USING THE COMIC BOOK TO TEACH HUMAN

VALUES AS THE BEDROCK FOR GOOD

GOVERNANCE


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2007


Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

In the globalization context, promoting good governance principles worldwide

appears to be a major challenge for the human community. Among the most important

premises of the good governance concept are the protection of human rights, the

promotion of equity and active participation of citizens. Thomas Weiss (2000) stressed

the important role the United Nations has to play in promoting good governance practices

to all nations. The recent events of popular revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt against

dictatorial regimes symbolize the aspiration of all people for good governance practices.

Good governance is a concept that encapsulates a set of principles aimed at promoting

sustainable methodologies and practices. As praxis, these methodologies are supposed to

help strengthening ethical ideals and reaching specific goals within a given context

(Agere, 2000). *The Institute of Governance of Ottawa* argued that "Governance

comprises (a) the institutions, processes and conventions in a society which determine

how power is exercised, (b) how important decisions affecting society are made and (c)

how various interests are accorded a place in such decisions"(Weiss 2000, p.797).  Agere

(2000) argued that good governance emerges in times where concepts of (a) democracy,

(b) civil society, (c) popular participation, (d) human rights, (e) social development and

(f) sustainable development, are taking an increasing importance in a globalized world (Agere, 2000).

In today's global world, values such as "mutual understanding among human beings" (Morin, 1999, p.3), diversity and equity are being central to numerous academic works. The global community is more than ever responsible for promoting a *good governance* culture throughout the world while respecting the richness and diversity of cultures. Morin (1999) argued: "the future of human genre is now situated on a planetary scale" (Morin, 1999, p. 2). This is particularly relevant with regard to a myriad of issues; the most notable example is perhaps climate change.

Although scholars and experts presented diverse definitions regarding the concept of *good governance*, most of them agree on its significant value in establishing and fostering local and global sustainable development. According to the United Nations, *good governance* encompasses eight major characteristics or principles. (a) Participation, (b) Rule of law, (c) Transparency, (d) Effectiveness and efficiency, (e) Responsiveness, (f) Accountability, (g) Consensus-oriented, (h) Equity and inclusiveness (United Nations, 2009).

Instilling these principles in our society is believed to be one way to achieve good governance. This thesis qualitatively evaluated the efficacy of the comic book as a medium in promoting universal values that can be regarded as bedrock for good governance. Within a critical pedagogy framework, a comic book has been especially created by the researcher to serve as a medium for the study. The drawings, texts and dialogues of the manuscript were conceived parallel to the literature review around what is referred to in this present work as "human values." These values encompass broad

meanings such as: "mutual understanding among human beings" (Morin, 1999, p 3), equity, diversity, and "earth citizenship" (Morin, 1999, p 3). One illustrating example of the later is the presence of different ethnicities and nationalities of characters throughout the comic book, thus delivering through framed sequences a diversity message. This research explored the communicational value emerging from the use of words in dialogues and texts on the one hand and pictures in shapes and symbols on the other hand. This particular facet of interplay between words and pictures characterizing the comic book (McCloud, 1993) as a medium makes its efficacy in communicating human values worth exploring.

This study examined the educational potential of the comic book by using focus groups to seek emergent themes related to the universal values discussed earlier. This is expected to contribute in advancing knowledge in this area given that: (a) few studies focusing on the usefulness of the comic book as a pedagogical reading used focus groups, and (b) few studies had recourse to comics created purposefully to serve as a research tool. To answer the research questions, three focus groups formed of middle school students (ages 10-13) were conducted. The age range of participants was chosen in accordance with the reading level of the comic book created for this study. Students were invited to read the comic book in the presence of the researcher as facilitator. A discussion was then engaged with them around the messages they understood from the comic book and their impressions about the medium as well.

Research justifications

There are several justifications for this research. First, the global world we live in today leads us to promote more diversity through various media including comic books. A second justification for this study will be the contribution such research can offer regarding the understanding of the comic book as a medium synergizing texts and pictures. Moreover, while many studies conducted about the comic book used both quantitative and qualitative methods few researchers have examined the comic book through focus groups.  Focus groups are supposed to provide a more intimate approach in looking at the relationship between the medium and the receiver. Using focus groups is a choice made on the premise that children are experts about their lives. Hearing their voices within focus groups is supposed to provide valuable insights and elicit meaningful data about the comic book as an educational medium. Furthermore, Yuen (2004) reported that although focus groups are an established qualitative method in social sciences (Goebert, 2002); scholars such as Gibbs, Morgan, Maxwell and Britten (2002) argued that children focus groups still a method in a nascent phase (Yuen, 22004).   Another justification for this study is the dearth of research focusing on the comic book as a medium in the Mass Communications field compared to studies addressing other media such as Radio, Television, Print Press, and New Media. If a plethora of studies on the comic books in other fields such as Semiotics, Education or Art, the comic book seems to attract less academic attention in the Mass Communications field. Moreover, there is virtually no research in the communication field that used a comic book created purposefully for the research and tailored around the research concerns to explore the medium.  Finally, this study will help expand knowledge about the comic book as a

communication tool of universal values to a young audience and as a medium on a

broader scope.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section will discuss three concepts that are in the center of this study. First, *good governance* aimed as praxis. Second, *critical pedagogy* as a means to good governance practices. Third, the comic book as an educational tool and medium within a critical pedagogy approach to education.

## The Concept of Good Governance

Good governance as a concept can be defined as a set of standards or principles through which a number of objectives are supposed to be met (Agere, 2000). It has been defined according to the United Nations as "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented" (United Nations, 2009). While the World Bank defines it "as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources" (Weiss, 2000, p.797), *The Institute of Governance of Ottawa* gave another definition, stating "Governance comprises (a) the institutions, processes and conventions in a society which determine how power is exercised, (b) how important decisions affecting society are made and (c) how various interests are accorded a place in such decisions"(Weiss 2000, p.797).

The United Nations has been working to promote *good governance* worldwide, especially in Third World countries where democratic policies are seldom respected. The

United Nations provided eight specific characteristics or principles for *good governance.* The following are these principles with an example illustrating each of them.

(a) Participation: such as providing equal opportunity to stakeholders (both men and women) to participate in the decision-making process affecting them, either directly or indirectly. This could be accomplished through direct participation or through legitimate intermediary representatives or institutions.

(b) Rule of law: such as the establishment of a policy that forces people to respect the law whatever their position, power or influence through legal frameworks that are "impartially" enforced.

(c) Transparency: one example is that in a corporation all the actions taken by those who are in governance must be clarified to stakeholders, full information must be disclosed, and this information must be accessible through understandable forms and media.

(d) Effectiveness and efficiency: one example would be the goals set by the governance people and how those goals will be met effectively in satisfying society's needs and making the best use of recyclable resources.

(e) Responsiveness: Institutions must respond to stakeholders' needs within a specific timeframe.

(f) Accountability: For instance, when a goal is set, governance people will be accountable to the public and stakeholders for achieving that goal within the predefined timeframe.

(g) Consensus-oriented: one example is that good governance implies a common mediation between various interests and opinions to converge for the common good of a given community in a given historical, cultural and social context.

(h) Equity and inclusiveness: one example is that governance people should include minorities and people whose voices are not heard by giving them the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process, and enhancing or maintaining their well being (United Nations, 2009).

Morin (1999) provided interesting concepts that can be linked to the principles of good governance. He argued that nations around the world must work together on enhancing the "mutual understanding among human beings" (Morin, 1999, p.3). Morin stated that while communication among humans is triumphantly increasing through various media, technologies and information means, "incomprehension is still the rule" (Morin, 1999, p.49). Moreover, no technique of communication is per se a guarantee of achieving understanding. Teaching understanding among humans is a fundamental mission of future education as "condition and protection of humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity" (Morin, 1999, p.49).

Furthermore, Morin (1999) stressed the importance of promoting "earth-citizenship" to face a human destiny which he considered to be on "a planetary scale" (Morin, 1999, p. 2). Humans, while preserving precious local specific identities must engage in a global cooperation and be involved as citizens of the "homeland-earth"(Morin and Kern, 1996) to meet complex global challenges such as environment protection and sustainable development (Morin, 1999).

Critical Pedagogy

This section will discuss the concept of critical pedagogy. It will present different criticisms from established scholars in the critical pedagogy field of the current educational system and practices. It is believed here that the comic book as an educational medium will reach a greater efficacy if employed critically and within a framework of critical pedagogy. In contrast to classic media used in education, the comic book can offer a room for enjoying learning and invite young learners through art to think critically about important and complex issues, thus, reinforcing democratic ideals and good governance principles within our society. Bomer and Bomer (2001) argued in their book titled *For a Better World: Reading and Writing for Social* Action:

> Unless we make critical conversations available to students, unless we set the discourse in motion in the classroom, we cannot expect children to develop questions and stances related to social justice either now or in the future (p. 59).

The comic book is first of all, a medium intended to make learning an enjoyable experience. Learners can enjoy learning and take time to critically analyze the messages conveyed to them through art work and not just memorize information and knowledge to make use of it in the future as it pertains in the classic system of education, and what Paulo Freire referred to as "the banking system of education" (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) argued that our system of education is basically based on the principle of educators making deposits in the educatee. This principle is intended to make learners passive receivers, and to become docile workers or/and consumers in the future. Freire also argued this principle hinder learners' chances to gain the necessary intellectual tools

for critical thinking, and thus for freedom and the enforcement of democracy (Freire, 1970).

Henry Giroux and Susan Searls Giroux (2006) argued that neoliberal capitalism ideology presents a massive oppression of citizens of lower strata of today's society. In fact the oppression not only lies in the material inequalities but also, and more importantly, in the normalized discourse and ideology that are enforced through political rhetoric and mainstream media. This neoliberal ideology enforces market fundamentalism and corporate and business agenda and interests. Furthermore, such ideology threatens the democratic ideals of modern societies. The main oppression of this ideology lies in educating citizens from an early age to become either docile workers or loyal consumers. Therefore, in this new era of neoliberal economic fundamentalism, business is given more importance than the human subjects that constitute our society. This ideology pervades in the current educational system that encourages tracking standardized tests to select students in market oriented fashion. The most oppressed from this system are the poor and minorities who struggle to transcend their economic and social conditions in order to succeed in the future. The neoliberal ideology put in their paths a multitude of obstacles that are completely in contradiction with the democratic ideals that our society was built upon. The bottom line is that money became an end in itself end not a means to an end in our democracy, even in education (Giroux and Giroux, 2006).

To tackle this hegemonic ideology which presents a massive oppression on a global scale via its pervasive nature, Giroux and Giroux (2006) proposes critical pedagogy as a key element for creating change. Our students need to acquire the

intellectual tools necessary to analyze critically the work conditions and the social

policies that the system put in place.  There is an exigent need for critically educated and

informed citizens who know how to think independently and transcend their social norms

and mores whether religious or secular which are in many instances oriented in a way

that benefits the neoliberal economic system Giroux and Giroux (2006).

Dean Braa and Peter Callero (2006) argued that a major oppression our society

faces lies in the neo-Marxist concept of reproduction. In fact systems of formal education

operate in a way that reproduces patterns or the exploitative capitalist system. The main

oppressed by this system are people from the non-capitalist classes who find themselves

under the direct and indirect exploitation of economic elites (Apple 1990; Mayo 1999;

McLaren 2003).  This oppression starts to take shape from an early age in the educational

system where there is a "hidden curriculum" (Apple, 1990). "Students are socialized and

behaviorally conditioned to accept hierarchal structures of power"(Braa and Callero,

2006, p 358). Moreover, students are very often in the classroom "conditioned to be

passive, conformist, and obedient members of society, thus generating easily manipulated

workers and passive, apathetic citizens" (Braa and Callero, 2006, p 358).

As a response to this issue Dean Braa and Peter Callero (2006) proposed the

incorporation of critical pedagogy in the teaching of sociology. This means going beyond

emphasizing critical pedagogy as a praxis to making it part of the culture and renovating

the whole discipline of sociology through a critical pedagogy framework. As Braa and

Callro argued, we live in a society where science is presented to students as a set of

established facts and not as a method for critically thinking about social phenomenon.

This has to be changed through the incorporation of critical pedagogy in the teaching of

sociology and thus the creation of an educational framework that will enable in the future a more critical education that allow students to become more informed citizens (Braa and Callero, 2006).

Lambert et al. (2007) argued that higher education in the UK went in recent years from societal and citizenry purposes among others to a highly commercialized and commodified education. Higher education has become mainly a preparation environment for students to serve primarily a "knowledge-based economy" (Lambert et al., 2007, p. 525). The corporate and entrepreneurial spirit has become pervasive in academic discourse and curriculum, giving less room for critical thinking and citizenship and societal oriented learning.  Indeed, students are not given a very wide range of choices as they go to higher education. Mainly, they learn how to be more productive and efficient in the capitalist system (Lambert et al., 2007)

Stephen Peters (2009) argued that sites of formal education can confine students in oppressive subject positions. He argued that in the colonial heritage, identity is a key element of determining oppression patterns. Stephen Peters (2009) argued that "identities are never completely finalized" (p.5), people tend to have complex and multiple identities that are in a constant evolution.  Oppression occurs on the identity level when certain social and group norms impose certain limits to one's identity thus making him or her adhere to a certain set of values that states what is right and universal (Stephen Peters, 2009).

To overcome the oppression that comes from the authority over knowledge on people's identities, Peters (2009) places an emphasis on imaginative, agentic assertions of identity, a reflexive critical pedagogy that would encourage students to decipher the

11

dominant and dominating discourses that are transmitted through society (Stephen Peters , 2009).

Nervin, McNeil and Smith (2008) argued that there is oppression in the discourse and the perception that our society has on disabled individuals. This oppression lies often in considering them as being outside of the norm and as being a source of problems that needs adequate solutions. Nervin, McNeil and Smith (2008) added that this paradigm needs to be changed through a critical pedagogy approach that empowers disabled persons as contributing individuals with complex and diverse identities. A critical perception should replace the current paradigm the society has on disabled persons. So they will be viewed and treated as individuals from a diverse landscape of individuals and identities in a complex society rather than being considered as abnormal or as opposed to normal persons. The later dichotomy is in fact an inaccurate concept if we take into account the uniqueness of identities and personalities within our complex society.

To sum up, critical pedagogy presents an umbrella for a variety of approaches that can, if adopted by the mainstream scholarship, contribute in changing oppressive practices in our modern society through a critical revolution or evolution of the educational system.

Richard Khan: Critical Pedagogy Eco-literacy, and Planetary Crisis

In his book titled "Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy, and Planetary Crisis: the ecopedagogy movement", Richard Khan (2010) presents a comprehensive and cross disciplinary analysis of the current state of ecoliteracy. He uses critical pedagogy as a means to develop and enforce human consciousness about our ecological challenges and our common fate as human beings. In analyzing historically the current system of

education he evokes, as a historic example of an achieved critical pedagogy enforcing democratic ideals, the concept of *Paideia* in ancient Greece (Khan, 2010).

"Beyond the simple inculcation of youth into preformulated expectations, Athenian *Paideia* instead integrated Athenian children into the broad ideals held by Athens concerning the harmony of body, mind, spirit, and polis" (Khan, p. 39). *Paideia* was in Athens an instruction system in which students were offered an eclectic cultural education. Ancient Greeks conceived "education as the *Paideia* of one's total civic livelihood" (Khan, p. 39). It meant education as a pathway to accomplish ideals (Khan, 2010).

Khan (2010) also discussed Paulo Freire's "Promethean Pedagogy", and Ivan Illich's "Epimethean pedagogy" with regard to the role of media and technology in education (Khan, p.81). Khan argued that Freire's Promethean Pedagogy presents a forward vision of pedagogy that doesn't reject the machine but rather humanize man. He used technology in his critical pedagogy as means to construct the future of education and therefore the future of humanity (Khan, 2010). Freire sought to democratize the use of technology in order to promote more humanistic relationships between people and an egalitarian society. His main concern was to critically examine the techno-capitalist society (Khan, 2010).

Illich's Epimethean pedagogy on the contrary presents a vision that looked backward to history in order to impact the future. For Illich the use of technology in education becomes problematic when tools became themselves an end rather than a means to an end, which can be, for instance, more knowledge and a higher civic consciousness (Khan, 2010). Thus both Friere and Illich present a complementary

philosophy of pedagogy, and particularly, of the use of technology and media in education.  Khan stresses the importance of both approaches in the information age where consumption of media is higher than ever before. Khan proposes that Freire and Illich's legacies should be used in eco-literacy because of their critical analysis of pedagogical tools. The most notable current example of these tools is perhaps internet as means for eco-pedagogy.  Khan presents the collaborative strength of using both Freirian and Illichian radical pedagogies in "producing a sustainable citizenry and readying the conditions for the next generation's political struggle over how to respond to planetary eco-crisis" (Khan 2010, p 98).

Finally concerning the current state of Eco-literacy, Khan (2010) evokes the work of Herbert Marcuse. In Marcuse's philosophy, Khan stresses the presence of a radical critique but also a positive utopianism that transcend current pessimism. Marcusian philosophy therefore presents both the radical engagement of anarcho- primitivism and the intellectual quality of analysis of ecologists' elite (Khan, 2010). Khan uses Marcuse philosophy to transcend Marcuse philosophy itself and goes "beyond a straight explication that could run the risk of divorcing Marcuse's thought" (Khan, p. 127) in order to meet the present ecopedagogical challenges. He further emphasized the "pro-life politics" (Khan, p. 128) and used Marcuse proposition of "politics as education and a revolutionary conception of Humanitas" (p.128) where he tries to transcend the dichotomy of culture versus nature and human versus nonhuman animal.  Khan also used Marcuse's concept of "Great Refusal" (p.134) which rejected established axioms and aimed at promoting a more revolutionary and optimistic reading of reality.  Khan through Marcuse' theoretical framework urges eco-pedagogues to become sustainable radicals.

Ecology must no longer be a cultural movement that defends nature but a natural

movement of the mainstream culture, thus going beyond the paradigm splitting culture

form nature (Khan, 2010). Herbert Marcuse once argued that "the real change which

would free men and things remains the task of political action" (Cited in Khan 2010, p.

137).

<div align="center">Defining the Comic Book</div>

Defining the comic book, comic strip or comics could be a challenging task.

Some comics writers prefer to call their work "graphic novels" in an attempt to give it a

better intellectual image than the "mass culture" stereotype that has been pertaining to the

comic book image for many years. Gabilliet (2010) argued that the most frequently

provided definitions for comics are (a) "picture narrative" and (b) "drawn stories" (p. 12).

But these phrases are too vague to clearly define the comic book (Gabillet, 2010).

Couperie et al. (1968) argued the comic strip, comics or comic books are rooted in

a long tradition of communication throughout several human civilizations. Expressing

stories and myths through pictures foreshadowed the alphabet. The modern form of

comic books we know today was perfected in the United States in the early 20th century.

But the birth of comic strips was preceded in Europe by the profusion of numerous

picture-stories throughout the continent, both silent and illustrating a text, often very

artistically valuable productions by highly skillful illustrators, usually disseminated in

either books or newspapers (Couperie et al., 1968). Nevertheless, many comics' scholars

argued that the first modern comic books creator was the Suisse artist Rodolphe Töpffer

in the early 19th century (Gabillet, 2010).  Furthermore, the comic strip is considered by

many to be a culmination of a very long tradition of human expression throughout the

history. Hogben (1949) presented a comprehensive history of human communication from the cave painting to the comic strip, providing a thorough examination of the comic strip's early ancestry. Other scholars such as Bougnoux (1999) approached creatively the communication potential of the comic book by presenting the communication phenomena and a number of theories in the communication field through various milestones in the comic strip world. For example, he introduces the reader to the drastic (and sometimes alarming changes) modern technology brought to human life through describing a sequence in the comic book *S.O.S. Météores* by Edgar P. Jacobs (Bougnoux, 1999, p. 34).

Couperie et al. (1968) argued that those who think that they can understand the comic strip world by analyzing one or two comic magazines will get a rather simplistic and reductive vision of the complex and rich world of comics (Couperie et al, 1968, p.155). In fact, the world of comic strips, "represent an incredible network of lucid observations, traditions, some of which are thousands of years old, influences and relationships between the characters" (Couperie et al, 1968, p. 155).

Perhaps the most original approach to defining the comic book was provided by McCloud (1993). In *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*, McCloud (1993) attempted to define comics as a medium through the medium itself, thus producing a scholarly material in a comic book rather than a text book. McCloud (1993) argued that a specific dictionary definition for comics would be "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an esthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1993, p.9). On the other hand, he gives a broad definition that introduces the medium as "sequential art" (McCloud, 1993, p.7).

The Comic Book as an Educational Tool

Berkowitz and Packer (2001) argued that comics present a set of enriching pedagogical opportunities. Comics attract students' attention to a variety of topics; they give students the opportunity to enjoy the process of learning (Berkowitz & Packer, 2001).

Versaci (2001) argued that comic books can be very effective teaching tools that bring students' attention to important social issues such as AIDS and single motherhood. He emphasized that comic books for a long period of time were unjustly judged as responsible for juvenile delinquency. Versaci (2001) argued "literature makes us think about big ideas" and so do comic books (p. 61). Most people read comics during childhood, and when they became adults, they tend to perceive comic books as "subliterate, disposable and juvenile" (Versaci, 2001, p. 63). For Versaci, this attitude toward comic books is comparable to someone's attitude in declining all motion pictures because that person once disliked Disney movies. Misinformed people often associate comic books with a single genre, for instance superhero comics, thus their negative attitude toward the medium (Versaci, 2001).

Versaci posited that unlike more established literature, comic books have the ability to humanize the subject at hand, by making it less abstract to the readers. In addition to the text, "readers can see the characters through the illustrations" (Versaci, 2001, p. 62). Moreover, "the interplay of the written and visual is a complicated process; a comic does not operate in words or pictures, but somewhere in between" (Versaci, 2001, p.62). This idiosyncrasy of the comic book makes it an "ideal" medium "for middle, secondary, and post secondary school teachers to accomplish what they need to

do more of: energize classes and engage students, teach much needed analytical and critical thinking skills" and other attitudes that students will carry from these early courses for a long time (Versaci, 2001, p.62).

This enlightened perception of the comic book as a medium in the academic world didn't come without a struggle. In fact, the comic book is still a controversial medium even though it has been gradually gaining a more nuanced image within academia on the one hand and the general public on the other hand. Indeed, once the comic book enjoyed a certain mass popularity in the first half of the twentieth century, some educators perceived it as a valuable pedagogical and colorful tool while others considered it as a harmful medium for children (Trasher, 1949, Curtis & Rampal,1995, Berkowitz & Parker, 2001 ).

Wertham (1954) warned the American society of the danger of comic books in damaging children reading abilities. Wertham (1954) argued that the comic book industry did a very good job in selling a deleterious medium image to educators and society in general. In his book alarmingly titled *Seduction of the Innocent*, Wertham argued parents were being deceived to think their children were able to read only because of the number of comics they were consuming. In reality, he said, comics' consumption by children made the task of educators harder in teaching children how to read properly and "low-grade literacy" was going to be the long-term consequence (Wertham, 1954, p. 123).

Furthermore, Wertham (1954) concluded that the seductive appeal comic books held in their content and the "alluring advertisements of knives and guns are contributing factors to many children's maladjustment" (Wertham, 1954, p. 10).

Thrasher (1949) argued that comics have been for a long time a scapegoat for social scientists whose failure in deciphering the complexities of juvenile delinquency causation found a propitious shortcut explanation in comics. He argued that these scholars (among them chiefly Fredrick Wertham), who claimed the existence of an intrinsic deleterious effect of the comic book as a medium without using rigorous scientific methodologies to reach their conclusions, were closer to forensic conjectures than to scientific elucidations with regard to comics. Moreover, he compared these monistic attitudes toward the comic book as a medium to some of the monistic criminology explanations of the Italian School of Criminology led by Lambroso who asserted the existence of a pre-criminal profile allowing discernment of criminals from common mortals (Thrasher, 1949).

Frank (1944) argued that although scholars' attitudes would vary concerning the educational value of comic books, most of them would agree on the existence of a certain affinity between children and comics. She stated that regardless of age, gender or intellectual level, most of them read comics with great "avidity" (Frank, 1944, p. 214).

Frank reported that The Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association of America examined and evaluated a sampling of comic magazines in 1944. The committee's inquiry sought not only an understanding of adults' attitudes toward comics but also a "child's-eye view of the comics" (Frank, 1944, p. 215). One hundred comic magazines were considered by the committee in analyzing content, nature, and appeal of comics' vis-à-vis the young audience. The committee also attempted to define criteria through which parents and educators could evaluate comics to "reach a *Modus Vivendi* regarding the juvenile preoccupation with them" (Frank, 1944, p. 215). The

findings reflected different types of comics. Nuances had to be stressed about the content

and editorial standards as well as selection of material, style, art work, and printing

(Frank, 1944). Varied quality of writing in comics was manifest. As to drawing, it was

terrible in some while others contained remarkable art. Frank argued that it was

impossible to categorize comics as either "good" or "bad" (Frank, 1944, p.215). "Like

other publications each must be judged on its own merits, the criteria have to be based

upon the nature of the medium itself, which can and must have the standards of its own"

(Frank, 1944. p.215). Frank also emphasized the long-rooted human need for fantasy and

fantastic stories that comic books offered to children and adults alike: "The myths and

legends of ancient Greece, the folk legends of America's Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill,

and the classic fairy tales themselves attest to the human need for escape and wish

fulfillment" (Frank, 1944, p. 216). These myths and legends play a role of imaginary

linkage between the physical and the emotional (giving children a sense of liberty that

reality sometimes tends to narrow). Frank argued that "Stories which push the boundaries

of reality have long served civilized man for the release of feelings of aggression and

frustration" (Frank, 1944, p. 216).

In an attempt to evaluate the nature of the medium, Gruenberg (1944) discussed

comics as a "social force" (p. 204). He argued the comic book as any young medium

must endure a maturation process that takes time. Indeed, zealous detractors of comics

were preceded by those who saw in motion picture and radio a threat for the society's

moral health. Gruenberg argued that comics can be described as a mere combination of

pictures and words, but "they obviously fall far short of the best that pictures can do and

also far short of the best that words can do. They are indeed very much slower than

radio." (Gruenberg, 1944, p. 213) Thus, the comic book is a medium that enables its readers and viewers a wider memorization capacity of visual and textual messages (Gruenberg, 1944).

Bender et al. (1944) suggested that beyond the established notion of the need for fantasy as an escape, "children's fantasies are a constructive approach to reality" rather than an escape. In fact, "fantasy is a natural part of the development of the child's personality" (Bender et al., 1944, p. 223).

Bender et al. conducted a series of studies using "projective arts as a medium of exploring the fantasy life of children" (Bender et al., 1944, p. 224). They found through analyzing children's drawings that "fantasy is a constructive aspect of child's experimental exploration of reality, of his progressive relating of himself to reality, of his trial-and-error attempts to solve his reality problems" (Bender et al., 1944, p. 225). Children explored through comics aspects of the body and its differences compared to other human and animal bodies and discovered facets and forces of the physical world (Bender et al., 1944).

According to Zorbaugh (1949), a controversy over the appropriateness of "comics as reading for children" rose in the late 1940s. He argued the emotional intensity of the polemic led to a "crusade censorship" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p. 225). This controversy encouraged The Department of Communications in Education of the School of Education of New York University to conduct a nationwide study aiming to evaluate adults' attitudes toward the comic book as a medium. The researchers interviewed 3.000 persons across the United States. The representativeness of the sample was based on the following criteria: geography, city size, age, sex, parental status and economic level. For

further insights, open-ended interviews were held in addition to the 3.000 surveys that formed the statistical data of the investigation. Zorbaugh et al found that about a quarter of adults were plainly against comics, in particular comics' magazines. Across the majority of the interviewees, newspaper comics received much more positive views in contrast to comic magazines with regard to their suitability as children's reading (Zorbaugh, 1949).

Zorbaugh argued that having a qualified attitude toward comics influenced the degree to which negative attitudes were unequivocally held about the comic book as a deleterious medium for children. Participants were asked, among other questions, whether they agreed with the assumption that "reading comics lowers the moral standards of children" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p. 227). The majority of interviewees understood the concept of "moral standards" as analogous of "conformity" or "sexual mores" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p. 228). The older they were the more concerned were the participants. Furthermore, parental status seemed to be closely related to the "dangerousness" of comics as children reading. The concern increased in significance as the children ages went down.

Moreover, comics were considered by many participants as "recreation for the child" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p.228). Only one of ten adults regarded comics as having educational value. According to Zorbaugh, data revealed that positive attitudes toward comics as educational tools were "largely unrationalized" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p.229) in contrast to criticism of the medium.

Attitudes also varied according to the nature of the characters and stories presented in the comics. Characters such as: (a) Donald Duck, (b) Blondie, (c) Gasoline,

22

and (d) Prince Valiant were regarded more positively and as being "drawn for children" or "about family" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p.229). On the other hand, (a) Dick Tracy, (b) Superman, (c) Batman, (d) Flash Gordon and (e) Phantom were not considered as being suitable "heroes" for children in parents' eyes (Zorbaugh, 1949).

By analyzing the data, Zorbaugh concluded that although attitudes regarding comics as an educational material varied across the segments spectrum (men approved comics more than women, younger persons were more positive in contrast to older ones, less educated were much more in favor of comics than highly educated, and finally single persons less negative than parents), the strongest factor shaping attitudes of interviewees with regard to comics was their "own comic reading habits" (Zorbaugh, 1949, p. 231). "The more comics the adult reads himself, the more likely he is to approve children reading comics." (Zorbaug, 1949, p. 234)

Zorbaugh research is a milestone in the early comics' educational appropriateness controversy because it was one of the first studies that sought to evaluate empirically the public attitudes toward comics in general and more specifically as educational readings.

In 1949, The Curriculum Laboratory of the University of Pittsburgh and the Comics Workshop of New York University conducted cooperatively an experiment using comics as instructional material in classrooms (Hutchinson et al., 1949). After analysis, the comic weekly *Puck* was picked by the researchers to explore educational value of comics. Teachers throughout the United States were invited to take part in the experiment. Two thousand and twenty-seven teachers, from a geographical spectrum of twenty-seven states, showed enthusiasm by participating in the experiment. In addition to the comic weekly *Puck*, participants-teachers also received a questionnaire aiming to

evaluate their experiences. Four hundred thirty-eight out of the 2027 teachers returned the questionnaire.

The findings revealed that comics used in different subjects (Science, History, Literature, and Geography) by the teachers captured children's interest and proved to be an effective pedagogical tool in helping children overcome reading, writing and oral language difficulties (Hutchinson et al., 1949).

Hutchinson argued that "the physical form of the comic strip which gives clues in the pictures to the meaning of the printed text was an aid in assisting poor readers" (Hutchinson et al., 1949, p. 239). In contrast to some of the assumptions discussed earlier about the deleterious effect of comics with regard to children reading, this later study revealed through empirical data and a rigorous methodology the power of comics in helping reluctant readers engage more easily in reading activities.

Adams (2000) reported projects that were conducted in primary and secondary schools in the U.K. using comic books as educational material. The first project was conducted in a primary school and focused on gender relations in sport by inviting pupils to make photomontage comics about soccer. One of the reasons behind choosing soccer as a central theme to explore meaning construction about gender relation in sport is that soccer is a sport in the U.K. that attracts huge popular attention but unfortunately involves one of the most discriminatory gendered processes (Adams, 2000). There is a clear inequality in opportunities between men and women in this sport and women quite often suffer from negative attitudes that have been replicated for generations by parents and teachers (Adams, 2000). Students exploration of themes of gender stereotypes through making photomontage comic books ultimately provided an interestingly

"provocative art work" (Adams, 2000, p. 306). The pupils used role-play method and took photographs of them playing different characters to construct the comic book they designed with the help of a comics' specialist who took part in the study. One of the artworks produced by four girls form the group was titled: "Rather Sport than Fashion" (Adams, 2000, p. 307). In this photomontage they expressed their rejection of preconceived role of being interested in dressing fashionably rather than being passionate about playing soccer (Adams, 2000). Moreover, Adams argued the girls were expressing female emancipation and independence from Western paradigm about female displaying narcissism and display through beauty, an attitude that is interpreted in sports milieu as a sign of vulnerability. Furthermore, in another photomontage titled "She's football crazy" (Adams, 2000, p. 307) a boy was displayed plaintive about the absence of his female partner, who is a soccer player and how bad he wished she was at home to cook for him. Adams (2000) argued that this was a powerful expression of the "reversal of stereotypical roles of football player and home keepers" (Adams, 2000, p. 307).

A second project reported by Adams (2000) was a project titled "The Tin Drum" project. This was developed by Nick Dodds, a secondary art teacher with a background in illustration. He conducted this project with 12 years old students using a section from the comic book: "The Tin Drum" which an adaptation of Gunter Grass' novel (Grass, 1964). The project gave students opportunities to experiment complex artistic techniques and explore some of the semiotics of the comic book at hand.

Bucher and Manning (2004) argued that cotemporary young adults who grew up with television and video games are looking for print media that offers them the same

"visual impact" and that graphic novels can fulfill this mission quite effectively (Bucher and Manning, 2004, p. 67).

Susan M. Squier (2008) drew few connections between two emerging fields which are disability studies and graphic fiction. She demonstrated through the analysis of two graphic novels how the comic book as a medium can help disabled young people in their identity construction and how the imaginative works of some authors can open a room for them to understand their differences. This can be done within a framework of complexity that is often lacking in a society that tends to simplify people by inserting them (whether consciously or unconsciously) into distinct categories of persons. To build this bridge between comic studies and disability studies, Squier (2008) used two comic books in her analysis. The first one is an acclaimed work that was presented to the public by the *Times Book Review "*as a graphic intellectual history" (cited in Squier, p. 72). This graphic novel tells the semi-autobiographic story of the author's childhood memories with his brother who suffered from epilepsy. In this astonishing black and white graphic novel, the author recount how his brother's sickness was perceived among other children and within society in general. We're told about his friends who labeled his brother as a "madman" (Squier, p. 75). The alienation that comes with the disability for the epileptic Jean Christophe did not only affect him but also frustrated his younger brother and sister. These details are expressed in a way that puts the hero (the disabled one) in the center of the story, living with a major difference and dealing with that difference with courage and creativity (Squier, 2008).

The second graphic novel used by Squier in her analysis is a less acclaimed work but still a graphic novel of a great pedagogical value (Squier, 2008). *The Ride Together*

was described in *Times Magazine* as "a memoir about growing up with an autistic brother and illustrated with cartoons" (Squier, 2008, p. 72). In this work the authors' intention was not to tackle the psychological issues related to the disability in question through the use of literary devices as it was the case in the graphic novel discussed above, but rather to help families and parents who have autistic children in their struggle. The use for comics as a medium here is mainly pedagogical. Nevertheless, some artistic techniques are effectively used to explore the depth of autism as an illness and a difference. This comic book describes the social struggle related to the illness through a narration of the illness impact on the disabled child family. Furthermore, this work explores the personal struggle of an autistic child and the "social costs of a discourse of developmental normalcy" that categorizes the main character "as an abnormal Other and his cognitive impairment as a disability" (Squier, 2008, p. 80).

Burns and Odelson (2009), two high school teachers and Smetana and Grisham (2009), two University teacher educators, conducted an experiment using graphic novels in a high school English summer school class for deaf students struggling with English as a second language. The class involved a mini-lesson on a given topic such as modeling text, and then literature discussions groups were formed to engage students in an active manner. Students were allowed to choose their own groups, and the discussions were conducted within a four weeks period. The first week of the experiment was somewhat frustrating as teachers were unable to accomplish class goals as they wished. Students showed some reservation in discussing the material they were reading. Nevertheless, the principal of the high school drew the teachers' attention to a remarkable phenomenon; students were reading their favorite comic books before classes started and during their

free time every day. Although some students were reluctant during the discussion groups, they formed their own improvised literature circles during their free time and discussed comic books with students outside the class an even staff members (Burns et al., 2009).

Burns et al. (2009) argued that graphic novels were useful in helping deaf students to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency with regard to English as a second language (Burns et al., 2009). According to Burns et al. (2009), graphic novels are a complex medium that communicate through pictures ideas, themes, and emotions. This helps deaf students and other readers' experience visually some of the material they read. Through analyzing the use of color, light, shadow, and lines, readers get a sense of how all these elements (and the interconnection between them) influence the tone and the mood of a given story and /or characters. Facial and bodily expressions convey meaning to students and inform them about characters' psychologies and personalities. Students also can deduce an action or an implicit statement in the interval between one image and the next just as they do when watching a movie. In addition to dialogues, graphic novels provide through visual material the students a room to experience "intangible feelings through allusion rather than direct description" (Burns et al., 2009, p. 230). Burns et al. (2009) argued that this visual aspect of the genre appeals especially to deaf students whose communication system is visual, but generally speaking it may appeal as well to a whole generation growing up with visual media such as television and video games, graphic novels indeed presents a bridge between classic reading and contemporary visual media (Burns et al., 2009).

Aaron Meskin (2009) tackled the question of comics as literature. Whether comics are literature or not is to a great extent a matter of opinion. Nevertheless some

graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* or Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* are considered by most scholars to be serious and valuable literature. But can we consider comics as whole literature? To answer this controversial question, Meskin (2009) proposed to categorize comics as a "hybrid art form" stemming from various art forms, media and influences such as literature, printmaking and satirical caricature (Meskin, 2009, p. 219).

Schwarz (2009) posited graphic novels are media that should be taken seriously in secondary education. She argued that graphic novels should be integrated into secondary curriculum to meet the educational challenges in the digital age. Nowadays students are consuming and learning from different media through which they are confronted with a highly visual world. Although some pedagogical measures have been put in place to adjust secondary education to the new reality, the responses were to a great extant insufficient (Schwarz, 2009). "Technology has made communications new again while schools work in old ways" (Schwarz, 2009, p. 56). Students outside the classroom are creating videos on YouTube, writing blogs and dealing constantly with multiple literacies. Students not only need to develop the technical skills with regard to multiple literacies and new media, but most importantly, they need to acquire the intellectual tools of critical thinking that will enable them to use the technologies in the best possible way (Schwarz, 2009). Schwarz argued that we need a new classroom to adapt with the reality of today's students without compromising traditional print literature that constitutes the core of our education. To achieve ongoing traditional goals, Schwarz (2009) views the graphic novel as the perfect medium, that offers on the one hand a visual richness and on the other hand, presents a literary and educational potential of traditional print literature

(Schwarz, 2009).  To illustrate her point, Schwarz (2009) evoked Susan Spangler (2008) experience in the classroom. Spangler (2008) linked graphic novels and new media usage.  She used Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis* in her class to encourage her students' critical thinking and linked the comic book to a research assignment on WebQuest. *Persepolis* is a graphic novel that tells the story of a little girl growing up in Iran during the Islamic revolution, and how the pressure of the conservative society impacted her personal development and her relation to her family, to society and to the world. *Persepolis* proved to be engaging in the classroom and increased students curiosity and excitement to complete the assignment on WebQuest which was about making research on Iranian culture and society both before and after the Islamic Revolution (Schwarz, 2009, p. 59).

Tabachnick (2010) argued adaptations of books and classic literary works in graphic novels are a good way to build a bridge between a generation of visual media and literature classics. According to Tabachnick (2010), the graphic novel as a medium presents several advantages. First, graphic novels are "a reading experience in which, as in traditional reading, the reader controls the speed of perception and can linger or look backward at will" (Tabachnick, p. 4).  Furthermore, the comic book is a medium in which the author can include long passages of narration, contrary to film or drama that rely mostly on dialogues. Moreover, according to Tabachnick (2010) one can regard the graphic novel "as an attempt of the physical book to survive in an electronic age by combining the advantages of traditional reading experience with those of the computer screen, which often provides visual objects outside the text"(p. 4).

Barnes (2009) analyzed the notion of "non-temporal consciousness" in the acclaimed graphic novel *Watchman*, written and illustrated by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. Through analyzing the main character struggle with his memory and the notion of temporality Barnes (2009) shed light on some interesting aspects of the medium. According to Barnes (2009):

> In comics both the past and the future are real and visible. Unlike in other media, in comics the past is more than just memories of what occurred on the screen moments before and the future is more than just possibilities. In comics you can physically flip back and forth in time (p. 58).

Likewise, Atkinson (2010) used the graphic novel adaption of Paul Auster's *City of Glass* to explore graphic novels potential as metafiction. He argued that metafiction uses devises which "force the reader to reflect on the functionality of the text and, consequently, the nature of writing" and that *City of Glass* is an illustrative example of graphic novels as metafiction (Atkinson, 2010, p. 107).

## The Semiotics of Comics

According to Wijeyeratne (1997) semiotics is "the study of systems of signification as opposed to the study of language as a system of communication" (p.106).

The comic book as a medium presents an exceptional semiotic appeal in comparison to other media. It is a medium that is viewed and read in the same time which requires a specific ability in decrypting the messages that quite often lie in the combination of graphics, words, signs, symbols, colors, shades, forms and pages architecture. This particularity gives the comic book a unique semiotic richness -

depending on the quality of the work at hand- that makes it a medium worth exploring of its potentials. It is argued here that the potential of the comic book as a medium with regard to its semiotic richness is largely underestimated within the large public and its image suffers from prejudice and misjudgment among the elites. As paradoxical as it may sound, the comic book suffers from the semiotics of the bourgeois society even though in semiotic terms it presents a cultural richness. Drawing on the works of Roland Barth, this section will explore the semiotics of comic books.

Although Barthes (1973) showed some reservation in defining semiotics as a discipline or a science, he did provide some insights on its nature. Barthes argued that semiotics or semiology, is an "adventure" (p. 4). An adventure in which the researcher understanding and/or interpretation is constructed by the researched objet. "It is what *advenes*: what comes to me from the Signifier" (p. 4), Barthes stated. In addition, when explaining his own motives in embarking on this "adventure" he described semiotics as "the close analysis of the processes of meaning by which the bourgeoisie converts its historical class-culture into universal nature" (Barthes, 1973, p. 5). It is argued here that the comic book as a whole medium (regardless of its different styles, trends, genres and variations) suffered for many years from bourgeois myths that labeled it as kitsch, literary poor and educationally dangerous. Barthes (1973) in explaining semiotics stated that semiotics is also a "method of an ideological critique" (p. 5). Barthes philosophy is useful here to shed light on how the semiotic of a bourgeois society lead progressively to a negative image of the comic book, and more importantly to underestimating its semiotic potential.

Goethe praised the works of Töpffer who is accredited by most comics' scholars and historians as the first author of comics (Gabillet, 2010). Since then, generally speaking, opinions about the comic book as a medium have taken increasingly a fairly negative tone among the elites. Artistically speaking, there is a widespread notion among the elites stating that comics are kitsch. Although there is almost no scientific evidence backing up this statement, it seems that it pertains among the elite that consider comics as an art of a lower culture, if it considers them as art at all. This notion of art classism can be understood through Bourdieu's concept of culture class. According to Bourdieu, the culture of the elite or the highest classes in society becomes the most important culture in the whole society not because of its innate superiority as a culture but because of it being the culture of the elite (Erickson, 1996). Thus, the elite can argue that painting in general, for instance, is Art with a capital A and comics is one with a small a, not because of the nature of one medium as opposed to the other, but because of the class position of the medium within the cultural landscape. Even if artists such as Picasso in a moment of artistic rejuvenation showed an interest in comics as a great artistic medium through which important messages can be communicated (In 1937, Picasso drew a comic strip he titled 'dreams and lies of Franco' to lampoon the dictatorial regime in the Spain of Franco), it is the cultural elite or the cultural class, that gives, tacitly, official stamps for great Art or art of a lower culture.

Many artists attempted through their art work to reconcile comics and great literature in one format. For instance, Jacques Tardi (1988) illustrated in a large format album in black and white Louis Ferdinand Céline's novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Céline, 1933). This work included 600 illustrations and the complete original text of the

33

author (Blind-Roland, 2010). The homage is particularly relevant if one knows that Céline's revolution in literary style was according to his own confessions inspired, among other sources, by comics.

In his book titled *the system of comics* Thierry Groensteen (1999) explored the semiotics of comics and provided one of the most important semiotic analyses up to date in the field of comics (Beaty & Nguyen, 2006).   Groensteen (1999) approached comics as a language and provided the concept of *iconic solidarity* which underlies the structural logic of comics in the sense that panels even though separated from each other still have a connection as a reading experience.  He further identified key concepts with regard to the system of comics. The first one is the *Spatio-topical system* which underlines the importance of space in comics and how placing panels and their architecture on the page are crucial in communicating messages. Esthetic effects emerges from the rhythm the author and/or artist chooses in placing panels, framing pictures and placing text in different ways according to the desirable reading impact and communicated meaning. Another concept proposed by Groenstein (1999) is *Arthrology.* This concept is a neologism made of the Greek word *arthon* which means articulation. This concept focus on the relations between panels and their construction as linear in a sequence (which he identify as restricted arthrology) or distant within a network (which he identify as general arthrology) (Groenstein, 1999).

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

This section will discuss the theoretical framework that will be used in this research. Two theories will be framing the research design on two different levels: (a) the usage of the medium, (b) the nature of the medium. The theories are respectively, Katz

<div align="center">34</div>

and colleagues' uses and gratifications of the mass media theory (Katz et al, 1973) and

Marshall McLuhan's media determinism theory (McLuhan, 1964).

<div align="center">Uses and Gratifications Theory</div>

The main idea of the uses and gratifications approach is that: "different people

can use the same mass communication message for very different purposes" (Severin &

Tankard, 2001, p. 294). Uses and gratifications theory presented a shift in how mass

communication scholars perceived the mass media audience. After an omnipresent

portrayal of a passive audience in mass communication theories, researchers started

looking to viewers, listeners and readers in a new way (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Bryant

and Street (1988) argued that "the notion of 'active communicator' was rapidly achieving

a preeminent status in the communication discipline" (Bryant & Street, 1988, p.162).

Katz (1959) was the first scholar to thoroughly describe the uses and gratifications

approach. His article was written in reaction to some scholars who claimed that the field

of communication research was dead (Berelson, 1959, Klapper, 1960).

Katz's argued mass communication scholars were investigating the question

"What do media do to people?" and suggested that communication discipline could be

saved from extinction if researchers start thinking about "What do people do with the

media?" (Katz, 1959)

In 1964, Blumer and McQuail conducted a study on the general election in

Britain. Using the uses and gratifications approach in their research, they tried to examine

"why people watch or avoid party broadcasts; what uses they wish to make of them; and

what their preferences were between alternative ways of presenting politicians on

television." (Blumer & McQuail, 1969, p. 10-11) In contrast to some earlier research

indicating that people used mass media to reinforce their opinions, Blumer and McQuail discovered that citizens used political broadcasts as an information source to learn about politics (Blumer & McQuail, 1969).

The uses and gratifications approach broke the idea of the passive mass audience, indicating that people use mass media to satisfy different needs. Katz, Haas and Gurvitch (1973) classified five categories of individual needs and media uses: (a) cognitive needs: acquiring and strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding, (b) affective needs: needs related to strengthening emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experience, (c) personal integrative needs, strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status, (d) social integrative needs: strengthening contacts with family, friends, and the rest of the world, and (e) escape or tension release needs: "escape and fading of contact with one's social roles and self" (Katz et al., 1973, p166-167).

Nevertheless, uses and gratifications theory appears to be effective in studying the usefulness of comic books as a teaching tool. Can the five needs and media use set by Katz and his colleagues (1973) be applied to the comic book as a medium for teaching human values? On the cognitive needs level: the need of a child to learn about climate change and Morin's "earth-citizenship" can be satisfied in a comic book describing a story of characters who try to save the earth from a disaster. Another example of cognitive needs may be the need of children to learn about ethnic diversity and the importance of "mutual understanding among humans" (Morin, 1999, p. 3). Accordingly, a comic book containing ethnically diverse characters may encourage the emergence of a positive attitude in the child's mind about ethnic diversity.

On the affective needs level, many stories in comics emphasized the importance of love, friendship and loyalty. In addition to the fact that children can learn from the characters and stories they read, using a comic book as a teaching tool present an esthetic advantage in the pictures and colors it offers to the child. Moreover, the comic book is credited as a medium that tenders a play world to the child. Krishnan (2009) argued that "there is value in sitting down with a child and engaging him or her in meaningful and fun-learning activities" (Krishnan, 2009, p. 1).

On the personal integrative needs level, the comic book may contribute in building personal confidence and self-esteem for the child. Many comics depict characters that are heroically courageous but who carry personal fears and phobias. One example is the Superman character, who is gifted with supernatural powers but who fears kryptonite, a substance that seriously undermines his supernatural power.

For the social integrative needs, using the comic book in the classroom present a great opportunity for interactive activity for the child. A teacher may organize with the students a discussion about the characters and the story presented in a given comic. According to Vygotsky (1978), a social constructivist who developed ideas first introduced by Piaget (1985), learning is a natural process that is constructed around meaningful interactions between novice and advanced learners, for instance children and adults. Vygotsky argued that the process of learning for a child occurs in a social-cultural context that includes interactions with other mature learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Finally, for the escape and tension release needs, the comic book is an ideal medium in offering escape and diversion for the child because it often provides a fantasy

world and fantastic stories and characters that nurture and enrich the child's imaginative and creative abilities.

<div align="center">Using Marshal McLuhan</div>

Marshall McLuhan (1964) theoretical revolution concerning the media impact on the human society in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* raised a controversy among communication scholars (Severin & Tankard, 2001) particularly because of his claim that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 7).

McLuhan and Fiore (1967) suggested the following:

All media are extensions of some human faculty -- psychic or physical. The wheel is an extension of the foot; the book is an extension of the eye; clothing, an extension of the skin; electric circuitry, an extension of the central nervous system. Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act -- the way we perceive the world (p.26).

When those ratios change, people change, and consequently their reality changes. After the magic bullet theory claiming the powerful effect of mass media over people's attitudes which was followed by the limited effect paradigm, Marshall McLuhan analyzed the communication process in a completely different way, focusing on the medium rather than the content of the medium. The media neither have the ultimate power to generate a stimulus response in people's minds, nor is their effect too limited. They simply shape our reality because they are the extensions of ourselves (McLuhan, 1964). Eugene Goodheart (2001) argued that:

<div align="center">38</div>

Like Barthes, McLuhan is a demystifier who takes pleasure in the mystifications of popular culture. You get the feeling from the wit and vividness of his language that he relishes the ads and comic strips that provide him with the lowdown of what our culture is really about (p. 92).

McLuhan (1964) with regard to comics stated that "comics, low in definition, are a highly participational form of expression, perfectly adapted to the mosaic form of newspaper" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 165). He argued that comics can include subtle communicational interactions that attract the reader's deep involvement. Furthermore, about the controversy that comics rose when they first appeared in their modern form McLuhan stated that "The elders of the tribe, who had never noticed that the ordinary newspapers was as frantic as a surrealist art exhibition, could hardly be expected to notice that the comic books were as exotic as eighth-century illuminations"(McLuhan, 1964, p. 169).

Nevertheless, McLuhan theory about media determinism is often criticized by scholars of not being empirically valid. Katz and Katz (1998) described McLuhan's insights about media effects on society as being "stimulating (though exasperating)" (Katz & Katz, 1998, p. 307). Goodheart (2000) argued the following:

He [Marshal McLuhan] doesn't argue his case; rather, he hammers it home through reiteration supported by long quotations (whose relevance is not always clear) from virtually every major writer of the Western tradition (Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Ramus, Shakespeare, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, and Spengler, to name a few) and a host of minor writers. McLuhan's self-described "mosaic"

style is supposed to provide an antidote to the lineality of the book, the medium in which he is compelled to express himself (p. 93).

Despite the controversial aspect that McLuhan's theory represent, his approach is believed to be a useful one in analyzing the communicational potent of the comic book as a medium in this study. McLuhan analyzed media impact on human society from the creation of language to the invention of print and finally electronic media (McLuhan, 1964). According to McLuhan, media change our reality on a significant scale. Therefore, it is believed in this study that a comic book addressing *good governance* principles and human values can change the reality of future citizens if they have been first introduced to values such as diversity, equity and "earth citizenship" (Morin, 1999, p. 2) in an earlier stage of their lives.

<center>Research Questions</center>

This literature review examined the research that has been exploring the efficacy of the comic book as medium. This study is particularly interested in evaluating the comic book in promoting "human values" as the bedrock for good governance.

Good governance, as suggested earlier, is an ideal and a process through which specific objectives are supposed to be met within a framework of specific standards or principles. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the role of the comic book as a medium in promoting universal values in a maturation process that creates a knowledge platform around the child or the citizen of the future of both the local and global society.

Therefore, two essential questions with regard to the efficacy of the comic book as a medium are:

RQ1: Can the comic book serve as an educational medium to teach human values as the bedrock for good governance?

RQ2: What types of reactions students can have with regard to the comic book as a teaching tool and as a medium?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Method

According to the literature review, few studies concerning the efficacy of the

comic book as an educational tool used qualitative methodologies such as focus groups

(Bender et al., 1944; Adams, 2000; Burns et al., 2009). This is one reason why a

qualitative methodology was chosen for this study in a grounded theory approach (Glaser

& Strauss, 1967). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggested that "qualitative research is

multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subjects

matter" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). This means qualitative researchers study

phenomena, subjects or objects in their natural settings, make sense and interpret each of

them in relation with the possible meanings that people associate with them. Furthermore,

qualitative researchers engage in a multitude of interconnected methods, aiming at a

better understanding of the subject under study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

That said, the main goal of this study was to observe, in natural settings, children'

reactions and attitudes toward the comic book as a medium and its efficacy in

communicating "human values" as bedrock for good governance.

Medium

A comic book has been created for this study by the researcher to communicate

certain messages to the target audience of the research. The comic book contained a

single story of 30 pages. Briefly, a general description of the story will be as follows: An 11 year old child makes a friendship with an imaginary speaking animal character that's able to communicate with all the animals of planet earth via his telepathic capacities. The two friends then engage in a journey on a boat to save a little polar bear that was driven away from home on a block of ice detached from the arctic because of climate change. Throughout their adventure, they shall meet other children from different countries and cultures who will join them on-board. The children will then discover their differences and similarities and most importantly a common love for their planet earth or the "homeland-earth" (Morin and Kern, 1996).

## Sample

The sample of this research was composed of three focus groups of children age 10-13. This age range was chosen in accordance of the reading level of the comic book used in this study. The study was conducted in the "children classroom" at the Family Resource Center, a leisure place for children and families at Oklahoma State University. Except the presence of the researcher as a facilitator, the settings are considered to be normal as participants used to go to the "children classroom" and have reading sessions there. After reading the proposed comic book for the study, students were invited to participate in a discussion and to write essays to evaluate their views and attitudes toward the issues discussed in the comic book and to generate emergent themes. Given that children participants are underage, in addition to IRB approval, parents were asked for approval as well before the study was conducted.

Procedures

This research used focus groups to generate data. The focus group is a group

based discussion method (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). The typical format usually

involves a homogenous group of eight to twelve people who meet for a period of time

around an hour and a half to two and a half hours. The group interactions are facilitated

by a moderator or the researcher himself who supplies the matters or questions for

discussion and coordinates interactions in order for the audience to remain focusing on

the topics of interest (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990).

Shamdasani and Stewart (1990) argued that most of the criticism that has been

expressed about focus groups as a method consist of the assumptions that they do not

provide hard data and findings generated by them cannot be generalized given the small

number of participants they include. However, focus groups remain a very effective

method in numerous occasions while presenting a number of limitations just as other

methods do (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990).

This research was conducted through the use of a comic book in natural learning

settings. The comic book focused primarily on the "human values" discussed earlier in

the literature review. Three focus groups were formed of children participants (ages 10-

13). Students were invited to read the comic book created for this research in the presence

of their teacher. A discussion was then engaged with them for 90 minutes and the

sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards. In order to identify emergent

themes and categorize them into logical groupings, the researcher used manual coding for

data analyses. The students' focus groups were conducted in natural settings, so the

approval from the Family Resource Center' administration was sought before conducting

the discussions in the "children classroom" environment. The researcher took the role of the facilitator and of participant-observer for the three focus groups. Additional note taking took place during the reading sessions to enrich the data gathered primarily from the recordings. To identify emergent themes, students' reactions, opinions, interactions with regard to the medium were evaluated and analyzed through direct observation, the audio-taped and transcribed discussions and finally students were asked to write essays on the comic book they read. The environment of the focus groups sessions was checked by the researcher before the dates of focus groups to identify any possible issues susceptible of undermining the appropriate course of the sessions. Finally, before conducting the three focus groups, assent was sought from all children participants as well as the children's parents consent.

<div align="center">Focus Groups</div>

The discussions for the three focus groups sessions focused primarily on students' reflections and the meanings they associated with the messages contained in the comic book they read. They were invited to discuss the diversity of characters in the comic book and the environmental subthemes of the story, and finally the human values emphasized in the comic book. Additionally, students were asked for their personal opinions toward the medium as an educational tool, and what they thought of the characters and the story. Nevertheless, as explained earlier this research approached the field with a grounded theory, spontaneous reactions toward the material were observed from children participants. For data gathering all discussions were audio-taped and transcribed. Moreover, children participants were invited to write essays to express their thought on the comic book they read in general. This task was explicitly presented to them and

clarified as a free expression of opinion and not a graded assignment. In contrast to the sessions that used group dynamics to generate discussion and possible social involvement from the students in expressing their views in front of their peers, the essays were meant to provide them a more personal and intimate type of expression. Therefore, they were supposed to communicate ideas that they weren't able to communicate in the discussion because of either time limit or peers pressure. The essay question was a broad one e.g. "what do you think of the comic book and the story in general?"

By giving the students the chance to respond to a broad question in an essay, they were supposed to have an opportunity to express more freely and in a different way what they thought of the messages communicated in the comic book.

## Description of the Field

This study was conducted in the Family Resource Center, a leisure place for families, students, and children located at Oklahoma State University Campus in Stillwater, Oklahoma.  The study lasted six days including a warm-up session, two reading sessions and three discussion sessions with three focus groups. The researcher attended the FRC twice a week for three hours, and once every weekend for one hour for five weeks period before the study to observe the settings and to distribute fliers to potential participants. Children attended the FRC on a regular basis, thus attending the family resource center enabled the researcher to take part of the landscape, which was supposed to facilitate the contact with children participants.  The researcher approached the field with a grounded theory as a framework. The highly emergent field was a central cue for this study where the researcher had to be in constant awareness of insightful details emerging from the place, especially those that could be taken for granted.  It is

important to note that this study site was preferred instead of having the children focus groups in the school environment because it provided a more relaxed atmosphere that is supposed to offer accessibility to children perspectives. Kruger (1994) argued that focus groups with children should be conducted outside of institutions managed by adults in order to lessen the power imbalance between kids and adults (Kruger, 1994). Also such settings were supposed to reduce tension as no teacher is around and no "appropriate and/or productive" behavior is expected from children. Thus, choosing a place that offered both leisure and educational activities, attended by children participants occasionally, seemed to be the perfect location of the study.

<center>Accessing Participants and Conducting the Research</center>

To access the place and approach participants the researcher used his status as a graduate student and approached the field environment gradually. The researcher distributed flyers to children and parents in the Family Resource Center. The researcher also distributed 150 fliers in a local elementary school to 4th and 5th grade children, thanks to the principal of the school who was very cooperative and provided access for advertising the study. This first step enabled the researcher to take part of the landscape and to make some acquaintances with people he saw attending the place each night. Thus, the researcher got the chance to explain the purpose of the study to some parents face to face. Parents went to the FRC with their children and played pool, table football, watched TV or just hanged around.  Finally, through their parents contact, 12 children showed interest in participating in this study.  The only demographic that was initially in the center of the study in discerning participants was: age.  The reason behind this is that the research was concerned primarily about a suitable age for the comic book used in the

<center>47</center>

study and the researcher was approaching the field in a grounded theory rather than targeting specific demographic such as sex or ethnicity. Sex and Ethnicity were not targeted because the comic book used in the study aimed at promoting universal human values without prejudices or predefinitions of sex or ethnicity in as aspects of one's identity influencing the interaction between the medium and the receiver (participant). Nevertheless, the group participating in this study was to some extant diverse and included four female participants and eight male participants. Some participants were siblings to each other, the researcher chose not to separate them when creating the focus groups but rather groups members were selected in a random fashion and some of them included two siblings at maximum. Pugsley (1996) argued that focus groups containing children who know each other provide more group cohesion and are likely to stimulate responses and generate significant data.

All sessions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim and reviewed by the researcher for further accuracy. The focus groups questions were derived from two levels or broad questions: What did the children think of the comic book they read with regard to content, narrative and style? And what meanings students associated with the comic book they read?

It is important to note the settings in which the two reading sessions and the three focus groups were conducted in order to demonstrate the impact of a specific space on data generation. All the sessions were conducted in the children classroom of the Family Resource Center. The room is usually dedicated for reading circles which made it perfect to conduct the comic book reading sessions, since most of children participants were already acquainted with the environment. The children classroom provided a setting that

was neither too formal like a classic classroom nor too informal for reading sessions to be conducted properly. A first session was held to warm up children participants and to make a preliminary discussion about what the research was about. Parents were also invited to this first session. Some of them were present and some others apologized and sent their children alone. Nevertheless, before obtaining parents consent and children assent, all parents were informed in detail about the research in the script sent to them by the researcher. Then a first reading session was held the following day during which the children started reading the comic book under the supervision of the researcher as a facilitator. The researcher also played the role of a participant observer, which made the children more comfortable. The students were seated around one table with the researcher in the middle. They were given each either one bubble or a narration part to read in the comic book, and the reading was conducted in a circular fashion. The researcher recorded the reading session and took notes to further enrich the data. This first reading session proved to be very problematic since some children when not reading and waiting for their turn were shouting and disturbing the other children. So, in the beginning the researcher found some difficulty in facilitating the first session properly. Eventually things got better and children were totally absorbed by the reading and stopped shouting and playing. Nevertheless, since the reading session was meant to not exceed 90 minutes, a second reading session was held the following day to finish the comic book reading. During this session and after finishing the reading, students were invited to write an essay on the comic book they read. They were given 30 minutes to finish this assignment. The researcher asked them to write an essay about what they understood from the comic book and to express their opinion in general about the comic book. This broad question was

selected purposefully to give participants room for expressing ideas that might be not addressed if the essay was about a specific topic presented in the material. This was supposed to enrich the data and provide further insights on the readership of the comic book at hand. Once this last reading session was finished, the researcher formed three groups with participants on a random basis. Beheshti and Large (2001) argued that although the number of participants in focus groups is usually influenced by the nature of the study, it is preferred when working with children for the number to be small (Beheshti & Large, 2001). Here the number was chosen to make the groups easier to handle for the researcher/facilitator and to provide a more intimate atmosphere for children. This was supposed to generate more data and encourage children participation as with a few members, peers pressure goes down. Each group included four children and was invited to come on a specific date to discuss the comic book. After each session children were offered candy and chocolate to thank them for coming to the session.

The following days, the focus groups were conducted and children were invited to discuss the comic book within a timeframe of 90 minutes. Nevertheless, the discussions lasted only 45 minutes and fun activities such as drawing and coloring were held after that. This was due to a saturation observed by the researcher after 45 minutes of discussion during the first group. Once the saturation was reached, the researcher stopped asking questions and students asked spontaneously to be allowed to start drawing some of the characters on the comic book or to start coloring the copies they were given to read. All focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed afterwards. It is important to note that children reacted very positively to the tape-recorder usage during focus groups. Even though they were informed about audio-taping the discussions beforehand, some of them

50

asked the researcher about the purpose of the audio-tape recorder usage and the researcher replied that it would be useful for him to remember the discussions for the study and analyze their opinions and thoughts. This response seemed to satisfactorily slake children curiosity about the tape-recorder. Moreover, the researcher took notes while facilitating the focus groups to enrich the data. After finishing the focus groups children were given a courtesy gift for participating in the study.

Data

Generally speaking, the data gathered from the reading sessions and the focus groups showed that children enjoyed the comic book they were giving and most of them showed a great deal of interest in the medium. The data obtained from the three focus groups yielded the same themes. In the following section these themes will be discussed in detail. Also an explanation of the coding process that lead to their construction will be provided. Schostak (2008) categorized writing qualitative research styles into three categories: (a) the traditional format, (b) the emergent format, and (c) the creative format. The last one provides a room for inventive data display and presentation (Schostak, 2008). The creative format has been chosen as a method of data presentation in this paper in order to increase the reader's chances to get a sense of the research findings in their relation with the medium. For instance, concerning emergent themes, selected panels of the comic book used in the study were displayed to introduce emergent themes from the focus groups. Also, excerpts from the focus groups are provided to illustrate repeating ideas and emergent themes. Finally, certain essays written by children participants during the study were displayed to provide visual examples of children participants' expressions about the medium.

Analyzing Data

The data was analyzed through an interpretive approach within a grounded theory. Transcriptions of audio-taped focus groups were reviewed and analyzed carefully in order to track emergent themes. Drawing on the work of Auerback and Silverstein (2003), the first step of the coding process was to cut the text to manageable proportions in order to take out the *relevant text* from all transcribed focus groups (Auerback & Silverstein, 2003). After selecting the portions of text relevant to the research concerns, the researcher tracked *repeating ideas* between participants and across groups to make sure that ideas are not repeated under the group process influence (Auerback and Silverstein, 2003). The next step in the coding process was to track down emergent *themes* under which umbrella *repeating ideas* were grouped. Repeating ideas that had something in common were grouped under one theme. The final analysis of the data showed that there were four dominant themes that covered different repeating ideas. Finally, themes were linked to theoretical references used in this study as a framework in analyzing the data (Auerback and Silverstein, 2003).

Synopsis of the comic book "Homeland Earth O Homeland Earth"

Following is a synopsis of the comic book used in this study. The names of the characters were chosen according to the world region they live in. Moreover, unusual or non-typical American names were chosen to stimulate children's curiosity about cultural diversity.

Rashid, a ten-year-old boy, is having a lesson about environmental protection in the class. Just after the class ends, on the way back home he is throwing trash on the ground and is being immediately criticized by his best friend Sami for his irresponsible

behavior. To this criticism Rashid is insensitive. He is just careless about environmental protection. There is so much land after all. The night of that day, Rashid is awakened in the middle of his sleep by an incredible light coming out of his window. Driven by curiosity, he goes outside to see where the strange light was coming from. In a movement of inattention, he plummets into the river next to his house. As he does not know how to swim, he starts screaming for help. Unfortunately, no one around could hear his desperate call.  Then, a strange creature (from which the light was coming from) saves him and welcomes him on a small boat.  Rashid is first shocked and frightened but eventually he is reassured by the strange creature whose name is ChelouChelou. The later reveals to Rashid that he is on a secret mission, and Rashid immediately shows his interest to partake the adventure. Rashid at some point is intrigued by ChelouChelou's identity. Indeed, ChlouChelou neither does he look like a fellow human nor does he have an appearance of a known animal. To Rashid's questions, ChelouChelou always respond by saying "I am just different" (Harbi, 2009, p. 5).

So our two friends go on a journey onto the ocean and one day they met Kaita, a little boy from Africa. Kaita presents the two travelers to the beauty of Africa and its animal and vegetable richness. After Kaita joins them on board, they will hit America where they will make friendship with Richard, who invites them to a beach cleaning party. The crew gets a new member and resumes the adventurous sailing. At some point our friends arrive at Russia, where they are welcomed by a little girl named Anushka. Anushka presents to their new friends her parents' environment-friendly little factory of clothes.  She explains the concept of sustainable development to her friends while giving them appropriate coats for the local weather. Anushka joins the team to go to India this

time, where they shall meet Sindamani, a little girl whose passion is growing trees. As Sindamani notices travelers who are tired from sailing, she provides them some fresh water, a natural element essential for life on earth and yet polluted and wasted by many humans.  After a while, all of them will spend some time growing trees. Once more, the whole team, with Sindamani this time, goes on the ocean to hit China and meet a little kid named Chung. Chung's passion is reading about renewable energies and green technology. After spending some moments hearing Chung sharing his knowledge about environment-friendly technology, our friends are ready to hit the ocean once more. ChelouChlou keeps responding by "I am different" each time a kid asks him about his nature/identity.

One day, our friends are caught in a middle of a violent storm, ChelouChelou loses consciousness, and the young crew members finds themselves alone with the responsibility of governing the boat. After a short episode of panic, they find a solution to face the storm and eventually everybody make it sound and safe until the storm has passed. ChelouChelou then is awakened and congratulates his crew members for their courage, solidarity and team spirit. He also informs them about the object of their journey. In fact, ChelouChelou secret mission was to save a little polar bear that was driven away from the arctic because of climate change. The mission started when ChelouChelou heard one day the hopeless call of the little bear miles away thanks to his telepathic capacities. Once the mission was finished, Rashid found himself asleep and his mother waking him up to go to school. Maybe it was just a dream. After school Rashid find a can on the grass, he picks it up and put it in a waste receptacle under the

incredulous eyes of his friend Sami. Indeed, the later is astonished to see Rashid finally caring for the environment.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study involved 12 children participants age 10-13. They formed three focus groups of four participants each. Focus groups discussions were transcribed and then coded using Auerback and Silverstein (2003) coding method. *Relevant text* was taken out of the totality of transcriptions. Then, *repeating ideas* among participants and across groups were tracked. Finally, *repeating ideas* were grouped under common *themes*. Following are the *reaping ideas* and common *themes* that emerged from the data.

*Repeating ideas:*

After analyzing relevant text the data revealed several repeating ideas. These repeating ideas were as follows:

(a) Environment protection is an interesting topic.

(b) We can have a better system to protect the earth.

(c) I know stuff about environment.

(d) I have an anecdote related to that.

(e) If it is recycling or about a specific reason, I read it.

(f) I don't like girly comics.

(g) He isn't an animal, he isn't a human; he is just different.

(h) People are from different races so they look different!

Following is an explanation of emergent themes under which repeating ideas were grouped.

*Themes:*

Several themes surfaced during the three focus groups. These themes included (1) *Learning about environment protection*, (2) *Relating personal experience to the comic book,* (3) *Educational content in comics,* (4) *Identity, differences and diversity.*

*1-  Learning about environment protection*
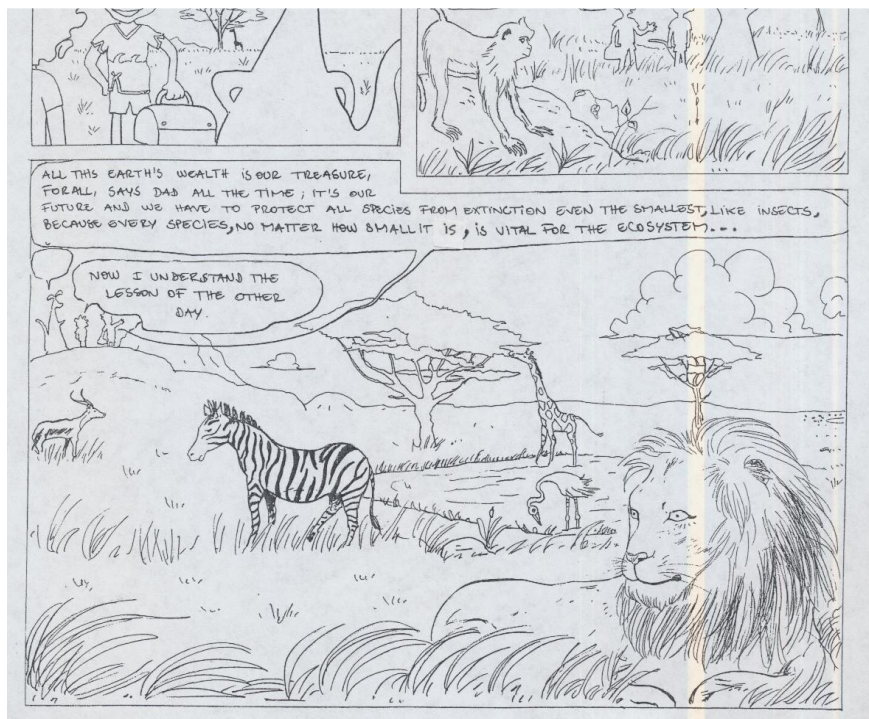


Homeland Earth Oh Homeland Earth, 2009. p. 5.

This theme emerged on several occasions during the focus group discussions. Children when asked whether they liked the comic book they read during the reading

session were affirmative and argued that was mainly because it was about environment protection. "Yes! Because it was about saving the environment! Wohou! Go earth!" pointed out enthusiastically one of the children participants. This idea of *Environment protection as an interesting topic* was frequent among participants and across groups. The other repeating idea that formed this theme was children participants on the fact that *we can have a better system to protect the earth.* For instance one participant stated: "We can have bicycles or just something that doesn't pollute the earth like electrical cars…"

2- *Relating personal experience to the comic book*



Homeland Earth Oh Homeland Earth, 2009. p. 10.

One repeating idea among participants and across groups was *I know stuff about environment.* Children participants at several points of the discussion provided information which was not directly related to the specific environmental points discussed in the comic book but nevertheless had something to do with environment as to show to other participants that they had knowledge about the environment and wanted to share it with them. As one of the participants asked the facilitator and group members ": Have

you heard about the oil spill?" and further explained that "It was in the Gulf of Mexico, there was oil all over and some plants and lots of animals died…it is sad…"And also, another participant who shared with the group members that "There are some factories that are lavaging salt water and they take out the salt so you have fresh water…"

I *have an anecdote related to that,* was another close repeating idea to the one discussed above. Many children participants shared personal anecdotes with the group that contributed in making the discussion more convivial and enjoyable, as exemplified by one participant: "My dad put some kind of trash in the backyard and there are some cats they come and eat them, so it doesn't pollute the earth…" These two repeating ideas were grouped under the theme of *Relating personal experience to the comic book* because they both expressed either a personal knowledge related to the topics discussed in the comic book or a personal anecdote that was more or less related to the discussion.

3- *Educational content in comics*



Homeland Earth Oh Homeland Earth, 2009. p. 17.

Two repeating ideas formed the theme *Educational content in comics*. The first one is "If it is recycling or a specific reason I read it," which was an idea expressed,

through using different words, by several participants across groups. The second

repeating idea was a rather surprising one. Using a quote from one of the participants, it

was called "I don't like girly comics". This idea was expressed by many participants,

mainly female participants when the researcher asked group members to describe the

kind of comics they did not like. The majority of female participants expressed their

dislike toward "girly comics" quite spontaneously. These participants provided specific

reasons why they disliked "girly comics" as exemplified by the following sample quotes:

S: "It's all about things that are popular, how do I explain it? Like… like

umm…kind of like…you know…like pink, fashioning…"

J: "like hey you wanna go to party!"

*4- Identity, differences and diversity*



Homeland Earth Oh Homeland Earth, 2009. p. 4.

The last theme that emerged from the data was insightful in many respects. First,

the identity of the character named ChelouChelou proved to be very intriguing to children

participants. In each group and at different moments, a discussion took place about "what

is CheLouChelou?" As passionately expressed by one of the participants who stated "The

only thing I hated is that we never knew what Chelouchelou is!"

Many suggestions were made. Following is a sample from focus group one as an

illustration of the type of debates that took place during the focus groups about

CheLouChelou's identity:

> O: He said he is not an animal…
> S: He looks like a kangaroo though…
> S: Well he is not a human. Humans don't look like that! It is impossible!
> S: Maybe he is an evil animal!
> M: He's not an alien; he is just different…
> J: He is different…
> S: He isn't an animal, he isn't human…he is just different!
> J: He is from a new species of something called different!
> J: He could be a plant…
> J: He could be a plant, a plant with some chemical reaction, but still a plant!
> S: He can't be a plant, he has no roots, and he has no leaves!
> J: There are some plants that don't have like roots and leaves…
> S: Yeah but usually they don't go in a mission to save the earth!
> J: He could be a cell!
> S: A cell!! I don't think a cell can be that big!
> J: He could be a cell that got big with some chemical reaction…
> J: He was testing a chemical reaction and then he does this and then he got
> affected by that chemical thing!
> S: Huh! He is Rachid's imagination.
> S: Huh! I know! It's his teacher dressed up!

This illustrates how CheLouChelou's shape exited children's curiosity and

imagination. His definition of himself as being "just different" did not slake children

curiosity, so they went on trying to find the closest possible identity to what

CheLouChelou is. This can be interpreted as being very telling of what Khan (2010)

evoked in his *Critical Pedagogy Eco-literacy and Planetary Crisis* about the dichotomy

that our modern civilization inherited from the Hellenistic world with regard to the divide

between human and animal. This notion that divides the human from animals and other

61

living creatures (which implies a kind of superiority of the human being) was not prevalent in other civilizations such as it was the case in ancient wisdom of Native Americans who pretty much viewed the human and the animal through a horizontal perspective in terms of importance (Khan, 2010).

Another inference that can be made from this point is that children participants expressed a need of categorization with regard to ChelouChelou's identity. The answer ChelouChelou kept giving to other children characters asking him throughout the comic book which was "I am different" did not satiate participants' curiosity. They wanted to find a category for him, even if this meant creating a new one.

The second repeating idea that constituted the theme of *Identity, differences and diversity* was labeled, using once again a quote from one participant, as "People are form different races so they look different!" Many participants across groups when asked about the characters in the comic book were intrigued by their look and their names. Some participants found some characters from different races and with different names "weird", whereas others were more tolerant toward their difference in terms of shape and color or name. The following sample illustrates this point:

> S: He's funny, he is ugly, she is pretty, he's weird, he' weird. [Showing respectively on the cover page: Rashid, Kaita, Sindamani, Chung, Richard]
> Moderator: Why do you think he's weird?
> S: I don't know…his hair is red and he has a white skin like a ghost!
> M: So what! I have a friend, she has brown hair and her skin is pink…
> S: Eww!
> M: No she is pretty!
> S: H's also ugly, he's dark! [Showing Kaita on the cover page]
> M: [A bit angry] because he is from Africa! People are from different races so they look different…
> R: Well he is black and he is from Africa.
> S: I thought this was sun burns…
> R: No it is his natural color…
> S: And why his hair is red, why did you choose red? [Sindamani]

S: Why did you choose the hair colors the way they are…
M: [to S] why your hair color is like that? How would you like people asking you?
S: I don't like other colors; I love black. [Showing her own hair]
O: Maybe their hair styles are customs from their countries…
M: His eyes are closed, his are closed, and his are closed… [Showing on the cover page, Richard, Chung and Kaita respectively]
S: His eyes are just different, they are just smaller…he is not closing his eyes, because that means that his closing his eyes on every single picture, but he's not… [Talking about Chung, a priory an Asian character]

It is important with regard to the sample shown above to mention some ideas that were not included in the repeating ideas groupings and which were labeled, using Auerback and Silverstein (2003) terminology, as "orphan" ideas (p.59). One orphan idea expressed by one participant in the discussion shown above came surprisingly against the pertaining controversy and was focusing not on the characters' appearances but rather on their personalities:

J: They were all environmental friendly.

Another participant in his essay when expressing why he liked reading the comic book stated:

A: Another reason is that it shows how and where other people with cultural diversities can still be friends.

## Analyzing the Essays

As expressed earlier in the present work, in addition to discussing the comic book used in this study, participants were given the opportunity to write their opinion about what they read. The researcher asked them to write a short essay about their opinion in general, including what they understood and what they learned from the reading but also what they liked or disliked. Responses were varied and enriched the data analysis,

63

especially with regard to the comic book as an educational tool. For example, children participants were very creative in their responses and while taking the messages expressed in the material seriously they took the material itself quite informally. The comic book provided them valuable information but in a rather informal fashion. The comic book was for many children participants first of all leisure medium even if the actual material was educational. This was expressed at many points during the focus groups and also in the essays. One example of that is that students expressed the enjoyable aspect of "the pictures" in the comic book, while in the same time praising the educational information contained in it. Following is a sample essay illustrating this point:

> A: I thought that the comic book was very well done and that it taught me a lot of things. The pictures were wonderful and the characters had very good personalities.
> I think that the book should be published. I think this because it is very educational. Another reason is that it is very intricate and beautiful drawings. Another reason is that it shows how and where other people with cultural diversities can still be friends.
> I think that the book is very educational. I think this because the book teaches people about the environment and how important it is. It also teaches about how important it is to save the disappearing wildlife and to not destroy it.
> I also think that the book has a very good theme. I also think that the book has a very good plot and settings. I also liked the story inside of the story because it was very good. I also loved the suspense and ending because they were very surprising.
> This is why I think that the book is good, it was very educational and very well plotted out. The drawings were very wonderful too. Overall it was just a very wonderful book and I hope to see it published and a lot of sales.

Another interesting aspect of the essays was that the students took very different and creative paths in expressing their ideas when asked to write what was supposed to be a relatively formal essay. For example, one essay was written around a drawing of the

character ChelouChelou and planet earth, reproducing part of the drawing on the cover

page of the comic book.
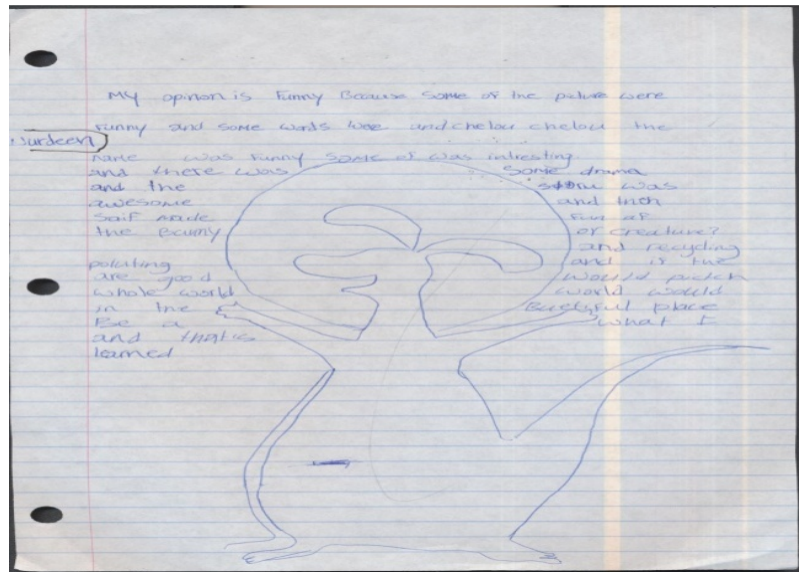


Sample essay 1.

Another participant expressed his opinion in bullet points fashion and created at

the bottom of the page a series of panels on which he put numbers and summarized the

story in the comic book by splitting it into sequences on each panel. Thus, emulating the

medium used during the study even though he was asked for writing an essay. It would

be not extravagant to evoke Marshal McLuhan's concept of the medium being the

message as it seems that the comic book construction as medium that expresses itself

through drawn and written sequences influenced the participants expression when asked

to write an essay about the messages contained in the comic book. Another participant

while writing some sentences in a formal fashion wrote others in scream speech balloons,

as a means to emphasize the most important thoughts she had about the story and the

comic book.
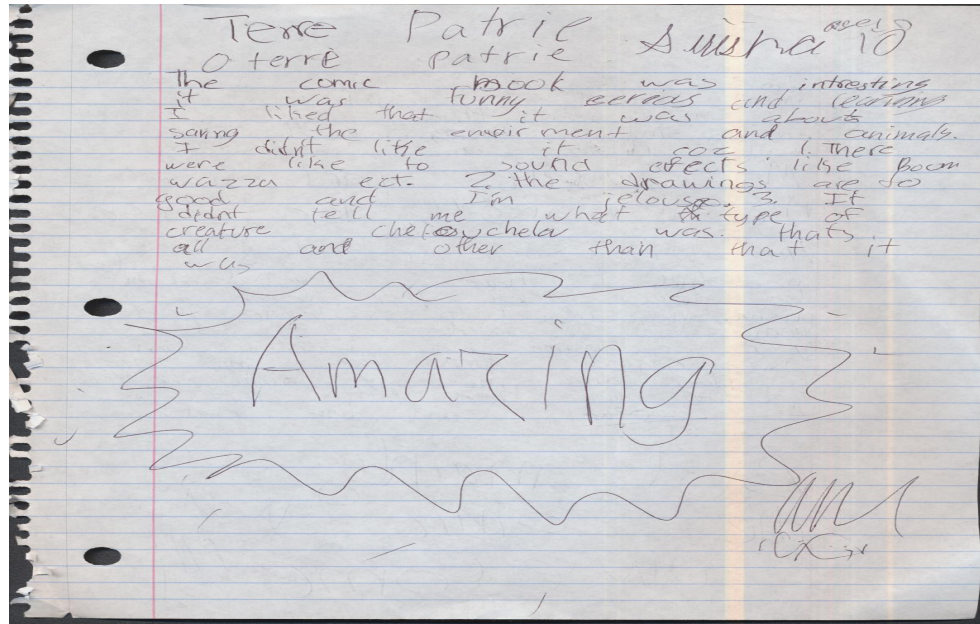
Sample essay 2.

As exemplified by the essay illustrated in sample 1, many children participants combined drawing and writing to express their opinions about the comic book they read. Again McLuhan's idea of media inside other media would be helpful here to shed light on the mechanisms of expression participants used during the essay task. McLuhan (1964) claimed that each medium contain other media in it. For example a book is medium in which the written text is another medium, and the written text is the medium that contain the speech, and the speech is a medium that contain in it the mind processes in creating ideas and formulating them into coherent and intelligible form (McLuhan, 1964).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Discussion

Using the comic book to teach universal human values to children was the starting point of this research. As explained earlier, the study was conducted through a grounded theory in approaching the field (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1998), this influenced dramatically the research concerns. As the data showed, if a priori it is difficult to evaluate the efficacy of the comic book in communicating abstract universal human values to a young readership, it appears nevertheless that the comic book was effective in inciting children to think critically about important topics such as: environment protection, differences between human beings, and earth citizenship. Furthermore, the comic book proved to be a suitable medium to invite children to discus educational topics with their peers in a convivial way. Most of children participants showed a great deal of enthusiasm during the group discussions. Moreover, children were very creative in their responses both during the discussions and when writing the essays. The comic book seems to provoke children to take creative ways of expression that they might not think of using if they were reading a classic book addressing the same topics. This section will discuss the theoretical construct called "*Using the comic book to gratify one's needs*" drawn upon the uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1973).

Using the Comic Book to Gratify One's Needs

It appears from the focus groups emergent themes, the analysis of the essays and direct observation the researcher had during both the reading sessions and the discussions that children used the comic book to gratify certain needs. As expressed in the theoretical framework section, uses and gratifications theory is used here as a framework to interpret some aspects of the focus groups emergent themes. Emergent themes were therefore collapsed into a theoretical construct called "using the comic book to gratify one's needs" following the methodology proposed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Following is this grouping of focus groups emergent themes into one theoretical construct through the five categories of individual needs and media uses assessed by Katz, Haas and Gurvitch (1973):

 (a) Cognitive needs: acquiring and strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding: Children participants expressed their interest in learning about the environment. This was observed through the two repeating ideas that constituted the Theme *Educational content in comics.*  For instance one participant stated the following:

> O: I thought the comic book was about some people who help the earth. It was interesting. It was a good comic book. I also never knew that some electric vehicles don't pollute the air. I never knew that water was the most precious treasure.

Another example related to this need is when children in the first focus group were discussing the characters in the comic book, they were intrigued by their countries

of origin, and they speculated that the first character who appears in the comic book was from Algeria (the researcher's country of origin) even though this was not mentioned at any point in the comic book. Many of them also proposed that Chung was from China, and others that he was from Japan as expressed in this excerpt:

> O: And this one (Chung) is from which country?
> S: He is from China…
> O: No...China is not surrounded by water so it has to be Japan.

Then, children spontaneously moved to a world map that was hanging on the wall on the children classroom and the researcher followed them with the audio-tape recorder and then they started tracing the journey the characters made from Algeria, to Some country in Africa (several propositions were made) and then to America, Russia, India or Nepal and finally China or Japan:

> S: I think this is how they went, he [Rachid] from which country is from…
> Researcher: Well I didn't precise that actually…
> J: Let's say he's from your country…
> M: Yeah let's say he is from Algeria…
> J: He went like this from Algeria to meet Kaita in Africa, and then they got around and they got to…
> S: He said he went to Mexico…?
> J: No!
> O: Somebody joined our club! [A child from outside opened the classroom door and took a quick gaze at the group then decided not to come in]
> J: No he didn't go to Mexico, he went to Africa first.
> J: So he went this way…
> S: And then all the way to New York City and next to north…Greenland or somewhere…and then they went…
> O: No Russia…!
> M: And they made all this in one night…
> R: It didn't say so in the comic book.
> O: They took a nap just once.
> S: It could've like go from here to here…
> O: How can they make it to here?
> S: No they just [went] down here.
> S: I've been to here, here, here and here!

R: And don't forget that the boat of ChelouChelou is magic so he can go faster than it is possible for a normal boat.
S: He said it was magic because it can go a long time without polluting!

(b) Affective needs: needs related to strengthening emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experience: with regard to strengthening emotional experience, it is difficult to assess through the data gathered from the focus groups whether children used the comic book to strengthening emotional experience. Nevertheless, many participants expressed during the discussions and in the essays how they enjoyed the pictures. One example is a female participant who expressed that, even though she disliked reading in general, she enjoyed reading the comic because of the pictures:

M: "And the best is pictures. Because I like to only look at pictures. I don't like to read at all."

(c) Personal integrative needs, strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status: Expressing one's opinion in front of peers about topics discussed in the comic book and sharing personal knowledge and personal experience related to these topics is believed to be one way of achieving this need.  Also, concerning to the personal integrative need, many children during the discussions expressed a need to relate characters in the comic book to their own personalities and identities. For instance, one female participant when asked which character she liked the most replied the following:

J: "I wanna be her [Anushka], she is recycbleich and I am recycbl-ich".

Another female participant wanted Sindamani (a female character a priory for India) to be from Nepal:

Moderator: Ok, so tell me about the characters, what do you think about the characters?

S: I wanna be Chelouchelou, but the prettiest one is…Sendamani!

O: Is she Indian?

S: Could she be from Nepal?


(d) Social integrative needs: strengthening contacts with family, friends, and the rest of the world: Here the data showed that there was a great deal of group cohesion during focus groups. Participants seemed to get along with each other quite naturally. However, it would be very subjective to assume that the comic book as a medium was the main reason behind this group cohesion.

(e) Escape or tension release needs: On the escape or tension release need, the data showed that many participants enjoyed the fantasy and the adventurous aspect of the material. For instance, one participant when asked to write the essay about the reading summarized the story in the first person as if he has lived the adventure himself:

> S: "One day I woke up. I saw a light so I went outside. And I saw a guy on a boat. So I said are you an alien? No I am a different thing remember that. So I hopped in the boat and off we go. So we met other people. And our mission was to save a polar bear on ice. So we helped him get out so we did. And he went back to his mommy. And all of us went home. The end"

Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of the comic book as a medium in several ways. First, it provided an appreciation of the medium through hearing children voices and listening to their subjective experiences rather than analyzing the medium objectively. Students were given a room to discuss the comic book they read freely with other children and also to express their personal opinion in the essay task. It is believed here that giving the children the opportunity to express their opinion in front of other children and through writing or drawing (as many spontaneously opted to express their thought) is one way to empowers children sense of independence and creativity.

Second, this study contributes to enriching the literature on the medium in the mass communications field. As explained earlier in the introduction and as shown in the literature review, research on the comic book seems to burgeon in several fields such as education and arts, but in the mass communications field the medium attracts less attention. It is believed that a look from the mass communications academics can provide an enriching perspective in understanding the nature of the medium and learning about its readership.

Third, the methodology of the study in using focus groups through a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach provides a room for children participants to spontaneously express their thought and feelings during the discussions and when writing the essays. Using focus groups was primarily an option to get close insights from children and elicit meaningful responses. It was the premise of this study to consider children participants as autonomous individuals interacting with the medium. This methodological choice was perhaps behind the degree of freedom and creativity children

participants showed during focus groups and especially when expressing their opinions in the essays.

Finally, by creating a comic book to serve the study, the researcher attempted to integrate into the medium the research broader concerns. These broader concerns consisted primarily in enforcing universal human values as bedrock for good governance through a critical pedagogy approach that empowers students' critical thinking about important issues that can impact their future in significant ways, for instance, environmental consciousness.

On the other hand, there are several limitations to this study that needs to be addressed. First, this qualitative research chose grounded theory in approaching the field and an interpretative method in analyzing the data. Thus, it is to a great extant a subjective study. However, it is not in the scope of this study, as it used a qualitative methodology to target objectivity. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) argued that in qualitative research "we believe…that subjectivity, interpretation, and context are inevitability interwoven into every research project" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 77). In quantitative research we usually deal with the concepts of *reliability* of data (which is related to objectivity) and with *generalizability* of findings (which is related to universality). Instead, in qualitative research Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) proposed that we deal with "*justifiability of interpretations"* as opposed to *reliability* and with "*transferability of theoretical constructs"* as opposed to *generalizability* (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 78)*. With regard to *justifiability of interpretations,* the attempt was made in this research to justify the interpretation of data in light of a number of theoretical references used in this study (e.g. McLuhan, 1964, Katz et al., 1973, Morin,

1999, & Khan, 2010). Whereas it seems to be more problematic to transfer the study to another population of children, as the comic book that was used in this study was conceived specifically to the target age group concerned by the research. Also, the same comic book needs to be used in the research to reach theoretical constructs that could be close to the ones constructed in this study. Thus, *transferability of theoretical constructs* needs to be based on the same age group (in perhaps a different culture or population) and using the same or a similar comic book with regard to content and style.

Another limitation of this study is that the focus groups were fairly small, even though this was a methodological choice as larger groups tend to be harder to handle, and smaller groups of children tend to provide more valuable data. Nonetheless, conducting the same study with larger groups and a higher number of participants could provide further insights.

Future research about this topic can explore the efficacy of the comic book in communicating human values to students in real life settings. Using the same comic book that was created for this research in a classroom environment could provide more insights about both the medium and the readership. Moreover, involving a greater number of participants could overcome some of the limitations of the present work. Another interesting application of this topic would be to use the comic book in a summer camp. Thus, exploring the efficacy of the comic book in communicating good governance principles and environmental consciousness in settings where nature and group activities are present. For example, a study could use the comic book *Homeland earth O homeland earth* (Harbi, 2009) to stimulate students' critical thinking about environmental protection and combine the use of the comic book with real life activities in a summer

camp. Another idea would be to use the comic book to communicate good governance principles such as participation or transparency and then organize group activities to illustrate those concepts.

In summary, despite the discussed methodological limitations, this study provides an innovative approach in studying the comic book as a medium and as an educational tool.  Through tailoring the medium to the research concerns, the researcher attempted to focus on the communication of certain human values as bedrock for good governance to a young audience. Many scholars argued that children are active agents in producing culture and actively participate in shaping their social word (Adler & Adler, 1998; Fine, 1987). This study aimed at qualitatively evaluating children's reactions to both the medium and the messages contained it.  Therefore, this study contributes to the understanding of the medium of the comic book on the one hand, and on the other hand, in a social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), to the endorsement of universal human values as bedrock for the good governance of the future.

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APPPENDICES


Appendix A:

Script:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

   I would like to invite your child to participate in a study that will be conducted in the Family Resource Center. For this, I will ask your permission and ask you to sign a consent form. In addition to your consent as a parent/guardian, your child will be asked for his/her assent.   Your child will participate in an audio-taped procedure in which he/she will engage in activities such as reading a comic book, discussing the reading with other children and the researcher, and writing essays about the reading.

   This research will use focus groups. Students will be given a comic book to read on 3 occasions with the researcher as a facilitator. Once the reading sessions are completed, four groups will be formed on a random sampling to have focus groups of discussion. The group interactions are facilitated by the researcher who will supply the matters or questions for discussion.  Focus groups will last no longer than 90 minutes. For data gathering the discussions will be audio-taped to be transcribed later. Moreover, children participants will be invited to write essays to express their thought on the comic book they read. This task will be explicitly presented to them and clarified as a free expression of opinion and not a graded assignment.



Sincerely,

Appendix B:

## ADULT CONSENT/PARENT PERMISSION FORM
## OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

**PROJECT TITLE:**  Using the Comic Book to Teach Human Values as the Bedrock for Good Governance.

**INVESTIGATOR:**   Amine Harbi, MS Mass Communications, Oklahoma State University.

**PURPOSE:**

This study will examine the efficacy of the comic book as a teaching tool and a communication medium with regard to human values as the bedrock for good governance.  Preparing the bedrock for good governance means introducing children to universal human values such as earth protection, mutual understating among humans etc. The introduction to such broad concepts that can be related to good governance principles can be done effectively through the comic book as an educational medium. In the context of promoting good governance principles, this project will evaluate qualitatively the efficacy of the comic book as a medium and a teaching tool.

This study will also gather information regarding how the young readership responds to the comic book as an educational tool. By conducting focus groups formed of elementary school students; the researcher will evaluate the reactions of the audience to matters of narrative, graphic style, format, and type of characters.

**PROCEDURES:**

Your child will participate in an audio-taped procedure in which he/she will engage in activities such as reading a comic book, discussing the reading with other children and the researcher, and writing essays about the reading. Those activities will take place in the Family Resource Center with the presence of the researcher who will be orienting the discussion.

This research will use focus groups. Students will be given a comic book to read in on 3 occasions with the researcher as a facilitator. Once the reading sessions are completed, three groups will be formed on a random sampling to have focus groups of discussion. The group interactions are facilitated by the researcher.  Focus groups will last no longer than 90 minutes. For data gathering the discussions will be audio-taped to be transcribed later. Moreover, children participants will be invited to write essays to express their thought on the comic book they read. This task will be explicitly presented to them and clarified as a free expression of opinion and not a graded assignment. They will receive a small gift for writing the essay and for their participation.

**RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:**

The risks to your child are minimal. If either you or your child becomes uncomfortable with the study, you will be given the opportunity to stop the procedure at that point with absolutely no penalty. Also, your child may choose to stop at any time with absolutely no penalty.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:**

It is believed that this research will help expanding knowledge about the usefulness of the comic book as an educational tool and as a communication medium.  If you are interested, we will send you a copy of the results of the study when it is finished.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

All information about your child will be kept confidential and will not be released. Children answers and audiotapes will be identified by subject number only, rather than

86

names on them. All information (answers and audiotapes) will be kept in a secure place that is open only to the researcher. Audiotapes will be coded to summarize child behavior.

The data and recordings will be kept in the researcher's computer for transcription for two years at his residence in 85 S UNIV PL APT 12 Stillwater, Ok 74075. Only the researcher will have access to them. After transcription, all the recordings will be destroyed. Results from this study may be presented at professional meetings or in publications. Participants will be given a number each and may be quoted in the study but their identities will be kept anonymous. At no point in reporting the data participants identities will be identifiable.

## COMPENSATION:

Your child will receive a small prize for his/her participation and writing the essay.

## CONTACTS:

I understand that I may contact the researcher at the following address and phone number, should I desire to discuss my or my child's participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study:
Amine Harbi, MS Mass Communications, Department of _Media & Strategic Communication, Oklahoma State University.
Email: amine.harbi@okstate.edu
Address: 85 S University Place APT 12, 74075, Stillwater, OK, Phone:  (405) 334-_9953
Adviser:
Dr. Wayne Wanta, Department of _Media & Strategic Communication, Oklahoma State University.
Email: wayne.wanta@okstate.edu
Address: 206 Paul Miller Building, Oklahoma State University, OK 74078-4053, Phone:   (405) 744- 6354
If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Shelia Kennison at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

## PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

## CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what my child will be asked to do and of the benefits of his/her participation. I also understand the following statements:
I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my child _____ (insert child's name here)_____

_____
_____
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian                          Date


_____
_____
Signature Witness                                            Date


I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____
_____
Signature of Researcher                                      Date

Appendix C:

**ASSENT FORM**
**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Dear Student,

We are interested in learning about the suitability of the comic book as communication medium and an educational tool for children your age. In order to understand this, we would like you to participate in reading a comic book with other children in the Family Resource Center and to engage in a discussion about the reading afterwards. We will also need your permission to let us audio-tape the discussions about the comic book in the Family Resource Center. Also we will ask you to write an essay about the comic book you will read. Your parent/guardian is aware of this project.
Please understand that you do not have to do this. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. You may stop at any time you wish from participating in both the reading of the comic book and the discussion about the reading.
Your name will not be on your answers, and you will be given a number that will be put on your answers so no one will know whose answers they are. If you have any questions about what we are doing, please ask us. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Amine Harbi
Graduate Student Oklahoma State University

MS Mass Communications.
Oklahoma State University

I have read this form and agree to help with your project.

_____
(your name)
_____
(your signature)
_____
(date)

VITA

Amine Harbi

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis:   USING THE COMIC BOOK TO TEACH HUMAN VALUES AS THE
          BEDROCK FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Major Field:  Mass Communications

Biographical:


        Education:  Degree in Information and Communication Sciences.


        Experience: Lecturer at the University of Annaba (Algeria) in the Italian
              Language department of the module: Communication.

        Professional Memberships: Fulbright Scholar and Member of State Alumni.

Name: Amine Harbi                    Date of Degree: July, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University          Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: USING THE COMIC BOOK TO TEACH HUMAN VALUES AS THE
            BEDROCK FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Pages in Study: 75                    Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Mass Communications

Scope and Method of Study: This project qualitatively evaluated the efficacy of the
comic book as an educational medium. The researcher created a comic book focusing on
human values as bedrock for good governance to serve as the medium for this study.
Using focus groups of children, the researcher evaluated the reactions of the audience to
matters of narrative, graphic style, and type of characters. Data was gathered through
direct observation, transcriptions and written essays.


Findings and Conclusions:  Four emergent themes dominated the focus groups: (a)
        Learning about environment protection, (b) Relating personal experience to the
        comic book, (c) Educational content in comics, (d) Identity, differences and
        diversity. Emergent themes were collapsed into a theoretical construct called
        "using the comic book to gratify one's needs". These needs were as follow: (a)
        Cognitive needs: acquiring and strengthening information, knowledge, and
        understanding, (b) Affective needs: needs related to strengthening emotional,
        pleasurable, or aesthetic experience,  (c) Personal integrative needs, strengthening
        credibility, confidence, stability, and status, (d) Social integrative needs:
        strengthening contacts with family, friends, and the rest of the world, and (e)
        Escape or tension release needs. The comic book proved to be an effective
        medium for the children to gratify certain needs.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL:   DR. Wayne Wanta