I thank the late American public science educator, Carl Sagan, for granting me such a perspective. Since the age of sixteen, his work has kept me cognizant of what is truly important on our pale blue dot.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Between June and August 2012, I taught a series of fourteen comics creation workshops as a community art education program at Youth Enrichment Services (YES), the youth services and programming division of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center) in New York City. In addition to YES, the program received support from Dr. Michael Bitz's arts-based literacy initiative, The Comic Book Project (CBP). I named my program the Youth Enrichment Services Comic Book Project (YES CBP) after the community and educational partners that enabled it. In following YES's mandate, I framed comics creation in the program as a mode of self-exploration and self-expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBT/Q) youth.

My teaching at YES began with two comics jams that I facilitated the week preceding YES CBP's first workshop. These were collaborative and improvisational comics activities that YES youth participated in to gain a sense of comics creation and my teaching style. The comics jams functioned to promote the program. Thereafter, YES CBP was scheduled twice a week over seven weeks, with an hour and a half workshop on Wednesday evenings and an hour workshop on Saturday afternoons. Youth attended YES CBP on a drop-in basis and turnout varied at every workshop, ranging from two to ten learners. Wednesdays attracted more youth with an average of six learners per workshop, while Saturdays had lower numbers with an average of four learners. Of the learners in the program, two young adults consented to participate in my research study on YES CBP under the self-selected pseudonyms "L" and "Passive War" (PW). As the art educator of the program, I was the third participant in the study.

The comics program culminated in a small exhibition and artists' panel during one of

YES's weekly Saturday afternoon community discussions. In this activity, a YES staff member would facilitate a discussion on a topic of import with the youth present at YES on Saturdays. For the Saturday gathering at the end of YES CBP's seventh week, I led an artists' panel in which five learners, including PW and L, presented their comics art and experiences from the program to a group of approximately 30 YES peers and staff. The five learners represented the core group of YES CBP, or those who attended the program consistently. I also led comics creation activities and a discussion with the wider attending group on art, expression and community-building. Then in September 2012, I designed a digital comic book with contributions of comics art from the program's five core learners.

During the comics program, YES's stated purpose was to foster youth development and empowerment by "focusing on the strengths, expertise, and hope of young people, and [by] providing them with plenty of opportunities for leadership, skills development, and self-expression within the context of a supportive community" (The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center [LGBT Center], 2013, History, para. 3, no longer available). [1]

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[1] Since then, YES has become "Center Youth." Despite the change, its mission remains largely the same:

> At The Center we believe that you should celebrate who you are, what makes you unique and why you matter. For members of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth community, we provide a safe, inclusive and affirming environment to foster relationships, personal and professional skills and the evolution of identity. Open to young people between the ages of 13-21, our programs build self-esteem and help ready you for various life stages. (LGBT Center, 2014, About youth, para. 1)

This mission statement is organized around four pillars: fostering social connections; developing leadership; accessing support through social services; and linking to other local LGBTQ youth resources (LGBT Center, 2014, About youth). These pillars were active during my time at YES but were articulated differently on its old website. In this thesis, I only discuss The Center's youth division as YES to accurately reflect the context in which I taught.

YES supported LGBT/Q youth through a range of social services and educational and cultural programs. It valued the arts' contribution to queer youth development and empowerment, and so arts programming was significant to its mission. YES staff or guest artists from the community regularly facilitated creative hands-on programs or projects. One such program was OutSpoken Views, a weekly zine-making workshop led by one of the YES staff liaising with me on the comics program.

Central to YES's mandate was the establishment of a community of secure inclusion (safe space) for all individuals who entered it, especially the population it primarily served: LGBT/Q youth aged 13 to 21. [2] The backbone of YES's community of inclusion was its safe space policy called "CRABS Assp" or "CRABS Ass," an acronym that stood for confidentiality, respect, attentiveness, be open, sensitivity and (make no) assumptions. CRABS Assp functioned as a set of ground rules that all individuals present at YES were expected to follow. It encouraged an amicable and respectful social environment among a youth population representative of metropolitan New York City's diversity.

As a guest program facilitator at YES, I was expected to learn and implement CRABS Assp within my program. I was first introduced to CRABS Assp at an OutSpoken Views workshop. At the beginning of the workshop, the staff member led the attending youth through the principles of the safe space policy. This routine protocol happened in the introduction of every group activity at YES in which I participated. It was always accompanied by another introductory protocol: staff and youth stated their preferred gender pronoun (PGP) along with their name, age, former and/or current residence.

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[2] In YES's informational materials, "Q" represented *questioning* rather than *queer*. I employ queer instead of questioning because the youth I taught used this term more frequently.

Thesis

I researched YES CBP as an arts-informed case study. The purpose of this study was to understand how the learning interests of two queer young adults and the queer-centric context of YES shaped my comics pedagogy in the program. In this thesis, comics pedagogy is generally defined as the practice of teaching comics creation in art education. Two central research questions guided my inquiry:

1. As an emerging community art educator and researcher, how can I understand the role my comics pedagogy played in actualizing the comics creation of two YES CBP learners and the safe space that made their comics creation possible?
2. How can I articulate this understanding through the comics form in a way that advances an integration of my research and artistic practices?

My thesis comprises seven chapters. The remainder of this introductory chapter presents my relevant artistic and teaching background along with my thesis's definitions and limitations, all of which are needed to understand the scope of my research. The second chapter provides an in-depth literature review on three topics informing my teaching and research: The Comic Book Project, comics and comics creation in art education and LGBT/Q issues in art education. The third chapter explains French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice as my theoretical lens, and the fourth covers the customized methodology I developed to answer my research questions. The methodology combines qualitative case study research, arts-informed research and comics creation. The fifth chapter presents the outcomes of my data analysis: comics pages, textual case descriptions and three case themes. The discussion in chapter six interprets my case themes through Bourdieu's theory of practice to understand comics pedagogy and creation in

YES CBP as social practices. The concluding chapter offers answers to my research questions, future directions for my research and its significance to art education.

Background to the Research

As a child in the 1990s, I grew up when blatantly commercial and Americanized anime (Japanese animation) exploded in North America and, unsurprisingly, I was swept into the Japanese media franchises of *Pokémon* (a contraction of pocket monsters) and *Digimon* (a contraction of digital monsters). I succumbed to their persuasive marketing, which led me to collect merchandise, watch television and play video games premised on fictional companion monsters battling and befriending other companion monsters. Another seminal anime series of my youth was *Samurai Pizza Cats*, which the reader may or may not have surmised, follows the adventures of three robotic cats who fight trouble as samurai while holding day jobs as pizza deliverers. In my adolescence and early twenties, I grew fond of anime's counterpart, manga (Japanese comics), with a distinct adoration for Hiromu Arakawa's *Fullmetal Alchemist*.

Anime and manga were my gateway to comics creation. I spent many hours drawing fanart of my favourite series and eventually challenged myself to invent my own characters and comics. I did so through the visual style of anime and manga, a style in which I had been immersed throughout my youth. I also took an interest in the technical standards and artistic wizardry of American superhero comics. In quite the quantum leap, I jumped from self-initiated comics creation to a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Visual Arts. In my studio program, I explored comics within the context of conceptual and contemporary art practices, and drew and printed a comic as an independent studio project in my final year. Resolved to engage more with

the comics field post-graduation, I interned at the boutique comics publisher Drawn & Quarterly and participated in the *bande dessinée* collective/publisher Le Studio coorpératif Premières Lignes. [3]

After my BFA, I also began teaching comics in community settings. I primarily taught comics creation workshops, programs and courses for youth with a range of entities external to K-12 education, from community organizations to an urban art school. A clear pattern emerged in my teaching practice as I facilitated several workshops at LGBT/Q youth events and was awarded funding to conduct a pilot community arts project with LGBT/Q youth. I noticed that many of my queer youth learners seemed to regard comics creation as positive and relevant art-making or as a vehicle to capture and communicate their experiences. Witnessing these effects of comics creation in my teaching practice sparked my curiosity about the potential broader positive impacts that comics creation within community art education could have for queer youth. The personal significance of my research, art practice and teaching, then, lies in their potential to improve the circumstances of individuals negatively impacted by oppressive human constructs targeting queerness. No doubt, this orientation derives from my experience as a female-to-male transsexual (transman). This life experience commenced in late adolescence and introduced me rapidly to some rather unloving binary constructions of sex, gender and sexuality. The negative impacts of these constructs proved to be a powerful motivator to aid others in similar circumstances to my own through research, teaching and art-making.

My engagement with comics through these artistic, entertainment and educational

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[3] To discover Drawn & Quarterly's artists and books visit: www.drawnandquarterly.com. Since the publication of this thesis, the publisher Vents d'Ouest has acquired Premières Lignes. To see collections of Premières Lignes, visit www.ventsdouest.ca.

avenues over many years have set foundations for my thesis.

Definitions

Within this thesis, I use specific terminology.

Comics has both a singular and plural form. When I employ comics as singular, I mean the comics medium. When I employ comics as plural, I mean several comics texts.

Comics art refers to artwork related to comics creation, including actual comics and the preparatory work needed to create comics, such as storyboards and character designs.

Comics creation refers to the act of making comics, which can vary from a sustained creative practice to an occasional engagement with the medium. It encompasses a broad range of skills such as scriptwriting, pencilling, inking, colouring and graphic design.

Community art education (CAE) is a particular field of art education practiced in community settings as defined by Sinner, Levesque, Vaughan, Szabad-Smyth, Garnet and Fitch (2012). In this thesis, I draw mostly from the understanding of CAE set out by my colleagues and me in this article because I have been implicated in maintaining and developing it through teaching and research assistantships within Concordia's Community Art Education Program. The CAE Program is a component of the Department of Art Education's undergraduate teacher-training program. My colleagues and I define CAE as an educational space distinct from K-12 and post-secondary education in which art educators work with community sites beyond traditional educational institutions. We hold that CAE construes art educator broadly and seeks to render art accessible to the public through

blending and oscillating between art and teaching methods in response to learner needs in

> a ‘just in time’ approach that often requires art teachers adapt to changing social circumstances in the moment, modifying curriculum and instructional delivery with latitude and flexibility that can transcend traditional teacher education models specialising in the teaching of children, adolescents or adults. (p. 28)

As the authors of this article, we hold that CAE is distinct from, but not oppositional to, traditional education. This can be seen in our characterization of CAE as a dynamic third space with a pedagogical approach that moves around and draws from different educative and artistic fields. Such movement creates the opportunity for community art educators to distance their pedagogies and curricula from those attached to educational institutions and to prioritize pedagogical engagements of working with and adapting to community (Sinner et al., 2012).

The vision of community in art education that we articulated in our article (Sinner et al., 2012) resonates with that of Lackey, Chou and Hsu (2010) who, in discussing the school and community art education dynamic through the language of formal and non-formal educative sites, reject the oppositional framing between school and community. They argue that such oppositional framing hierarchically positions those officially sanctioned to teach (certified teachers) over those who are not (non-certified teachers). Lackey, Chou and Hsu find this binary unproductive and divisive for art education and, rather, call for embracing the complexity and particularity of all art education contexts and their specific pedagogies.

Other researchers have investigated the notion of art education practice in community in similar ways to our conceptualization of CAE (Sinner et al., 2012). Coutts and Jokela (2012) characterize the gamut of community arts practices featured in a special issue of the *International Journal of Education Through Art* as artistic and educational “context-sensitive

practice[s]" (p. 220) that prioritize engagement with the particularities of community sites existing both "on the periphery of society" (p. 218) and beyond normative education. Despite a different descriptor, I include Coutts and Jokela's definition of community arts practice within CAE because they frame it as "a form of education through art" (p. 218), that is, as having a prominent art education dimension.

Campana (2011) uses the term "community art education" to describe art education practice focused on non-school settings distant from institutionalized education. As with our conceptualization (Sinner et al., 2012), Campana defines CAE based on a distinct physical and conceptual space and pedagogical approach. She describes this approach as "a certain way of collaborating and interacting" that "is driven by a particular context, need(s), and/or asset(s), and grounded in articulating some problematic or oppressive status quo, envisioning alternatives, or celebrating a particular aspect of a community" (p. 280).

Because Campana (2011) views CAE through the lens of asset-based community development and activism and links it to social justice and critical pedagogy, her definition privileges CAE's sociopolitical dimensions and largely excludes those CAE practices that are not explicitly sociopolitical. Rather than being intentionally exclusive, Campana's definition reflects the small participant sample from which she constructed her definition: five artist/educator/activists. My colleagues and I note that social priorities feature prominently in CAE practices but that overt sociopolitical priorities are not obligatory (Sinner et al., 2012). This attribute of CAE that we put forth reflects the wide spectrum of community sites and art educators studied in our Concordia-based review of CAE graduate research and Concordia's CAE Program (Sinner et al., 2012).

What is common among these views of CAE is an understanding that art education with community sites is a situated practice that gains its character from context and distance from institutionalized education. The perspectives above also locate teaching practice within the spectrum of educational sites that constitute community and position art education beyond the art classroom. Some of the reviewed authors argue that CAE contains a particular pedagogical approach in art education based on consideration of and adaptation to context and its learners (Campana, 2011; Sinner et al., 2012). This approach, in its more distant relationship to traditional teacher-training and practice, is also associated with broader notions of art educator than certified art teacher as seen in the examples of artist-teacher (Sinner et al., 2012) and artist/educator/activist (Campana, 2011). For this thesis, I characterize the general pedagogical approach of CAE as adaptive because it tends to privilege learning engagements attuned to the specific teaching context of community settings.

Genderqueer refers to individuals whose conception of and self-identification with gender is not positioned within strict binary constructs of man/woman, male/female or masculine/feminine. The *singular they* is considered a gender neutral pronoun that some genderqueer individuals employ so as not to situate themselves in a gendered binary. To respect the gender self-determination of my participant L, I use the singular "they" and "them" pronouns when referring to L in this thesis.

Standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer, *LGBT/Q* is an umbrella acronym that denotes the diverse community of sexual and gender minorities. There are many variations of this acronym, each signifying different ways of being representatively inclusive. The term *queer* can be interchangeable with LGBT/Q, as in "the queer community." In its subversive and

political usage, queer signifies persons who have a more fluid identification with their sexuality, gender or sex than suggested by the "fixed" identity categories represented by the letters of the rainbow acronym. The double meaning of queer reflects the terminology used by the YES youth I met and my own usage. I employ LGBT/Q with a slash to acknowledge queer's double meaning as an umbrella term and as a distinct identification. I derived this slashed spelling from an article by Cosier, Lampela, de la Garnica, Sanders, Smith-Shank, Rhodes and Whitehead (2005).

In my usage, *trans* can mean transgender, transsexual or any other identity on the trans spectrum. This meaning of trans acknowledges the slippery borders among trans identities while allowing transsexual identification to be separate from other identities in the spectrum, if the reader interprets it as such.

Limitations

This study has several limitations based on methodology, context of the comics creation program and the researcher.

Case study. The findings of case studies are specific to their context of inquiry. Thus, the findings of this thesis only reflect the YES context and the experiences of two queer young adults and an art educator of a comics program in that context. The study does not contribute generalizable knowledge to the field of art education, albeit its findings may serve as an example to educators and researchers in similar contexts (see G. Thomas, 2011b).

YES. Youth accessed YES programming and services on a drop-in basis, based on need, interest and a myriad of other factors. These factors affected learners' attendance in the program

which, by extension, affected their art-making and ability to participate in the research. Boyd (2011) reported similar turnout issues associated with teaching art at the Kaleidoscope Youth Center, a drop-in LGBT/Q youth centre in Columbus, Ohio. The two participants in my study came to YES and the comics creation program regularly, but their attendance is not reflective of all the youth who came to the program. YES CBP was also taught in the summer months with one of its weekly sessions scheduled on Saturdays, two additional factors that may have limited turnout and potential participation in the research.

Comics creation. The way I taught comics creation in YES CBP reflects my background and disposition towards the medium and, therefore, does not encompass all perspectives, facets or possibilities of comics creation. Findings regarding the comics pedagogy analyzed in this case study cannot necessarily be extended to child learners, and I refer readers to Stoermer (2009) for guidance on teaching comics creation to children from an art education perspective. Given the close relationship between sexual and gender minority experiences and comics creation in YES CBP, the program is not directly transferable to educative contexts where various queerphobias (homophobia or transphobia, for example) exist and/or where heterosexuality is presupposed to be better or normal. [4]

Researcher. Like all qualitative researchers, I bring particular ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological assumptions (Creswell, 2013) to art, teaching and research that characterize the results of this study as subjective. I make my assumptions as a

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[4] In such environments, one is likely to encounter heterosexism and heteronormativity. Cosier (2009) offers a concise distinction between the two. Heterosexism is "bias against nonheterosexuals based on the belief in the superiority of heterosexuality. Heterosexism does not imply the same fear and hatred as homophobia" (p. 299). Heteronormativity refers to the social practices and institutions that normalize heterosexuality (p. 300).

researcher explicit in the thesis through reflexivity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

My first research question addresses the relationship between my adaptive pedagogy, learners' comics creation and the creation of safe space in YES CBP. Embedded within this question are three major topics that required in-depth literature reviews. These reviews shaped how I conceptualized and taught comics creation within the adaptive pedagogy of my community art education program and situated the contributions of this thesis in relation to other researchers and scholars.

First, I reviewed literature on The Comic Book Project (CBP), a curricular initiative that supports adaptation of comics creation to specific educational contexts. Because CBP informed my program's curriculum, I needed to understand its general characteristics and how they would be changed for YES CBP. Comics creation was the central subject of YES CBP's curriculum and art education was the disciplinary lens through which I taught it; consequently, I reviewed other ways in which comics and comics creation have been understood in art education to glean insights about teaching the medium in YES CBP. Finally, I reviewed LGBT/Q issues in art education to inform myself about potential issues I would encounter when teaching a queer youth population and doing so at a queer community centre. In setting parameters for this review, I excluded graduate research and included publications through 2013.

The Comic Book Project

Michael Bitz (2010) defines the contemporary relationship between comics and education as "the comics-in-education movement": "a rapidly growing movement of K–12 educators… embracing comics as a form of literature and a pathway to reading and writing" (p. 4). This

movement has focused on comics reading to develop literacies ranging from conventional textual literacy (Frey & Fisher, 2004), visual literacy (Frey & Fisher, 2008) and multimodal literacy (Connors, 2013). As a pedagogical tool for many literacies, comics creation remains overshadowed by comics reading, but Bitz (2009a) avers that comics creation is "a more comprehensive – and arguably more authentic – educational approach" (p. 2).

Bitz (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010) has broadened the comics trend in education to include comics creation through The Comic Book Project (CBP), an American arts-based literacy initiative he founded in 2001. [5] Since then, the program has expanded internationally, reached approximately 150, 000 youth (M. Bitz, personal communication, April 25, 2014) and launched an online platform called Comics Go Global that connects learners for collaborative comics creation (Jackson, Bitz & Toniolo, 2013). CBP's mission is to have youth "plan, write, design, and produce original comic books on a socially relevant theme, then publish and distribute their work for other children to use as learning and motivational tools" (Bitz, 2009a, p. 3). Premised on the notion that the intersection of words and visual art in comics creation forges literacy pathways (Bitz, 2004a, p. 34), CBP uses youth-generated comics as an integrative arts approach to core academic learning with a primary, though not exclusive, emphasis on developing conventional literacy (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010). Throughout his CBP publications, Bitz notes that the initiative approaches literacy development via its social, personal and creative dimensions, rather than standardized instruction, and does so through a context-specific approach in which local educational and

[5] See Khurana (2008) and Lopate (1976) for practical examples of two comic book projects independent of CBP.

community entities adapt CBP to their needs. [6]

Bitz (2004b, 2009a) holds that comics creation encompasses core competences of literacy, a proposition he has advanced, for example, through linking comics creation to the attainment of the New York State Learning Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) (New York State Education Department, 2014). He details how these standards were met by high school students making manga in an afterschool comic book club (Bitz, 2009a, pp. 40–48) and by elementary students in CBP's first city-wide pilot project of 733 participants at 33 afterschool sites across New York City (Bitz, 2004b). Other examples of how comics creation fosters literacy pepper Bitz's CBP publications, one of which is comics creation as a reading and writing scaffold (Bitz, 2010).

In CBP, literacy development combines learner-driven content and a mode of youth media production, enabling learners to render their interests, identities and life experiences through a medium embedded in contemporary youth culture (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010). With a focus on learner-driven content, Bitz notes throughout his CBP publications that learners often situate themselves and their social realities in their comics. For example, Bitz's (2004a, 2004b) thematic analysis of comics from the first CBP city-wide pilot project showed that inner-city elementary students typically created comics themed on the harsh aspects of American urban life, including gang violence and drug abuse. The intersection between comics creation and self is most detailed in Bitz's (2009) ethnographic study on an afterschool comic book club of predominantly African American and Latino high school students

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[6] Preceding Bitz, some academics advanced comics creation in education as an interdisciplinary and a popular cultural means to develop research, comprehension and writing skills in school classrooms (Chilcoat, 1993; Morrison, Bryan & Chilcoat, 2002; Wright & Sherman, 1999).

deeply immersed in manga. The students' self-initiated interest in manga and amateur manga production practices fostered engagement with literary and artistic creation, Japanese culture and language, and personal and cultural identities (Bitz, 2009).

CBP's embrace of learner-driven content derives from the initiative's rooting in socially relevant education, especially the perspectives of John Dewey (Bitz, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010). Bitz (2009b) defines social relevance as "what a student deems important to him or her, not what adults or corporations try to dictate nor what popular culture or mass media try to insinuate" (p. 21). His approach to socially relevant education positions youth as creators, not consumers, of contemporary media (Bitz, 2006, 2009b). To him, this avoids pedagogy based on the acritical interpretation of popular culture texts and "edutainment" – entertainment designed for educational use by corporations (Bitz, 2009b). Bitz (2008a, 2009a) supports curriculum that interrelates learning with youth's social, cultural and personal contexts beyond school, which he sees as not only personally meaningful for them but also critical to successfully link arts and academic learning.

CBP has been implemented across a range of school, afterschool and community contexts using small-scale, site-specific models and large-scale models encompassing many sites (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010). These range from a district-wide cross-curricular program between art teachers and English teachers in public primary and middle schools (Bitz, 2008a) to an education and outreach program encouraging healthy decisions on tobacco use among Native American youth (Montgomery, Manuelito, Nass, Chock & Buchwald, 2012). In the early years of CBP, afterschool programs were a principal educative site for the initiative's implementation where it typically manifested as an afterschool comic book club (for

diverse examples, see Bitz, 2006). CBP has often been located within afterschool education because of a shared socially relevant philosophy and, as Bitz (2009a) notes, this mutuality arises because "children are required to learn, but they are not required to attend" (p. 40) afterschool education. This condition necessitates that afterschool education adopt a socially relevant approach to foster learner interests as motivation for attendance (Bitz, 2009a, pp. 156–157).

The range of implementation sites and models, along with a socially relevant philosophy, reveal that CBP's curricular structure is highly flexible and does not prescribe a pedagogical approach to comics creation (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2010). CBP adapts to the needs of particular educational environments by serving as a framework for comics creation that supports educators as capable instructional designers (Bitz, 2009a, p. 156) who can modify the CBP curriculum's foundation of "characters, plot, design, and publishing" (Bitz, 2008b, p. 5). This framework also exists within a general implementation model: teacher-training on comics creation, introductory activities to comics creation, written and visual drafting of comic books, drawing comic books and publicly displaying learner comic books (Bitz, 2008a).

A final characteristic of CBP is how it addresses the social dimension of comics creation. As Bitz (2010) describes, educators often teach comics creation through CBP as a collaborative process. In one common collaborative approach, learners make comics in teams modeled on American mainstream comics production in which each team member adopts a specific role such as writer, penciller, inker, colourist, editor and so on (Bitz, 2010). On a broader social level, the publishing and presentation of youths' comics in the CBP model engages audiences with learners, their creative processes and their stories through printed compilations, exhibitions and

online galleries (Bitz, 2010). The public sharing of learners' comics can bridge to community engagement when, for example, learners create a "community-oriented comic book" (p. 126) intending to raise awareness or action on a particular issue.

Conclusions on The Comic Book Project

Although CBP emerged from a different discipline than art education, I incorporated literature on the initiative because YES CBP followed its general curricular structure, and Michael Bitz, as a research mentor, influenced my program's development. Readers, then, should have an overview of the initiative to understand the parallels and divergences between CBP and YES CBP. Primarily, YES CBP is distinct in the specificity of its community site and learner population, especially since no CBP program with queer youth or a queer community site appears in Bitz's publications. Relative to other CBP projects, my program had many young adults aged 18 to 21, an age group falling outside CBP's K-12 focus. [7] The experiences of two queer young adult learners in YES CBP whom I examine provide novel insights into a segment of comics creation learners rarely broached in the art education or CBP literatures.

YES CBP fits within the spectrum of out-of-school learning environments that CBP has framed as legitimate and thriving educational spaces. In his publications, however, Bitz largely conceptualizes the CBP programs situated outside of schools through afterschool education. For example, he bases the general characteristics of a CBP out-of-school implementation model on those of afterschool education (Bitz, 2010, pp. 140–149). This leaves unaddressed in CBP the possibility of thinking about the community site as an educational space distinct from afterschool

[7] In YES CBP's core group, one youth was under 18 and the other four were between 18 and 21. With the youth who attended on a drop-in basis, approximately 30 percent were under 18 and 70 percent were between 18 and 21.

education, especially with respect to its different relationship to academic curricula. Afterschool education typically supports academic curricula in flexible ways while community art education has more discretion over its links to academic curricula given its greater distance from educational institutions. In conceptualizing community sites as distinct educational spaces (see Sinner et al., 2012), my thesis establishes a departure point for thinking further on differences between CBP in afterschool education and in CAE.

When I developed YES CBP's curriculum in May 2012, it had a literacy component. Originally, learners had the option of earning a high school ELA credit by participating in the program. Consequently, I wrote a curriculum with two streams, one framing comics creation as an introductory exploration to an artistic medium that queer youth could use to voice experiences or showcase their talents. The other framed comics creation as a literacy development vehicle following New York State's ELA learning standards. Before YES CBP started, I dropped the literacy component when YES staff decided that they preferred youth participate in the program on interest alone rather than incentive.

Dropping the literacy component allowed me to reorient YES CBP into a total CAE program not obliged to follow state curriculum standards. CBP's general comics creation process and four pillars of comics creation, along with my comics experience, guided YES CBP's final curriculum. I began by teaching comic strips and mini-comics as introductory formats to comics creation. Then I taught narrative structure, storyboarding, pencilling and inking. The knowledge and skill set developed in these lessons were directed towards a one-to-three-page comics project. The lessons for this project formed YES CBP's primary curriculum stream which occurred on Wednesday evenings and gave consistency to the program's core

group of five learners who usually attended that day. With more inconsistent attendance, the Saturday workshops served as a secondary, yet related, curriculum stream. The secondary stream had stand-alone activities which functioned as both independent lessons for drop-in learners or, when the core group learners attended on Saturdays, supplemented the lessons in the Wednesday workshops.

I did not use CBP curriculum template materials as these were designed for the elementary school level. I determined that the materials were too structured for adolescent and young adult learners who brought their own creative dispositions and interests to the program and, at times, highly developed skills and knowledge of comics creation. Instead, I taught comics creation by balancing learner interests and a flexible, yet structured, comics creation process. Learners were free to select their own content and aesthetic approaches to comics within a conventional process that I developed from the CBP curriculum and my own comics experience. The conventional process provided a series of steps to learn the formal properties and techniques needed to make comics. For the general art learners who comprised the majority of the program's attendees, this structure made comics creation less intimidating and achievable. The few who were advanced learners could expand upon the curriculum's basic structure to pursue comics creation in-depth while receiving extra guidance from me. The flexibility of this curriculum allowed me to respond to the needs of a range of learners while letting them pursue their own interests. With the drop-in nature of YES, a collaborative approach to comics creation was not feasible, so it occurred as an individual process but within a group atmosphere.

Comics and Comics Creation in Art Education

Exceptionally few studies with comics or comics creation as the central thesis of research exist in the art education literature. That said, research by Brent and Marjorie Wilson addresses these two topics as a component of inquiry on the cultural influences of graphic development (learning to draw) and children's graphic narratives. [8] In their work, comics is a category of visual narrative or graphic narrative. [9] I turned to their research because, as of literature published through 2013, it is the largest body of research inclusive of comics and comics creation in the discipline.

In a 1974 case study, Brent Wilson analyzed the self-initiated comics art of a boy named J.C. Holz and theorized that the boy's comics creation was a form of play. J.C. sought to avoid boredom by finding mental stimulation through drawing comics, which also had the effect of teaching him the formal and narrative conventions of American superhero comics (Wilson, 1974). In another study, Wilson and Wilson (1976) analyzed drawings by "Anthony" and subsequent ones by J.C. inspired by superhero comics, along with the self-initiated narrative drawings of two other children. They concluded that these artistically gifted children were self-motivated to produce copious amounts of narrative drawings to avoid boredom (Wilson & Wilson, 1976). They identified a desire to tell stories as the mechanism facilitating the children's copious drawing and, by extension, their advanced artistic abilities (Wilson & Wilson, 1976). The 1976 study noted the role that the narrative dimension of comics played in children's graphic

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[8] Few co-authored publications by Wilson and Wilson have Marjorie as the first author. When she is first author, the initial "M" appears in the first author position to clearly attribute her contribution.

[9] Wilson and Wilson did not explicitly define the distinction between visual narrative and graphic narrative in their research. I take visual narrative to mean any narrative in a visual form and graphic narrative as any drawn narrative.

development within the context of self-initiated art education. [10]

In observing that participants in the 1974 and 1976 studies drew from popular media sources, Wilson and Wilson (1977) pursued further research into culture's relationship with graphic development. They had 147 high school and college students complete drawing tasks from memory and tracked nearly all their drawings to a source image. Based on this finding and observing how participants modified their images while drawing, Wilson and Wilson proposed that the participants' drawings were derived from mental schemata that had been obtained and altered from pre-existing images. To Wilson and Wilson, pre-existing images functioned as models showing participants what and how to draw. Participants had drawn from a variety of models; however, peers' drawings and popular media – "especially comics and television" (p. 8) – were the most prevalent. Wilson and Wilson stressed this culturally mediated view of graphic development further by analogizing drawing to a semiotic process of "configurational sign-making" (p. 6): drawn objects (configurations) are signs (rather than representations) that operate within a visual sign system, and learning to draw them depends on acquiring the conventions of this system from models.

Shortly after their 1977 study, Wilson and Wilson (1978, 1980a) began analyzing short, graphic narrative drawings on storyboard-like templates that they elicited from children. They carried forward their 1977 propositions on drawing to the child-participants' graphic narratives: the narrative, compositional and configurational conventions in the children's creations derived

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[10] Wilson and Wilson used the term "spontaneous art" in their research from the 1970s and 1980s, which referred to art made on children's own accord and for their own purposes, usually outside of school (M. Wilson & Wilson, 1982, p. xv). With a similar meaning, Brent Wilson used the term "self-initiated" in his later writings on visual culture pedagogy. For consistency, I use self-initiated when discussing Wilson and Wilson's entire body of research.

from culturally acquired schemata that they recalled, transmitted and transformed during drawing (Wilson & Wilson, 1978a, 1980a). Evoking their semiotic analogy again, Wilson and Wilson (1978a) framed the drawing of graphic narratives as "the recycling of [cultural] symbols as a basic cognitive process" (p. 90).

Wilson and Wilson's switch to sequential templates signaled their change of focus from "the cognitive means" of drawing to "the cognitive ends" (Wilson & Wilson, 1978b, p. 78) of graphic narrative. In other words, they shifted their research from *how* children drew to *why* children drew graphic narratives. Wilson and Wilson proposed that children drew graphic narratives to model life situations and did so by constructing symbolic representations of four realities: the everyday, the self, the social normative and the future (Wilson & Wilson, 1978, 1978b, 1980a; M. Wilson & Wilson, 1982). They called this inquiry into self and world through drawn narrative "graphic symbolic worldmaking" (Wilson, 1985, p. 96).

Wilson and Wilson (1979a, 1980a, 1983, 1984, 1987) then extended their investigation of cultural models, graphic development and graphic symbolic worldmaking through studies that elicited graphic narratives from children in several countries. As an analytical approach, Wilson and Wilson categorized the stylistic, compositional, narrative structural and/or thematic aspects of children's graphic narratives and measured differences between them through statistical comparison. By identifying and quantifying differences in the form and content of the graphic narratives, they evidenced that culture creates a multitude of contextually contingent pathways within graphic development. Cross-era studies revealing differences in children's drawings across time and place supported the pluralistic nature of children's graphic development found in the cross-cultural studies (Wilson, 1997b; Wilson & Ligtvoet, 1992; Wilson & Wilson, 1982).

Another consistent finding in Wilson and Wilson's (1979a, 1980a, 1983, 1984, 1987) cross-cultural studies was that graphic narratives demonstrating higher graphic skill and narrative complexity modelled conventions of popular imagery distributed by mass media. This led to their conclusion that exposure to popular media images supported the creation of complex graphic narratives and more advanced graphic development at ages younger than previously thought (Wilson & Wilson, 1980a, 1979a, 1983, 1984, 1987). To explain this finding of the cross-cultural studies, Wilson (1985) proposed that culture is inextricably linked to graphic development and graphic worldmaking in that the pool of available images in a culture "determine[s] the look, complexity, and content of children's artwork, and expand[s] or limit[s] the artistic worldmaking possibilities of children" (p. 103). In other words, the models that children draw from in particular cultural environments not only delimit their graphic capabilities but also contain the "graphic languages" (graphic sign systems) that guide how they draw symbolic realities (Wilson, 1985).

Wilson (1985) proposed that differentials between "enormous, marvelously complex, varied, expressive, and flexible" graphic languages and "simple and inflexible" (p. 96) ones profoundly shape graphic development and graphic worldmaking. Cultures with more diversified imagery – such as those with popular cultural imagery – provide the necessary models for children to develop the capabilities needed to draw more sophisticated graphic narratives (Wilson, 1985). The ability to draw complex graphic narratives does not mean that the children who drew them had inherently more profound or accurate understandings of self and world; instead, their culture provided the graphic models to learn more advanced drawing and, thus, to represent more sophisticated symbolic realities (Wilson, 1985; Wilson & Wilson, 1987).

Wilson and Wilson's culturally mediated view of child art, as Tavin (2005) commented several years later, challenged modernist "models of creative expression and developmental stages" (p. 15) long established in art education. These models held that artistic learning followed a linear, universal developmental pathway mediated by internal factors and that self-expression directly reflected children's pure, elemental creativity unfettered by societal or artistic conventions (Wilson, 2004). Modernist art education deemed external influences – especially adult and popular cultural ones – on children's "natural" graphic development as contaminants that rendered artistic behaviours resembling "copying" tantamount to the interference of "original" self-expression (Wilson, 2004; M. Wilson & Wilson, 1982, 2009).

Throughout their careers, Wilson and Wilson (1977, 1979a, 1982, 1984, 1987; M. Wilson & Wilson, 1982, 2009) rejected the theory of graphic development as a universal pathway and maintained it arose from complex interactions between innate (biological) and cultural factors that generated multiple and divergent developmental pathways. For instance, M. Wilson and Wilson (2009) proposed that children possess seven innate "graphic-ordering principles" (p. 44), or seven inclinations to organize artistic elements in particular fashions. These inclinations, they stressed, are subverted or maintained depending on a child's exposure to cultural influences and social interactions with adults and other children, a process which varies by child (M. Wilson & Wilson, 2009). They also rejected child art as a product of pure self-expression. Through their research, Wilson and Wilson developed a postmodern perspective on child art as a social construct that changes according to multiple aesthetic and academic discourses, a perspective they used to challenge the dominance of modernist thought in child art theory, practice and research (Wilson, 1997a, 1997b, 2004).

Other art education scholars have also challenged modernist attitudes in relation to comics. Such attitudes fuelled reservations among art teachers about modelling comics, and this motivated Smith (1985) to challenge the notion that copying comics limits "personal expression and inventive behaviors" (p. 154). By analyzing two cases of child-produced comics, Smith found that the child-authors incorporated their own themes and imagery into their comics, thereby evidencing creative behaviour by modifying cultural models. Hoff (1982) advocated for comics and visual narrative in the art classroom as a strategy to enrich students' art learning experience and to prolong it past junior high school, irrespective of comic books' reputation as "cheap sensationalist trash" (p. 22). Wilson and Wilson (1979b, 1979c, 1979d, 1980b, 1981; M. Wilson & Wilson, 1981) also countered conventional art education practice at the time in a series of practical *School Arts* articles that encouraged art teachers to engage children in visual narrative activities in order to expand their narrative and artistic capabilities and to explore graphic symbolic worldmaking. These practical articles culminated in M. Wilson and Wilson's (1982) book *Teaching Children to Draw* that extended this encouragement to parents.

Of the cultures they studied, Wilson and Wilson (1987) found Japan a dramatic example of how graphic development and worldmaking can transpire when comics is a principal visual model. They found that the ubiquity and popularity of manga provided a massive pool of imagery that allowed Japanese children to draw more sophisticated graphic narratives at a younger age compared to Egyptian children, who in the 1980s had no comparable popular and visual culture. Over a decade later, Toku (2001a) reported a similar result: Japanese children progressed more quickly in their ability to depict complex space as they aged relative to American children. She attributed this in part to how space is rendered in manga and then

modeled by Japanese children.

After research with Marjorie Wilson, Brent Wilson (1997a, 1997b, 2002) focused on Japan using a similar methodology as their previous cross-cultural studies. Preliminary analyses of data by Wilson (1997a, 1997b) collected in 1989 showed that Japanese children tended to model manga characters rather than invent their own and that this modelling engendered a higher degree of skill than typically expected for children. In reporting on the final results, the modelling was so prevalent that Wilson (2002) developed a classification system with seven archetypical characters found in mainstream manga that matched the manga-inspired characters of his participants. He found that 54% of the kindergarten children in his sample drew characters with manga-influenced features (such as large eyes) or ones directly identifiable as archetypical character types in commercial manga, a number that jumped to 75% in sixth grade (Wilson, 2002, p. 47).

Wilson and Toku (2004) discovered that the strong modelling of manga continued into adolescence and young adulthood with the amateur publishing practice of *dojinshi*. *Dojinshi* refers to self-published fanzines or original comic books drawn in the manga tradition and the groups of youth who draw them (Wilson & Toku, 2004). *Dojinshi* artists model the artistic and commercial practices of professional manga in, for example, selling and trading comics at numerous, large and well-attended comic markets across Japan (Wilson & Toku, 2004). The production of *dojinshi* is so widespread in Japan and involves the exchange of so many images that Wilson (2003) described this popular visual culture phenomenon as impossible to map. [11]

Given the strong influence of manga on Japanese youth's graphic development and

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[11] As Chen (2003, 2007) shows with Taiwanese adolescents, the complexity of *dojinshi* extends to its role in constituting the sociocultural identities of participants in anime/manga fan culture.

worldmaking, Wilson (1997a, 1997b, 2002) became interested in its function as a sociocultural influence on their lives. To do this, he interpreted manga and Japanese youth's manga-derived graphic narratives through a semiotic lens, approaching them as signs of Japanese society. Specifically, manga characters signified Japanese cultural identity and Japanese children adopted this identity by drawing manga-inspired characters and graphic narratives, a process that prepared them for life in Japanese society (Wilson, 1997a, 1997b, 2002). Wilson and Toku (2004) also interpreted genres about same-sex male relationships typically re-imagined and drawn by female artists as signs of Japanese women deconstructing traditional gender roles and reconstructing alternative ones.

In more recent scholarship, Brent Wilson (2003, 2005, 2008) engaged with visual culture art education by theorizing three pedagogical sites of visual culture production. For this thesis, visual culture is understood as a contemporary, yet contested, paradigm in art education that explicitly extends the notion of the visual from the traditional fine arts to encompass a broad spectrum of human images and image-making practices as valid content and practice (Duncum, 2009a; Wilson, 2004). Visual culture includes contemporary art and popular culture (Duncum, 2009b; Wilson, 2003) and the globalized, technological and networked visual experiences of the digital age (Carpenter & Tavin, 2010). It is premised on postmodern assumptions of "the politicization of art and the media, social pluralism, many truths with many narratives, and the blurring of the distinction between high and popular culture" (Duncum, 2009a, p. 67).

For Wilson (2003, 2005, 2008), the first pedagogical site is youth's self-initiated visual culture production done outside of school and other formal art education environments. The second is formal art education environments, both school and non-school, where adults instruct

youth in visual culture production. In seeking to bridge formalized art education and self-initiated art education of youth, the third site is a liminal space between the first two where youth and adult visual culture production and interests are negotiated and combined into new manifestations. Such combination is facilitated through an inclusive, collaborative and egalitarian exchange "in which teachers and students are stakeholders" (Wilson, 2003, p. 227). Elsewhere, Wilson (2005) characterized this exchange of the third site as transactional pedagogy.

Wilson (2005) credited J.C. Holz's self-initiated comics (see Wilson, 1974), collected early in his research career, with informing his theorization on visual culture pedagogy. J.C.'s comics brought Wilson's attention to youth's self-initiated visual culture production as a legitimate pedagogical site within art education. His research experience with J.C. also highlighted the adult interactions that encouraged such self-initiated production, helping him to conceptualize the characteristics of the third site. In this 2005 article, Wilson used comics creation as an exemplar of self-initiated visual culture production by youth to help him extrapolate the general characteristics of visual culture pedagogy. His theorization was not concerned with comics pedagogy per se. Nor was it concerned with comics pedagogy within visual culture pedagogy. It did, however, embrace comics and comics creation as legitimate content and practice in art education.

During the early 2000s, interest in comics and comics creation as its own domain, rather than embedded within children's graphic narrative, emerged in a number of K-12 practitioner-oriented articles that had comics or comics creation as the central topic of discussion. These articles offer different pedagogical rationales for including comics or comics creation in art curricula: comics and cartoons develop traditional artistic skills and concepts as well as introduce

students to fine artists (Berkowitz & Packer, 2001); the popularity of manga may maintain students' interest in art beyond adolescence (Toku, 2001b); comics creation facilitates interdisciplinary art-making in the form of "sculptural comics" (Rowberry, 2002, p. 100); and making comic strips promotes an affirmative model of disability (Seidler, 2011). Following Wilson's (2005) lead of legitimating comics in art education through visual culture, Graham (2008) argues that, since graphic novels exist at the intersection of contemporary art and visual culture, reading and making them teaches adolescents postmodern art-making practices and facilitates exploration of personal and social issues. Similarly, Williams (2008) advances that, as a form of visual culture, comics and comics creation enhances visual literacy, engenders empathy and facilitates exploration of the personal and social dimensions of the human condition.

Adams (1999, 2000) argues that comics creation should be included in art curricula because the medium can support critical engagement with social issues through its complex form and image-making practices. Specifically, he sees comics creation as a postmodern art practice, holding that students can employ it to critique binary gender constructs, reinterpret literary texts and appropriate published comics narratives (Adams, 2000). Adams (2001) even suggests that art education student-teachers can create comics in order "to re-examine the historical precedents of both East and West for image construction and interpretation" (p. 142), and that such comics can be the basis for lesson plans in practicums.

Another recent cluster of comics-themed literature in art education is Carpenter and Tavin's (2012) exploration of "graphic novel formatted scholarship " (p. vi) – or comics-

informed scholarship [12] – that aims "to challenge traditional conventions for both graphic novels and academic papers" (vii). [13] In 2010, Tavin and Carpenter created an article in comics form discussing the contemporary reconceptualization of art education towards several frameworks that "shift from traditional modes of artmaking and 'art thinking' toward a profoundly critical, historical, political, and self-reflexive understanding of visual culture and social responsibility" (p. 329). These frameworks critically distance themselves from the past paradigms of modernist self-expression and discipline-based art education (Tavin & Carpenter, 2010).

Although comics is not a topic of discussion in their article, Carpenter and Tavin's (2010) use of the comics form is significant because it suggests a reconceptualization of the medium that parallels the article's theme of reconceptualizing traditional art education. The authors distance the article from a traditional understanding of comics as linearly narrative, aesthetically-focused, hand-drawn and rooted in studio or commercial practice through digital production and presentation. [14] They employ a mix of digital photographs and re-appropriated images structured within the image/text juxtaposition of the comics form to represent critical and conceptual content that embodies the sentiment underlying art education's shift: "*how one draws with* specific tools has given way to *ways in which one draws from* various sources" (Carpenter &

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[12] Carpenter and Tavin (2010, 2012) do not explain why they use the term *graphic novel* over the term *comics* in their graphic novel formatted scholarship when they clearly use characteristics of the comics *medium* but not the distinctive characteristics of a *format* of comics, the graphic novel, in their articles.

[13] Duffy (2009) published a preceding article in comics format that discusses his work on comics and multimodal pedagogy in a museum context.

[14] Carpenter and Tavin (2010, 2012) do not discuss their creation process or production tools, but their articles resemble the photo comics made using Comic Life, a popular commercial software allowing individuals to make comics with digital photographs (plasq, 2014).

Tavin, 2010, p. 328, original emphasis). With these characteristics, the article can be construed as a postmodern-inspired revision of comics's juxtapositional structure for scholarly purposes rooted in the authors' critical visual culture standpoint.

Continuing in the mode of graphic novel formatted scholarship, Carpenter and Tavin (2012) edited a special issue of *Visual Arts Research* on the contemporary status of comics in art education. The issue has nine articles and one introduction in comics-format which appear in a range of hand-made, mixed media and digital styles. The articles situate comics creation and comics in various philosophical, theoretical and pedagogical frames to further advance "the graphic novel as legitimate and meaningful visual culture content in art education" (Carpenter & Tavin, 2012, p. vi). In discussing the interpretative nature of comics, some authors consider their verbal-visual multimodality (Sousanis, 2012) or their function as a semiotic network that gives readers flexibility and control in meaning making (Sutherlin, 2012; Sweeny, 2012). Others discuss the pedagogical potential of autobiographical comics to foster cross-cultural understanding (Manrique, 2012) and the educational implications of comics's narrative, postmodern and multimodal dimensions for students to understand the world (G. Thomas, 2012).

Several authors in the special issue view comics through a Deleuzian/Guattarian lens to: explore the recombination and reassembling of memories through comics form (Grube, 2012); explicate the politics of art-making and subjectivity using the comics form (Robinson-Cseke, 2012); and challenge comics conventions of production and interpretation by approaching the medium as an experience and process of making rather than a reproductive and representational semiotic exercise (Wallin, 2012). As distinct from other articles in the special issue, Williams (2012) discusses comics creation as a data collection method in her fieldwork with incarcerated

women. With scholarly-activist intentions, Williams drew comics during her fieldwork to capture and convey the experiences of incarcerated women in more compelling accounts and for a wider audience than traditional research.

Conclusions on Comics and Comics Creation in Art Education

Within the past fifteen years, a body of literature in art education has emerged with comics and comics creation as central topics of discussion. This literature is primarily practical in nature, advancing pedagogical rationales for these topics in K-12 education. Some scholars in this literature have related comics to theoretical and philosophical frameworks, albeit this remains nascent. The thinking about comics and comics creation in these articles, whether for pedagogical rationales or with broader conceptual frameworks, largely derives from postmodernist and visual cultural perspectives. Of note among the authors theorizing with comics in art education is Brent Wilson and his development of a pedagogical framework for visual culture using J.C. Holz's comics creation.

In contrast, Brent and Marjorie Wilson's research lacked the comics specificity of the contemporary practical and theoretical articles because it focused on the related, yet broader domains of narrative drawing and graphic narrative. When comics appeared in their research, it featured primarily as popular cultural models that facilitated graphic development and graphic symbolic worldmaking. Comics as visual models were especially prominent in their studies on Japanese children's graphic narratives. Comics creation occasionally appeared in Wilson and Wilson's research as a mode of graphic narrative taken up by the more graphically skilled participants in their studies on self-initiated art education.

Framed as a form of graphic narrative, comics in Wilson and Wilson's research served the same purpose as its cousin. Wilson and Wilson used graphic narrative as a methodological support to their central thesis of research – cultural influences on child art – and to their main research agenda – to develop a postmodern perspective on child art. Through numerous studies in which children drew graphic narratives, they demonstrated that the pluralistic nature of graphic development and graphic symbolic worldmaking depended on culturally specific models and conventions. Wilson and Wilson's demonstration of how the narrative intent and inquiry of graphic narrative reflects children's contextually constituted selves and worlds added further support to the notion that child art was culturally located. They conducted their studies to help prove that child art is culturally conditioned rather than emerging culturally unconditioned from children's inner selves.

Postmodernism and visual culture, with their expanded notions of art and the visual, have forged space for comics and comics creation as legitimate in art education, a situation radically different from the chronic exclusion of comics under modernist art education. This paradigm dismissed comics based on its popular cultural association. Encouragingly, many contemporary authors advancing comics in art education have avoided validating the medium based on its popularity alone and, instead, have advanced the medium based on its complexity, critical potential and situatedness in the world. Nevertheless, immense epistemological space remains regarding the pedagogical and curricular dimensions of comics as related to different contexts, populations, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and other disciplines. This is especially pressing in the domain of art education research where the existent studies offer insights about comics and comics creation in relation to graphic development, self-inquiry and semiotic

systems, if one extrapolates conclusions about graphic narrative to comics.

Despite a growing presence of practical publications, understandings of comics creation in the discipline still largely reside within a normative K-12 formulation of art education focused on children and adolescents. This same limitation exists in Wilson and Wilson's research which focused on children and, at times, adolescents. Future research can expand on comics creation in relation to differently aged learner populations. Credit is due to Wilson and Wilson, however, for expanding the recognition of alternative educative sites where comics pedagogy can occur. They did this through research on self-initiated art education and Brent Wilson's theorizing of visual culture pedagogy. This expansion, though, does not extend into research specifically on comics pedagogy in practical contexts.

Wilson and Wilson's research is also limited in that it primarily understands comics through its popular manifestations, in the sense of popular media and popular visual culture. This limitation is indicative of not viewing comics through a comics-specific lens, which has the effect of dampening a nuanced understanding of the medium. Framing comics as popular media or culture overlooks non-popular traditions of comics practice and, consequently, excludes understandings of how the stylistic, formal and content aspects of non-popular genres might affect graphic symbolic worldmaking and development.

Moreover, the understanding of graphic symbolic worldmaking Wilson and Wilson put forward is mostly based on a simple storyboard template of a few sequential frames that they used as a methodological tool in their studies. If extrapolated to comics, graphic narrative in their research is largely limited to the comic strip format. However, composition is a critical aspect of making meaning and symbolic representation in comics and commonly appears in

designs more complex than a simple panel sequence. How more complex comics formats affect graphic worldmaking and development remains open for investigation in art education.

Despite the international scope of Wilson and Wilson's research, its age prevents it from accounting for the contemporary context of increased international cross-fertilization between comics practices, as seen with the appropriation of manga in non-Japanese contexts (for an example of such appropriation with New York City youth, see Bitz, 2009). [15] Their studies on Japan, as with Wilson and Toku's work on *dojinshi*, considered manga as a Japanese phenomenon. At least one other art education scholar has investigated manga in another Asian context: Hong Kong (Lau, 2013). Wilson and Wilson's research, as with the vast majority of the comics-themed literature in art education, addresses English North American and Japanese comics traditions. Other traditions, such as the Franco-Belgian or Québécois traditions of *bande dessinée,* have yet to be broached in the art education literature. An exception is Kim (2008), who studied Korean comics, or *manwha.*

In relation to my thesis, aspects of Wilson and Wilson's research informed how I approached content and form in the YES CBP curriculum. With the concept of graphic symbolic worldmaking, Wilson and Wilson showed that children are inclined to employ graphic narrative as a means of self-inquiry when drawing on their own or by invitation. I assumed that this inclination would remain for older adolescent and young adult learners. To support self-inquiry, my curriculum necessitated that learners bring their own content – characters, plots, themes and ideas – to their comics. To support self-inquiry further, I stressed comics creation as a mode of self-exploration and a medium capable of addressing any type of content.

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[15] M. Wilson and Wilson (2009) are aware of this trend in their second edition of *Teaching Children to Draw*; however, this is a practical, not a research publication.

Wilson and Wilson's insights on graphic development also informed how I structured teaching the comics form in the YES CBP curriculum. According to Wilson and Wilson, models are critical in acquiring the conventions of graphic narrative and in developing the graphic skills needed to engage in self-inquiry through drawing. In expecting a population of primarily novice drawers, I assumed that most of them would require scaffolding to develop schemata for figures, backgrounds and other formal properties of comics. In other words, a majority of my learners would require instruction on the formal and technical conventions of comics to actually draw their learner-driven content. My curriculum provided models and practice exercises so learners could improve their graphic and narrative capabilities as they progressed through the program. My curricular structure around formal comics conventions, however, had to accommodate the multiple graphic developmental pathways of learners in my program. As explained in the Discussion chapter, this led me to a pedagogy that individualized the curriculum's comics creation process to learners.

My thesis makes a contribution in expanding understandings of comics pedagogy in art education by addressing it in relation to a particular population and site: queer young adult learners and an LGBT youth centre. The relationship between comics pedagogy and queerness has not yet been thoroughly studied in art education research. I also offer an approach to comics pedagogy different from the visual culture and postmodern ones in the literature: a socially adaptive approach that presupposes comics pedagogy in community art education arises in relation to the interests of learners and the practical circumstances of the site rather than from a particular standpoint such as visual culture or postmodernism. This causes comics pedagogy to be paradigm-flexible, rather than paradigm-driven, and enables excluding, combining or

switching between paradigms in response to the social dynamics of the community site.

LGBT/Q Issues in Art Education

As one of the earliest articles in a mainstream art education journal dealing substantively with sexual diversity, Honeychurch's analysis (1995) on the topic was succinct: sexual orientation had been omitted from art education's "dialogues of diversity" (p. 210). It had been excluded from wider postmodern conversations on how different subject positions and their constituting contexts affect meaning-making in the creation and reception of visual art (Honeychurch, 1995). Honeychurch argued for the inclusion of sexual orientation in these conversations because it affected meaning-making like other subject positions. He also called for art education to take a further step: examine "the ideological and political systems which have created and fostered oppressions based on other than heterosexual subjectivity" (p. 216).

Honeychurch's article highlights two principal standpoints proponents take when advocating for greater queer representation in art education: include LGBT/Q within the spectrum of differences existent in established art curricula and critique the heteronormative assumptions of established art curricula. Over a decade after Honeychurch, Britain's National Society for Education in Art and Design held two initiatives that explicitly took up these standpoints: a special issue of *The International Journal of Art and Design Education* (IJADE) (Stanley, 2007a) and a related conference (Stanley, 2007c). Both initiatives sought to visibilize the contributions of LGBT/Q people to the development of art education, incorporate queer perspectives and content into the discipline and change the pervasive culture of heteronormativity in the educational system (Stanley, 2007a, 2007c). Underscored by the goals

of inclusion and critique, the special issue and conference challenged art education to forge a different relationship with queer individuals other than one of chronic exclusion.

These two goals also serve as the rationales underpinning five strategies in the pursuit of greater LGBT/Q representation in the discipline. I have synthesized these five strategies from the queer-themed art education literature: professional advocacy, curriculum reformulation, criticality, autobiographical accounts and teacher support. This pursuit for greater representation has been characterized by some queer proponents as a cultural war against conservative factions of art education (Check, 2004; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Fehr, Check, Atkins & Keifer-Boyd, 2002).

Professional Advocacy

As the literature indicates, [16] professional advocacy on LGBT/Q issues in art education has focused on enhancing support for representative art curricula within the discipline's largest North American professional organization, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) of the United States. As the largest organization of its kind, NAEA has historically represented the mainstream of art education and its concomitant heteronormative bias. Before the early 1990s, Check (2000) states that "LGB [lesbian, gay and bisexual] issues had been noticeably absent from NAEA convention programs and sponsored research" (p. 139), a condition which, to him, supported silence on LGBT/Q issues in art education. Check claims that a major turning point in this situation occurred at a workshop he facilitated at a 1992 NAEA conference addressing

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[16] I remind the reader that the interpretation in this section is only from my perspective as an outsider to the social space of the queer community of the National Art Education Association. My interpretation relies solely on the information provided in the literature.

silence and isolation of LGB art educators. The workshop opened an initial space to discuss these topics and to form a fledgling LGB interest group (Check, 2000).

Between 1993 and 1996, the nascent LGB interest group functioned as a working group within NAEA's Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education (CSTAE) (Check, 2000). This provided the group more visibility in NAEA by letting it submit conference proposals through CSTAE and use CSTAE's newsletter (Check, 2000). In 1994, the group formalized into the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues Caucus (LGBIC) with the intention of seeking official NAEA affiliate status, and a constitution was written in pursuit of this goal (Check, 2000; Lampela, 1996). LGBIC gaining affiliate status would increase visibility of lesbian and gay issues and perspectives in art education through curriculum change and would work against the chronic exclusion within the discipline stemming from "social and educational biases, discrimination and misrepresentation in research and teaching" (Lampela, 1996, p. 23). Because negative societal attitudes towards homosexuality in education impacted queer teachers and students in art education, Lampela (1996) argued that an advocacy group was needed to take positions on behalf of affected individuals, educate the discipline on discrimination and offer support and social forums for its members and straight allies.

Check (2000) and Lampela (1996) led LGBIC's transition to NAEA affiliate status in 1996, which granted it official recognition as a special interest group within the organization. With affiliate status, proponents of LGBT/Q art education organized into a more cohesive and visible collective within NAEA (Check, 2000). Check (2000) notes, however, that "internalized homophobia and fear of disclosure" (p. 141) stymied participation in the LGBIC's formative years. Although not happening within NAEA, an example of homophobia in American art

education not long after LGBIC's granting of affiliate status was the cancellation of a panel on LGBT issues in the classroom at a state art education conference in 2001, an experience elaborated in Akins (2003), Check and Akins (2003), Fehr, Check, Atkins and Keifer-Boyd (2002) and Herbet (2003). As these authors recount, the state art education executive board cancelled the panel two weeks before the conference in response to the homophobia and threats of a local school board administrator. They also recounted how this forced them to relocate the panel to a nearby state university. Even though this incident was not directly related to NAEA, it highlighted the need for a queer advocacy group in the discipline at the time.

In 2001, LGBIC affixed "T" for transgender to its acronym (Lampela, 2009), signalling greater representation of LGBT/Q identities. Shortly thereafter, the LGBTIC underwent a contentious name change/extension elaborated upon in a collaborative article by Cosier, Lampela, de la Garnica, Sanders, Smith-Shank, Rhodes and Whitehead (2005). In the article, the authors reenacted tensional email exchanges about a close majority vote to change the caucus's name from LGBTIC to Queer Issues Caucus. Some supported the name change in favour of a less cumbersome title and for the inclusivity and identity fluidity connoted by the word queer (Cosier et al., 2005). Others challenged the name change based on not identifying with the word queer and its being too political and academic for practitioners (Cosier et al., 2005). In the end, the caucus compromised by extending its name to LGBT/Queer Issues Caucus and allowing its members to use either side of the slashed title to suit their circumstances (Cosier et al., 2005). The exchanges in the article reflect different perspectives within the macro-LGBT/Q community on semantics and representation.

Between 2009 and 2012, LGBT/Q advocacy in art education emerged in the form of the

Big Gay Church, a performative, participatory and pedagogical intervention conducted by a collective of art education researchers who detailed their humorous yet critical exploits in two articles by Rhoades, Davenport, Wolfgang, Cosier and Sanders (2013) and Sanders, Cosier, Rhoades, Wolfgang and Davenport (2013). In their articles, the authors explained how they critiqued the influence of conservative religious anti-LGBT/Q discourses on the American education system through performative queer "congregations" that disrupted the normative concept and format of NAEA conference presentations and church services.

Curriculum Reformulation

Many have called for the reform of art curricula towards greater LGBT/Q representation, and I borrow Stanley's (2007c) expression "curriculum reformulation" (p. 794) to describe this strategy. Stanley defines curriculum reformulation as:

> Re-examining what goes on in the contemporary syllabus, arguing for not just the addition of new elements derived from LGBT experience and action, but also incorporating a repudiation of core assumptions derived from a heterosexual perspective relating to social structure and personal space. (p. 795)

Echoing Honeychurch (1995), Stanley's definition sets inclusion and critique as rationales for curriculum reform in art education.

Mainly from the standpoint of inclusion, Laura Lampela (1995, 1996, 2001b, 2007a) has written extensively on embedding equitable and representative discussion of lesbian and gay artists into art curricula. Many of her publications showcase exemplar artists for adoption into lesson plans, focusing on historical lesbian artists (Lampela, 2000, 2001a, 2006, 2007a) and

contemporary lesbian and queer artists (Lampela, 2007b, 2007c, 2010). For Lampela (1995, 1996, 2000, 2001a, 2007a), claiming that an art curriculum is truly representative of cultural diversity requires recognizing sexual orientation within the spectrum of other human differences that contemporary art curricula consider. Her perspective echoes Honeychurch (1995) and she, in fact, was another early voice arguing for the inclusion of sexual diversity in art education (Lampela, 1995). Besides representative cultural diversity, Lampela states other rationales for including gay and lesbian artists in the art curriculum: these artists and their artwork open discussion on sexual minority identities in the art classroom (Lampela, 1995, 2000); students with information on gay and lesbian artists' sexual identities garner more accurate interpretations of their artworks (Lampela, 1995, 2000, 2007a); LGBT/Q representation increases awareness, acceptance and safe space for queer students in the classroom (Lampela, 1995, 2000); and gay and lesbian artists provide role models for LGBT/Q youth (Lampela, 1995, 2007a).

The inclusion of LGBT/Q artists in the curriculum is not without difficulties, as revealed by an art teacher survey conducted by Lampela (2001b). She found that 81% of art teachers actively included artwork by LGB artists while teaching, and 92% were aware that a portion of artists in their lessons had sexual minority status (p. 151). Despite the high percentage of awareness and inclusion among art teachers, 60% believed that knowing artists' sexual minority status was not significant to understand their art and, furthermore, 51% believed that discussing artists' sexual orientation was not significant to understand their art (p. 151). Based on the surveyed art teachers' perceived irrelevance between sexual orientation and artwork, Lampela concluded that art teachers generally foreclose opportunities for accurate interpretation of LGB artwork among students because they do not disclose the artists' sexual identities.

Another difficulty Lampela (2000, 2007a) discussed regarding queer-inclusive art curricula is that some art educators assume that all lesbian and gay artwork is sexually explicit and, thus, unsuitable for art class. She stresses that such artwork is inappropriate for school contexts but that it is also different from artwork addressing sexual identity and romantic relationships. The latter type of artwork is just as appropriate for school as work by heterosexual artists addressing these themes (Lampela, 2000, 2007a).

As Lampela noted, queer artists provide role models, a view shared by many scholars. [17] In the IJADE special issue, Stanley (2007b) offers his own exemplar queer artist, suggesting gay artist Derek Jarman as a postmodern model for a politically engaged "gay aesthetic" (p. 113) and diverse artistic practice. Hall (2007) discussed how a gay and a lesbian artist of colour presented their art practices to secondary students, serving as role models for pursuing personally-informed artwork. Although the artists discussed sexual identity within their practices, students identified with them based on sociocultural experiences associated with identities other than those of minority sexuality (Hall, 2007). In a community context, Lee and the young women of the LIK:T project (2007) explored intergenerational mentorship among bisexual and lesbian women through the production of posters and a photography exhibition.

Another challenge in reforming curriculum towards greater LGBT/Q representation is the role of cultural institutions in stymieing access to historical or contemporary LGBT/Q cultural content. Several scholars discuss this challenge in a UK context (Frost, 2007; D. McIntyre, 2007; Petry, 2007; Walker, 2007). Walker (2007) underscores the difficulties that students and researchers interested in lesbian artists have in creation or research when faced with a

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[17] Stanley (2007c) categorizes artist role models and mentorship as a separate approach to develop LGBT/Q-representative art education rather than, as Lampela does, an effect of adding queer content to the curriculum.

sociocultural history and art history that renders lesbians invisible or understands them through oppressive male and heterosexual constructs. Frost (2007) notes that, historically, museums have had a dismal record in representing lesbian and gay culture, as exemplified by how they censored classical objects with depictions of same-sex relationships as pornographic or obscene. This treatment also exposes how modern society can impose its own perceptions of same-sex relationships on those of the past (Frost, 2007). Even when contemporary LGBT/Q visual art is present in cultural institutions, censorship and institutional homophobia can interfere with accurate and nuanced LGBT/Q representation to a broader public (Petry, 2007). Museums have also lacked consultation with the LGBT/Q community in the collection of queer materials, which, if done, would contribute more accurate representations of queer heritage and history (D. McIntyre, 2007).

Besides specific curricular initiatives around content, other art education scholars advocate for reforming curriculum through a queer theory lens. This lens foregrounds critique of heteronormative assumptions. Desai (2003) observes that multicultural art education ignores sexual diversity, thereby maintaining heterosexuality as a normative structure of culture. She argues that this silence is even perpetuated in approaches to multicultural art education that understand culture as a social construct and identities as "unstable categories that are fluid, multiple, and contradictory" (p. 157). Drawing from Judith Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, Desai states that the omission of sexual diversity in multicultural art education results from conflating gender and sexuality which creates a binary opposition of man/woman that positions heterosexuality as the dominant sexuality. Desai advances a Butlerian lens to rethink culture as performative, which would deconstruct "the conceptual dualism that frames

issues of gender and sexuality in social reconstructive multiculturalism" (p. 158) and open opportunities for understanding sexual identity as intersectional with other cultural identities.

Bey and Washington (2013) see curriculum as performance, a set of socially constructed actions that teachers and students enact. Queering curricular performances initiates actions that open "alternative *points of engagement*" (p. 117, original emphasis) within the normative (rather than strictly heteronormative) curriculum, whereby proscribed or expected interactions and experiences with the curriculum can change. To Bey and Washington, alternative points of engagement facilitate "*conversations of understanding*" (p. 119, original emphasis) – critical reflections and renegotiations of lived experience, identity and, especially, one's identification with the curriculum (the performance) that are made in hindsight within the classroom. Through this process, teachers and students can queer their identification as curriculum participants from within the curriculum to come to know themselves differently through unconventional learning and teaching interactions, relationships and experiences (Bey & Washington, 2013).

Criticality

The critical impulse of curriculum reform – or the "repudiation of core assumptions derived from a heterosexual perspective" (Stanley, 2007c, p. 759) – carries through to the critical disposition it seeks to instill in students through pedagogical strategies or learner art-making. In the LGBT/Q art education literature, criticality encompasses identifying and resisting heteronormative assumptions that structure learning environments, visual representations and society at large.

Some scholars seek to challenge behaviours sustaining heteronormative educational environments by suggesting pedagogical strategies to establish the art classroom as a safe space. Check (2002) encourages teachers to identify how normative white masculinity supports homophobia and misogyny in their classrooms and to deconstruct these oppressive constructs in attitudes, behaviour, language and curriculum through critical self-reflection in order to promote positive gender constructs for all students. Payne (2010) recommends that teachers highlight the harm caused by the pejorative use of the words "gay" and "retarded" and suggest alternatives so that students enhance their compassion for a spectrum of human differences. Gude (2003) offers a number of strategies to discuss LGBT/Q issues in the art curriculum while considering the dilemmas of representing the "other" and promoting critical thinking.

Other scholars advance the critical interpretation of queer and heteronormative representation in media texts. Given that media representation has a real influence on how heterosexual and LGBT/Q persons conceptualize queerness, Chung (2007) endorses critical media literacy as a pedagogical strategy to deconstruct reductive "mediatypes" (p. 101) – media stereotypes – of lesbian and gay people. He suggests that such stereotypes be contested with "countertypes" (p. 103), or positive stereotypes. In a similar vein, Sanders (2007) argues that, among students, the critical reading of contemporary queer and heteronormative television and film fosters discussion and opens awareness on queer representation, its relation to intersecting identities and heteronormativity. Compared to Lampela's aforementioned focus on fine art and historical artists, Sanders embraces contemporary media to engage students in LGBT/Q social justice issues.

Another cluster in the literature focuses on the potential for critical art-making by

students to resist heteronormativity in a variety of contexts. Within post-secondary art education, Ashburn (2007) sees photography as a means to challenge heteronormativity and open space for other sexualities by presenting outsider perspectives through documentation, examination and expression of queer history, life and culture. Rhoades (2009) proposes that employing digital tools, specifically hypertext within digital family albums, through a deconstructive frame can challenge and expand master narratives of the heteronormative nuclear family. In developing the theme of digital media for LGBT/Q social justice further, Rhoades (2011) advances digital media as a site for collective, critical and arts-based action that promotes equitable LGBT/Q discourses over discriminatory ones. Rhoades (2012a, 2012b) also explored collective, critical and arts-based action in an urban community context, putting the framework she laid out in her 2011 article into research. She investigated how LGBT/Q youth learned and engaged with video production as a critical, civically engaged and activist practice (Rhoades, 2012a, 2012b). Participants learned skills that facilitated the critique of negative, adult-imposed discourses of queer youth as victims by telling their stories through a short documentary film and using the film within an outreach program on LGBT/Q youth (Rhoades, 2012a, 2012b).

By moving from expression to criticality in art-making, Addison (2005, 2007, 2012) argues that the UK secondary art and design curriculum can create space to resist heteronormativity, thereby making identity exploration and representation through art more inclusive to queer students. Addison's series of articles is worth referencing at length because it stands out in the literature based on its explicit discussion of how modernist discourses of creativity in art and design education constrain queer youth art-making in schools.

For Addison (2005), art and design is one of the few curricular areas offering

metaphorical space for sexual minority students to explore and represent their emerging sexual identities. In the curriculum, however, self-exploration transpires through modernist-inspired self-expression that presumes creative acts facilitate an individual's understanding of a unique, inner self and produce artwork directly manifesting that self (Addison, 2005). According to Addison, the possibility of critical and resistant space in art and design arises when expressive acts are construed as receptive acts. As receptive acts, art becomes a mode of communication for social and political engagement with audiences on heteronormative discourse and representation rather than a true queer self (Addison, 2005).

Addison (2007) remarks, however, that the invitation to explore the self through art-making for sexual minority students is often circumscribed. Sexuality as an aspect of identity is excluded from the self-representational norms of secondary schools which seek to segregate adolescents from their emerging sexualities; albeit de-sexualized heterosexual representations that fit school discourse on sexuality, such as marriage, are permitted (Addison, 2007). Even when art and design open a space for the articulation of difference, students usually represent their unique selves by employing stereotypical depictions garnered from the mass media and canonical art history (Addison, 2007). The critical interpretation of these representations' essentalizing and normalizing functions, he notes, is overlooked when students use such representations for the study of form, which leads them to acritically perpetuate stereotypes in their artwork.

According to Addison (2007), the exclusion of both queer representation and critique of essentialized representations in art and design education reproduces a heteronormative school environment. Within this environment, most queer students censor self-expressions that risk

exposing a queer personal and emotive self (Addison, 2007). They, instead, opt to avoid or deny queer representation by, for example, employing stereotypical signifiers that support heteronormative values (Addison, 2007). Using Foucaultian insights on confession, Addison argues that queer students avoid "confessional routes" (p. 18) of self-expression because their identities have already been "named and codified" (p. 16) – and, thereby, disciplined – as other in the school environment. Addison advises against confessional routes in art and design education because they risk exposing queer students to further discipline within a heteronormative school culture.

Instead, Addison (2007) endorses student art-making that employs "distancing strategies of historical investigation and contemporary criticism" that foster the "demythologisation of the idea that art has a uniquely expressive function whereby its communicative, critical and investigative roles are overlooked" (p. 18). Such strategies open space in the art and design curriculum to represent identity "as something constructed in relation to the affordances (the constraints and potentialities) of a given situation" (Addison, 2007, p. 12), which, Addison believes, unfixes heterosexuality as absolute and dominant. Distancing strategies do not equate to aloof engagement with viewers; instead, they confront viewers with the negative impacts that queer people sustain within the social structure of heteronormativity (Addison, 2012, p. 538).

Autobiographical Accounts

Another cluster of publications in the literature is self-accounts about LGBT/Q experiences in the professional and personal contexts of art and art education. These autobiographical accounts highlight the human and emotional dimensions of LGBT/Q life

experiences both as a political stance to render queerness more visible and a point from which to foster greater understanding of LGBT/Q people. Laura Lampela and Ed Check's (2003) anthology *From Our Voices* remains the only collection of LGBT/Q autobiographical accounts in art education. Covering a period from the 1960s to the early 2000s, it illustrates the personal and professional impacts of homophobia and heteronormativity in a range of art and art education contexts through the life experiences of American sexual minority and allied students, teachers, artists and academics.

Besides this anthology, Ed Check is the scholar who most prolifically employs autobiographical accounts in the literature. Through writing and art-making, he examines his life experience through a broad intersectional lens, addressing relationships among the social locations in which he situates himself: gay, white, man, working-class, academic, artist, educator and activist (Check, 1992, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2012; Check & Akins, 2004; Check, Deniston & Desai, 1997). In this very personal scholarship, Check cogitates on how external and internalized homophobia and misogyny negatively impacted him as: a gay and gender nonconforming youth in the 1960s and 1970s American Midwest; as a closeted elementary art school teacher developing a gay identity during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s; as an openly gay activist graduate student in the 1990s; and an openly gay professor working in conservative West Texas from the late 1990s until present. When focused on his sexual identity, Check (2012) characterizes his lived experience as "fenced in/out" (p. 20): internalized homophobia fenced his sexual identity into private space and out from public view while external homophobia fenced him out from heteronormative social spaces and into the space of the other. He describes the overall interaction between his sexual orientation and academia as a "war zone" (Check, 2004).

Check (2004, 2006, 2012) engages with autobiographical writing and art-making to mourn and reconnect with his past in order to heal from traumatic life experiences. His trauma arose from the homophobic responses of certain segments of American culture to his sexual orientation and nonconformity with the masculine gender (Check, 2004, 2006, 2012). He believes this process affords him greater self-understanding on how his past informs his perceptions of being a working-class and sexual minority outsider in academic spaces (Check, 1992, 2005, 2006, 2012). Beyond personal healing, Check believes testimonies documenting the complex navigations through and effects of discrimination that queer educators experience can disrupt homophobia embedded in dominant art education discourses (Check, Deniston & Desai, 1997). Personal narratives can also support "anti-homophobia classroom strategies" (Check, 2012, p. 19) or "anti-bias teaching" (Check & Akins, 2004, p. 70), as Check (1992, 2002, 2005; Check, Deniston & Desai, 1997) attests to through his own teaching and mentoring as a professor.

Teacher Support

Stanley (2007a) notes that, as the general context, institutional support and guidance for teachers to address LGBT/Q issues in the art classroom is lacking, leaving them feeling unprepared and unsupported to tackle issues of homophobia. This situation impedes queer and non-queer teachers from pursuing "an equal rights agenda" (Stanley, 2007a, p. 6) in which they respond to homophobia and bullying as part of the school's mandate to provide equality for all. To Johnson (2012), a lack of institutional support can extend into pressure for teachers to self-censor their LGBT/Q identity, which negatively impacts student-teacher relationships by making

them non-transparent and inauthentic. The educational system may also require lesbian and gay teachers to fake "*heterosexual credentials*" (McKenzie-Bassant, 2007, p. 57, original emphasis) to attain social inclusion and to protect themselves. Even if teachers attempt to discuss how the educational system positions non-heterosexual identities as other, they can be accused of imposing a personal issue – disclosure – rather than brining up issues around heteronormativity and discrimination in education (McKenzie-Bassant, 2007).

In this context, McKenzie-Bassant (2007) argues that "lesbian and gay teachers cannot [alone] be asked to carry the responsibility of challenging systems of education which are proven to be conventionalised by heterosexist norms and values that alienate and devalue them" (p. 61). In other words, such obligations also rest on institutions. This is especially needed when the self-disclosure of queer status by teachers remains dissuaded and risky in the educational system (Lampela, 2003; Stanley, 2007a). Stanley (2007a, 2007c) sees potential in teacher education as a way to change negative institutionalized attitudes and practices towards queerness. Teacher support, as a strategy to foster a queer representative art education, however, has received the least attention in the literature. Only a few scholars have addressed the topic.

Lampela (2005) engaged pre-service teachers with queer issues by modelling how to write lesson plans that included lesbian and gay artists and by having student-teachers map the identities of those artists to facilitate reflection on their own identities within curriculum planning. In another example, Cosier and Sanders' (2007) respective approaches to "queer-affirming art teacher education" (p. 21) aim to educate student-teachers to be politically conscious and active in the "fight for social justice and human rights" (p. 29) when addressing LGBT/Q issues in K-12 education. They believe that teachers have a moral obligation to teach

all students equitably by confronting the effects of heteronormative school cultures and by constructing the classroom as an inclusive and democratic space. In their approach, Cosier and Sanders focus on student-teachers' responsibility to change school cultures and to create secure learning environments for all students.

Conclusions on LGBT/Q Issues in Art Education

All five strategies within the art education literature reveal that the pursuit of LGBT/Q representation, as with comics and comics creation, is primarily associated with K-12 art education. The literature provides little pedagogical or curricular insight on how to teach in queer community contexts or even queer-centric educational spaces where queer youth might occupy safer learning environments but deal with different issues and dynamics. The exception is Mindi Rhoades (2012a, 2012b) with her research at an LGBT/Q youth centre in an urban community setting. Moreover, the literature reflects how the five strategies to establish an LGBT/Q-representative art education are largely advanced through the perspectives of LGBT/Q scholars with acute underrepresentation of queer learner perspectives.

Queer perspectives in the literature are overrepresented by lesbian and gay scholars and underrepresented by bisexual, trans and other queer perspectives. To the best of my research, Stanley (2007a) was the only one to explicitly acknowledge this problem in a footnote to his introduction to the IJADE special issue: "More work needs to be done in forefronting bisexual and transgender contributions to art and design education" (p. 8). Elsewhere in the literature, the brief recognition of trans – usually by affixing "T" to the rainbow acronym – is consistently followed by scant substantive discussion in practice or research publications. I found no

publication in art education that was transsexual specific. Credit is due to Cosier (2007) on broaching transgendering practices in art education by writing on her mentor relationship with one "young butch dyke/drag king" (p. 6) who expanded her conceptualization of gender fluidity, specifically female masculinity, among contemporary queer youth. I point out these gaps not to suggest deliberate omission of trans but to stress that overrepresentation of certain queer identities, experiences and perspectives in art education limits the degree to which LGBT/Q proponents in the discipline can claim to be inclusive.

Readers may interpret this thesis as contributing to the advocacy standpoints of LGBT/Q-representative art education by making visible a trans dimension in the teaching and research of art education. The thesis achieves this by illuminating my experience of being visibly trans in the pedagogical relationships of YES CBP and considering this experience as relevant to the thesis's data analysis and representation. That is to say, I try to forge more space for trans identity and experience in art education's "dialogues of diversity" (Honeychurch, 1995, p. 210) in support of others' urgings that an LGBT/Q-representative art education be broadly inclusive. Along with addressing a queer-centric community space and the still unexamined relationship between comics creation and queerness in art education, my thesis contributes the experience of a trans art educator to the literature.

The five strategies and the discourses of inclusion and critique that underscore them can be construed as important conditions that have allowed an LGBT/Q-representative art education to manifest over the past two decades. More specifically, they can be understood as necessary conditions to create and maintain a space of secure inclusion for queer individuals in the discipline. Despite the underlying dynamic of security and insecurity pervading the LGBT/Q-

themed literature in art education, this same literature lacks explicit, in-depth discussion and critical or theoretical development of safe space as a concept. This leaves the discipline with: a generic understanding of safe space in relation to queer learners and art educators; little insight into how it functions as a complex relational process; and sparse knowledge on which conditions are required to actualize and maintain safe space within specific contexts of art education practice, whether they be school or community sites.

A selection of literature on the topics of safe space, LGBT/Q youth and education provide a starting point to engage complexly with the concept beyond its common meaning of "a neutral meeting ground where individuals are allowed and encouraged to present multiple aspects of themselves, free from judgment and emotional and physical harm" (Shelton, 2008, p. 70). This literature highlights how the actualization of safe space with queer youth is a relational process with adults or adult-led educational structures. Schroeder (2012) points out that adults play a significant role in constraining or facilitating the agency of queer youth within in-school and out-of-school safe spaces. This includes adults who support the creation of safe space and those in broader educational or other social spaces who force "spatial compromise" (Schroeder, 2012, p. 647) on queer youth's agency and activism through homophobia and heterosexism.

On a similar point, Hackford-Peer (2010) argues that discourses positioning queer youth as innocent victims and activist educators allow adults to create safe space for and with them in schools; however, such queer-affirming spaces are generally segregated from the larger school context. This spatial segregation circumscribes school-wide and community coalitions that act to challenge the institutionalized heterosexism that leads to the need for protection in schools (Hackford-Peer, 2010). Loutzenheiser and Moore (2009) discuss how individualistic discourses

underpinning safe school programs separate individual and systemic causes of LGBT/Q bullying and harassment so that these acts of violence are framed as "an individualized concern with individualized solutions" (p. 157). This discourages critical interrogation of and coalitionist action within and beyond schools against the heteronormative structures of education that support LGBT/Q bullying and harassment (Loutzenheiser & Moore, 2009).

Cosier (2009) stresses the importance of "understanding the interdependence of school structure and student/teacher relationships…[in] the creation of school cultures that support kids who do not fit the norm" (p. 295). Based on her research at two alternative schools, Cosier developed the contrasting categories of "rule-bound schools" and "principled schools" cultures (p. 296). The former privileges governing behaviour through conformity to rules and bureaucratic pedagogical relationships that position teachers as "rule enforcers" (p. 296). The interaction of these two conditions alienates students from meaningful experience and participation in rule-bound schools (Cosier, 2009). In contrast, principled schools are structured on a few principles that extend school governance to include students (Cosier, 2009). These schools also have attentive pedagogical relationships that embrace and support the sexual and gender diversity of "problem" students that would violate the social norms of rule-bound schools (Cosier, 2009). These two conditions support queer students' attachment to and engagement with their principled schools and, as a result, position such schools as safe spaces (Cosier, 2009). Sentiments of safe space in principled schools, as Cosier notes, arise because queer youth feel cared for and are "allowed and encouraged to speak their minds, without fear of reprisal by school officials" (p. 297).

These articles articulate safe space (or lack thereof) as contingent upon adult-led social

structures and relations, which can expand or constrain how queer youth act in such spaces. The same relational dynamic existed at YES although, as I observed, it tended towards enabling queer youth to flourish because the set of principles in CRABS Assp softened adult power. CRABS Assp regulated social interactions between queer youth and adult staff as consciously respectful and egalitarian, which also served to mitigate power dynamics and allow queer youth to participate in the governance of the YES space as opposed to governance being concentrated solely in the hands of staff. Such relations engendered a sense of security for sexual and gender minority youth through relationships of caring, respect and engagement, and reflected YES's purpose as an organization focused on youth development and empowerment. A condition that further supported this sense of security, unlike the school structures cited above, was YES's position within a large queer community centre in New York City with the internal power and resources, and the external support of a queer-friendly city, to muffle the effects of heteronormativity.

My pedagogical relationships with learners in YES CBP had to abide by the same relational dynamic of CRABS Assp, but they were also characterized by the need to make individualized creative space safe for the queer youth I taught. To understand this element of creative safe space in the pedagogical relations of YES CBP, I am informed by Hunter's (2008) definition of safe space within the context of collaborative community-based performance and peace-building. Hunter defines safe space as a "processual act of ever-becoming, of messy negotiations" (p. 16). She extends the common understanding of safe space from a container of protection or insularity that rules out tension and risk to an active social process that holds the tension generated by risk as productive. When this process is operative in creative spaces, a

"dynamic tension between known (safe) processes and unknown (risky) outcomes" (p. 8) plays out from the interactions and relations of participants and facilitators generating creative acts. These social dynamics of creativity position facilitators and participants in a process of constant negotiation with risk and safety that leads to productive creativity (Hunter, 2008). Informed by Hunter's definition, I characterize adaptive pedagogy in YES CBP as a process of actualizing safe space through tensions between safety and risk during comics creation learning. I elaborate on this conceptualization of safe space as process in the Analysis and Discussion chapters. Before that elaboration, however, I explain the theoretical lens that has enabled me to understand adaptive pedagogy as a relational process in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL LENS

In this chapter, I outline my thesis's theoretical lens: French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theory of practice. I applied a sociological frame to my research question because I believe that pedagogy and curriculum in community art education develop primarily in response to the social context and relations of community sites. In my teaching practice, I seek to meet the interests and needs of learners, adjust to community sites' circumstances and incorporate their missions into my programs. These aspects of my CAE practice necessitate that I execute constant flexibility and responsiveness in curriculum and pedagogy and such actions, in my view, support CAE foremost as a relational phenomenon.

Bourdieu offers a theory of human social activity (practice) to understand comics pedagogy and comics creation as social practices contingent upon the YES context. In doing so, I can understand the phenomenon addressed by my first research question: the actualizing action of my adaptive comics pedagogy on L's and PW's comics creations and the safe space that enabled them. In the Discussion chapter, I apply the Bourdieusian lens outlined in this chapter to the case themes arising from my data analysis.

Bourdieu's Sociology

Bourdieu (1977, 1990) developed his sociological approach to overcome the opposition between two steadfast modes of theoretical knowledge in the social sciences: objectivism and subjectivism. In seeking to overcome their opposition, he characterized and critiqued each mode's respective theories of practice.

Bourdieu (1990) refers to objectivism as "social physics" (p. 25), and his natural science

analogy underscores that this mode presupposes and detects social structures that are separate from individual agents and that are largely imperceptible to them. From a Bourdieusian sociological standpoint, structures are systems of social relations and, in detecting them, objectivism warrants its label as a " 'structuralist' point of view " (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 8). [18] Objectivism renders social structures intelligible via the empirical methodological means of an observer external to and distant from practice who "constitutes practical activity as an *object of observation and analysis, a representation*" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 2, original emphasis). This process of constructing practice into an object of study is called objectification (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). In Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) sociology, the term "objective" means data and representations constructed via objectification. The term also implies "collective" or "social" because objectivism studies social phenomena and regularities. To reveal the underlying structure of social relations and the contextual conditions that render possible agents' subjective experiences and practices, objectivism brackets out agents' phenomenal (subjective) understandings of social reality (Bourdieu, 1990).

Subjectivism is a constructivist approach to sociology that views social reality as continuously created from agents' consciousnesses (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 9).

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[18] In sociology, structuralism has two established meanings: 1) social structures take priority over agency in determining social action; and 2) a cross-disciplinary theoretical movement positing that the relations which constitute an overarching and hidden structure generate human culture and social action (Scott & Marshal, 2012). The first and second meanings of structuralism apply to Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) sociology, although he diverges from the second. Bourdieu (1990) accepted the structuralist method of analysis because it facilitated relational thinking about social phenomena – comparing and relating elements of a system to discover their meaning and function (p. 4). He rejected, however, the unthought imposition of intellectualist biases onto practice through this method, such as taking the rational logic of the distant analyst for the practical logic of the agent (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu (1990) refers to it as "social phenomenology" (p. 25), reflecting how it privileges closeness to agents and their subjective experiences of practice as the source of social scientific knowledge. Subjectivism apprehends meaning and constructs representations of social reality by analyzing agents' direct experiences of it and by excluding analysis of the conditions (detected objectively) making such experiences possible (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu (1990) asserts that subjectivist knowledge only describes a common-sensical and unquestioned understanding of social reality.

For Bourdieu (1990), objectivism tends to theorize practice "as mechanical reaction" (p. 62): a mechanism external to agents determines their actions so that their practices are only reactions to that mechanism. Mechanicalist theories of practice can manifest as social norms explicitly put forth and obeyed by agents or as an enigmatic unconscious or social apparatus that regulates agents unawares (Bourdieu, 1990). Either way, Bourdieu (1990) criticizes these theories for reducing agents to "automaton[s]" (p. 41) without agency who are moved by the internal logic of an independent and closed entity for the sole purpose of its reproduction. As a result, objectivist models reify their representations of practice as *actual* practice and interpret it as an execution of the model's rules, which turns inherently regular social practices into ones that are certain and predictable (Bourdieu, 1977). By transforming structures into static totalities, mechanicalist theories exclude how the historical genesis and development of structures and the practical context of their actualization through agents transforms them (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu (1990) argues that subjectivism tends to propose practice as "finalist" (p. 46): practice is a product of the subject's consciousness, whereby agents voluntarily and deliberately pursue explicitly posited goals or, in a particular version of finalist theories of practice, pursue

the maximization of profit at the least cost via calculative and rational decision-making. For Bourdieu, subjectivist theories of practice grant agents too much agency via their free will without structural constraint. They do so by treating "each action [as] a kind of antecedent-less confrontation between the subject and the world" (p. 42); consequently, the subjectivist standpoint assumes that agents are historically and socially unconditioned in practice (Bourdieu, 1990). Specifically, Bourdieu argues subjectivist theories of practice forget that agents' individual trajectories through social structures and their conditioning by the collective history embedded in such structures "delimit the range of possible actions" (p. 46).

Bourdieu (1977, 1990) argues that both objectivist and subjectivist knowledge are needed to fully account for practice. This epistemological perspective stems from his assumption that practice is generated from a dialectic between the collective structure of social relations external to agents and the individual incorporation of those relations within agents (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). In presupposing that social relations manifest both externally and internally, Grenfell and Hardy (2007) note that "structure is indeed the key unifying concept" (p. 27) in Bourdieu's sociology. However, Bourdieu (1990) did not give equal weight to both knowledge modes even though he claimed to bridge the duality between them; he "kept on the side of . . . objectivism" (p. 14). Bourdieu (1990) characterized the subjective aspect of practice as a creative and strategic agency, yet one determined by objective social relations.

Given this assumption of "ontological complicity" between both knowledge modes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128), Bourdieu's methodological approach to sociology involved objectivist and subjectivist stages. In the former, he measured the material properties of social relations through their statistical distribution, while in the latter he captured the symbolic

properties of social relations, that is, the meaning attributed to material properties via agents' perception and appreciation of them (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 135). Aligned with his epistemological privileging of objectivism, Bourdieu (1990) believed that revealing the objective aspect of social reality necessitated "a methodical break with primary experience" (p. 14) in order to disconnect from the common sense understandings of the social world inherent in subjectivism. Moreover, the break was necessary because subjectivism's elimination or reduction of observer distance was "irremovable, except through self-deception" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 14).

Consistent with his ontological and methodological assumptions, Bourdieu's theory of practice relies on a series of concepts, or "thinking tools" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 160), that construct practice by relating objective and subjective aspects of the social world. The foremost of these concepts are field, habitus and capital, and Bourdieu developed them as heuristic devices during empirical social scientific research to make sense of his sociological data (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 160–161).

Practice: Relations between Field, Capital and Habitus

As an objective construct in Bourdieu's sociology, a field is a space or network of relations between differential social positions held by agents, either individuals or institutions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97, pp. 113–114). Societies with high differentiation are composed of several relatively autonomous fields and sub-fields that have their "own logic, rules and regularities, and each stage in the division of a field . . . entails a genuine qualitative leap" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104). For example, the American comics field constitutes a configuration of social relations with its own dynamics and rules that are distinct from the art

field (see Beaty, 2012) and may contain sub-fields as distinct as mainstream comics and art comics (see Wolk, 2007).

In conceptualizing how a field operates, Bourdieu (1990) characterizes it as a competitive game: a "pitch or board" (p. 67) with a bounded terrain on which agents compete to obtain social positions of high value according to social rules and stakes. In this social game, agents are players with skills, strategies and perspectives that depend on their positions in and the conditions of the field (Thomson, 2008, pp. 68–69). Bourdieu (2006) also analogizes fields to competitive economies where practices are premised on capital, a broad range of assets whose generation, accumulation and exchange are the force or energy – the currency – driving fields.

Agents' configuration of different capitals and total volume of capital establishes their field position, relationship to other positions and gaming strategies (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Put differently, the "fiduciary value" set on an agent "defines what he is entitled to . . . the (hierarchized) goods he may appropriate or the strategies he can adopt" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 138). [19] As networks of positions, fields are, in fact, networks of the distribution of capital among agents, making capital both the structure of the social world and the mechanism by which it functions (Bourdieu, 2006). The distribution of capital is unequal, engendering hierarchized and power-laden social relations (Bourdieu, 2006); thus, a field is a space where agents strategize and struggle to generate, accumulate, convert or maintain capital, vying to reproduce or transform the field by conforming to or challenging its tacit rules and distribution of capital among agents (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). In contrast to the static social structures of objectivist theories of practice, agents' continuous struggles for capital render fields dynamic and

[19] In quoting Bourdieu's words, the *generic he* has, consequently, appeared in this thesis. If desired, I invite readers to replace *he* with their pronoun of choice.

open to change and make them a product of collective history (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 102).

Bourdieu (2006) proposed "three fundamental guises" of capital (p. 106): economic, social and cultural. These capitals, to different degrees and efforts by agents, are convertible and their value is determined by their scarcity in fields (Bourdieu, 2006). The three fundamental guises of capital operate in every field, but their relative value changes in individual fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). Bourdieu (2006) defines economic capital as money or other quantifiable assets that are convertible into money. This type of capital is immediately transmissible between agents (Bourdieu, 2006). With economic capital, the profit-oriented and self-interested nature of social exchanges is conspicuous (Moore, 2008, p. 103). Social capital is resources accrued through mobilizing group membership and social networks (Bourdieu, 2006).

Bourdieu (2006) explains that cultural capital relates to culture as a valued asset, and it manifests in three states. In the embodied state, it consists of cognitive and corporeal dispositions – culture developed into the tacit knowledge and capabilities of competence whose acquisition requires a great investment of personal and free time (pp. 107–109). Objectified cultural capital manifests as material objects (p. 109). Its materiality makes the transmission of cultural capital between agents easier; however, a precondition of owning objectified cultural capital is having the competence (the embodied cultural capital) to consume it (p. 109). The institutionalized state is a particular type of objectified cultural capital that separates embodied cultural capital from its owner (pp. 109–110). It does so by bestowing competences with institutional recognition (such as academic qualifications), which makes them comparable and convertible between agents (pp. 109–110).

By extending the concept of capital in his theory of practice, Bourdieu (1990) proposes that all social fields, not just the economy, involve practices that "can obey an economic logic without obeying narrowly economic interests" (p. 50). Because fields function as social economies, agents enact practices according to a general economic logic: "the practice most appropriate to achieve the objectives inscribed in the logic of a particular field at the lowest cost" (p. 50). This logic, however, is not socially recognized because agents exchange a wide variety of non-economic goods (e.g., cultural and social capitals) and profits that are considered gratuitous and that are not readily quantified (Bourdieu, 1990). These social exchanges, then, appear disinterested towards the maximization of profit and disguise or repress that non-monetary goods function as capital (Bourdieu, 1990). For Bourdieu, social exchanges and practices are, in fact, laden with socially disguised self-interest so that, like capital, the notion of "interest" has a broader meaning. The sociological truth that Bourdieu establishes about social practices, then, is that they are objectively detected as economic but are socially unrecognized or misrecognized by agents as economic.

Bourdieu's (1990) third thinking tool is habitus. It manifests as both a "practical sense" (p. 66) in navigating fields and a system of socially constituted dispositions. Practical sense is an agent's instinctive capacity to anticipate, based on past experience, a field's present social regularities in order to reckon its future configuration of capital (positions) (p. 66). When players are immersed in the game, they employ practical sense to anticipate the imminent positions and moves of other players, both teammates and competitors, based on expected probabilities (pp. 81–82). The urgent demands of practice force practical sense to be future-oriented, and this sense of direction gives agents their subjective experience and meaning of the

game (p. 66, p. 81). Bourdieu describes practical sense as "the 'feel for the game' or tactical intelligence" (p. 103) that orients choices and actions in field competition for capitals. It describes a faculty of the body rather than a faculty of the mind, operating through automated responses that bypass conscious deliberation, intent and reference to social rules so that players can "respond instantaneously to all the uncertain and ambiguous situations of practice" (p. 104). With practical sense, Bourdieu characterizes agents' habitus as a creative improvisation with field situations, albeit one without strategic intention posited by conscious free will.

To participate in fields and to develop a practical sense, agents require *illusio*, that is, being enveloped by the game through interest and investment in its rules and stakes, which signals a tacit acknowledgement that the game is worth playing, its stakes are valuable and its rules are worth mastering (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98, pp. 115–118). Bourdieu's meaning of interest intentionally opposes the notion that participation in a field can be motivated by disinterest (being gratuitous and having no reason to play the game) or be played with indifference (having no preference for the game and being unable to discern the value of its stakes) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116). *Illusio* also implies agents are committed to doxa, the "undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68). Without *illusio*, players perceive the game as arbitrary and cannot become invested or adjust to its logic and demands (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 67).

In addition to acting as practical sense, Bourdieu (1990) describes the structure of habitus as internal, yet socially constituted, "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (p. 53). Dispositions are lasting and largely unconscious tendencies of how to perceive, appreciate and

act in the social world, and when considered as a system, comprise agents' cognitive and corporeal constitution (Bourdieu, 1990). In being transposable, dispositions are generally applied across different areas of practice via unconscious transfers of the body (Bourdieu, 1990). Prolonged immersion within a particular set of field conditions, especially those of early life, will lead agents to form particular dispositions that come to define their "possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54) for a lifetime. Dispositions are also formed through agents' historical trajectory through different field positions (as well as their present ones) (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82).

Bourdieu (1990) avers that generating practice depends on a regular, yet not absolutely predictable, "confrontation between the *habitus* and an event that can exercise a pertinent incitement on the *habitus*" (p. 55, original emphasis). In an earlier conceptualization of his theory of practice, Bourdieu (1977) articulated this confrontation as a "conjuncture" (p. 78). A conjuncture is the actualizing context of practice where the habitus encounters a social situation composed of certain conditions that activate a response (a practice) (Bourdieu, 1977). Conjunctures are microcosms of a larger space of social relations and, thus, are structured by these relations (Bourdieu, 1977). A conjuncture, then, can be considered a particular moment of a field (Bourdieu, 1977). To trigger practice, current conditions in the conjuncture must be homologous to the ones in which the habitus formed (Bourdieu, 1977).

Because similar social relations structure both the formative and actualizing conditions of the habitus, these relations are reproduced when dispositions generate practice (Bourdieu, 1990). The structural synching between generative and actualizing conditions causes agents' habitus to exert conditioning for specific social situations and spaces; that is, to exert a practical sense that

automatically and unconsciously adjusts to the probabilities and demands of the field inscribed in a current situation (Bourdieu, 1990). For Bourdieu (1990), when habitus immediately attunes to the field situation, agents have doxic experiences (p. 68). In such experiences, there is no "conscious search for purposive adaptation" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 129) to the social space by agents, giving them the impression of being in a social reality that makes sense and that is self-evident. Agents tend to operate within field situations in which they have been conditioned to operate, so they tend to generate practices that comply with a field's logic and demands while excluding those considered improbable or inconceivable in a given field (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu (1990) states that the habitus tends to select conditions conducive to its continued reactivation and this selectivity protects it from circumstances and experiences that challenge its conditioning. Thus, the "generative capacity" (p. 55) of the habitus – its ability to produce a seemingly unlimited number of practices – only produces those within the range of possibilities set by its formative conditions. This reproductive tendency characterizes practices as "regulated improvisations" (p. 57) that are structured by current field conditions and past field conditions embedded in dispositions. What Bourdieu (1990) terms the "finalist illusion" (p. 61) of subjectivism – that practices are the realization of agents' conscious strategies – gives way to the regular, though not absolute, reproduction of social structure through agents' habitus.

In sum, Maton (2008) explains how the concepts of field, capital and habitus function: "practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)" (p. 51). Given the right conditions, in other words, agents' dispositions interact with their capital holdings to generate

practice within fields.

Employing Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

With Bourdieu's thinking tools, my interpretative objective in this thesis is to understand comics creation and pedagogy as social practices contingent upon the conjuncture of YES CBP – a particular state of the CAE field in which dispositions and conditions encountered each other to activate my pedagogical practice and the participant-learners' comics creations. Through a Bourdieusian lens, I frame YES CBP as a conjuncture within the CAE economy, a site generating practices that are self-interested and focused on the exchange of embodied cultural capital in the form of comics competences. My analysis identifies which dispositions and conditions active in YES CBP generated the participant-learners' comics creations and my pedagogy. Moreover, I frame comics pedagogy as a mode of capital exchange between learners and me. My proposition that comics pedagogy is an exchange of capital builds on similar ones by other art education researchers who have applied a Bourdieusian lens to art teacher-student relations (Sinner et al., 2012; K. Thomas, 2008, 2009; K. Thomas & Chan, 2013).

Astute readers of Bourdieu will recognize that my thesis is informed by aspects of his theory of practice rather than its entirety and, thus, I am limited in how far I can claim to be employing a Bourdieusian framework. Bourdieu's methodological approach holds that the object of study be constructed in relation to fields and, thus, presumes objective field analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 104–105; Grenfell, 2008, pp. 219–224). Because I have no quantitative training, I maintain Bourdieu's ontological assumption about a mutually constituting objective and subjective social reality while employing qualitative data and methodology

focused on participants' subjective experiences. That is to say, I use the theoretical assumptions of field and capital to interpret my findings without having constructed fields and capitals by way of statistical measures. Given my use of qualitative methods, I focused on gathering and analyzing data on the subjective property of agents present in Bourdieu's framework: dispositions. I have also limited myself by analyzing a small number of participant dispositions that are salient to comics practices in YES CBP rather than participants' entire habitus.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) holds that a theory of practice must contain a theory on social science as practice in order to account for how the presuppositions of researchers' distant social positions become embedded in their representations of practice. In other words, researchers must conduct a "socio-analysis" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 20) on themselves to critically interrogate how their social scientific practices and instruments of objectification transform practice through the process of re-presentation. Bourdieu called this reflexive sociological approach participant objectivation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Reflexivity in this thesis does not approach the full, radical potential of Bourdieu's participant objectivation, which consists of using his thinking tools on oneself as an academic within the social relations of academia rather than only stating an awareness of various social positions and privileges (Grenfell, 2008, pp. 225–227).

My attraction to a Bourdieusian framework supersedes a shared ontological assumption. I am attracted to his theoretical perspective because it provides thinking tools to facilitate CAE practitioners' reflexivity, including mine, on the social competitive dimension of CAE that exists simultaneously to its social collaborative dimension. In this thesis, objective methods cannot illuminate the full network of relations of the CAE field. Rather, it suggests that Bourdieu's

socio-reflexive thinking tools, even if separated from their original empirical function, have benefit for conceptualizing CAE practice more deeply. These tools can make practitioners more aware of the underlying social forces and tacit interest shaping their teaching practices. In this thesis, I focus these tools on my own practice, specifically on adaptive pedagogy in relation to other stakeholders in the CAE game – learners and community sites.

In my experience as an emerging community art educator, I have sensed two social dimensions of CAE. One is the socially recognized dimension of collaborative practice in which practitioners hold the common sense view that CAE's purpose is to promote varying degrees of progressive social change and positive community impact. Their central focus on meeting the needs and interests of learners through curriculum and pedagogy encapsulates this common sense. As I have experienced, the other dimension is the underlying social competitive nature of CAE as an entrepreneurial practice. In relation to CAE's collaborative dimension, this one is largely disguised, I think, because it undermines the common sense supporting collaborative CAE. I have found that CAE's competitive dimension is a component of nearly every exchange in the field, whether it be transparent in the payment for a completed contract or less transparent in the not always conscious deliberations of selecting and securing community partners with reputations to enhance the credibility of a project. Given its persistence, I am curious as to how this competitive dimension relates to collaborative practices and whether it is indicative of a wider system of field relations that Bourdieu theorizes.

In transposing Bourdieu's ontological assumption to CAE practice, some readers may think that his competitive and interested view of relational engagement in his theory of practice contradicts the collaborative and disinterested view of relational engagement embedded in the

ethical principles and social justice goals underscoring CRABS Assp, my teaching and research with LGBT/Q youth, and my arts-informed research methodology. Depending on one's philosophical assumptions, the relationship between these two ontological views can be interpreted as fundamentally opposed and/or mutually constituting. I choose to view them as mutually constituting, following Bourdieu's assumption that the social world comprises an interconnected objective and subjective reality.

I have difficulty assuming that CAE only operates by way of a collaborative dimension in which practitioners function according to principled social priorities and use the arts to engender positive social change in communities (for diverse examples of collaborative CAE, see Sinner et al., 2012). This difficulty arises when collaborative CAE is supported by its manifestation as an entrepreneurial practice that facilitates the exchange of resources and assets for practitioners to actually manifest collaborative practices, whether this means finding and pitching jobs to provide for the necessities of life or securing funding to do a social justice project. The interrelationship between both dimensions situates CAE's collaborative practices within a larger sphere of competitive social relations of the CAE field. For example, practitioners compete to secure contracts, funding or community partners against other practitioners, or use social justice projects to oppose representations and truth claims emanating from other social spaces. In the latter case, CAE practice is part of a greater struggle among interacting fields.

From my subjective standpoint, I endorse and practice by the principles of collaborative CAE but I also believe that grasping CAE as competitive practice through the notions of field, capital and habitus can enhance practitioners' capabilities to strategize and work in the CAE field. These tools can even aid those seeking to bring a collaborative and socially justice

worldview to fruition. Viewing CAE practice through a Bourdieusian lens requires thinking in terms of social value and social meaning, interest and disinterest, and cautiously approaching the potential for competition as the productive counterpart of collaborative CAE practice rather than seeing competition as collaborative CAE's anathema.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In the preceding chapter, I outlined Bourdieu's theory of practice, which offers a theoretical lens to interpret comics pedagogy and creation as social practices within community art education. Before moving to a broader, more abstract explanation of YES CBP comics practices through a Bourdieusian lens, I generated a particular understanding of them through descriptive and thematic analyses. I formed my analyses through a customized methodology that blends qualitative case study research, arts-informed research and comics creation. Case study research was my leading approach because it provided the study's analytical focus: to construct an in-depth description and analysis of YES CBP as a bounded system of pedagogical relationships. This approach also shaped my data collection. I used multiple methods to collect varied data with which to build an in-depth understanding of comics practices in YES CBP. Arts-informed research and its guiding concept of "form" supported the analytical focus of my case study through the integration of comics aesthetic conventions and processes into two data analysis methods of case study research.

I addressed my second research question through this process of integration, one that seeks to understand how my research and artistic practices can intersect through the comics form to advance my understanding of how my comics pedagogy helped actualize L's and PW's comics creations and concomitant processes of safe space. Comics scholarship on the interpretative nature of comics, along with the methodological literature on case study research and arts-informed research, guided the procedural specifics of my research design. Thus, I review these literatures and explain how they shaped my methodology throughout this chapter.

Case Study Research: Ontological Perspectives on the Case

The purpose of case study research is to understand a case (or multiple cases) and its context in-depth (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2006, 2009) and, from a qualitative research perspective, to do so by focusing on the case's complexity, particularity and singularity (Stake, 1995, 2005). Creswell (2013) and Stake (1995, 2005) both conceptualize the case as a singular bounded system – a whole with functioning and integrated parts – with boundaries that separate the case from its context. The case's boundaries arise from parameters set by the researcher, which include time and place (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2006, 2009) believes the case should be situated within a contemporary and actual context, a view shared by Creswell. The case's context can be narrowly defined, for example, in being the time and place of the study, or be broadly defined, for example, in being situated within larger social, political and other conditions (Creswell, 2013, p. 294). The many contexts in which the case can be situated inform its relationships and activities (Stake, 2005).

Opinions differ on the ontological status of the case, ranging from "more concrete" to "less concrete" (Yin, 2009, p. 32). Stake (1995) prefers that the case be a thing or entity with clear boundaries, such as a person or program, and not a generality, such as a process. Creswell (2013) and Yin (2009) interpret the case's ontology more flexibly: along with entities, they consider phenomena, such as an activity or a relationship, to be cases. Because a degree of concreteness is needed to define cases, Yin (2009) notes that they *cannot* be abstractions but *can* represent abstractions such as concepts (p. 32) or, as Stake (1995, 2005) prefers, issues.

Stake (1995, 2005) suggests that the conceptual structure of a case study be organized around issues: complex problems that are embedded in the relationships and contexts of the case.

Observing and understanding how a bounded system copes with issues draws attention to its functioning and interactions with surrounding contexts (Stake, 1995, 2005). Among the three types of case study suggested by Stake (1995, 2005), and that Creswell (2013) adopts, instrumental case study foregrounds issues, which means that researchers investigate cases to facilitate understanding of an issue(s) rather than investigating a case for its intrinsic interest. [20]

Conceptualizing the case through abstractions – such as a bounded system or issues – is a basic way researchers transform the concrete case – a practical phenomenon – into an analytical construct, the case study. The distinction between the actual case and its abstracted construction is central to G. Thomas's (2011a, 2011b) definition of case study, which he articulates as the subject of study and the object of study. To him, a case study is composed of the subject of study – the unit or thing being studied, the actual case – and the object of study, or "the analytical frame within which the case is viewed and which the case exemplifies" (G. Thomas, 2011a, p. 515). Put differently, the case must be an example of an analytical or theoretical focus; otherwise, it remains a description rather than an endeavour of research (G. Thomas, 2011a, 2011b).

These perspectives on the ontological definition of the case helped me establish the basic conceptual structure of my case study. My case study constitutes a subject of study – a comics creation program, YES CBP – and an object of study – YES CBP as a case of Bourdieu's theory of practice. This conceptualization of case study resonates with Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) perspective that researchers be mindful of the distinction between actual practice and their representations of practice. In setting boundaries, I chose a concrete case with clearly

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[20] The other two types of case study are intrinsic and collective (Creswell, 2013, pp. 99–100; Stake, 1995, pp. 3–4).

identifiable temporal and geographic parameters: YES CBP spanned seven weeks during the summer of 2012 at an LGBT community centre in New York City. To understand how my case would function as a relational phenomenon, I framed YES CBP as a bounded system of pedagogical relationships between the program's art educator and two of its learners. This pedagogical system was surrounded by and interacted with the social context of YES, specifically YES's safe space policy. I focused on the issue of adaptation in comics pedagogy to understand the relationships, functioning and interactive context of my case. Because I am concerned with understanding the issue of adapting comics pedagogy within YES CBP's relationships and the queer community context of YES, my thesis is an instrumental case study.[21] To link my case study's conceptual structure to Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theoretical lens during my data analysis, I nested dispositions in my bounded system's components (the study's three participants) and the actualizing conditions of comics practice in the case's context (YES).

Case Study Research: Methodological Perspectives

Similar to the case's ontological status, opinions vary on the methodological status of case study research, as revealed by its being called "a method, a methodology, a strategy, a design, [and] an approach" in the methodological literature (Tight, 2010, p. 329). Tight (2010) argues this confusion derives from the generic use of the term "case study" in social science research to describe any detailed study of a small or single sample in an attempt to lend case study greater respectability. Since case study is identical to general qualitative research, Tight

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[21] I selected YES CBP based on its atypicality from the norm, what G. Thomas (2011b) refers to as an outlier case. That is, YES CBP was distinct from typical CBP programs in its adaptation of comics pedagogy to a queer community art education context.

argues that it should simply be called "what it is – small-sample, in-depth study" (p. 338).

Stake (2005) views case study research as "a process of inquiry" (p. 444) but states that it "is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 443). He defines case study by selection and interest in a single case rather than methods because cases can be investigated through many interpretive frames, research designs and methods. Similar to Stake, G. Thomas (2011b) defines case study as a "design frame" (p. 36): it is a focus that structures the research design towards an "examination of the singular" (p. 37) through a range of methods and procedures. Because case study has no specified methods, Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006) see it as a research strategy whose methodological flexibility offers a bridge across quantitative and qualitative paradigms by allowing for mixed methods.

Similar to Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006), Yin (2009) believes that case study can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed method. However, Yin's (2009) approach is biased towards the systemic and linear procedures of quantitative research, which underscores his labelling of case study as a "method." He frames case study as a form of empirical research predicated on methodological assumptions of natural scientific research in the belief that "emulating the principles of scientific research . . . will produce stronger case study research" (Yin, 2006, p. 111). For example, Yin (2009) seeks to maximize rigour by incorporating strategies into case study design to explicitly address the quality tests of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Comparatively, Creswell (2013) views case study "as a methodology: a type of design in qualitative research" (p. 97) that is distinguishable from other qualitative approaches. He differentiates case study based on its focus of study – to conduct "an in-depth study of a bounded system or a case" (p. 103) – and its procedures – multiple-method data

collection and the data analysis methods of case description and analysis of case themes. For him, the interpretation of an instrumental case represents the general conclusions or lessons ascertained about an issue(s) through study of the case (p. 99, p. 101).

Based on the reviewed authors, case study's methodological status depends on judgements about its degree of difference relative to other forms of research. Tight (2010) sees no distinction while Yin (2009) and Creswell (2013) see fundamental distinctions in research design but through different paradigmatic standpoints. Stake (2005), G. Thomas (2011b) and Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006) do not associate specific methods or procedures with case study and, consequently, classify it as a more generalized structure that shapes research design in a distinctive way but not enough to claim it as an independent methodology. For this thesis, I position myself with Creswell (2013) and use him for primary methodological guidance because he offers the practical benefit of building his case study approach on the work of two well-cited case study methodologists within social science, Yin (2009) and Stake (1995, 2005).
To more thoroughly ground my thesis in case study research, I have cited and discussed literature on the ontological and methodological dimensions of case study research.

Stake's (1995, 2005) approach is qualitative, and while he offers conceptual guidance on case study design, he offers little on the relationship between research design and researchers' philosophical assumptions and theoretical lens, which Creswell (2013) does. I appreciated this aspect of Creswell's approach because it increased transparency and accountability of my researcher biases, which, as will be seen in a coming section, supported arts-informed research's emphasis on researcher reflexivity (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Yin (2009) favours flexible over closed case study research designs as long as flexibility does not weaken the study's rigour (p.

62, pp. 70–71). This qualitative study does not match Yin's quantitative bias, and using him for primary methodological guidance would have minimized the greater flexibility of emergent qualitative research design I needed to respond to fieldwork developments and issues (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). G. Thomas (2011a, 2011b) offers a comprehensive typology of case study research that synthesizes many methodological conceptualizations of this form of inquiry, thereby providing a classificatory structure of possible directions to design case studies. His typology does not, however, associate specific methods or procedures with case study research, given that he approaches it as a design frame. I preferred Creswell's (2013) more structured approach to data collection and analysis methods because it helped me in beginning to integrate arts-informed research and case study research.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) views data collection as an iterative process consisting of activities that transcend gathering data to encompass those that facilitate such gathering. This process includes identifying individuals or sites, access and rapport, purposeful sampling, recording information and field issues (Creswell, 2013).

My thesis received ethics approval from Concordia University's Ethics Review Board on March 8, 2012. A particular ethical concern in my project was the vulnerable status of LGBT/Q youth learners and participants, who ranged in age from 13 to 21, and embedding considerations and protocols for this population's status in my teaching and research. Put differently, queer youth's participation in YES CBP and research activities needed to occur through a safe space process that balanced the benefits and risks of participation. The benefits of participating in the

comics program included learning specialized comics-making skills that are not typically taught in schools and using comics creation as a positive outlet and expressive mode for LGBT/Q youth experiences and identities. In my view, participation in the pedagogical and research activities should have posed no more risk than that encountered by youth participating in other educational and cultural programming at YES. For me, the greatest risk for participants and learners was stressful emotions or reactions being triggered if they decided to address difficult personal experiences in the workshops or research activities. I was also concerned that such emotions or reactions could be triggered unexpectedly by my actions or the actions of other learners in the workshops. The counselling resources at YES and the presence of many professionally trained youth social workers while I was teaching or conducting research activities mitigated this risk. Youth could receive help quickly from professionals, and I could report any incidents immediately to YES staff or its director. No such issues arose.

I began identifying a research site for my thesis with the help of Michael Bitz in February 2012. Bitz contacted the Director of YES, inquiring whether the LGBT youth centre would be interested in partnering with CBP for a summer comics program. After this initial contact and further discussions with YES, I sent a project proposal outlining YES CBP's program structure, goals and outcomes, along with the research study's planned ethics procedures, to the Director and two other YES staff liaising on the proposed project. They reviewed the proposal, and soon after YES accepted to host my comics program and on-site research activities. In March, my thesis supervisor and I visited YES to see the site and meet one of the staff members helping with the program. In early June, I met with the three YES staff, Bitz and a staff member from the

Center for Educational Pathways (EdPath). [22] We finalized details of site access related to the comics program and research activities. CBP also offered to supply a budget of $200 to purchase art materials for the program.

During the two weeks preceding the start of YES CBP, I promoted the comics program and built rapport with the youth. I attended an OutSpoken Views zine-making workshop to meet the youth and, as mentioned in the Introduction, to become familiar with CRABS Assp. Immediately before that workshop, I created recruitment posters and distributed them to youth. I continued to promote the program through two comics jams that I used to notify youth about the research study and an information session on the study to be held after YES CBP's first workshop. The staff member facilitating OutSpoken Views enthusiastically helped with the promotion of YES CBP in the youth centre throughout its run, as did other staff members.

The study was open to all youth attending YES and participating in the comics program. Two young adults attending the first comics workshop stayed for the information session. They were L and PW. I explained to them the purpose and scope of the study, reviewed the consent forms and answered their questions. Both signed and returned the consent forms to me during the information session. Parental consent forms and minor assent forms were prepared for minors who may have wanted to participate in the research. No minors participated.

Creswell (2013) notes that in qualitative research sampling is purposeful: samples are selected based on how well they illuminate the research question (p. 156). Although I purposefully selected my case, I had less control over who participated in the study. Thus, I had a convenience sampling strategy since the selection of participants relied on those most available

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[22] The Center for Educational Pathways is the non-profit organization that houses The Comic Book Project.

to participate (Saumure & Given, 2008). Two weeks after the information session, I ended recruitment because no other learners wanted to participate in the study or they attended too inconsistently to be available for research activities. By this time, YES CBP was at its mid-way point and data collected on new participants would not have reflected an experience extending throughout the program. Instead, I focused on in-depth data collection with PW and L.

Following Creswell's (2013) case study research approach, I used a range of data collection methods to gather data with which to build an in-depth understanding of the case. My methods included: two individual interviews, two group interviews, a questionnaire, participant observation recorded through field notes and photographs, and the collection of documents, mainly participants' comics art and documents related to my curriculum. Data collection focused on participants' perspectives of and experiences in the program, their past experiences with comics and art, and the safe space context of YES.

A key method in my study was observation which allows researchers to directly record phenomena under study in field contexts (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In observation, researchers relate to participants and field contexts on a continuum from complete participation to complete observation based on how much they engage in the activities being studied (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Based on this continuum, I was a *participant as observer* because I was a participant in site activities, my involvement in site activities was secondary to observation and my researcher status was known to individuals at the field site (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). As the instructor, I fully engaged in YES CBP's activities, and learners were aware that teaching doubled as an observational activity for research. I gained legitimacy as a participant because of my open female-to-male transsexual identity, being a

comics artist and comics fan and being vetted by YES staff. YES's safe space policy also provided a welcome environment that mitigated the effects of my outsider status.

Participant observation allowed me to directly observe how L and PW experienced YES CBP. However, I could not take observational notes during the workshops as my full attention was dedicated to teaching. Instead, after each workshop, I wrote observational and reflective field notes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009) on my laptop. As part of my field observations, I photographed both participants and their comics art in the workshops. I asked their permission before taking photographs, warned all learners in the room that I was photographing and excluded identifying features of the participants. To preserve the confidentiality, anonymity and comfort of all learners, I decided not to video or audio record the workshops. I thought these methods would be too intrusive and would compromise the sense of security that was paramount to YES's safe space and the learners who were not participating in the research. Likewise, no photography or video recording occurred during the program's culminating event at the Saturday community discussion.

Individual interviews and group interviews were other key methods. With flexibility in mind, all interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide with open-ended questions focused on particular topics of discussion (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Mears, 2012). Individual interviews allowed me to "cross borders of experience in order to learn from others" (Mears, 2012, p. 173), that is, to access perspectives about YES CBP contained in participants' experiences. Interviews also allowed me to ask questions addressing aspects of PW's and L's YES CBP experiences not observable in participant observation (Bryman, 2012; Forsey, 2012), especially their recollections and reconstructions of events as participants

(Bryman, 2012, p. 495) that I missed while teaching.

In group interviews, researchers ask several participants questions on a range of topics in order to elicit individual opinions within a group context (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Bryman, 2012; Gibbs, 2012). Although primarily focused on eliciting individual opinions, Currie and Kelly (2012) note that the group setting allows "co-constructed context-specific meaning, shared by interview partners but not necessarily the interviewer" (p. 413) to arise, making group interview complementary to the individual meaning gleaned in one-on-one interviews. Group interviews also have the advantage of gathering many opinions at once when time and money are restricted (Bryman, 2012; Gibbs, 2012). Because research activities with L and PW spanned only six of the eight weeks I taught at YES, group interviews allowed me to evoke more reflection on their experience in YES CBP. This method also proved significant in eliciting a common understanding of the meaning of CRABS Assp at YES.

At the beginning and end of the program, I conducted one group interview as well as one individual interview with each participant. Interviews spanned approximately 30 minutes except for the final group interview, which lasted an hour. To reduce burden on participants, I scheduled interviews on the same days as the comics program or days that participants were at YES. I audio recorded interviews using my laptop and conducted them in the art resource room where I taught the program. The art resource room was near YES's communal lounge space; consequently, loud conversation among youth occasionally filtered through the walls during interviews. I transcribed audio recordings before subsequent interviews in order to revise my interview guides in response to discussions from preceding interviews.

Mid-way through the program, I gave participants a basic questionnaire on the topics of

self-identification, personal history and relationship to YES, which L and PW completed and returned within two weeks.

After the community discussion, I collected L's and PW's comics art: mini-comics, sketchbooks and their three-page comics projects. I scanned the artwork for analysis and returned their comics art to them at the final group interview. Showing reciprocity (Creswell, 2013, p. 55, p. 300), I gave the participants $20 gift certificates to New York City area bookstores and a portion of the remaining art materials. As further reciprocity to both participants and YES, I compiled the comics art of the five core YES CBP learners into a digital comic book that they and YES could use for their own purposes.

Arts-Informed Research

Cole and Knowles (2008) state that arts-informed research (AIR) can "serve either as a methodological enhancement to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology" (p. 60). In this thesis, AIR supports the focus of study provided by case study research. It does so by giving me a framework to integrate aspects of the comics form into Creswell's (2013) two case study data analysis methods: case description and analysis of case themes. With AIR as a support to my primary methodological approach, I constructed YES CBP as a bounded system via the thematic analytical means of comics in conjunction with written descriptive analysis. I return to the procedural specifics of this combination after summarizing AIR's key tenets.

Spearheaded by Canadian education academics Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2002), arts-informed research is an approach to employing

the arts within qualitative research. Defined as "research that brings together the systemic and rigorous qualities of social science inquiry with the creative and imaginative qualities of the arts" (Knowles & Luciani, 2007, p. xii), this confluence of arts and research focuses on how "processes and representational forms of the arts" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 58) can *inform* – augment, influence or inspire – those of mainstream qualitative research. Throughout their AIR publications, Cole and Knowles assert that the researcher role is primary to the artist role because in their methodology "the arts are used to advance a research agenda" (Cole & Knowles, 2011, p. 121).

A principal purpose of AIR is "knowledge advancement" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 62), which means making social science knowledge more inclusive of diverse ways of knowing. AIR achieves this by expanding the definition of knowledge to include generative and subjective knowledge – that which "reflect[s] the multidimensional, complex, dynamic, intersubjective, and contextual nature of human experience" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 67). Therefore, for Cole and Knowles (2008), knowledge on human experience is advanced when its subjective complexity is studied and recognized in research and the propositional and reductionist knowledge of "logical positivism and technical rationality" (p. 59) is not taken as the privileged epistemological mode. AIR is committed to "epistemological equity" (M. McIntyre, 2004, p. 259), a principle which holds that other ways of knowing are equal to rational, intellectual knowing.

AIR's description of knowledge advancement reiterates the general purpose of qualitative research. What distinguishes AIR from other qualitative methodologies is that knowledge advancement is pursued through processes and representations of the arts which are framed as alternative to conventional research modes (Cole & Knowles, 2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011;

Knowles & Cole, 2002). Cole and Knowles (2008, 2011) specifically point to these conventional research modes as positivism, which omits subjective knowledge, and text-based, technical qualitative research, which usually falls short of communicating how subjective knowing is experienced as "accessible, evocative, embodied, empathetic and provocative" (p. 60). Cole and Knowles tend to frame the arts as a remedy to the supposed oversights of these conventional research modes by endorsing the arts' ability not only to capture subjective knowledge but also to communicate it in ways more representative of its complexity.

The second purpose of AIR – "research communication" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 62) – aims to expand the accessibility of social science knowledge among non-academic audiences through arts representation and through acknowledging diverse ways of communicating beyond text. AIR presupposes that knowledge represented through diverse media reflects and, thus, communicates the complexity of human experience better than a single mode, which in social science, is usually text (Knowles & Luciani, 2007, p. xii). Conveying social science knowledge in multiple modes acknowledges "the myriad ways of engaging in the world" whether these modes be "oral, literal, visual, [or] embodied" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 60). Research communication aims to reconcile the long-standing distance between how the academy represents and engages with communities and to ensure that research has practical impacts for society at large (Cole & Knowles, 2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2002).

To achieve these two purposes, AIR employs form as its guiding principle (Cole & Knowles, 2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2002). Cole and Knowles's (2008) primary definition of form is synonymous with the arts as distinctive art media, such as poetry, painting and so forth. They further explain how an art form is defined by different dimensions

that can structure the process and representation of research, such as a method, organizational structure and aesthetic conventions (Cole & Knowles, 2008). No matter the dimensions of form used, Cole and Knowles (2011) state that AIR adheres to certain methodological features that double as defining elements of AIR: committing to an art form(s) that inspires and structures the conceptualization of the research process and representation; approaching the research process as a creative and emergent endeavour, guided by the flow of inquiry and the researcher's artistic and academic practical senses; and engaging academic and non-academic audiences with social scientific knowledge via representational forms of the arts for transformative impact (p. 122). [23] Cole and Knowles (2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2002) outline eight qualities, or principles, which further characterize a research project as arts-informed and that serve as its evaluative criteria: knowledge claims, intentionality, contributions, communicability, holistic quality, researcher presence, aesthetic quality and methodological commitment.

In AIR, *knowledge claims* are particular and inconclusive; thus, knowledge is not propositional but open to alternative interpretations (Cole & Knowles, 2001a, p. 217). [24] The interpretive flexibility of AIR supports its *intentionality*: AIR representations should evoke intellectual and moral impact across many segments of society, which includes employing research for "social responsibility and epistemological equity" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 62).

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[23] Of Cole and Knowles's (2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2002) articulations of AIR's defining elements, I find their equation of defining elements to "methodological features" in their 2011 chapter the most concise and cogent.

[24] Cole and Knowles renamed "knowledge claim" from their 2001 chapters to "knowledge advancement" in their 2008 and 2011 chapters. To me, employing the term knowledge advancement to describe a quality or evaluative criteria *and* a central purpose of AIR is confusing when knowledge advancement, as a purpose, presumably works through *all* the qualities and criteria. I employ the original term in this thesis to maintain a clearer distinction.

With such intentions, AIR is expected to make *contributions* with theoretical and transformative potential or, respectively, to contribute significant insights to social scientific knowledge and to generate new social and personal possibilities (Knowles & Cole, 2002, pp. 211–212). This moral intent is achieved through *communicability*, which stipulates that AIR research be made accessible to community members through the arts' ability to engender evocative and resonant responses (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 67).

In AIR, research is less "linear, sequential, compartmentalised, and distanced from researcher and participants" (Cole & Knowles, 2011, p. 124), giving it a more *holistic quality* than conventional qualitative research or objectivist research. [25] The holistic quality of AIR manifests in its emphasis on consistent and coherent interconnections between all aspects of more fluid research designs and providing transparency regarding the fluidity of such designs (Cole & Knowles, 2011, pp. 123–124). An AIR text is expected to exhibit *researcher presence*: researchers reflexively account for themselves throughout the research process, and this reflexivity manifests in an AIR text through a signature that marks the conceptual and creative aptitudes of the researcher-as-artist (Cole & Knowles, 2011, p. 123). AIR defines *aesthetic quality* as how well the aesthetic conventions of a chosen art form support the research's aims (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 66), especially "in a way that is congruent with the art form used" (p.

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[25] AIR's subjectivist stance, along with Creswell's (2013) subjectivist case study approach, contradicts Bourdieu's view that the objectivist gap is both socially insurmountable and methodologically necessary and that epistemological equity is skewed, rather than perfectly balanced, between subjectivist and objectivist knowledge. As noted in the theory chapter, my thesis is methodologically qualitative and subjectivist, so AIR is appropriate here. Readers should be aware that employing AIR in a study following a complete Bourdieusian methodological framework would require modifying AIR for Bourdieu's objectivist assumptions, especially in regards to AIR's explicit aim to reduce the distance between researcher and researched.

63).

Finally, Cole and Knowles (2008) make evidence of commitment to AIR's framework – *methodological commitment* – a principle itself (p. 66). Methodological commitment is shown through attention to the research's aesthetic quality (Cole and Knowles, 2008), but its meaning is clarified further by Cole and Knowles's (2001b) early articulation of AIR in their approach to life history research: showing integrity towards the ethical principles framing research-participant relationships around caring, respect, sensitivity, dialogue and reducing hierarchical power relations (pp. 25–44, p. 126). These principles resonate with those of CRABS Assp, so AIR is a particularly congruent methodology for the YES context. Methodological commitment is also demonstrated through "a *principled process* and *procedural harmony"* (Cole & Knowles, 2001b, p. 126, original emphasis), that is, the researcher follows ethical and AIR principles reflexively and in a consistent manner.

Cole and Knowles's approach to arts-informed research is what Sinner (2010) calls a methodological disposition. With this idea, Sinner offers a way to categorize the many confluences between the arts and research in contemporary academia. A methodological disposition is an orientation towards using the arts in research that is guided by "a particular perspective on [the] arts" (p. 129) and different philosophical assumptions (see Creswell, 2013). Communities of research-arts practice can form around particular methodological dispositions (Sinner, 2010). AIR, then, reflects the methodological disposition of a specific research community: Cole, Knowles and their graduate students at the Centre for Arts-Informed Research at University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Centre for Arts-Informed Research, n.d.).

Another arts-informed methodological disposition is that of Lynn Butler-Kisber (2010), who employs the term "arts-informed inquiry" with the same intention as Cole and Knowles but through a terminological break with the word research. Butler-Kisber adopts the term inquiry to "emphasize holistic inquiry processes, and a way of being in the research" (p. 8) rather than qualitative research as a strict procedural process. Arts-informed inquiry is a branch in her typology of qualitative inquiry, and it uses "various forms of art to interpret and portray the focus of the particular study" (p. 8). As do Cole and Knowles (2008), Butler-Kisber categorizes form according to art media.

Data Analysis: Comics Creation as Method

In my thesis, arts-informed research guided my approach in using comics to inform the data analysis and representation of case study research. I applied AIR's three methodological features as: conceptualizing my research process and representation through the conventions of the comics form; conducting data analysis through a creative process of comics creation integrated with two case study data analysis methods; and using the representation products of my analytical process – comics art – to engage academic and nonacademic audiences in the experience of comics practice in YES CBP and the issue of adapting comics pedagogy to queer community contexts. Within these methodological features, I employed aesthetic and interpretative conventions of comics formal structure and the symbolic representation of cartoons.

Comics studies scholarship provided guidance on understanding the benefits of comics structure and cartooning to data analysis and representation. Several comics scholars observe

that the same formal structure typically used to sequence information linearly in comics offers the possibility to interpret comics non-linearly, that is, to interpret comics pages via multiple sequential pathways that transcend reading comics in the conventional left-to-right and top-to-bottom sequence (Bredehoft, 2006; Cates, 2010; Legrady; 2000; Molotiu, 2012; Szczepaniak, 2010). Arguing that comics has a modular structure comparable to interactive digital media, Legrady (2000) notes that comics's "two dimensional matrix" (p. 82), or the simultaneous vertical and horizontal arrangement of panels, is a networked structure that opens multi-directional reading pathways. This gives readers choice on how to re-sequence panels (modules of narrative information) on the comics page (Legrady, 2000). Similarly, within a discussion on the work of contemporary comics artist Chris Ware, Bredehoft (2006) avers that the "two-dimensional architecture of the comics page" (p. 872) disrupts narration premised on one narrative line, or events being narrated in one sequence moving forward in time. Ware's page compositions offer multiple sequential pathways that open several narrative lines to the reader (Bredehoft, 2006).

In discussing connections between comics and diagrams in Ware's work, Cates (2010) highlights "the diagrammatic potential of comics" (p. 100): the ability of comics structure to create "sequences of images that are related in ways that have less to do with time than with other interrelationships of meaning" (p. 99). What Cates means is that, like diagrams, comics can facilitate relationships of meaning other than those rooted in narrative chronology through non-linear juxtaposition in two-dimensional space. Diagrams indicate relationships between elements through closeness in space and, when this characteristic of diagrams is used in comics, it offers the possibility to break with the convention of linking elements in linear sequence to

indicate a narrative's passage of time (Cates, 2010). For Cates, non-chronological relationships of meaning "may be associative, analytic, or metonymic" (p. 91) and imply "relationship[s] of comparison, more than causation" (p. 100).

The comics scholars reviewed thus far argue that comics structure invites readers to construct meaning around and across the spatial dimensions of a page. Szczepaniak (2010) characterizes this reading strategy as "processual" (p. 91) whereby reading becomes an active and conscious experience of constructing meaning by using the page as the primary interpretative unit of comics. In processual reading, the page functions as "a constellation" (p. 87) of elements that *suggests* possible ways to consolidate its parts into a meaningful whole. In contrast, readers using a "goal-oriented" (p. 91) strategy approach the panel as the primary interpretative unit of comics. In this strategy, readers treat panels as units and passively link them into the linear sequence supplied by the artist (Szczepaniak, 2010). Similar to Szczepaniak's proposition that there are two interpretative layers on the comics page, Molotiu (2012) claims comics have a double interpretability, which he articulates in the concepts of "sequential dynamism" (p. 89) and "iconostasis" (p. 91). The former refers to "the formal visual energy" or "sense of movement" (p. 89) created by the page's panels and other compositional elements that push the eye into conventional and alternative reading sequences. The latter refers to perceiving the "comics page as a unified composition" (p. 91). Molotiu argues that these perceptual processes occur in both narrative comics and abstract comics. [26]

Another formal convention I borrow from comics is cartoon representation. Joseph

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[26] Abstract comics is a genre of comics exploring non-representational imagery and materiality within the medium's formal structure (see Molotiu, 2009). This genre can also render comics "abstract" through ambiguous narratives premised on formal and representational imagery (Baetens, 2011). I taught abstract comics as a lesson in YES CBP.

Witek (2012) discusses cartooning as a representational mode common in American comics that is based on the simplification and exaggeration of caricature. Cartooning makes little effort to reproduce the illusion of three dimensional space, resulting in a visuality of malleable bodies, bold lines and simple backgrounds (Witek, 2012). Comics artists, as Witek remarks, use the cartoon mode for its ability to create images that emphasize concepts by simplifying an object to what the artist construes as its defining features. Comics theorist Scott McCloud (1993) has termed this effect of cartooning as "*amplification through simplification*" (p. 30, original emphasis): the basic meaning or idea of a thing is amplified as it becomes increasingly abstracted from its real-life appearance through cartooning.

The process of amplification through simplification depends on the semiotic action of cartoons, what McCloud (1993) calls "iconic abstraction" (p. 46): cartoons are icons whose abstraction from actual appearances pushes them towards the signification of words. In clarifying McCloud's theory, Cates (2010) states that cartoons' "process of signification is diminishingly a matter of resembling the thing they represent, [and] increasingly a matter of accepted symbolic conventions" (p. 96). Through iconic abstraction, cartoons attain some properties of linguistic signification because their simplification generalizes their meaning, thereby opening them to communicate a "texture or subtext" (Cates, 2010, p. 97) not literally depicted. The effect of this semiotic action is the opportunity not only to convey but also – in McCloud's mind – to "amplify" the concepts or meaning embedded in the cartoon over its literal representation.

Informed by the comics studies perspectives above, I think the interpretative flexibility of comics structure can facilitate thematic analysis of my case by relating its different components.

When components of a case are rendered on a comics page, the medium's two-dimensional structure can evoke non-chronological meaning between them through juxtaposition. Comics, then, can encourage comparative and, thus, thematic connections between case components by literally and cognitively drawing links across and around the page to find patterns across data. Furthermore, comics structure creates thematic meaning by using its double interpretability to move out of sequences altogether. The case researcher (through drawing) or the case reader can switch between panels and the page as interpretative units – from linking panels in linear or alternative sequence to interrelating them as a composition – thereby entering and re-entering the data at different points to form case themes. By encouraging individuals to break with the conventional, uni-directional reading sequence associated with narrative in comics, case researchers and readers can develop thematic relationships.

To use the compositional structure of comics, however, data need to be analyzable in comics form. Data, in other words, need to appear as formal elements of the comics medium – dialogue, panels, characters, colour and so forth – that can function within its compositional structure. When data are rendered through cartoon representation or more abstract design elements, they gain the ability to foreground ideas in visual form. This enables data to manifest as visual signifiers of abstract ideas that can be thematically analyzed using the structure of comics. I call coded data that have been converted into the formal properties of comics *comics codes*. When comics codes are situated within and related by the medium's formal structure, themes can emerge from the data.

In this thesis, my use of comics creation as a data analysis method follows the purposes of arts-informed research. Given AIR's first purpose – to advance knowledge – I considered

comics as an alternative epistemological mode, a way of generating meaning about social phenomena different from the conventional data analysis methods of case study research. In doing so, I asked myself questions on how the comics form could advance an in-depth understanding of: pedagogical relationships between the case's participants; the case's interaction with YES's safe space social context; and the primary issue arising from YES CBP's pedagogical functioning and contextual interaction – the adaptation of comics pedagogy. My answer concentrated on framing comics creation as an analytical mode that, by virtue of employing the juxtapositional structure of the medium and the symbolic representation of cartoons, could facilitate a holistic thematic analysis of the case.

In combining the arts and qualitative research, I emphasized the analytical dimensions of comics more than its evocative quality. I did, however, consciously use comics's evocative quality, especially with regards to character design, to better connect participants with readers. The analytical emphasis of my arts-informed research diverges with Cole and Knowles's emphasis on evocative and resonant research representation. In my reading of AIR, the balance between "the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies" and "the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59) seems skewed in favour of the arts but in a way that mystifies their contributions to qualitative analytical rigour. In doing this thesis, I aimed to begin demystifying some of the "creative" and "fluid" aspects of comics creation to better understand its contributions to qualitative analysis without falling into the rigid procedures that AIR critiques.

In conjunction with comics creation, I used a textual analytical mode to develop a descriptive way of knowing the case. This analysis facilitated my understanding of the case's

individual components and its context in-depth before understanding their functioning and interrelationships at the more abstract level of themes. The descriptive analysis involved identifying and describing the dispositions, historical conditions and YES's current conditions that impacted learner comics creation and my comics pedagogy. Both analytical modes offered strongpoints that presented different understandings of the data – a specific, descriptive understanding through text and a systemic, thematic understanding through comics. When combined, these modes provided a more holistic and deeper understanding of YES CBP and its context than if either one had been employed alone.

In consideration of AIR's second purpose – research communication – the interpretative flexibility of comics structure opens the experiences and subjective meanings of YES CBP to multiple interpretations. This allows audiences to generate their own knowledge from the case. The signification of comics codes supports this interpretative flexibility as well because cartoon representation carries a generalized meaning by virtue of its stylistic simplification. Such meaning is ambiguous enough to be reinterpreted beyond the specific context of the case. Since AIR's purpose of research communication is explicitly linked to a transformative engagement with communities beyond the academy, my case study aims to contribute practical knowledge on how comics pedagogy might be approached in other CAE contexts dealing with the issue of adapting such pedagogy to the conditions of queer community sites and the dispositions of their learners.

Comics Creation Procedure

As part of integrating the comics form into case study data analysis, I blended a comics creation process that I developed in my artistic practice with Creswell's (2013) two data analysis

methods of case study research: case description and analysis of case themes. My comics creation process generally proceeds as follows: preparatory brainstorming and sketching to develop a comic's content and visuality, which includes character design; storyboarding to organize the comic's narrative and compositional structure in the form of panel and page layouts; drafting the pages in pencil and then inking them; and processing the comic digitally for reproduction, which typically includes scanning the pages and splicing them together and colouring them in Photoshop. Each step in this process involves many stages of comics art that progress towards a final comic or, in this thesis, several large format comics pages.

To turn this artistic process into a research-oriented one, I used Creswell's (2013) general qualitative data analysis spiral as a procedural scaffold. Creswell conceptualizes data analysis as a series of four spiral loops in which researchers circle around to revisit data several times. In the first loop – data management – researchers organize raw data into a database and convert them into analyzable units (Creswell, 2013). In the second loop – reading and memoing – researchers develop a general understanding of the database through reviewing and note-taking (Creswell, 2013). In the first two loops, my analytical process had little integration with comics creation or form. After transcribing my interviews and categorizing my data according to data collection method and participant, I gleaned a preliminary understanding of my data by reading through my database, memoing notes on my laptop and drawing notes in sketchbooks. Drawing in sketchbooks was the preparatory brainstorming I did to develop character designs for the study's participants, note preliminary patterns in the data in visual form and begin to organize the systematic functioning of the case through diagrams.

In the third loop – describing, classifying and interpreting – researchers describe the

phenomenon being studied as observed in context, find codes in the data and aggregate them into themes and, finally, interpret the overall meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013). Case description and analysis of case themes parallel the describing and classifying stages of Creswell's general analysis spiral. For Creswell (2013), case description develops an understanding of the case's important details as observed by the researcher, such as its history, context and routine activities (pp. 100–101, p. 200, p. 294). As in the first two loops, part of my third loop was conventional in that I did it through a textual mode: written description. My case descriptions focused on understanding the basic character of participants' dispositions, histories and current conditions salient to their comics practices in YES CBP. The descriptions mainly appear in the Analysis chapter and to a lesser extent in other sections throughout this thesis. ,

After case description, Creswell (2013) states that the researcher conducts an analysis of case themes representing a few key issues of the case. In the third loop of my analysis, I integrated storyboarding, penciling, inking and digitally processing comics into Creswell's analysis of case themes. To do this procedurally, I treated comics creation as a type of coding in which I re-formulated textually coded data into units that were analyzable in comics form. Following this, I amalgamated the converted data into themes by designing, drawing and inking them into the compositional structure of comics. I began this process by reentering the initial patterns and notes established in loop two. I continued by coding data traditionally through highlighting and marking up salient segments of interview transcripts, lesson plans and field notes, and by taking and condensing notes on other textual and visual data. As a result, I established preliminary text codes that I then turned into comics codes – such as characters, dialogue, panels, colours or drawn objects – that represented an idea relevant to the analysis. For

example, character design was an entire comics creation process dedicated to turning data about the participants into a formal property of comics that could function in the medium's structure. When original data were already in visual form, I appropriated segments of them as a comics code.

The process of establishing comics codes involved drafting and redrafting their visual form in my sketchbook and on many loose sheets of paper. When the data were condensed into a body of comics codes, I gradually related them into thematic relationships by juxtaposing codes and sequencing them through many rounds of storyboarding. This process continued through and was largely finalized in the penciling and inking of large pieces of Bristol board. This comics creation process gave rise to the case themes detailed at the end of the Analysis chapter. I did not finalize the design of the comics pages nor the thematic links between codes before penciling the final comics pages; I wanted the analysis process to continue as I drew on the Bristol board. Finalizing the page designs in the storyboarding process and then drawing them on the Bristol board would have shifted the comics creation analysis into data representation prematurely. In my view, this would have limited my exploration of how penciling and inking contributed to the thematic analysis. After inking the comics pages, I scanned and then spliced and coloured them in Photoshop, where I had a final opportunity to rearrange elements of the page design.

The products of the comics analysis were two and a half sketchbooks, numerous storyboards and sketches on loose paper, three finalized character design sheets, four large format comics pages drawn and inked on 22 by 30 inch Bristol board and another smaller comics page sized 11 by 15 inches. Two of the large comics pages represent the pedagogical

relationships of the program and the issue of meeting learners' interests through adaptive pedagogy. The three others represent the participants' dispositions and relationships to comics creation that were actualized in YES CBP. Interpretation – the final stage of Creswell's (2013) third loop – is contained in the forthcoming Discussion chapter in which I interpret the themes arising from the comics analysis through Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theory of practice.

The final loop in Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral condenses data into a concise representation, in visual or other format. The five large comics resulting from my arts-informed analysis can be construed as the data representations of this case study.

Validation

Creswell (2013) recommends eight validation strategies to strengthen the accuracy of a qualitative study's findings, four of which I adopted in this thesis: triangulation, clarifying researcher bias, member checking and thick description (pp. 251–252). Triangulation involves using "multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (p. 251) for an interpretation. I used triangulation primarily by corroborating codes and themes across participant perspectives and data sources collected through different methods.

I also employed member checking, or when participants review and verify the accuracy of researchers' accounts (p. 252). Member checking required specific ethical attention because of the nature of my comics representation. In my comics analysis, I wanted to generate comics codes by appropriating segments of PW's and L's comics art. Moreover, I wanted to design proxy representations of the participant-learners by modifying the protagonists in their three-

page comics. This necessitated that I obtain copyright permissions from PW and L to make derivative artwork from theirs. Proxy representation was a strategy to protect the confidentiality of my participants while giving them a visual presence in the case study. PW's and L's original characters bore no resemblance to their actual appearances. Because they stemmed from the participants' artwork, my derivative characters were strongly representative of PW's and L's experiences of YES CBP and approaches to comics creation. I did not foresee the arts-informed component in my case study's original research design, so the comics representation was not approved in the original ethics protocol. Consequently, I required and obtained additional compliance through an addendum submission to the original ethics protocol. The addendum was approved on August 19, 2013. PW and L received addenda to the original consent form in the fall of 2013 and both consented to participate in the arts-informed phase of my study. Their consent forms gave me the copyright permissions needed to make derivative artwork from their comics art.

I established a member check procedure for the character designs and comics pages. I sent the comics art to L and PW via email for review, suggested changes and/or approval. PW approved the his comics representations without changes. Member checking with L proved more complex. Over two months, L did not reply to the initial member check email that requested them to review, comment and approve my comics art on their YES CBP experience. Three follow-up reminders did not elicit responses from L. I tracked the two latter reminders by email receipt and the tracking software indicated that L had opened these two reminders several times. To ensure that L's consent was on-going before the submission of my thesis to defense, I reiterated L's right to withdraw from the research in the final follow-up email,

giving them an opportunity to withdraw and have the comics art and other data on them pulled and destroyed from the thesis. In this email, I invited L to express any objections or discomfort about the comics or any perceived present or future harm they felt could arise from their publication. I repeated my intention to publish the comics and expressed my concerns about the public, permanent nature of the representations in the thesis because they would be available online.

Given this situation, I consulted with a research ethics officer at Concordia's Office of Research and was advised that the publication of the analysis comics without L's reply or approval presented no ethical objections. This advice was given because the addendum consent form L signed clearly stated that upon receipt of the derivative artwork, L had two weeks to notify me in writing about changes they wanted made to the artwork, comments they had about it and/or approval of it without further changes. The addendum consent form further stated that if I received no notification in writing after two weeks and a follow-up email two days before the two week's end, I had L's consent to use the derivative artwork in my research and publish it without their input or approval. This condition of the consent form, however, would be overridden if L explicitly withdrew from the research prior to the submission of my thesis for defense. Without active and expressed withdrawal from the research, L's original consent remained valid. During the research's first and second phases, I was given no indication that L lacked the capacity to give or withdraw consent nor that they were in heinous circumstances that would have compromised their ability to give or withdraw consent. L had never expressed concerns about any perceived coercion in my role as a researcher.

Taking ethics seriously, I deliberated with myself and other researchers on whether to

publish the comics without L's input or approval. These deliberations focused on weighing the potential present and future personal harm to L caused by publishing the comics and whether the representations of L's experience in YES CBP would advance understanding in art education about the unique needs and challenges of teaching art with genderqueer youth. Personal feelings of betrayal about publishing the comics were possible; however, as shown by the email tracking, L read the emails several times, indicating that they consciously chose not to reply or withdraw from the research. From my perspective, pressing for a reply would have disrespected L's choice not to withdraw. Since I took careful anonymizing procedures to protect participant confidentiality, publication of the comics posed little identification risk to L. I believed strongly that the representation of L's experience in YES CBP would benefit learners, educators and researchers in the discipline by forging more visibility on non-binary gender identifications and the negative effects of gender binary presuppositions. This would potentially make the discipline more cognizant of genderqueer identity but also more LGBT/Q-representative. For these reasons, I decided to publish my analysis comics on L. Given that L did not member check the comics representations, my comics rendition of L's experience in YES CBP is less valid than PW's.

A third validation strategy was clarifying researcher bias since I transparently stated biases, assumptions and positions informing my research (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). I exercised a reflexive researcher presence through my individual drawing style and by rendering myself as a character in the comics pages. With the proxy character designs, I modified the characters further to emphasize that the representation of the learner-participants and their YES CBP experiences was through my interpretation. Finally, I employed thick description with rich detail

of the case to facilitate its transfer to other case readers (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Thick description manifests largely in the thesis's textual descriptions and, to a lesser extent, visually in the analysis-produced comics art.

In the following chapter, I show and discuss the analytical products of my arts-informed case study methodology: comics art with extended explanatory captions and textual descriptions of L's and PW's experiences in YES CBP.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the descriptive textual analysis that established my particular understanding of the case's components (participants) and its context. It also presents the primary comics products of the thematic analysis that developed my systemic understanding of how the case's components functioned within relationships of adaptive pedagogy that interacted with the YES context. Both analyses are intended to be read together to obtain an in-depth understanding of YES CBP. At the end of the chapter, I summarize the three case themes that arose from my comics creation.

First, I present the primary products of my thematic analysis: three finalized character designs and five comics. As explained in an extended caption, the finalized character designs represent a primary example of turning data on participants into comics codes. The comics are divided into two types. Three are dispositional, and they focus on the participants' YES CBP comics practices through the notion of socially and historically constituted dispositions. Two are pedagogical, and they identify the salient aspects and functions of my pedagogical relationships with the participant-learners, especially regarding creative safe space. Each comic has an image detail and extended caption that further explain the process and representation of my comics creation in relation to AIR. Comics specific to the participant-learners are followed by my textual descriptions of their experiences in YES CBP. The textual descriptions provide greater access to the meaning behind the comics codes that would be inaccessible to readers if they were only engaging with the comics. High resolution images of the character designs and comics are embedded in the digital version of this document so that readers can zoom into the various portions of the comics art for greater detail.

Character Design

I used character design to associate participants with defining aspects of their comics practices. I developed comics codes signifying these aspects and embedded them into the participants' character designs through different symbolic strategies. By virtue of cartoon symbolism, I had visual reminders in the designs that enabled me to constantly relate the key aspects of the participants' comics practices to other data on the comics pages.

The mainstream comics genre defined PW's comics creation, and I coded this in his participant-character's yellow goggles and T-shirt logo, items derived from superhero fan apparel that he actually wore to YES CBP (see Figure 1). Genderqueerness defined L's comics creation, and I coded this in their participant-character's genderqueer "look" and the colour red (see Figure 2). I appropriated these two symbolic strategies from L, who used them to convey genderqueerness in their three-page comic. The red bow tie became the primary genderqueer code in L's dispositional comics page. I did not have the same representational restrictions on my character design as on those of PW and L, so I depicted myself as a simplified version of my actual appearance (see Figure 3). The visual strategy I used to symbolize a key aspect of my comics pedagogy – blending – appeared after the character designs. Blending is symbolized in the colour orange, which results from the mixing of two primary colours: red and yellow. This colouring strategy is seen in the comics in which my character appears.

Using visual characters in my research representation was associated with the AIR purpose of research communication for audience engagement. In representing participants as characters, I had the explicit intention of opening an opportunity for a more concrete and resonant sense of connection with the participants of YES CBP than abstracted and technical textual descriptions.

Representing participants as characters gives readers a person to interact with on the page and an opportunity to engage with the emotional nuances, challenges and successes that the participants experienced in their YES CBP comics practices.

Figure 1. Passive War's character design. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

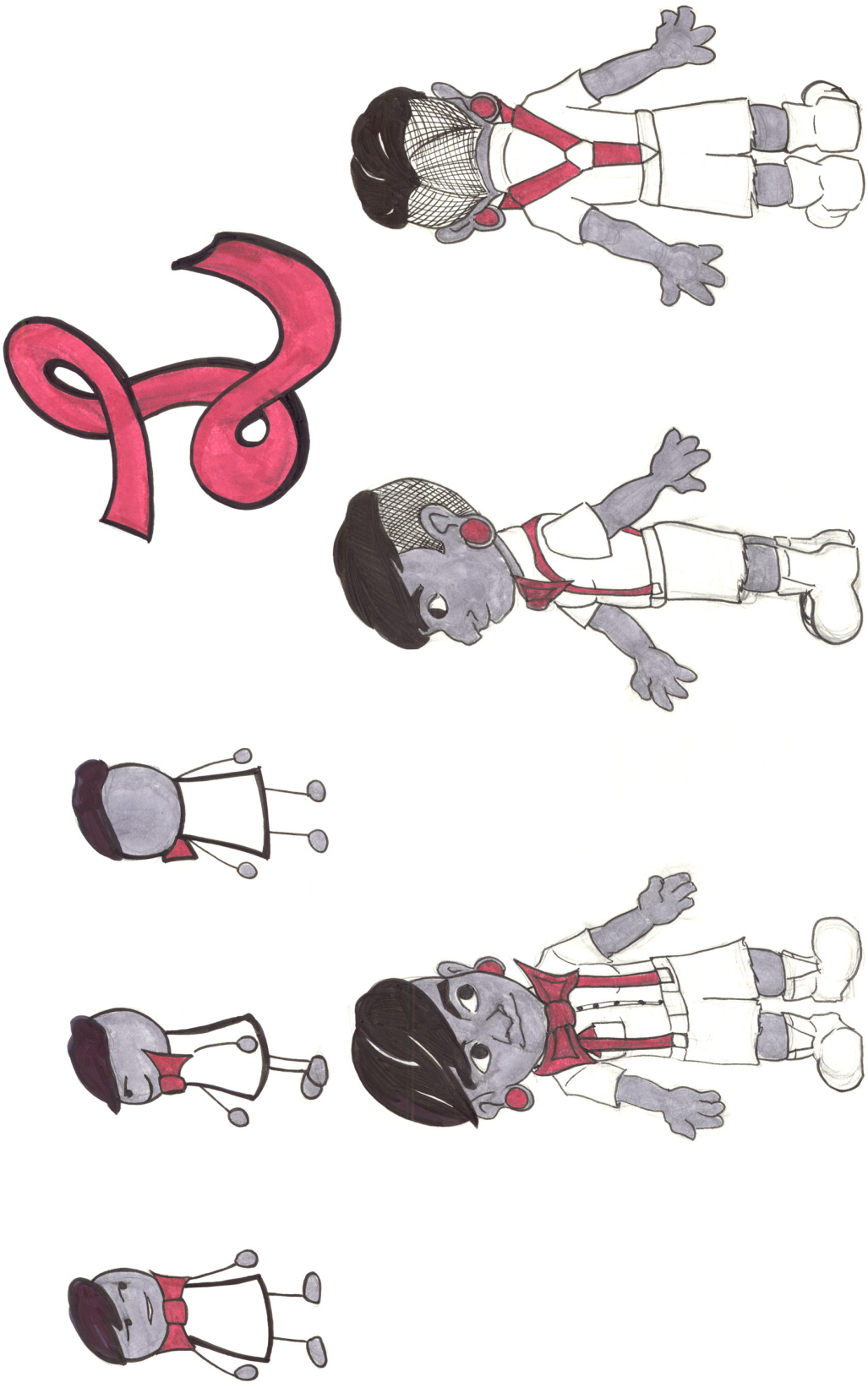

Figure 2. L's character design. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

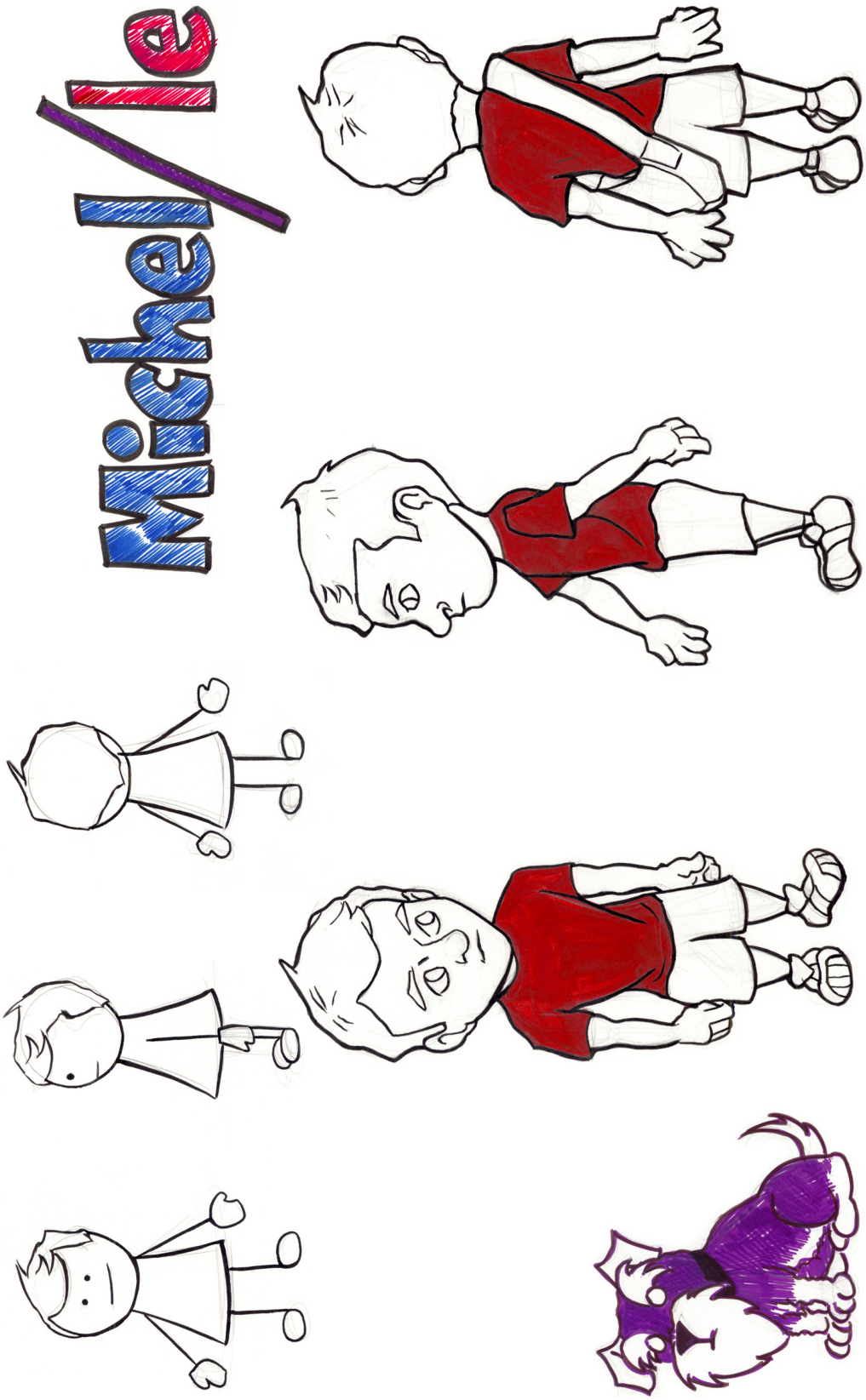

Figure 3. Michel's character design. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Michel's Dispositional Comic

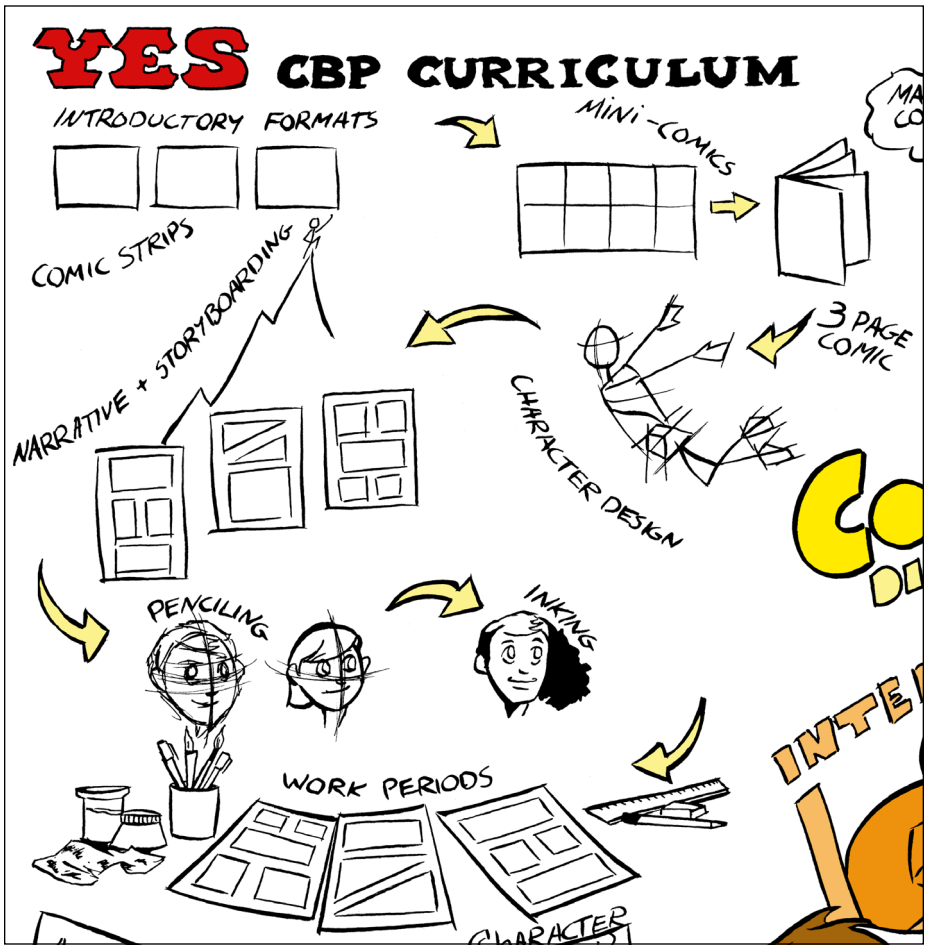

Figure 4. Detail of Michel's dispositional comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

I created this comic to analyze the gender and comics dispositions that generated my comics pedagogy in YES CBP and the historical conditions that formed them (see Figure 5). As elaborated in the Discussion chapter, I call my primary dispositions toward comics "bounding" and "blending." I associate the former with perceptions, appreciations and actions that tend to assert comics as a distinct medium. For example, my bounding disposition activated during the design of the YES CBP curriculum, as seen with the curriculum's emphasis on the specific formal characteristics of comics (see Figure 4). I associate the latter with perceptions,

appreciations and actions that tend to blend comics genres and traditions with each other or blend the comics medium with other artistic or communicative modes. These same dispositions are active in my gender practices. From my trans experience, I am inclined to shun binary gender logic and to understand gender as a fluid or spectral phenomenon. Such blending, however, does not assert itself within perceptions, appreciations and actions associated with my personal gender self-identification which has held strong as masculine, even within a female body. The dispositions of blending and bounding are visually coded in the colour orange. Orange is a colour derived from blending red and yellow but, as a secondary colour, its shades are always restricted by its original primary colours.

My dispositional comic resonates with AIR's principle that the reflexive presence of researchers should appear through signatures that mark their conceptual and creative aptitudes as researcher-artists. My reflexive presence goes beyond the content of the comics art and textual descriptions. It also manifests through my personal drawing style in all the comics. My drawing style bespeaks the comics traditions that have conditioned my understanding of and sensibilities to the medium. By manifesting these traditions' conventions visually, my drawing renders transparent my biases towards comics that always inform how I teach the medium and how I employ it as a methodological tool in research. For example, my penchant for the formal aspects of comics carried through to my focus on techniques and formats in the YES CBP curriculum (see Figure 4) and my selection of a methodological disposition that emphasizes form.

Figure 5. Michel's dispositional comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Passive War's Dispositional Comic

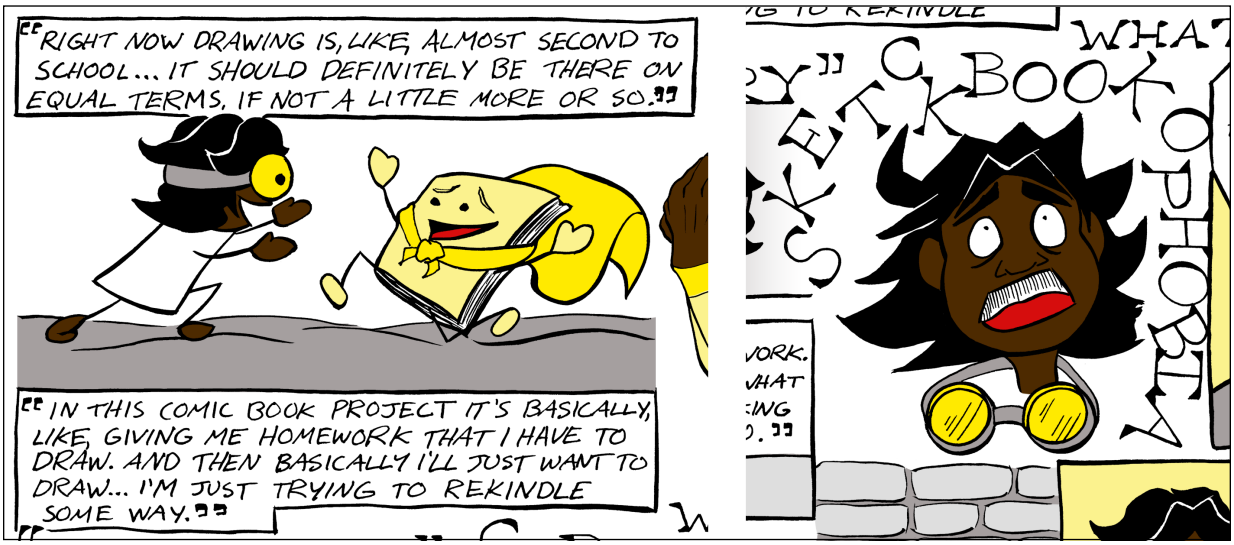

Figure 6. Detail of Passive War's dispositional comic.
Comics art by Michel Levesque.

My analytical goal in drawing this comic was to understand PW's complex relationship with comics that manifested in YES CBP (see Figure 7). Conformity to the conventions of mainstream comics underscored his relationship. This conformity is coded in the colour yellow, which is a primary colour used commonly in superhero costume designs. PW's relationship to comics involved a complex set of conflicting emotions and interests. This is seen in the panels representing two contrasting emotional responses of PW towards comics creation (see Figure 6). The first panel codes one aspect of PW's relationship with comics: adoration, as expressed in his "relationship" with a caped anthropomorphized comic book. PW also related to the medium with self-doubt, as seen in the "sketchbookophobia" code based off a term he coined in an interview.

Besides the analytical benefits, the communicative dimension of comics structure can facilitate case readers' appreciation of the complexity of PW's experience. This supports AIR's

purpose of research communication. If looking at the comic as a compositional unit – iconostasis in Molotiu's (2012) terms – one apprehends a dense collection of panels and other comics properties that convey the notion of complexity literally and metaphorically. When readers enter the page through sequential dynamism (Molotiu, 2012), the appreciation of complexity is further enhanced; readers have the opportunity to engage with the more detailed meaning arising from particular codes constituting the comic. A critical procedural decision to facilitate this compositional structure was drawing the original dispositional comics on 22 by 30 inch Bristol board, which allowed me to create a larger and more dense composition. In conventional American comics practice, original comic pages are approximately 10 by 15 inches.

Figure 7. Passive War's dispositional comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Passive War's Pedagogical Comic

Figure 8. Detail of Passive War's pedagogical comic.
Comics art by Michel Levesque.

In this pedagogical comic, there is a palpable change in rendering style from the stick figures of PW's dispositional page (see Figure 9). The switch between styles speaks to the fluidity of a creative inquiry process using different representational approaches depending on the needs of the analysis. Overtime, I found that stick figure representation favoured thematically relating codes. The minimal amount of time required to render enabled me to jump mentally between the ideas behind comics codes and to form links between them because I did not have to dedicate too much concentration on drawing. More detailed cartooning took more time and, thus, focused my attention singularly on the comics codes I was drawing. This was

appropriate when I needed to think deeply on individual ideas related to participants' comics practices. Comics codes with added detail made these things stand out for consideration in my interpretation of the comics through a Bourdieusian lens and will do so for readers when they form their own interpretations. Although seemingly easy, drawing in stick figure representation was difficult for me at the beginning of the analysis because I have a strong tendency for detailed, illustrative rendering. When I started drawing codes in my sketchbook, I drew them too illustrative, and I pulled away from this style over time as I saw little analytical benefit to it. When not using a cartoon style, I concentrated too much on the technicalities of representation during drawing, making the comics analysis more time-consuming than it had to be.

My inclination towards detail and technique proved largely counterproductive in the research process but facilitated my pedagogical relationship with PW because we shared a similar disposition for emphasizing form in comics creation. As a consequence, I could easily adapt to his interests and the logic underscoring them. I understood them from my own comics conditioning that resulted from emulating certain conventions of mainstream comics. In the third panel of the critique sequence of PW's pedagogical comic (Figure 8), the specificity and technicality of my response to his request for a critique on his comics art is a pedagogical situation that manifested my affinity for comics form. The page being critiqued is the first page of PW's three-page comic (see Figure 12).

Figure 9. Passive War's pedagogical comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Descriptive Analysis: Passive War's Comics Creation

Passive War (PW) was a twenty-one-year-old aspiring comics artist who identified as an African-American male and, regarding his sexual orientation, as "I'm not sure but I would say queer because personalitie [sic] is a big factor." PW was an avid anime and manga fan, a passion only rivalled by his adoration for American superhero comics, which he referred to synonymously as mainstream comics. Comics critic Douglas Wolk (2007) notes that mainstream comics are " 'superhero and other genre comics, serialized as pamphlets and then sometimes collected into books, and marketed mostly to comics stores,' as opposed to 'general-interest comics marketed outside the specialty comics industry' " (pp. 19–20). Mainstream comics are a sub-field of American comics and generally refer to the superhero genre or other comics genres marked by a similar style that are published by corporate entertainment entities (usually DC and Marvel) or other comic book publishers (p. 47).

As a fan, PW was invested in the universe of superhero comics and participated in fan activities such as conventions and the pseudo, fan-propagated "siding war" between Marvel and DC. As an astute comics aficionado, however, he was also critical of corporate mainstream publishers for privileging profits over readers. He thought this was exemplified by publishers disrupting readers' emotional relationships to characters through their tendency to kill and then quickly resurrect superheroes to generate revenue. PW described this tendency as:

> Instantly, they come out with a new hero. They come out with a new comic book: IronMan, IronMan Returns. Captain America really didn't die. He got transferred into another dimension, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. The Flash didn't die. He just went around time and now he's a permanent piece of time. He's gonna come back. Batman's

not dead. Batman's just in another dimension right now trying to find his way back.

PW's nuanced understanding of superhero comics surpassed content knowledge of characters in the Marvel and DC universes; he appreciated their capacity for political satire and social metaphor. In one of our interviews, he pointed out that the discrimination against mutants in Marvel's long-running *X-Men* series could be interpreted as a metaphor for the exclusion of LGBT/Q individuals in society:

> It is that big subtle undertone of being different in a community of people who are, who are supposed to be your peers but they look, view you as different because you're mutant. Mutants are looked down upon because: Why are they so different? They're not even supposed to be with us. You should separate them from us. That's, like, society in general and it feels like, it's like, they're basically saying everything but without, like, having it shoved down people's throats.

This preference for reading comics with a subtle reference to LGBT/Q identity, rather than a flagrant one, reflected PW's own predilection in approaching the topic of LGBT/Q identity in his comics creation. For example, PW mentioned that such subtly could appear in a character's visual design. Undertones of LGBT/Q content in superhero comics or the then new roster of contemporary LGBT/Q superheroes were not significant reasons that led PW to read this comics genre; instead, he was attracted to its narratives, character designs and, especially, the aesthetic diversity arising in the media and styles of its comics artists.

PW had been reading superhero comic books since childhood, a habit that started when a family member purchased him comic books that were not ones he had originally requested. The mistake made PW seek out the comic books he wanted to read – Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* –

which served as a gateway to read other superhero comics. PW's comics reading evolved into a practice of self-initiated comics creation because, as he stated, "It was basically something I liked so much that I had to be a part of it." As a child, PW also invented his own characters inspired by anime series such as *DragonBall Z* and *Digimon* rather than copying their characters directly as fanart. PW had little opportunity to develop his comics creation in high school because he had no art classes; albeit, in his last year of high school, he participated in extracurricular programs that further developed his self-initiated comics creation.

At the time of YES CBP, PW's primary source of art education was an undergraduate program in graphic design. The program was broad, covering topics such as typography, painting and video, but it had no comics component. PW speculated that the exclusion of comics creation from the program was due to "a snob reason as in comic books aren't art." He remarked that he did not understand why comics creation was not taught in his program as graphic design could be explored through comics, and comics creation is one career option in graphic design. After completion of his undergraduate degree, PW had aspirations to apply to a comics creation program at an art college. He saw his work in YES CBP's digital comic book as potential content for his future portfolio submission.

During his graphic design degree, PW stated that, "I really did put draw[ing], like comic books back on my back burner, like the furtherest back burner that it could be on and more focusing on, basically, graphic design rather than graphic novelling." In PW's current circumstance, comics creation had became secondary to school, and he saw YES CBP as an opportunity to re-prioritize drawing comics. Seizing this opportunity reflected a creative urgency to reengage with his self-initiated comics creation, an engagement which PW thought YES CBP

could facilitate. He articulated this urgency as:

> I have so many characters and they all have a story that has not been drawn yet and . . . it [the community discussion] just brought back so much memories of I need to finish so much . . . it just makes me just, I guess, look back at all my work and see what I want to do again and what I, what I don't need to do and further future work of what I want to do.

PW acknowledged, however, that making a comic book was an arduous task, noting that, despite his passion for comics creation, he usually left his sketchbooks and comics projects unfinished. He had encountered past motivational challenges in comics creation, stating that: "I haven't finished a comic book since high school and that was only because they were making me finish it." He thought YES CBP would provide him a structure and an expectation to draw by assigning him a project which would, in turn, motivate him to draw and complete the project. PW's goals in the program were to finish his three-page comic, inspire himself to delve further into his comics and develop his technical drawing skills.

Figure 10. Character from Passive War's sketchbook. Comics art by Passive War.

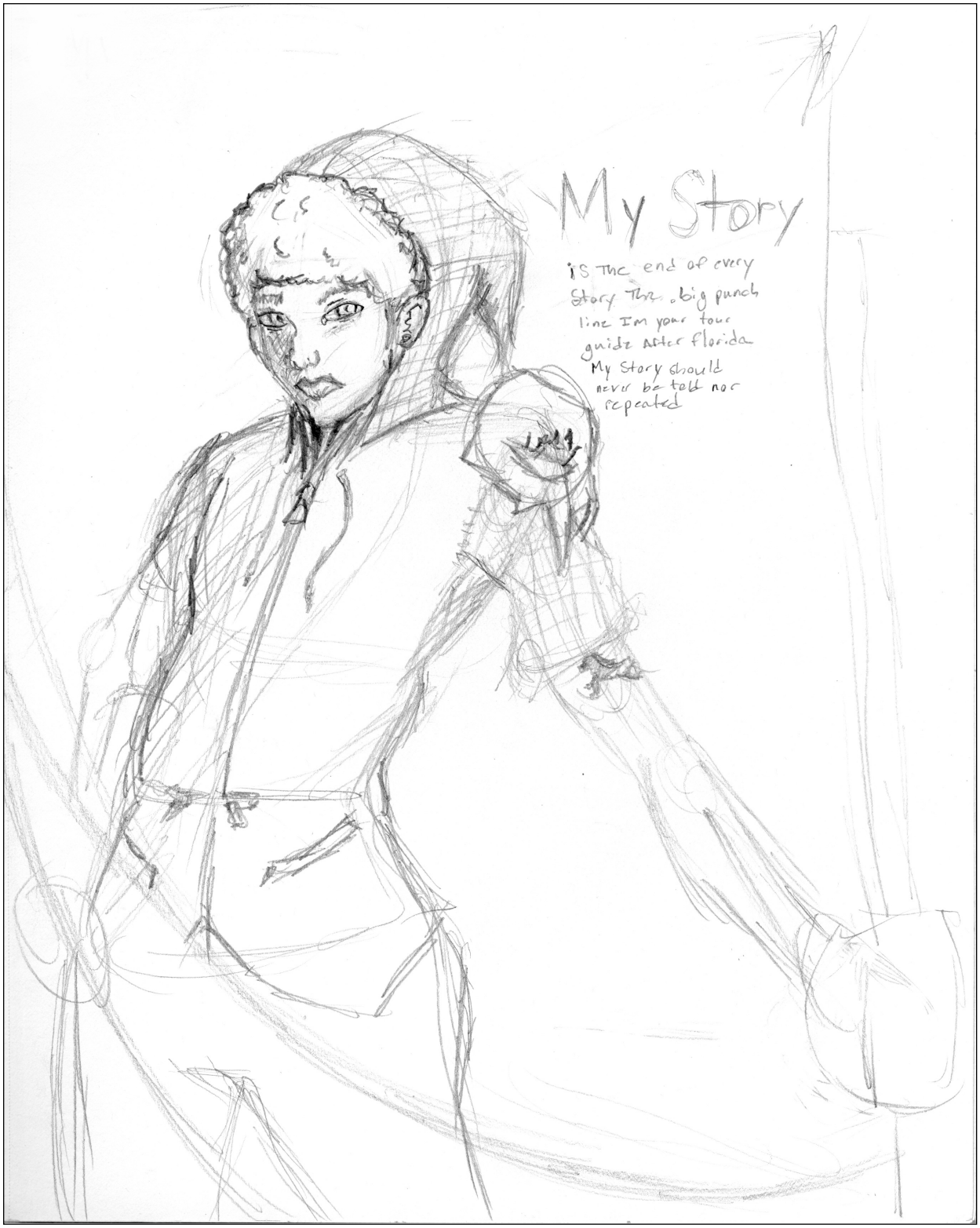

Figure 11. Character from Passive War's sketchbook. Comics art by Passive War.

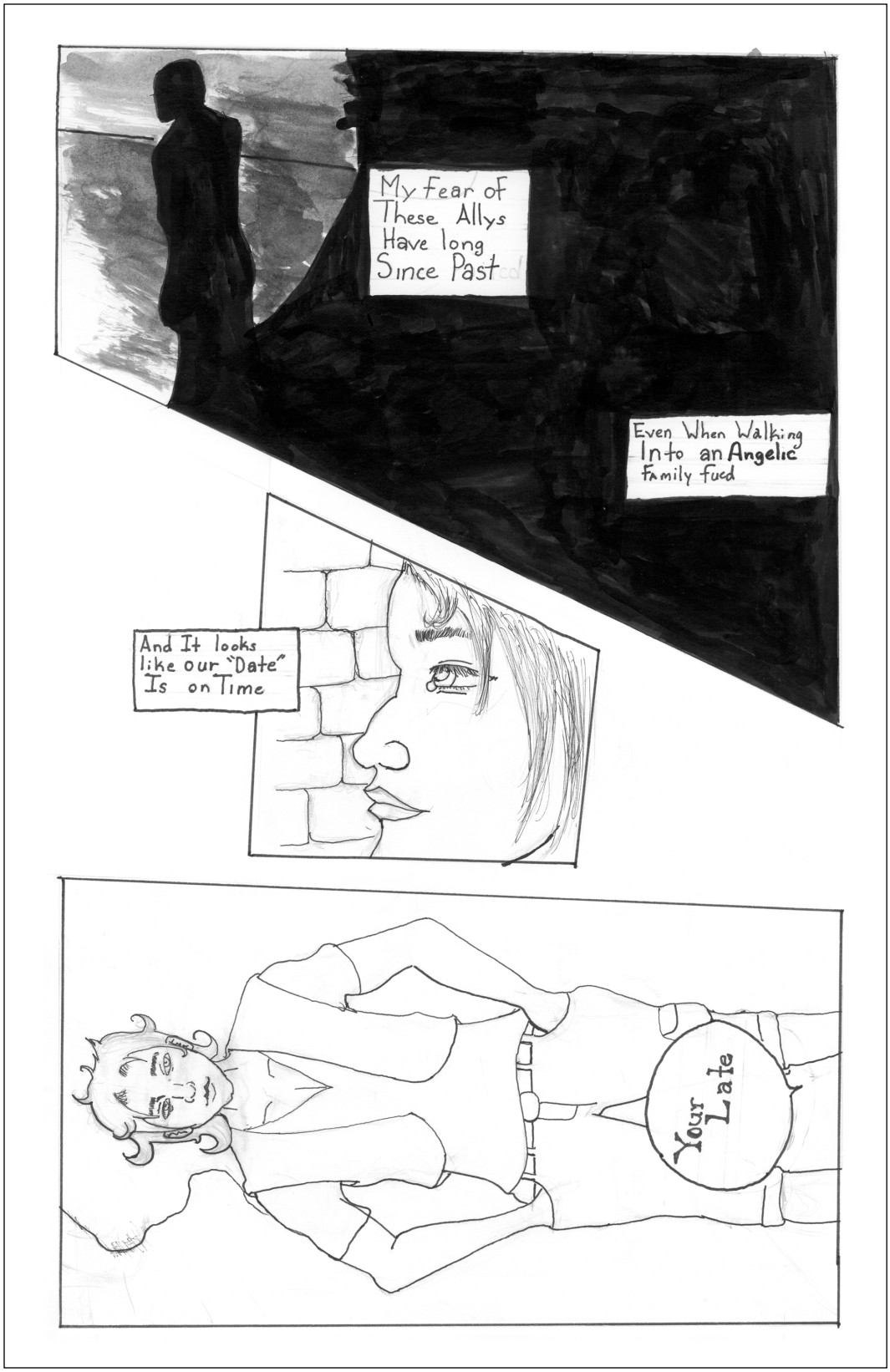

Figure 12. Page 1 of Passive War's three-page comic. Comics art by Passive War.

Figure 13. Page 2 of Passive War's three-page comic. Comics art by Passive War.

Figure 14. Page 3 of Passive War's three-page comic. Comics art by Passive War.

Specifically, PW saw YES CBP as an opportunity to reacquaint himself with a comic he had made in high school, and he re-appropriated its characters for a new narrative (see Figure 11). In his three-page comic, PW revisited old characters to reconsider what he liked about them and what he could change about them. His re-appropriation of old characters functioned as a way to select which characters to work on from the cast in his imagination (for an enduring character of PW's not associated with his three-page comic narrative, see Figure 10). Character design was an area where PW subtly incorporated queer content into his comics. He enjoyed gender ambiguous and gender nonconforming characters which he explored by making his own characters, Michael and Azazel, androgynous. PW was not comfortable representing himself directly in his comics art as queer but did mention that he situated different aspects of himself in his characters. On a deeper level for PW, revisiting old characters represented "happy times in artwork where it was just basically me drawing because I wanted to, not just because I felt like I needed to."

PW's comic is a snippet of a much larger story situated within the supernatural and drawn from Christian themes (see Figures 12–14). Set in the aftermath of an angel revolution against the Great Deity, the narrative is premised on the placement of angels within human bodies as punishment for rebelling against the Great Deity. Luis, the human protagonist, houses an angel named Azazel, the angel of death, with whom he has fallen in love. Both are poised to stop another imminent angel revolution on Earth. PW had recently redesigned Luis from the bisexual Greek god and jokester of his high school comic into a more mature and rugged human. On the first page of PW's comic, Luis is walking alone in a dark alley about to encounter someone for unknown reasons. On the second page, Luis meets a demon, the presumed antagonist, who

houses the warrior angel Michael and with whom he wants to instigate the second angel revolution. In the second page's final panel, Michael is unleashed from the demon and, moving to the third page's first panel, Azazel appears to protect Luis. A fight ensues between the angels; albeit, the comic ends on a cliff hanger with Michael cornering Azazel in the final panel. PW's narrative holds the theme that one should not blindly follow orders, and he linked this theme to the contemporary context of people in society blindly following precepts of homophobia.

PW stated: "Comics are usually my safe space, that they're where I go to think. They're always safe space. You can be free to say whatever you want." However, comics creation was also a source of insecurity for PW because, as he stated, "I've always been a doubter in my abilities to draw." During YES CBP, PW feared drawing head angles incorrectly and took personal blame for his perceived faults with drawing human anatomy. Upon receiving the sketchbook I gave him, PW had "sketchbookophobia." He described it as: "It's just, I don't want to touch it. I don't want to look at it and then when, like, I finally actually touch the pen to the page then I'm golden." PW did not practice much in his sketchbook; it sported a few sketches of characters mainly for his three-page comic. He was also struggling to establish his own style in a tug of influence between the visual style of manga and the realism of superhero comics. This process was difficult for PW in that he wanted simultaneously to develop his drawing to the high technical standard of mainstream comics and to establish and be comfortable with a drawing style that incorporated a manga influence, which can differ considerably from the visual

conventions of American mainstream comics. [27]

Because of his insecurities, PW used YES CBP to identify and correct what was "wrong" with his artwork by opening it to feedback from peers and scoping out other people's artwork to appropriate solutions to the difficulties he was encountering. Such corrective action was exemplified by PW's perspectives on the community discussion: he enjoyed it as an opportunity to receive feedback; he would have preferred it be open to The Center and the public in order to maximize the quantity and diversity of feedback he would have received; he appreciated the compliments on his work but would have preferred more critiques, even suggesting in the final group interview that individuals could leave comments on post-it notes behind his artwork to indicate what was wrong or right with the drawings; and he preferred not to answer questions in the artist presentation in favour of gleaning the perspectives of others on his work rather than expressing his own.

Within YES CBP, PW sought safe space as a developing comics artist rather than a queer young adult, seeking a creative space where he could find support and guidance for his ideas and developing artistic skill without intimating judgement. PW felt that a safe space for art learning:

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[27] Despite the range of cross-fertilization between comics traditions and genres in the contemporary context and the great diversity of style within those traditions and genres, general characteristics remain persistent and one example relevant to the current discussion is the stylistic differences between American mainstream comics and Japanese manga. Here, I limit my comments to their general visual conventions. American mainstream comics function, in borrowing Witek's (2012) concept, in the naturalistic representational mode. In this mode, the goal is to reproduce the illusion of three dimensional space and realism in figures (Witek, 2012). Commonly with superhero comics, this realism turns into a hyperrealism of intimidating muscular bodies. According to McCloud (2006), manga tends towards the simplified, iconic representation of bodies (large eyes, for example), the frequent divergence from realistic representation for expressive, emotive effect and the blending of naturalistic and caricature rendering (p. 216).

would provide a comfort . . . that I'm being supported in my artwork and whatever I put on paper, it's not going to be judged. It's going to be all basically my idea no matter how far fetched or how out there the idea may be on paper. It's my idea and no one will question it.

Specifically for PW, YES CBP was a safe space in that he felt he could bounce his creative ideas off other people without them getting quickly criticized and in that he could appropriate ideas from other people to improve his own artwork. Based on his art education experience, PW acknowledged that, like queer safe space, safe space for developing an artist identity was contextually contingent: It "depend[s] on the people who you're learning with because you could, you could end up in a group that's not so supportive." Here, PW referred generally to people making art learning unsafe when they insensitively critiqued. He also mentioned his "first experience with art bigotry" that happened in his graphic design program: an instructor imposed her own classifications of art on her students' artwork that, effectively, excluded it as art. Although he did not elaborate on particular instances of criticism regarding his comics creation, PW reported having his narrative ideas labelled as cliché in the past, which to him denoted a lack of originality and made him self-conscious. He was not concerned about YES CBP being an unsafe learning environment for LGBT/Q identity because it was exclusively queer and he had confidence that YES staff vetted me before accepting the program, stating that, "I would assume that they wouldn't, wouldn't hire a bigot."

Seeking feedback through informal critiques was the foundation of my pedagogical relationship with PW and they established a space for him to identify his artistic "mistakes." PW thought an LGBT/Q instructor was not essential to create a safe space in YES CBP because any instructor working with queer youth at YES would be expected to abide by proper LGBT/Q

etiquette and language. He mentioned, though, that an LGBT/Q instructor had the benefit of helping youth explore queer themes in their comics. PW thought it was important for a comics instructor to have a strong knowledge base in comics and shared experience of fandom, which was captured in such interview statements as: "If you kind of didn't know anything [about comics], it kind of would've ruined the whole project" and "If I'm going through a nerd moment [in YES CBP], somebody would understand." Having comics knowledge implied I knew how to teach the *drawing of comics*, which was the knowledge PW sought to access from me to improve his drawing. The second interview quote refers to many casual discussions during the workshops that I had with PW in which I shared my enthusiasm for anime and manga and my favourite superheroes at the time: Northstar and Gambit from Marvel's *X-Men*. From my perspective, these discussions demonstrated my fan knowledge, which seemed to further legitimate my role as a comics instructor in the eyes of PW.

PW frequently asked me for advice about drawing technique and anatomy, especially facial positions which he considered one of this main weaknesses. I was very sympathetic to PW's struggles in comparing his artwork to that of the realist standards of superhero comics because I struggled with that in the self-initiated comics creation of my late teens and early twenties. He stated that, "Through critiques you helped me, I guess, fix up a little of my anatomy problems that I had, like, with drawing" and doing so "without having to pull out the whole skeleton and point out each and every part 'cause I hate that and it never helps me at all." PW perceived critiques as a method of instruction that did not order him to do something; instead, they provided him suggestions on how to approach a problem. This left him the choice to apply the solution I offered or not. I deemed this pedagogical approach critical because PW had already

developed an acute appreciation of comics and his own artwork. He was more than capable of discerning what worked for his comics creation.

With my pedagogy, PW felt he had achieved certain outcomes in the program, stating that he had learned how to apply the feedback given in critiques and that my offering of suggestions and identifying mistakes helped him move to other drawings. He felt that YES CBP had enabled him to overcome his fear of incorrectly drawing head angles and that, by the end of the program, his confidence in his artwork had improved. In seeing an improvement in his sketchbook at the end of YES CBP, he stated that he had gained motivation to draw more and to improve his skill level to that of mainstream comics. This sense of accomplishment was accompanied by a sense of not having achieved all the goals he set out for himself at the beginning of the program; he missed, out of necessity, the inking workshop where he would have learned a new skill and the opportunity to finish his comic earlier. In the final workshop before the community discussion, I helped PW ink his three-page comic and, even then, some of it was left uninked.

Despite the security of YES CBP, PW did not feel absolutely secure drawing in a group context where he had to draw in front of other learners. In gauging his artwork to that of others, PW became self-conscious about drawing, stating that: “I don’t like the whole staring over the shoulder thing. It, like, sort of weirds me out while I’m drawing and I just stop usually.” Also evidencing PW’s self-consciousness was that his comics creation changed between public and private space. He reported that the comics he drew in private where akin to journals and had deeper stories whereas the comics he drew in public were more comedic. Although PW was more comfortable drawing comics alone, he reported a tendency to become frustrated when he could not figure something out, leading him to push this artwork aside and at times for a long

duration. On the other hand, he liked drawing in groups because it exposed him to others' creative ideas, art styles and techniques that he could appropriate to improve his artwork. Working among others gave PW a sense of competition to have the better story and artwork, which motivated him to draw more. He believed that self-imposed competition with others would force him to draw more and, thus, improve. For PW, motivation to make comics also came from associating social recognition of his artwork with an expectation to produce more artwork:

> I like recognition for work and, I guess, it comes from my mainstream love that basically recognition means I have to draw more of said stuff. So, the more recognition I get, the more I feel that I need to draw and I need to get my work out there and my need for people to see it . . . and my need to get better.

PW also struggled with YES CBP's initial open group status that let any youth from YES attend irrespective of their interest level in comics creation. Even though YES had a drop-in policy, youth had to attend a group activity while present at the centre. Some youth participated in my program because it seemed to be the most interesting option among the other programs at a given time. Consequently, I had learners with a range of attention spans and inclinations to talk, not during my instruction, but during activities. I tolerated a degree of chatting during activities to maintain the interest of learners who had to attend the program and to break the intensity and awkwardness of silence during work periods that distracted some learners.

PW was accustomed to silence while drawing and found the talking during comics creation activities disruptive. He preferred a closed group because there would be less talking, enabling him to concentrate. He also perceived talking as unproductive and indicative of other learners

not taking comics creation seriously, which risked giving the impression that YES CBP was more of a social group than comics group. Over time, he thought the working space in the program improved because it became quieter. This reflected YES CBP developing a core group of learners who attended the program regularly. They changed the prevailing social dynamic of the group to one of quiet concentration on comics creation in preparation for the small exhibition during the community discussion. Learners coming into YES CBP near the program's end either attuned to this dynamic or left.

L's Dispositional Comic

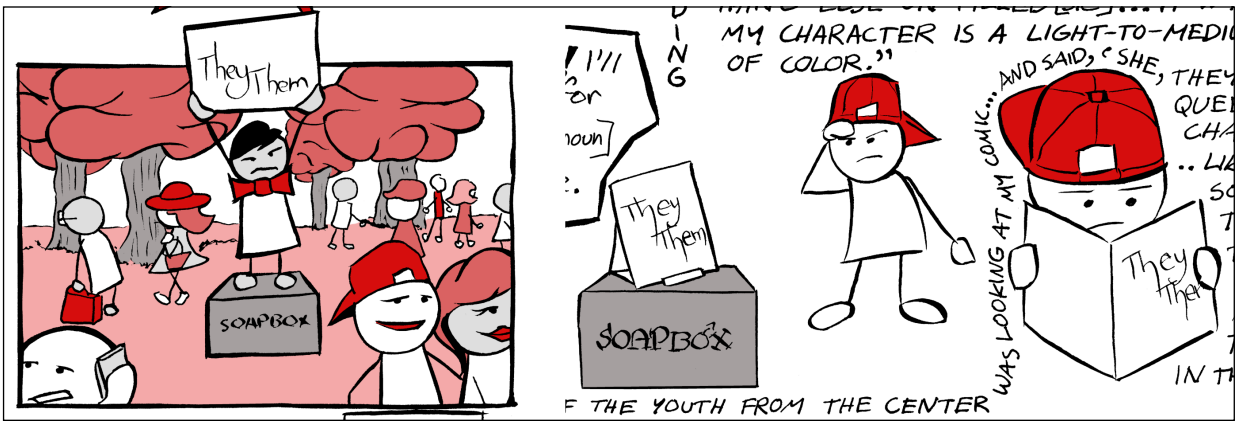

Figure 15. Detail of L's dispositional comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Similar to PW's dispositional comic, I drew L's to understand the multifaceted dimensions of their relationship with comics in YES CBP (see Figure 16). L's relationship with comics was equally complex irrespective of them being a novice learner in comics creation. Genderqueer identity and critique of binary gender logic pervaded L's comics creation, and I coded this in the colour red. L's comics creation involved an interaction between social justice motivations, a strong confidence in learning, and a negotiation between private experience and public activism. The compositional structure of the comic brings these complex factors into relation. For example, the comparison between the two panels from L's dispositional comic shows that L's activism on LGBT/Q issues took different forms depending on whether those issues were tied to personal experiences that could potentially become public (see Figure 15).

The cognitive and visual interrelating of comics codes that gave rise to the themes characterizing L's comics creation was a creative and emergent inquiry process guided by my artistic and academic practical senses. My third analytical loop involved simultaneously drawing codes on the comics page and consulting and reconsulting my database to link them and refine

their cartoon symbolism. The design of L's dispositional page, as with all the comics pages, was progressive rather than predetermined, albeit panel sequences and other codes were planned in storyboards. I did not draw the page in a particular order. Rather, I drew across and around the page based on the spatial needs of the comics codes and all caps interview quotes, and how these elements needed to relate to each other. Themes emerged largely in the drawing and inking phases. My goal with the progressive page designs was to ensure that the relating of codes continued throughout penciling and inking rather than having these steps turn into drawing a concluded data representation in comics form. The drawing and inking processes were iterative because I drew and inked different segments of the page simultaneously. I used a grid layout to give some interpretative and visual organization to the data during this process.

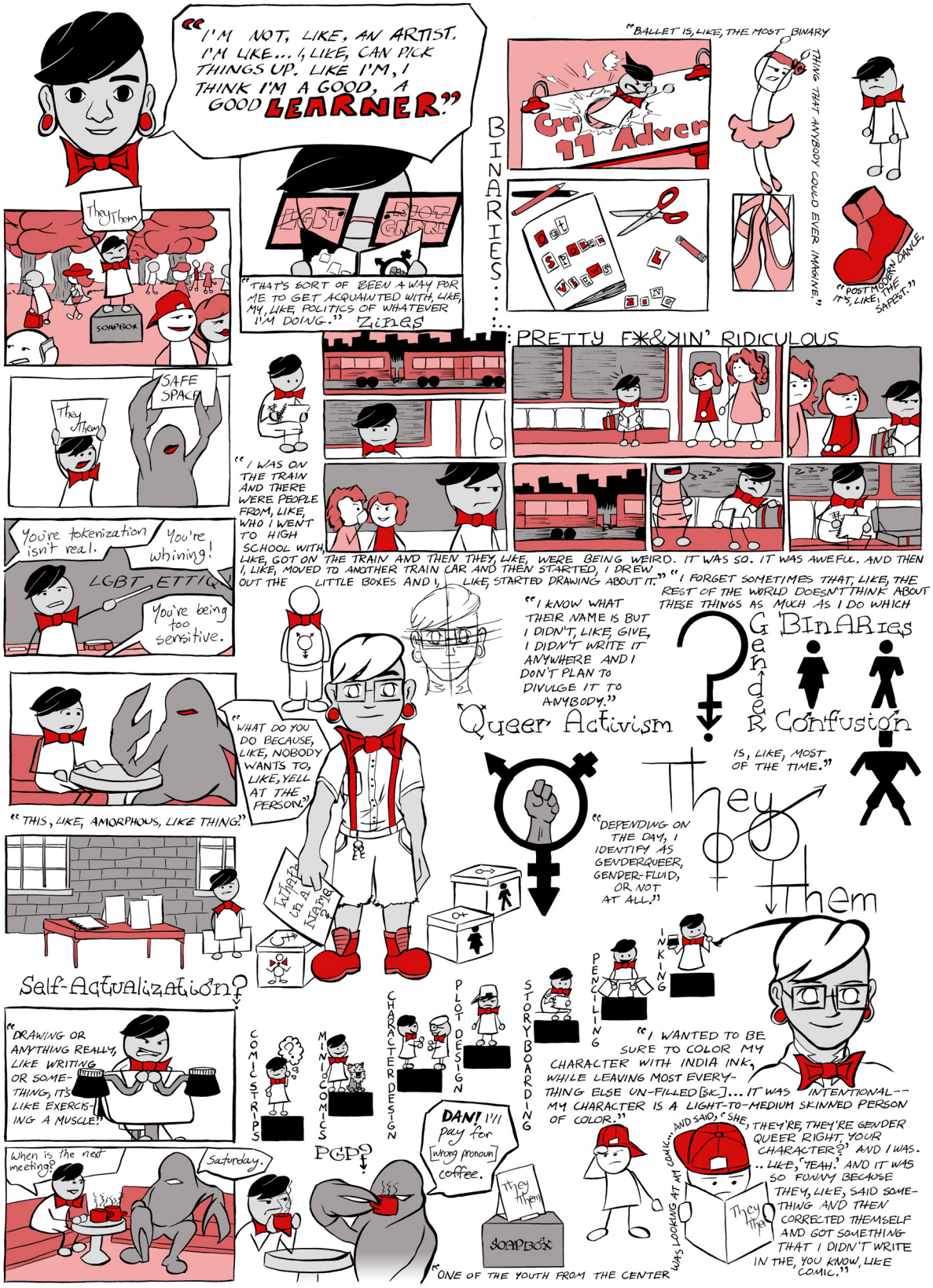

Figure 16. L's dispositional comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

L's Pedagogical Comic

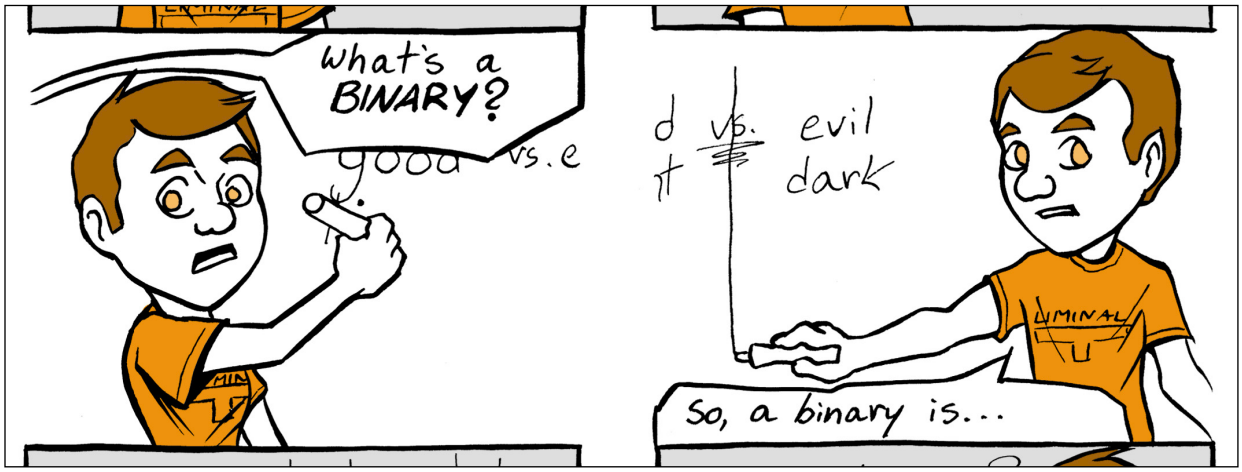

Figure 17. Detail of L's pedagogical comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Through the pedagogical comics of L and PW, I focused on understanding which of my pedagogical actions shaped individual creative safe space for both learners. A metaphorical space that affirmed genderqueer identity was important to creating a sense of secure inclusion for L. The creative space of the workshops was secure enough for L to take the risk of depicting a personal experience in their comics art; however, articulating the personal dimensions of their three-page comic to peers in the community discussion felt risky, despite the activity being at The Center and following CRABS Assp.

This detail from L's pedagogical comic is a segment of a six panel sequence that depicts a significant pedagogical action of mine that created safe space in YES CBP for L: discussing binary logic (see Figure 17). Drawing the panel in a more detailed cartoon style and planning a sequence of how the action transpired provided me lots of time to think about this important aspect of L's YES CBP experience. I deepened my understanding of the action in constant consultation with interview data. For research communication purposes, panel sequences aptly depict action and, thus, emphasize safe space as a process. My facial expression to the learner

who asked the question “What’s a binary?” shows how I was surprised that, in the context of an LGBT youth centre, many learners in the workshop did not know what a binary was.

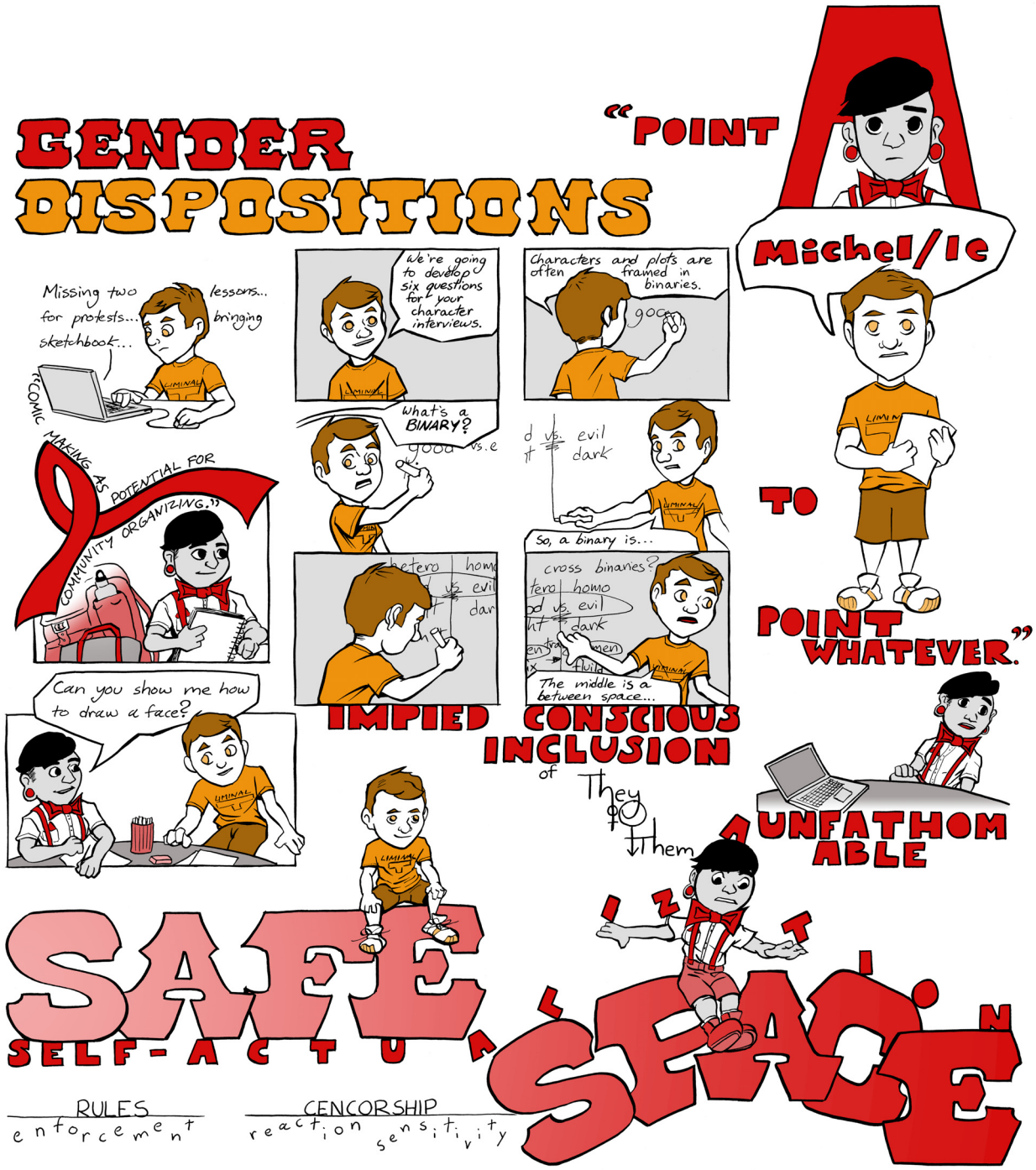

Figure 18. L's pedagogical comic. Comics art by Michel Levesque.

Descriptive Analysis: L's Comics Creation

L was a politically engaged nineteen-year-old youth involved in queer community organizing and YES's youth organizing internship program during YES CBP. L described their gender identity as: "Depending on the day, I identify as genderqueer, gender-fluid, or not at all." In my time at YES, L most frequently used the identity label genderqueer and preferred to be addressed using the singular "they" and "them" pronouns. L did not identify with a particular sexual orientation but stated queer was the most approximate label. They also expressed ambiguity towards their ethnicity and race in that they felt it appropriate to identify as a person of colour but acknowledged that they had acquired white privilege.

L had a casual knowledge of comics and no experience with comics creation prior to YES CBP. They had engaged, however, with the arts through their dance major at a liberal arts college. L was also familiar with zines, a media closely related to comics, through their community organizing activities and the OutSpoken Views zine-making workshops. L's visual art experience in school was limited to a few classes in junior and senior high school, which included an advertising class that they especially disliked. Despite little sustained experience with the visual arts, L joined YES CBP to reengage with art-making on a regular basis, citing that the program offered the time and structure to support this. L was an open learner, stating that, "I'm not like an artist. I'm like . . . I, like, can pick things up. Like, I'm, I think I'm good, a good learner." This statement highlighted their attitude towards comics creation in YES CBP as an opportunity for fun art-making and their confidence towards learning a new competence irrespective of artistic talent. Before YES CBP, L had recently participated in two art programs at YES – OutSpoken Views and a guest art program from the Whitney Museum of American Art

– that were formatted as weekly workshops with a self-contained activity. Their attitude towards these programs in an interview indicated that L had positive art-making experiences in both. Although not explicitly stated by L, these experiences may have reinforced their perception that YES CBP, with a similar format, would also be enjoyable.

YES CBP was a positive art education experience for L in that they achieved outcomes not reached in their school art education: completing a project and being satisfied with the outcome within a defined period of time; practicing art on their own time and initiative; and maintaining the attention span needed to complete their three-page comics project. L attributed these outcomes to the curriculum's progression which made comics creation accessible, enabling them to improve upon the new skills they were learning. By the end of the program, L felt that drawing and writing were "like exercising a muscle," which meant they thought they could improve at comics creation by practicing it.

Figure 19. Unfinished mini-comic sketch from L's sketchbook. Comics art by L.

Figure 20. Watercolour from L's sketchbook. Comics art by L.

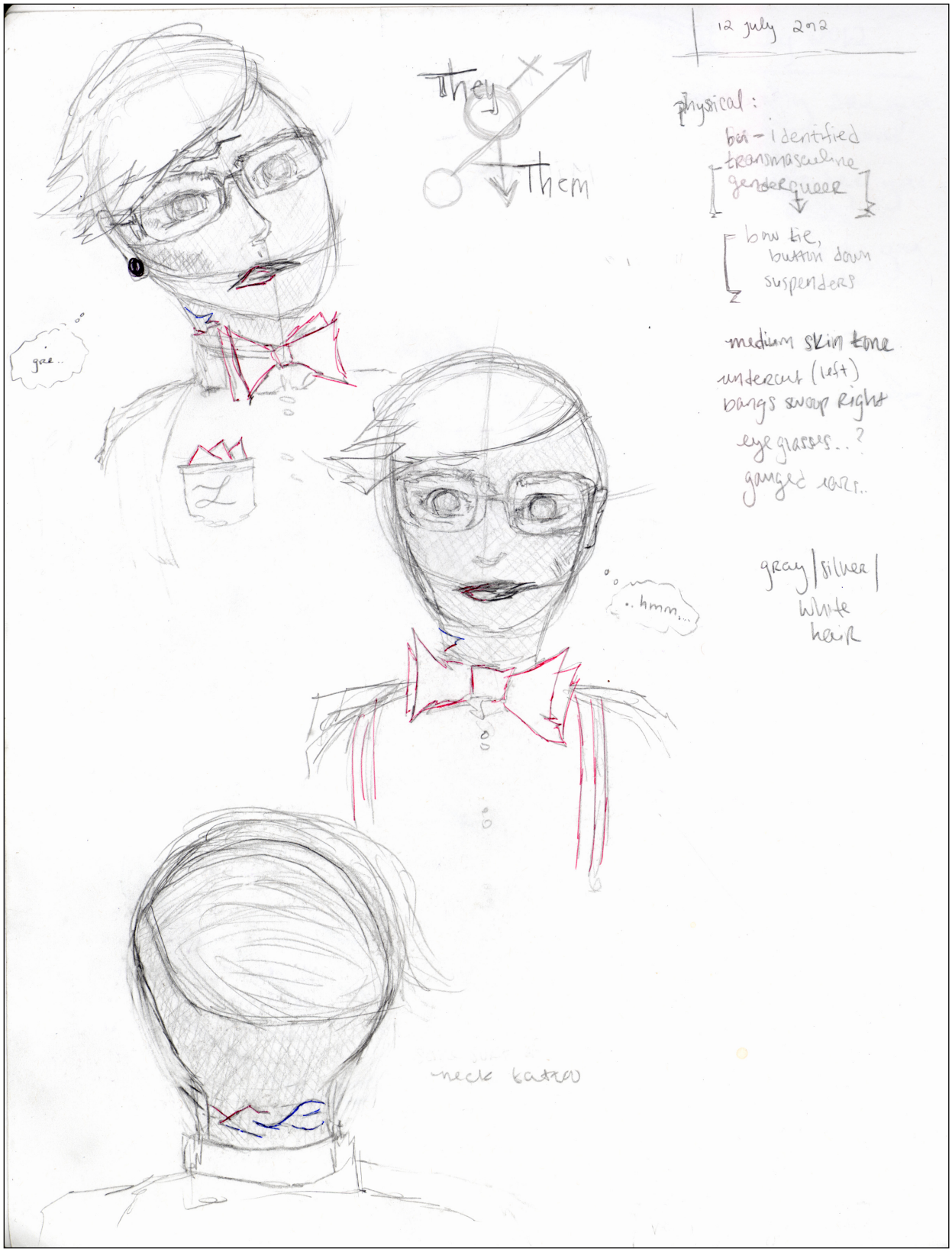

Figure 21. Character design from L's sketchbook. Comics art by L.

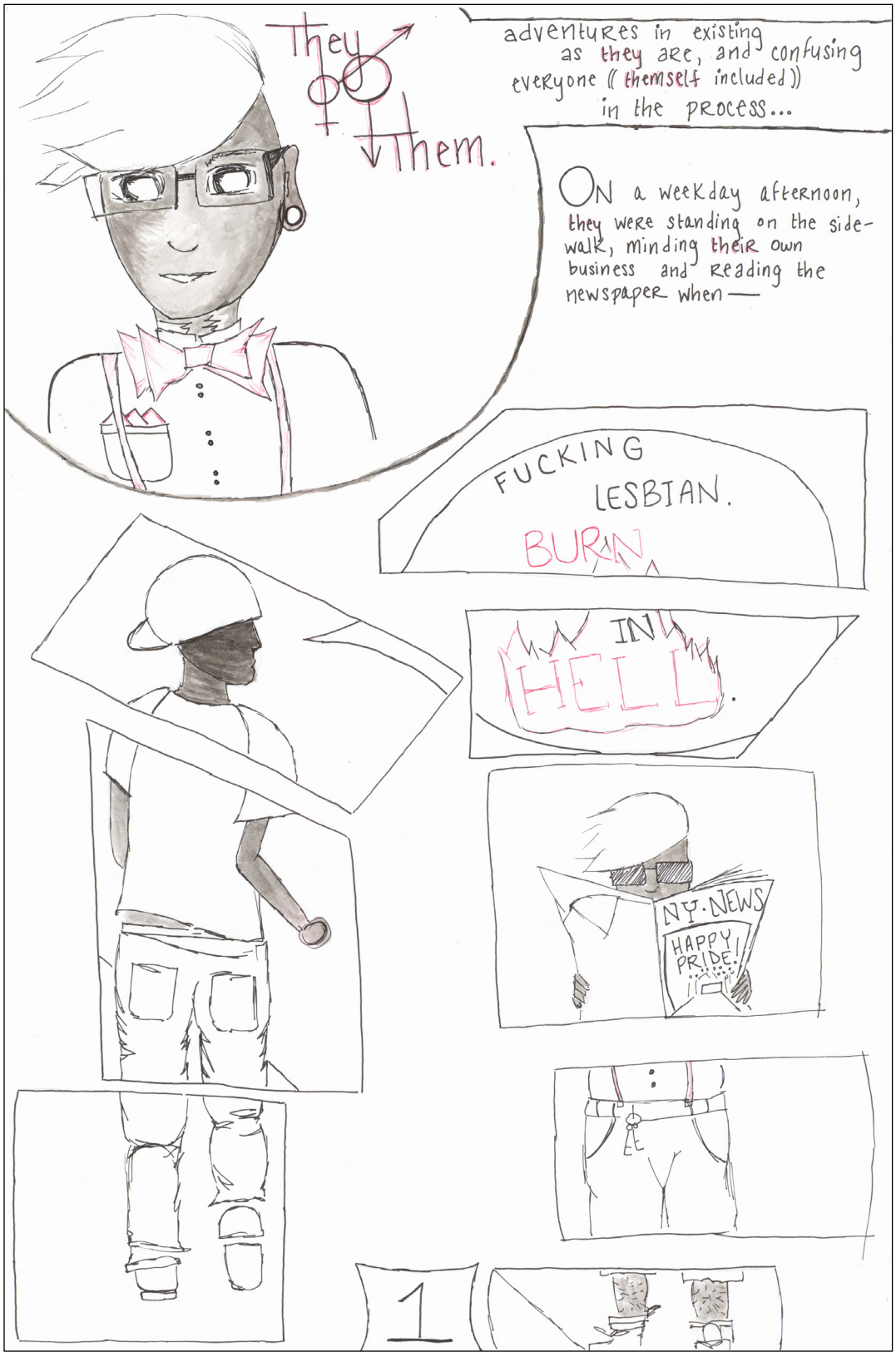

Figure 22. Page 1 of L's three-page comic. Comics art by L.

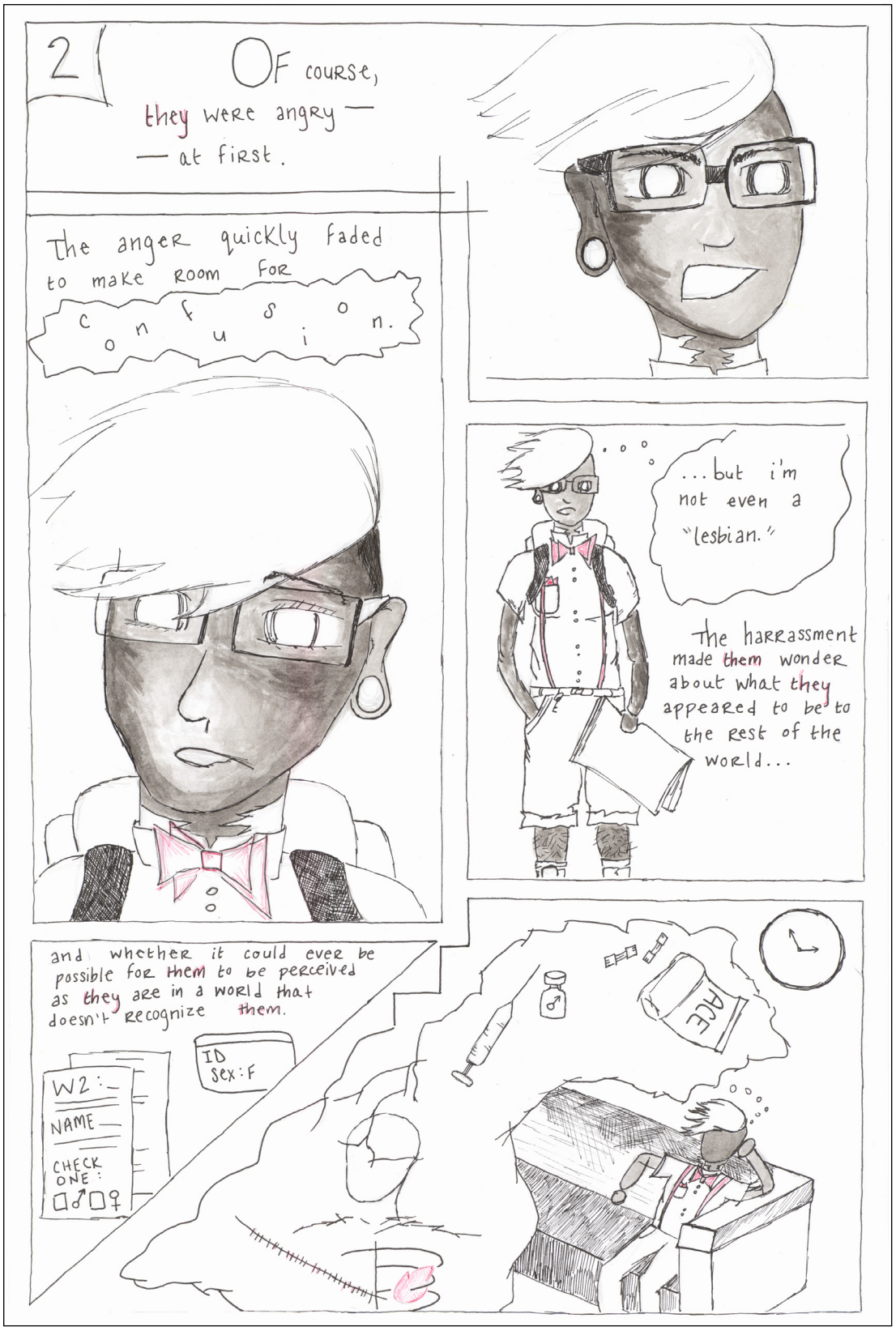

Figure 23. Page 2 of L's three-page comic. Comics art by L.

Figure 24. Page 3 of L's three-page comic. Comics art by L.

Throughout YES CBP, L drew extensively in their sketchbook, using it for introspective drawing and journalling, mini-comics storyboards, storyboards and character designs for their three-page comic and several stand alone activist-themed drawings (see Figure 20 & 21). As a beginner, L developed a dedicated work ethic related to comics creation during and outside the workshops. They even brought their sketchbook to a political mobilization and recorded the experience through several drawings. This implied L was contemplating how to situate comics creation within their activism. In fact, such thinking was explicitly written on one of their sketchbook pages: "comic making as potential for community organizing" (see Figure 19). L may have applied a suggestion that I made to them upon hearing that they would be participating in a mobilization. I encouraged L to link comics creation to their activism and did so throughout the program.

Genderqueerness and its relationship with the gender binary predominated L's comics creation, which was unsurprising given that, as they stated, "I forget sometimes that, like, the rest of the world doesn't think about these things as much as I do which is, like, most of the time." L tackled these topics through critiquing gender binaries and exploring their subjective experience of genderqueerness. Their focus on these topics culminated in a three-page comic entitled "They/Them" (see Figures 22–24). In this comic, L recounted a personal experience of harassment and gendered assumptions at the 2012 New York City Pride festival through a semi-autobiographical character. In L's words, the comic explored how "readings of gender identity and expression inform or help to create other assumptions about a person." In this case, genderqueer expression was misconstrued for a sexual orientation (lesbian). L considered their character a creation different from themselves despite the comic's plot being based on their

personal experience.

The comic's introductory page depicts a stranger yelling, "Fucking lesbian. Burn in HELL," to an unnamed, gender ambiguous person (the comic's protagonist). On the second page, the stranger's mislabeling of the protagonist as "lesbian" prompts anger and then confusion. The protagonist wonders if they could ever be read as genderqueer in a binary gendered society. The second page's last two panels depict the protagonist contemplating what L described as "cliché images" of "some common steps that many folks on the transmasculine gender spectrum take or consider taking." As they stated, the objects refer to medical aspects of transmale transition that relate to the protagonist's internal conflict of "dysphoria." L did not clarify what type of dysphoria their character experienced but I surmise it may be an internal conflict of gender identification.

L noted that this internal conflict intentionally contrasted with the external conflict on the first page. They stated that the external conflict dealt with "social dysphoria" and "social transition." L did not explicitly define these terms but, from my personal experience as a transperson, social dysphoria can generally mean feelings of unease caused by others' gendered misassumptions about one's own body in social interactions. Social transition generally refers to the social aspects of transition (e.g., legal name change) rather than the physical ones of medical transition. On the final page, the protagonist breaks from the narrative to directly question readers about their relationship to the gender binary. The protagonist makes clear their own relationship to the construct by stating: "Binaries . . . pretty f*&kin' ridiculous." Of note on the final page is L's juxtaposition of a superhero and a human silhouette in a binary, reflecting how superhero comics are embedded within the same oppositional logic typically applied to gender.

Besides narrative content, L employed visual strategies to address genderqueer identity in their comics art. They used character design to create a gender ambiguous person with the skills they had learned in YES CBP's seventh lesson, which focused on developing characters' appearances, interiorities and relationships to narrative for the one-to-three-page comics project. These skills enabled L to shift from representing genderqueerness in the form of a generic body, as seen in their mini-comics and early sketchbook drawings, to an individual with specific attributes who appeared in their later sketchbook drawings and They/Them. This character's "look" includes, but is not limited to, an under cut, gauged earlobes, a bow tie and a button-down short sleeved shirt. The character's appearance complicates a gendered reading of L's protagonist, and this may have contributed to the stranger wrongly assuming the protagonist as lesbian.

L used other strategies. In highlighting the connection between gender and language, L blended gender symbols into their lettering, as seen on the third page of They/Them (see Figure 24). They also used the colour red symbolically; specific visual elements in their comic and sketchbook were coloured red to signify genderqueerness. For example, the neutral pronouns "they" and "them" in L's three-page comic appear in red. Drawing attention to the neutral pronouns through colour further obscures a gendered reading of the protagonist by underscoring that they have no name. L concealed the name intentionally: "I know what their name is but I didn't, like, give, I didn't write it anywhere and I don't plan to divulge it to anybody." Finally, L employed symbols – female and male bathroom markers, the raised fist combined with a transgender symbol; and the ringed gender symbols – in reference to or critique of the gender binary. To emphasize the importance of their character's representation as a person of colour, L

used washes of India ink to render their character's skin a light-to-medium tone.

L's critical genderqueer standpoint within their comics creation reflected circumstances and concerns within their life. A dominant thematic throughout my interviews with L was a sentiment of their identity being in constant confrontation with social spaces and individuals that could not conceptualize genderqueerness because they were structured by oppositional gender. In these spaces, L consistently experienced their preference for the singular they being ignored and had had many negative interactions with peers when trying to raise awareness about offensive or insensitive behaviour and language towards LGBT/Q people. L expressed a sense of fatigue in continuously confronting peers on these issues, stating that: "Having straight friends is, like, harder than, I think, straight people realize that it is. I don't think they always realize." As L explained further:

> You can't win. You can either, like, as a queer person in general, like, you're either talking about it too much or you're, like, thinking about it too much and then nobody wants to hear it anymore or, like you're complaining or whining.

L even questioned whether "calling out" people on their offensiveness or insensitivity was effective if they became defensive or could not understand why certain language or behaviour was inappropriate. L mentioned several instances throughout our interviews in which they reframed from calling out based on anticipating negative or unpredictable reactions from peers.

L stated that they rarely encountered space that was inclusive of genderqueer identity in their general life experience. This included their home life and primary and secondary school experiences. In these educational environments, L often felt that they were the only queer person and that, "Generally in school…teachers didn't really know what to do with me. Other students

didn't really know what to do with me." Given these circumstances, L stated that when they were high school age and younger, they would seek out anything LGBT/Q-related outside of school which included reading about the historical 1969 gay liberation Stonewall riots in New York City and looking for books with LGBT/Q characters.

At their liberal arts college, L could more readily locate safe space but at times still felt like the only queer individual because the college was not an exclusively queer space. For example, they explained how, in the same semester, they had a postmodern dance course in which safe space was explicitly established by the instructor and a ballet course in which the instructor framed this dance tradition as binary and rigid, which made L feel unsafe. During dance collaborations with other non-queer students, L reported feeling tokenized because of their queer status and being uncertain about how to voice ideas in anticipation of other students perceiving and reacting to them as being too sensitive. In dance improvisations, L lacked trust in other non-queer students because they did not share an understanding of queer transgression in society.

Given the lack of social awareness and recognition of genderqueerness in L's life context, they sought or created safe space rather than expecting society to provide it. For L, the need to create safe space for oneself implied "that you've had an experience with a social, like, in a social interaction that wasn't safe." One of the safest spaces for L was queer community organizing groups. Another one was YES. L began attending YES a year prior to my program in order to find LGBT/Q community. They discovered YES as a young high school student through online research but waited to attend until they turned 18 and no longer required parental consent. L valued YES because its staff, especially those of colour, were mentors who were well-adjusted

and successful LGBT/Q adults with whom they could interact on a regular basis. L thought it was important that young queer people have older, thriving queer adults as mentors to help them self-actualize as queer, a sentiment that stemmed from L's history of not interacting with an out queer person regularly until their first year of college. Mentors where particularly important at this time of L's life because they were struggling to conceptualize how they, as a queer youth, could develop into a flourishing queer adult, stating that, "I can't fathom like how that happens."

L had a nuanced understanding of safe space and felt it was difficult to define. They described it as "this, like, amorphous, like, thing" because it varied based on context. As L put it: "What is being said, and what you're talking about, [and] who is going to be affected by what changes depending on, like, the situation." On this point, L was referring to the gap between "safe space rules and then, like, enforcing what that means" in discussion on how they had observed people at YES use pronouns (presumably gender neutral ones) incorrectly and be rarely corrected. This happened despite the CRABS Assp introductory protocol being repeated at every group activity and having the goal to instill respect for people's preferred gender pronoun (PGP). For L, the action of correcting a mistaken pronoun in these circumstances was ambiguous: "What do you do because, like, nobody wants to, like, yell at the person." L was expressing the struggle in safe space regarding the "line between, like, censorship of what people say and, like, being sensitive about, like, what you say and how people might react to what you're, like, saying." Despite this ambiguity at YES in L's experience, in the same interview they described CRABS Assp as "a pretty good summation of, like, the ideal safe space" and, in a later interview, they noted it was consistently enforced. L's contradictory statements point to their nuanced understanding of safe space as more akin to a contextually contingent social process than a static

condition.

When I asked L on two different occasions what had happened in YES CBP to create a safe space for learning art, they referred to a particular experience:

> When we were talking about something having to do with, like, plot and character and you used the word binary. And we were talking about like, like a literary terminology and then it became a discussion about what is a binary. What does that mean? What can that mean as LGBT people? What can we think about how that works? And that was really cool and awesome because I, I can't even, like, I don't even think that's ever been a discussion that I've been, like, part of ever in general. Which is kind of, like, a weird thing because it's just like, I don't know. 'Cause that's, like, such a huge part of my identity in general but its never talked about, ever.

For L, this critical moment in the program occurred when I taught character design in the seventh lesson of the program. Part of the lesson explained how characters and plot are often framed in binary constructions such as good/evil. To better illustrate my point, I connected these literary binaries to those in the LGBT/Q community such as heterosexual/homosexual. This extended into a discussion on the concept of a binary itself. To L, the discussion on binaries was a recognition and conscious inclusion of their identity and, thus, signalled that my comics pedagogy included genderqueerness. This pedagogical experience contrasted sharply with how their identity was not acknowledged in society at large.

Incorporating binaries and other LGBT/Q themes into my comics pedagogy, however, occurred only because I felt secure at YES to teach comics as a transperson. I was able to discuss my trans experience, identity and comics art in my pedagogy. In the program, I

presented myself as a female-to-male transsexual. This was expressed in a visual that combined the masculine and feminine versions of my French name – Michel (masculine) and Michelle (feminine) – into Michel/le. The addition of the slash in this name represented my history and continuing experience as an individual navigating spaces between binary constructions of female/male and woman/man. This visual opened opportunities in the program to discuss and problematize binaries through my trans experience. When L responded in drawings to the program on their questionnaire, they highlighted the Michel/le symbol. This indicted that they appreciated my non-binary self-presentation in YES CBP. L appreciated that I was open both in the workshops and the community discussion about my trans status and the difficulties of trans experience. To L, my willingness to openly disclose and position my trans experience was another aspect that made YES CBP a safe space. They thought instructors disclosing how their identity and social position affected their teaching was more important than having LGBT/Q-identified instructors teach the program. L also appreciated my openness because they were having difficulty imagining a queer future for themself, a point highlighted when they asked me in an interview: "How do you go from, like, point A to point whatever?"

Besides my actions as an instructor, other aspects of YES as an explicitly queer environment facilitated L's learning and making comics as a queer person. L thought YES provided an environment where youth could more easily focus and self-actualize as LGBT/Q individuals while learning comics because queer was the norm. They also thought that queer space was a safer space for art learning in that they would be less hesitant to address queer subject matter, stating that, "It might impede what I'm doing if I wasn't in an LGBT environment." YES CBP also felt secure to L because they knew the people participating in the

program beforehand and knew the space operated according to CRABS Assp. As a community site, the learning environment was also safe in that L was not under any pressure to be evaluated or graded.

Despite their public political activities and discussion of political issues in the workshops, L was uncomfortable speaking to the personal aspects of their comics during the community discussion, stating that "I never talk about myself in front of people." They did not specify a reason for this discomfort. It led L to skirt questions in the artists' panel on how their identity shaped their comics creation and to express nervousness and doubt about answering such questions in our interview prior to the community discussion. Their discomfort was also reflected in L wanting the community discussion closed to the public in order to maintain safe space. Furthermore, L was motivated to make their comic so that people could read an explanation of genderqueerness rather than L having to do the explaining. This may have been related to L's fatigue in having to constantly encounter ignorance or defensiveness with regards to their genderqueerness and respectful social interactions with LGBT/Q people. L, however, did receive some encouragement at the community discussion regarding their comics's potential function as an indirect explanatory device for genderqueerness. They recounted:

> One of the youth from The Center was looking at my comic . . . and they turned and they looked at me and said, "She, they're, they're genderqueer, right, your character?" And I was like, "Yeah." And it was so funny because they, like, said something and then corrected themself and they got something that I didn't write in the, you know, like comic. They inferred it and then I was like, "That was a correct thing to infer." So that was pretty cool.

After receiving positive feedback from peers during the community discussion, L was motivated to use their comics creation skills and comics for political activity. L had even discussed with peers in their activist community the prospect of collaborative art-making with zines. They stated that learning comics creation and having a well-received finished product gave them "more tools with which to, like, go forward and actually do that."

Three Case Themes

The textual descriptions enabled me to develop an in-depth understanding of my case's components and to formulate preliminary relational patterns in the data by comprehending: the interests that PW and L pursued through their YES CBP comics creation; the formative and current conditions shaping those interests; and their perspectives on what pedagogical actions established safe space in YES CBP to support those interests. To understand how pedagogical relations functioned between participants, I further analyzed through comics creation the insights I gained on the case's components in the descriptive analysis. Three case themes characterizing the pedagogical functioning of YES CBP emerged from my comics analysis: identity, recognition and safe space. Each theme constitutes my understanding of YES CBP comics practices before their interpretation through a Bourdieusian lens in the forthcoming Discussion chapter.

Identity. In relation to comics creation practice and teaching, participants actualized different degrees of queer and artistic identity. As demonstrated by their comics art and interview comments, L overwhelmingly pursued comics creation as a genderqueer individual and considered themself a capable and confident learner in forming a new relationship with comics creation. With a combination of comics experience, advanced skill and self-doubt, PW pursued comics creation as an aspiring comics artist intent on furthering his artistic aptitudes. In contrast to L, he did not foreground his queer identity in comics creation. In response to the identities of both learners, I taught comics creation by privileging different identity standpoints and, thereby, related to and guided their comics creation in different ways. I put forward my experience and knowledge as a transperson for L and my experience and knowledge as a comics artist and fan for PW.

Recognition. Both learners used comics creation as a vehicle to gain recognition for their identities. Through a critical lens, L approached their comics as a platform to render visible genderqueer identity and its often turbulent relationship with a binary gendered society where non-binary identity and thinking are often excluded. However, L limited the degree of recognition their private genderqueer self would receive publicly. This was seen in how L distanced themself from their comic's protagonist and in how they experienced anxiety at the prospect of discussing the personal elements informing their comics creation at the community discussion. PW created comics in YES CBP with the intention of gaining present and future recognition. By seeking and eliciting feedback, PW sought acknowledgement that he was drawing according to the conventions of mainstream comics. With aspirations to master these conventions, he sought to improve his artistic aptitudes to gain future recognition as a comics artist. Although, his aspirations were accompanied by self-doubt in his drawing skill. As a community art educator, I encouraged and tailored my instruction to these interests for recognition. I supported PW's interests through informal critiques and non-judgmental feedback that helped him develop as an aspiring comics artist. I supported L's actualization as genderqueer in YES CBP through genderqueer inclusion by way of a critical acknowledgement of binaries and a visible trans presence.

Safe Space. Teaching through different identity standpoints and with certain instructional approaches were pedagogical actions that established individualized creative safe space for PW and L to actualize their identities and recognition pursuits in comics creation. The collective sense of security already provided by CRABS Assp enhanced that of these individualized spaces. Referring to Hunter's (2008) definition of safe space as a process, the adaptation of my comics

pedagogy to PW's and L's interests created a condition of simultaneous safety and risk that engendered the tension leading to their comics creations. My pedagogical actions helped L learn new comics creation skills and form new links between comics creation and their activism in a non-binary and queer-centric space; however, L encountered risk by facing the prospect of, for unexpressed reasons, publicly discussing the personal dimensions of their comics creation in the community discussion. Similarly, PW improved his comics skills and confidence in a space inclusive of superhero comics; however, he encountered risk by facing insecurities associated with his drawing skills and drawing in a group context that heightened his self-consciousness. In both circumstances, safe space involved a process of negotiation for PW and L between risky, yet meaningful, outcomes and maintaining a sense of emotional comfort in comics creation.

Finally, I was able to teach as a visible transperson in YES CBP because the program was situated in a queer-centric community site which provided me a sense of security. I articulate the relationship between safe space and comics practices in YES CBP, including my comics pedagogy, further in the following chapter through Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theory of practice.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I use Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977, 1990) to interpret my comics pedagogy and the comics creation of two participant-learners in YES CBP. As mentioned previously, my employment of Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field is theoretical, not empirical. Also, my employment of habitus is restricted to salient dispositions related to comics practices in YES CBP, rather than considering each participant's total system of dispositions (habitus). With these three thinking tools, I examine YES CBP as a conjuncture of the CAE field, that is, as an instance of the CAE field where conditions of YES and dispositions of an art educator and two learners encountered each other to generate comics practices. This conjuncture reflects the structured social relations between the positions of community art educator and learners in the CAE field and the positions of adults and LGBT/Q youth in YES's safe space.

What characterized this conjuncture and its pedagogical relations was a confluence of field logics. Each participant strategized and accumulated capital in YES CBP for competition in different field games. The participant-learners accrued embodied cultural capital in the form of comics creation competences. As a community art educator, I accrued embodied cultural capital associated with developing the pedagogical competences of a second specialization – teaching LGBT/Q youth – to that of my primary specialization – teaching comics. The participant-learners and I exchanged this capital through comics pedagogy, which facilitated the time required to transact the acquisition of comics creation competences to learners and new pedagogical competences to me. Interpreted this way, pedagogical relationships and comics practices in YES CBP were interest-laden and operated within the social economy that comprises the CAE field. Because learners' capital holdings and interest in capital accumulation were

directed to play in fields other than the CAE one, the relations and exchanges between the positions of community art educator and learner were not in direct competition within the same field. YES CBP's pedagogical relations, then, can be construed as synergetic, or as conferring reciprocal advantage to the learners and the art educator for struggles in different fields.

The structuring effect of the CAE field and YES's CRABS Assp policy enabled the synergetic nature of YES CBP's pedagogical relationships. In the CAE field, power dynamics between community art educator and learner positions are mitigated by a basic tenet of the field's doxa: meeting the needs and interests of learners. This tenet opens the potential, in certain conditions and with certain dispositions, for a more egalitarian interaction between learners when it persuades community art educators to privilege accommodating learners' interests and needs in curriculum and pedagogy over that of their own. [28] Because YES CBP was a CAE program, I actively taught according to this tenet of the field in the program. The power dynamics between community art educator and learners in YES CBP were further mitigated because their relations were structured by the characteristic relation between adult staff and LGBT/Q youth at YES. As an LGBT youth centre with youth development and empowerment as its central mandates, adult staff and youth relations at YES were structured by a set of principles that shaped social interactions between these positions as caring, egalitarian and participatory. These principles constituted the CRABS Assp policy. In being situated within the social space of YES, community art educator and learner interactions had to adopt the CRABS Assp's social structure.

As social practices generated within this structured social space, YES CBP comics creation and pedagogy arose for each participant based on conditions that activated their

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[28] The presumption, through a Bourdieusian lens, is that accommodation confers a socially unrecognized strategic benefit in the CAE game.

dispositions. Such interactions generated a strategic play of capital intended to benefit participants' positions in different fields. Before interpreting PW's and L's comics creations through a Bourdieusian lens, I consider how the YES CBP conjuncture generated a practice of comics pedagogy focused on adaptation to learner interests, especially in relation to curriculum design and instructional delivery. As an agent in the position of community art educator, my habitus employed adaptive comics pedagogy for strategic play in the CAE field.

In conceptualizing YES CBP, designing its curriculum and teaching its workshops, my habitus triggered my "bounding" disposition, a tendency to approach comics within boundaries that characterize it as a distinct artistic and communicative medium. Throughout my five years of CAE practice, I have rarely taught subjects other than comics, which has resulted in a comics-specific CAE practice. This disposition is largely pre-reflexive, and it caused me to exclude the consideration of developing an arts program for YES based on other art subjects or blending comics with other art media. It is no surprise, then, that I selected the comics-specific curricular framework of The Comic Book Project; it reinforced and helped to transpose my bounding disposition from my art practice, a practice that has endured as centred on comics.

My bounding disposition framed comics in YES CBP through what Beaty (2012) terms "form specificity" (p. 20), a tenet of mid-twentieth century modernist aesthetic theory that conceptualized artistic media through quintessential forms, materials and methods. In his review of the competing definitions of comics circulating in the social space of comics scholarship, Beaty notes that formalist definitions advance form specificity by proposing essential properties of comics that position the medium as a unique art form. For example, Beaty refers to Scott McCloud's (1993) oft cited formal definition of comics that claims juxtaposition as an essential

property of the medium. In taking a sociological perspective to the comics field, Beaty argues that defining properties of the medium are only historically and socially constituted conventions of that field (pp. 43–44). When designing the YES CBP curriculum, my bounding disposition led me to conceptualize comics and comics creation through a formalist definition. I framed comics according to distinct formal properties as reflected in how my curriculum divided lessons into activities themed on essential elements of the medium, such as panel transitions and inking. I also framed comics creation as a distinct creative process as reflected in how many of my lessons integrated progressively into the standard comics creation process seen in YES CBP's primary curriculum stream of the Wednesday workshops.

Although I pre-reflexively made the YES CBP curriculum comics-specific, I intended the transformation of its structure through learner-driven content. Learners understood that the defining elements of the medium where always flexible conventions. They could adapt the conventions, including the "standard" comics creation process, to their own content, aesthetic preferences and methods. The curriculum's learner-driven component made comics creation a postmodern phenomenon in YES CBP, one that followed the postmodern approach to graphic narrative advocated by Wilson and Wilson: as there are multiple pathways to understand and approach narrative drawing, there are also for comics creation. I further supported learners' adaptations of the curriculum by adjusting my instructional delivery to their expressed interests. A learner-driven component to the curriculum and adaptive instructional delivery allowed me to respond to the relatively unpredictable flow and composition of learners and their diverse interests entering the program on a drop-in basis.

Although I consciously designed a general adaptive instructional approach, its execution

as a process of adaption functioned through pedagogical sense. Behind this practical sense was my "blending" disposition: a tendency to unbound the conceptual distinctions between things. My blending disposition inclined me to enact comics pedagogy as adaptive to and pragmatic within the YES context by splintering and pluralizing the singular definition of comics in the curriculum to support individual learners. In analytic retrospect, the blending disposition manifested as instructional delivery that combined different, even philosophically contradictory, art education paradigms. At the time, I was using whatever instructional strategy came to mind to accommodate the interests of a considerable range of learners dropping into the program weekly or even mid-workshop. This resulted in a paradigm-flexible approach towards comics instruction that drew on and switched between principles of modern, postmodern and visual culture art education to anticipate the instructional strategy that would best tailor comics creation to the expressed interests of specific learners. Teaching the medium through paradigm-flexible instructional delivery manifested comics in ways that reduced its formal distinctiveness by mixing and matching properties of different comics genres and traditions or even other media.

For example, PW was primarily concerned with form specificity, as evidenced by his singular interest on the medium and exclusive focus on improving his technical skills and understanding of the comics form as related to superhero comics. In response to this, I largely maintained a formalist definition of comics in my pedagogy with him. I emphasized the conventional techniques, routines and formal properties of the superhero genre and provided feedback using this genre's conventions as informal evaluative criteria. My pedagogy with PW, however, was also guided by postmodern principles of appropriation and hybridity (Gude, 2004) in that I encouraged his artistic strategies of borrowing from other artists and learners and his

cultural blending of manga and superhero visual styles. My teaching with PW occurred through on-the-spot and sporadic critiques that demanded a quick and accurate aesthetic judgement while delivering feedback in ways that were sensitive to PW's self-consciousness towards his drawing skills and presence among other learners.

L's comics creation was postmodern in orientation because it dealt exclusively with the deconstruction of binary oppositions and universalized concepts of self (Hutcheon, 2006), specifically as they related to the gender binary and selves structured on this construct. Given this, my pedagogical approach with L drew on principles of visual culture art education that frames image-making as a critical engagement with the visuality of power, ideology and representation (Duncum, 2010). Through this, I encouraged L "to challenge existing hierarchies [by] produc[ing] images that are alternative to or even oppositional of widely held ideologies" (p. 7). For L, these challenges focused on issues of gendered power and assumptions through the narrative and visual representation of comics. L's postmodern orientation also entailed my suggesting of exemplars from alternative comics, graphic novels and zines. These comics traditions matched L's interests because they commonly have political content and expansive notions of comics not restricted to the mainstream. My ability to conceptualize the comics medium as broader than the mainstream developed from my exposure to alternative comics production at Drawn & Quarterly and with Premières Lignes, and my postmodern and conceptual art training in my BFA.

L responded well to the flexible definition of comics in the curriculum; they felt that I had framed comics according to a postmodern non-binary ethos. Their postmodern orientation necessitated that I stress they always had the option to digress from the curriculum's formalist

structure. In my teaching with L, my habitus made tacit readings of when and how to frame aspects of comics or myself in non-binary logic and when and how to frame comics in a more bounded or formalist view to facilitate the graphic skills for their comics creation. As a novice learner, L mainly stayed with and benefited from the curriculum's form-focused comics creation process. I evoked the formalist curriculum with L when they requested instruction in graphic development to facilitate their postmodern comics creation. For example, I modified methods of figure drawing from mainstream comics when L asked me to show them how to draw a face and aspects of the body. They were, in Wilson and Wilson's (1977) terms, requesting me to establish a schemata to draw certain configurations.

As a community site, YES provided conditions to activate the pedagogical sense generating my adaptation in instructional delivery. My practical sense activated because YES was a community site similar to those I had taught in during the formative years of my CAE practice. As in past community sites, YES was distant from institutionalized education and so it placed no expectation on me to apply academic curriculum standards. In fact, YES decided that the curriculum standards of YES CBP's literacy component that I intended to apply were to be dropped before the beginning of the program. The community site status of YES allowed me to teach art as I usually did: individualizing comics creation in the moment to support learners' interests by splintering the form-focused component of my curriculum. At YES, I had latitude in my teaching as long as I followed the site's safe space policy and fit, to lesser or greater degrees, comics creation into its mission. YES's mission did not restrict the comics-specificity of the program, so my bounding disposition towards comics could reproduce itself freely. The CRABS Assp social structure encouraged the type of participatory engagement in my instructional

delivery and the learner-driven components of my curriculum, allowing my habitus to easily reproduce my blending disposition in comics pedagogy.

A condition of YES as a CAE site that was common in the formative conditions of my CAE practice was drop-in attendance. From experience, I designed my curriculum and general instructional delivery to respond to the non-mandatory and varying attendance of YES CBP. In splitting YES CBP lessons into defining formal features of comics, I did not consciously intend to enforce a formalist framing of comics; rather, I intended to create a modular structure that could respond to changing attendance patterns. With this structure, I could adjust the curriculum to the attendance flow of the program and individual workshops. For example, due to the lure of the outside world on one particularly sunny Saturday afternoon, I had to improvise a new lesson because the turnout of two learners was too low for the planned activities. I shifted the lesson to a later date in the program.

In a broader example, I modified the progression of the curriculum to respond to higher attendance on Wednesdays compared to Saturdays. Originally, I designed the Wednesday and Saturday workshops as integrated lessons, as one lesson split into two sections. The Wednesday and Saturday workshops, however, became less integrated when the Wednesday workshops showed more consistent and higher turnout over time. Consequently, I created a primary curriculum stream containing the core of YES CBP – the conventional comics creation process and its accompanying one-to-three-page comics project – that flowed through the Wednesday workshops. The Saturday workshops turned into stand-alone activities because of their lower and more inconsistent attendance rate.

Adaptation strategies such as modular curriculum design (to respond to attendance flow)

and instructional delivery (to respond to the interests of learners) were not only disinterested educational strategies. My habitus used these strategies for competition in the CAE field as a practitioner to attract and maintain learners in my program. In the serious social game that is CAE, one of the highest stakes is learner attendance, a stake made higher by the prevalence of non-mandatory attendance policies among community sites. If strong learner-turnout strategies are not in place, community art educators do not have art programs, a circumstance that would jeopardize their teaching practice.

From experience, I knew that if learners lacked a sense of choice, participation and ownership in conceptualizing comics creation, I risked them not returning. Given this, I designed learner-driven curricular components to support self-inquiry – graphic symbolic world making in Wilson and Wilson's terms – through comics creation. By investing themselves in the curriculum's adaptation, learners personalize comics creation, making it more meaningful and valuable to them. With this strategy, the objective is to have learners continue that investment by returning to the CAE program. I designed the curriculum's modular structure mainly for the novice comics learners, such as L, who made up the majority of the program's attendees. In a general-interest setting such as YES, I would have a higher probability of attracting more learners to the program if its comics creation was accessible and less intimidating. I achieved this through thematic lessons that initially gave a clear definition of what comics creation is.

As a community art educator, these learner-turnout strategies reflect the *illusio* that I acquired from practicing in the CAE field. In this field, a primary interest is developing and maintaining a teaching niche based on particular competences, typically those that are educational and artistic. CAE practitioners build niches through specialization to render

themselves distinct from other practitioners. If their niche distinguishes them enough, CAE practitioners' competences become scarce and, thus, valuable as a service in the CAE market. A niche is symbolic of a practitioner's distinctive embodied cultural capital, but it is also a risky stake because too much specialization in certain competences can limit practitioners' access to contracts or jobs if their clientele bases change or if they tire of teaching the same specialization over a long period.

In working to position myself in the CAE field, I have invested in developing a niche teaching comics creation and related pedagogical competences honed to this subject. This specialization has been valued because of its novelty and, often, its association with youth and, by extension, youth art-making. During YES CBP, my pre-reflexive practical sense of competition with other CAE practitioners was in action, leading me to play the capital of my niche concentrated in my primary teaching specialization. Therefore, I pitched a comics-specific program to YES. Teaching comics creation at YES represented further investment in my niche by expanding its worth through the addition of another pedagogical specialization: teaching LGBT/Q youth. The time spent at YES would further develop my pedagogical dispositions by teaching at an American LGBT youth centre and with a diverse urban LGBT/Q population. The development of my second specialization depended on having learners in the program and, especially, diverse ones; the more diverse interests (comics ones or not) that drove me to tailor comics creation, the more my ability of adaptation would be developed for quick and accurate response to queer learner interests in other CAE contexts.

These interested aspects of my pedagogy in YES CBP were disguised by the leading disinterest in CAE practice. This disinterest is encapsulated in a presupposition of the field's

doxa: CAE's purpose is to meet the needs of learners and the mission of the community site. In complying with CAE doxa, I premised YES CBP as an opportunity for unique, creative skills development not typically taught in schools and comics creation as a mode of self-expression and self-exploration in a supportive environment. [29] YES also benefited from the exchange. The youth centre provided the context, support and accessibility to a learner population that I needed to develop my pedagogical competences with LGBT/Q youth. In return, it received a free arts program, compilation of its youth's creative talents and its youth learning new creative skills in fulfillment of its mandate of youth empowerment and development. As with other community sites, YES CBP happened and succeed because the staff at YES construed arts broadly and appreciated them as an integral component of queer youth development and empowerment, as demonstrated by their regular arts programming and dedicated art resource room. As is not always acknowledged in CAE practice, I gained social capital from this exchange. By working with a large and reputable American LGBT youth centre, the value of my professional relationship with YES would make my pedagogical experience more credible.

Another significant condition activating my comics pedagogy was YES's status as a queer-centric community site that provided the condition of safe space to actualize as trans in my comics pedagogy. This condition has not been present in many of the community sites of my general CAE practice. As a queer-centric site, YES enabled me to teach comics as a visible transperson by establishing an environment in which I could be trans without fear of reprisals. I rarely have such pedagogical agency in other community sites in which I teach comics because

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[29] I usually agree with Lackey, Chou and Hsu's (2010) objection to oppositional positioning between school art education and community art education, but it conferred the strategic advantage in these circumstances of the CAE game.

they are usually heteronormative, leading me to hide my trans identity. Teaching as a transperson encouraged me to develop comics creation activities with explicitly queer themes precisely because the social context established safe space for me to do this.

In the case of YES CBP, it was easy for me to actualize as trans because my habitus was pre-adapted to YES. From my life experience as trans and my conditioning in queer spaces, I had the necessary dispositions to function in YES's queer social space. My habitus was already conditioned to apply a blending disposition that generated queer social practices characterized by fluid perceptions, appreciations and actions towards gender, sexuality and sex. Moreover, I had acquired a "relational" disposition needed to function at YES from immersion in the relational dynamics of similar community spaces and other queer safe spaces through my CAE practice. From these spaces, I developed a propensity to perceive, appreciate and act in ways that are consciously inclusive and empathetic to the effects of LGBT/Q marginalization. The match between my habitus and YES created a doxic experience for me in YES CBP and the congruence created the sense of security I needed to actualize socially as a transperson.

Just as my pedagogical practice at YES was generated from the interaction between certain positions, dispositions and YES conditions, the comics creation practices of PW and L emerged from a similar dynamic. PW experienced and pursued comics creation in YES CBP through the position of an aspirant comics artist and a specific stylistic disposition – a propensity to perceive, appreciate and do comics according to the logic of the mainstream comics field. PW's disposition reflected his history in this field as a consumer and amateur producer and his present position as an aspirant comics artist seeking future social recognition in the field. Over time, he formed a stylistic disposition premised on the visual conventions of superhero comics,

or in Bourdieusian terms, the genre's presuppositions that comprise its visual doxa. This was evident in PW's self-doubts related to his perceived inadequate compliance with mainstream comics doxa and need for recognition that he was progressing towards compliance with that doxa en route to a higher field position.

PW had full *illusio* in the mainstream comics field, reflecting his investment in developing the embodied cultural capital valued in that field: a disposition to draw at a high technical level and in a way that conformed to the genre's realist representational conventions. Prior to YES CBP, PW had invested ample personal time and energy through self-initiated comics creation to cultivate a style that would match that of superhero comics, which was eventually internalized as a mostly unquestioned stylistic disposition. The result of this cultivation was visible in PW's advanced drawing capabilities appearing in his comics art. When viewed through a Bourdieusian lens, Wilson and Wilson's observation that the modelling of comics advances graphic development can be interpreted as a prolonged conditioning that develops dispositions complying with the doxa of a comics field or other social spaces.

In view of playing the comics game, PW's participation in YES CBP can be interpreted as an investment strategy to further develop his drawing style towards the realism of superhero comics. His strategy encompassed eliciting feedback from peers and me; scoping out others' artwork; finding himself structure, motivation and encouragement to draw; and intending to use his comics products in an art college portfolio application. His pedagogical exchange with me, then, was motivated by self-interest to render him more competitive for entrance into a higher position in the mainstream comics field. PW's habitus apprehended our pedagogical exchange as an opportunity to acquire knowledge on technical drawing, especially anatomy, that would add

further value to his embodied cultural capital. The increased value would be more likely to lead him to the position of socially recognized comics artist. His strategizing demonstrated the exercise of a practical sense for the mainstream comics game in response to a probable outcome of that game: advanced technical drawing ability and mastering of the superhero style corresponded with social recognition as a comics artist in the field. PW's strategy was not aimed at individuals in YES CBP but at other players in the mainstream comics field with which he sensed to be in competition.

Certain conditions in YES CBP activated PW's stylistic disposition. The program's curriculum was structured on a definition of comics and a comics creation process with stages, materials and exercises similar to those of mainstream comics production that he employed in his self-initiated comics creation and for which he had gained a sense through avid comic book reading. My adaptive comics pedagogy also supported the actualization of his stylistic disposition. Meeting his interests as a learner through instructional delivery required that my practical sense attune itself to the field logics and dispositions underlying his expressed interests. This involved transposing similar dispositions from other areas of my overall social practice to form a baseline understanding of interest rooted in the same field logic as PW. With this baseline, I could apply pedagogical strategies to meet his interests genuinely and quickly through practical sense in the context of CAE practice.

Meeting both PW's and L's interests involved putting forward particular identities that channelled similar dispositions to theirs so that I could establish a baseline of field understanding. The result was instructional delivery targeted to their interests. Teaching from different identity standpoints to channel dispositions is akin to how art educators take up multiple

and integrated roles in CAE depending on the site context such as artist/educator/activist (Campana, 2011) and artist-teacher (Sinner et al., 2012).

With PW, I situated myself in the identities of comics artist and fan in order to teach through the mainstream field logics and doxa that were guiding his comics creation. As a consequence, my pedagogy facilitated the reproduction of the mainstream comics field in his comics creation by creating a pedagogical situation where his habitus had few restrictions on activating the stylistic disposition of its choice. Had the choice not been present to perceive YES CBP through the logic of superhero comics, PW likely would have left the program. The instructional strategy of "dispositional switching," then, also doubled as a learner-turnout strategy to maintain the interest of PW in YES CBP.

I was able to create this reproductive pedagogical situation because I shared a stylistic disposition towards comics creation similar to that of PW. My comics creation has also been informed by manga's visual style and the realism of superhero comics. I also understood PW's struggle in the position of aspiring comics artist because I had struggled with conforming to superhero conventions in my late teens and early twenties. Under the field logics of mainstream comics, I understood the self-imposed, yet socially-created, pressure to conform to a certain style and the allure of the profits accrued through advanced technical and aesthetic skill. Compared to PW, my disposition has changed. Although we shared a stylistic disposition towards comics in relation to an emphasis on form, the extent to which manga and mainstream comics inform my comics creation has waned since I was his age. I was exposed to alternative comics production and training in a conceptual art program that has made me more conscious and critical of commercial manga and superhero rendering styles. I silenced these criticisms while I was

teaching PW because they would not meet or attract his interests in YES CBP.

PW had a largely doxic relationship in YES CBP due to the presence of conditions similar to the mainstream comics field and an adaptive pedagogy that facilitated the reproduction of his stylistic disposition attuned to that field. There was, in other words, a compatibility between the past generative conditions of PW's comics creation and the current conditions of his YES CBP comics creation. The compatibility allowed him to transpose the disposition underlying his long-standing self-initiated comics practice to a CAE program. This transposition was pre-reflexive as PW never considered drawing from other comics influences in the program; although, due to the program, he stated that he was open to reading alternative comics (as long as the story was good). However, this compatibility was not *perfectly* doxic. PW's position as an aspirant comics artist caused him to experience self-doubt regarding his drawing skills when comparing himself to the more advanced (socially recognized) work of established comics artists and when not complying with mainstream comics doxa by incorporating manga conventions into his style. His perceptions of self-doubt were compounded by the group working conditions of YES CBP where he compared himself to other learners' artistic competences. Comics creation in YES CBP brought him into confrontation with these insecurities.

The doxic and non-doxic aspects of PW's YES CBP experience reflected the tension of his individualized creative safe space in comics learning. The compatibility between his dispositions and YES CBP conditions created a sense of comfort. This sense of comfort was enhanced by pedagogical actions that supported his adaption of the comics curriculum to his main interest: his development as an aspiring comics artist. My adaptive pedagogy, then, served as a process of actualizing the comfortable dimension of safe space but one mediated through

practical sense. However, this pedagogical process also created tensions between safety and risk for both participant-learners that I sensed but that were not always explicitly expressed to me, even in interviews. The participation of PW and L in YES CBP generated risk when their comics creations brought up various emotional discomforts. These feelings reflected the non-doxic aspects of their creative safe spaces.

Unlike in past social spaces, PW did not encounter direct social barriers to actualizing his comics creation in YES CBP such as insensitive critiques or biased university programs. Rather, he encountered internal barriers to actualizing his comics creation practice based on having internalized the common sense of mainstream comics as a stylistic disposition. The pedagogical actions that created safe space for PW were important to assuage the insecurities he experienced as an aspirant comics artist and, thus, they contributed to the actualization of his comics creation in YES CBP. To accrue the embodied cultural capital and profits of improved drawing skill and confidence though, PW undertook the risk of experiencing the emotional tension intimately connected with his self-initiated comics creation. Put differently, PW's investment strategies in comics creation competences carried risk.

Compared to PW, L had no stylistic dispositions or *illusio* conditioned by the comics field because they had never participated in the comics game. Instead, L pursed comics creation through a critical disposition that reflected their position as a young activist in the queer community organizing field as well as their history as a person socially unrecognized by the gender binary social structure underpinning the relations of many fields. Their disposition was a propensity to perceive, appreciate and act through a deconstructive and resistant stance towards binary logic in general and gender binary logic in particular. This was evident in how L's comics

creation reflected critical art-making strategies discussed in the LGBT/Q-themed art education literature. Their depiction of a genderqueer self through a semi-autobiographical character and other symbolic strategies showed that L employed a critical distancing strategy to engage readers with static binary constructs and their structuring of gender over expressive or confessional strategies to render an inner true self (Addison, 2005, 2007, 2012). Given L's comics creation in YES CBP, the activation of their critical disposition in the program can be construed as being guided by their political interest in struggling against the doxa of binary gender underpinning many fields.

The transposition of L's critical disposition to a CAE program revealed that they were practicing comics creation through the *illusio* of the queer activist game. When viewed through a Bourdieusian lens, L's participation in YES CBP can be interpreted as an investment strategy to develop comics creation skills that could potentially be employed in their activist practice. Besides their political comics art, other indications of this included taking their sketchbook to a political mobilization and intending that their three-page comic serve as a distancing educational device on the topic of genderqueerness. Although L's relationship with comics creation was nascent, their participation in YES CBP indicated some interest in accumulating new competences of comics creation (new embodied cultural capital) to support their opposition towards a strict gender binary and to forge more space for the social recognition of genderqueer identity. These interests were motivated by high personal stakes because the gender binary structure had persistently prevented L from self-actualizing as genderqueer in society at large.

As with PW, an activating condition of L's comics creation was my adaptive pedagogy that facilitated a match between my disposition and L's by putting forth a particular identity.

This created a baseline of understanding between me and L's interests in countering non-binary logic. In our pedagogical relationship, I engaged with L primarily as a transperson. This was possible because I had developed a critical disposition towards the gender binary from my own history as a transsexual living under the gender structures that imposed limitations on my actualization as trans. This congruence of identities facilitated the reproduction of L's critical disposition by creating a pedagogical situation where their habitus had the liberty to apply the dispositions most apt to its reproduction.

L's critical disposition seemed to have derived from their immersion in unsafe conditions (those inhibiting self-actualization as genderqueer) associated with social spaces structured on binary gender. Unsafe conditions for L included educational spaces and social interactions with peers that excluded genderqueerness. These conditions also generated within them a general sense of discomfort in and confrontation with the social world. Unsafe conditions provoked a critical disposition towards the binary gender structure in L and motivated them to seek out conditions where they could actualize as genderqueer (safe conditions). Safe conditions not only supported L's self-actualization but also cultivated their critical disposition. L encountered these conditions in social spaces that were deemed safe space such as community organizing groups, YES and their postmodern dance class. In particular, OutSpoken Views and exposure to zines in their community organizing circles may have offered the right combination of zine-making and safe space to set a precedent for L to manifest their critical disposition and political interests in their YES CBP comics creation.

After prolonged immersion in a variety of safe and unsafe conditions, L developed a practical sense to instinctively detect the regularities of binary logic in social situations. Based

on this, their practical sense mediated the degree to which they could actualize a genderqueer self by estimating such things as the reprisals they would ensue for not conforming to the gender binary and what actions they could take to challenge the binary. L's "binary sense" was cultivated enough to detect binary logic in the safe conditions of queer spaces where such logic was consciously dampened but not necessarily eliminated. When L's sense was low or not active, they had doxic experiences that reflected a compatibility between their non-binary (or blending) disposition and social space.

In YES CBP, L's binary sense was not as active mainly due to queer being the social norm, CRABS Assp and certain pedagogical actions of mine. My presentation as trans in non-binary terms (Michel/le) and my explicit acknowledgement of binary logic generated individualized creative safe space for L to actualize as genderqueer through comics creation. The confluence of these conditions created a pedagogical situation of comfort allowing L to activate their critical disposition in comics creation. This pedagogical situation supported a relatively low risk investment in learning comics creation because of YES CBP's safe conditions. As with PW, however, even though basic conditions of safe space were satisfied in YES CBP, investing in comics creation was risky for L. They experienced emotional discomfort when they decided to take the risk of presenting the personal dimensions of their comic in the community discussion.

By interpreting the participants' comics practices through a Bourdieusian lens, I have understood how YES CBP functioned as a conjuncture. The program generated comics practices through an encounter between agents' dispositions and current conditions that resembled the formative conditions of their activated dispositions. The practices of YES CBP's art educator

and two of its learners, then, were constrained by the possibilities set by their dispositions and the current conditions of YES. The participants' comics practices were perceived, appreciated and acted through habitus attuned to different fields. Moreover, the YES CBP conjuncture enabled comics pedagogy to function as a mode of synergetic capital exchange through which participants traded embodied cultural capitals to enhance the competitiveness of their positions in different fields.

An interaction between conditions of the YES space – its community site status, queer-centric environment, drop-in attendance policy and changing learner interests – activated my bounding and blending dispositions to generate a formalist, yet flexible, comics curriculum and an adaptive comics pedagogy featuring paradigm-blending and dispositional-switching strategies flowing from my pedagogical sense. Both methods were mediated by interests associated with my strategic play in the CAE field from the position of community art educator.

Adaptive comics pedagogy was an important condition to actualize PW's and L's comics creations. It generated a sense of security against the insecurities experienced in certain field positions occupied by PW and L. By adapting to their interests through dispositional switching and paradigm flexibility, the field logics generating participant-learners' interests were reproduced. The presence of these logics contributed to their sense of security because it created doxic elements that attuned YES CBP to the learner-participants' dispositions. Safe space, then, was a pedagogical process that enabled the reproduction of various fields logics in the program. It is also a condition that facilitated the synergetic transfer of capital between art educator and learners in YES CBP because it made the transfer less risky through pedagogical exchanges of accommodation, support, attention and caring.

PW's comics creation was mediated by interests associated with recognition in the mainstream comics field from the position of aspiring comics artist. In combination with his position, PW's comics creation was generated from an interaction between his stylistic disposition towards mainstream comics, the curriculum's comics-specificity and my adaptive pedagogy. Teaching from the position and logic of a comics artist and fan was central to my adaptive pedagogy with PW. My pedagogical adaptations were a condition of PW's pedagogical situation that generated creative safe space for him to reproduce his stylistic disposition and, thus, to continue developing as an aspiring comics artist, although with some risk.

Finally, L made comics from their position as a young genderqueer activist in the queer activism game and as a socially unrecognized genderqueer person in many fields. In combination with their positions, L's comics creation was generated from an interaction between their critical disposition and my adaptive pedagogy, especially when I taught from the standpoint of a transperson and shared a critical disposition against non-binary logic. My pedagogical adaptation generated safe space for L to reproduce their critical disposition and, by extension, a genderqueer self in comics creation. As with PW, the actualization of L's comics creation had some risk.

Given the specificity of interacting positions, conditions and dispositions, comics creation and pedagogy at YES in the summer of 2012 would have been different for these participant-learners if they had been with another community art educator.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In reaching the end of this thesis, I return to the research questions posed in the Introduction. My questions were:

1. As an emerging community art educator and researcher, how can I understand the role my comics pedagogy played in actualizing the comics creation of two YES CBP learners and the safe space that made their comics creation possible?
2. How can I articulate this understanding through the comics form in a way that advances an integration of my research and artistic practices?

Through my first question, I sought to understand my comics pedagogy in YES CBP from the perspective of an emerging community art educator whose teaching practice has focused on comics creation. Through this question, I also sought to understand my comics pedagogy in YES CBP as an emerging researcher who is interested in the social constitution and dynamics of CAE practice. The second question addresses my methodological interests, specifically, how research and comics practices can be integrated for the purposes of qualitative research in art education.

In my first question, I addressed the central issue of this instrumental case study – adaptive comics pedagogy in CAE practice – through practical and theoretical standpoints. As an emerging community art educator, investigating YES CBP as an instrumental case study gave me a practical understanding of the instructional approaches I used in adapting comics pedagogy. Actualizing the comics creation of PW and L required teaching comics creation through a paradigm-flexible approach and different identity standpoints (comics artist and transperson) to support their learner-driven interests of identity exploration and social recognition of identity through comics creation. The actualization of these learner-driven interests depended on the

general safe space provided to LGBT/Q youth through the CRABS Assp policy that structured my program. Actualization also occurred because my pedagogical actions generated individualized creative safe space for comics learning. By foregrounding different identities for learners, I also used practical knowledge from my social experience in the comics field and as a transperson to teach comics.

Adapting comics pedagogy to the interests of two learners and the safe space social context of YES indicates that YES CBP had different constraints, rather than fewer constraints, in the educational space of community art education relative to other educational spaces. Distance from the academic curricula of educational institutions does not imply more freedom for the CAE practitioner to design curriculum and do pedagogy "as they please." Instead, CAE practitioners encounter different social structures and conditions at community sites and these will determine how they practice curriculum and pedagogy. Practitioners' own dispositions and the dispositions of learners will also structure their teaching practices. Moreover, practitioners' habitus will likely select community sites with conditions and learners to which they have been conditioned to teach. Continually selecting to teach in certain conditions will eventually give rise to a CAE practice adapted to those conditions. Mine has been for CAE sites open to comics and LGBT/Q youth.

In YES CBP, I was not obligated to implement the academic curriculum standards of educational institutions. However, my comics pedagogy was accountable to YES's institutional structure as an LGBT youth centre and its conditions. CRABS Assp defined YES CBP's general safe space and the youth centre's drop-in policy shaped the program's curriculum and instructional delivery. PW's and L's interests equally structured my instructional delivery; if I

did not strive to meet those interests through pedagogical actions that individualized creative space for PW and L, I risked their not returning to the program. When understood through the presupposition that CAE's purpose is to meet the interests of learners and the missions of community sites, I think the structured adaptations of comics pedagogy in YES CBP were positive. They promoted ethical principles of relational engagement between community art educators and LGBT/Q youth and encouraged self-inquiry through comics in a space of secure inclusion. These structured adaptations, then, helped two young adults, who are part of a population still facing many barriers in life, actualize themselves and their goals, either specifically as queer or as another self.

From the standpoint of a researcher, a Bourdieusian theoretical lens allowed me to understand comics pedagogy in YES CBP as a CAE social practice. As a socially constituted practice, pedagogical adaptation in YES CBP arose from a specific conjuncture – a situation where dispositions and field conditions meet to generate practice. Instructional practices such as paradigm flexibility and dispositional switching depended on this conjuncture as did the comics creation of learners. Pedagogical adaptation in YES CBP was also a practice of capital exchange within the CAE field, forming synergistic relationships to accrue capital for competition in other fields. In this view, adaptation – whether towards learner interests or safe space needs – was a strategy that facilitated the exchange of capital for me and learners.

In relation to my second question, I sought to employ the comics form in a way that advanced the analytical links between case study research and comics creation so that analysis was the most prominent area of integration between my research and artistic practices. This involved apprehending the particular components of my case through textual descriptions and the

systemic functioning of the case as a bounded system of pedagogical relationships through using comics creation as a form of thematic coding. Both analytical processes formed my in-depth understanding of YES CBP. I hope this understanding transfers to case readers through the interpretative flexibility and cartoon symbolism of the comics art that my analysis generated. With its emphasis on form, Cole and Knowles's methodological disposition of arts-informed research provided a crucial framework to accomplish the integration of my artistic and research practices in this thesis.

Significance

The significance of this thesis to art education manifests in its practical insights regarding teaching in queer community contexts and theoretical understandings of comics pedagogy. It has further significance to qualitative and arts-based methodology through its explicit focus on comics creation. CAE practitioners might glean insights into the curricular, pedagogical and safe space dimensions of teaching in LGBT youth centres and with queer young adults, two areas that are understudied in art education. Through its in-depth case study analysis and comics visualization, I also hope my thesis bridges gaps in art education's LGBT/Q literature on trans experience and queer young adults' perspectives in art learning.

This thesis contributes a Bourdieusian perspective on comics pedagogy in CAE practice, which currently does not exist in the art education literature on comics and comics creation. Bourdieu provides a different vantage point to conceptualize comics pedagogy in art education – as primarily constituted by the social circumstances of a community site, rather than a specific philosophical approach to art education. For CAE practice, my thesis provides an example for

how Bourdieu's thinking tools can help CAE practitioners render a more complex conceptualization of their teaching in community settings. The concepts of field, habitus and capital uncover the socially unrecognized competitive dimensions of CAE practice and the interest-laden dimension of pedagogical relationships that exist simultaneously to the socially recognized and disinterested purposes underscoring the subjective experiences of many CAE practitioners. In using a Bourdieusian lens, my intention is not to discount the disinterested purposes of CAE practice but to give CAE practitioners more access to the often tacit *illusio*, social structures, conditions, dispositions and meeting of dispositions that actualize and constrain their pedagogical practices and learners' art-making. These tools, in other words, might help practitioners better strategize for the CAE game.

My thesis also has methodological significance because comics creation as a form of data analysis remains underrepresented in the qualitative and arts-based methodological literatures. As my literature review of comics and comics creation in art education revealed, a cluster of art education scholars are exploring the comics form in the representation of scholarship. The full potential of this emerging trend remains to be explored in data representation, which can be better achieved by extending comics creation or comics-inspired creation beyond comics-formatted journal articles. Cole and Knowles would encourage us to think beyond this format to engage non-academic audiences.

From the standpoint of perceiving comics as a distinct artistic medium and area of practice, I hope that the methodological work begun in this thesis establishes a foundation for researchers to consider comics as its own methodological genre in arts-based research rather than a subset of the visual arts or narrative inquiry genres (Leavy, 2009). Given its narrative and

visual dimensions, comics can fit into these methodological genres but may also be construed as its own genre because of its development within a distinct historical and social field (Beaty, 2012). In reflecting a form-specific approach to comics creation, my methodology serves as one example of employing comics creation in qualitative research.

Furthermore, my approach holds that researchers with a range of artistic abilities can work with comics creation in their research, if it is supported by a deep engagement with comics practice, theory and scholarship that informs how they employ the medium. Although stick figure representation was appropriate for my analysis, drawing in this style also deliberately conveys that researchers should not foreclose an interest in using comics creation in their research due to a lack of artistic ability or training. My approach, however, stresses the importance of using a broad and deep understanding of comics practice to inform methods so that classic or superficial assumptions about comics and unthought presuppositions of the comics field do not uncritically emerge as a structuring assumption or component of a research project.

Future Directions

From this thesis, I have developed a better understanding of my comics pedagogy within community art education practice, both from a practitioner and a theoretical perspective. The investigation, however, opened up more questions and challenges than I could possibly address in one thesis, especially around blending research and comics practices and the philosophical assumptions of different theoretical and methodological frameworks. In future research, I intend to explore the relationship between Bourdieu's objectivist/subjectivist standpoint and qualitative research further in relation to the social dimensions of the CAE field and comics practices. The

methodological possibilities of comics creation will continue to interest me, particularly as related to research mobilization for society at large. Finally, I intend to broaden my study of the relationship between LGBT/Q youth and comics creation from the relatively short-term impact of skills development and expression to the long-term effects of comics creation on queer youth development and resilience.

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