EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONAL

PROCESSES OF COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS FOR POTENTIAL

IMPLICATIONS IN FAMILY THERAPY:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS APPROACH

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT,

FAMILY STUDIES, AND COUNSELING

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY

JOHN LLOYD, MS

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 2020

DEDICATION

      This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who have always provided the support I needed throughout my academic career. To my mom and dad who kept pushing me to finish my work. Also dedicated to my wife Laura who has been my support and cheerleader. You have given me the inspiration to help see myself through this project these last few years. To my grandparents who encouraged my education from a young age, while they are not alive to see what I have accomplished I keep them with me. Finally, to those who may benefit from the research, my hope is that I have helped create something that can be beneficial to those in need.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

John Lloyd

Exploring the Dynamics of Relationships and Emotional Processes of Comic Book
Characters for Potential Implications in Family Therapy: A Content Analysis Approach

May 2020

Engaging with clients who have difficulty in understanding and addressing their emotions

can cause difficulty for therapists, specifically in working with adolescents who are likely

to be resistant to therapy in general. Comic book therapy is an approach that can be

utilized by a therapist to help an adolescent engage in therapy by processing through

familiar emotions that the client observes in their favorite comic book characters. Using

content analysis, the researcher coded a total of 14 graphic novels that were published by

both DC and Marvel comics. The research presented in this dissertation indicates that

there are a multitude of emotional expressions that are conveyed in comic books. Comic

books also utilize an assortment of different mediums to convey emotion and utilize a

variety of relational interactions to help characters express and convey their thoughts and

emotions. The therapist can then utilize the examples provided by the researcher to aid in

the breaking down of therapeutic and relational barriers to better improve a client's

overall emotional well-being. Over time, the practice of comic book therapy can be fine-

tuned to better serve a diverse population of clientele. The researcher also intends for the

research to be a starting point for a database to be created that benefits therapists and

clients alike by identifying narrative themes that can be utilized within the context of

therapy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table   Page

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Comic book therapy incorporates characters from comic books, including

superheroes, into evidenced-based therapy that includes cognitive behavior therapy and

bibliotherapy (Parsons & Howe, 2006). It only seemed fitting to utilize a media that

children are familiar with to help them grow and develop, specifically when it comes to

their emotional processing. Using comic books as a therapeutic technique with children

and their families provides the therapist with an opportunity to use a well-known medium

to effect positive change. Children grow up watching their favorite superheroes in

cartoons on TV, they read comic books, and many children own and play with superhero

action figures. Often, children make believe that they are superheroes, similar to other

kinds of pretend play; children who make believe they are superheroes can increase their

social, cognitive, and creative skills (Parsons & Howe, 2006). According to Watson

(2019), 53% of adults aged from 18-34 read comic books on a varying, but regular, basis.

Adults tend to stay connected to their superheroes through watching movies of those

characters, all of which can have an impact on their psychosocial development (Early,

1993). Often, people look to superheroes for escape, but they will also use them to

identify the potential for human achievement and to recognize the great qualities in

humans that are typically depicted in any particular superhero.

In the past, comic books were viewed as "subliterate" by the general American culture and were seen as scapegoats for children becoming degenerates (Lopes, 2006, p. 401). More recently, some adults, including therapists, have come to recognize that superheroes take an important place in the culture as both children and adults look up to these characters for the ideals they embrace (Lopes, 2006). Children and adults often make a connection with how some characters exemplify the best in human nature (Lopes, 2006). Comic books also can tell a history of social stigma as that stigma relates to the culture. Readers of comic books relate to the stigmas that heroes face, such as being social outcasts, and how the characters cope with the issues that being a social outcast generates. Artists and writers of comics use stigmas as a basis of plot that relates to the retailers who sell and promote them, and the consumers who purchase and read them (Lopes, 2006). Over time, it appears that comic books have gone from a source of brain-rotting material to being recognized as a legitimate art form that people of all ages can relate to! Comic books could potentially provide a source of dialogue to help adolescents who struggle in processing their emotions.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the self-esteem and identity issues adolescents face throughout their young lives, it can be difficult for them to discuss their problems in a direct way due to their level of increased anxiety, which in turn, promotes resistance in therapy (Early, 1993). According to Huey, Henggeler, Brondino, and Pickrel (2000), children who participate in delinquent behavior tend to come from families who have had difficulty maintaining family cohesion, family functioning, and parental monitoring. Families may find it

difficult to express themselves when it comes to specific traumas or to discuss moments where there has been aggressive behavior towards each other. Families need to find a way to discuss the traumas and negative attitudes they have experienced with each other in order to maintain a sense of cohesion and stability, which in turn, could reduce the possibility of reckless behavior in adolescents (Huey et al., 2000). Parents of adolescents can face important challenges in the way they relate to their children, the way in which they communicate, and identifying effective ways to discipline or to allow the adolescent to learn on their own through experience.

It can be difficult for children, specifically adolescents, to open up in therapy for multiple reasons, such as: confidentiality, lack of insight into what is wrong, pride, and embarrassment (Rosalski, Steward, & Miller, 2010). Therefore, it has become more common for therapists to either use play therapy or bibliotherapy as a means for adolescents to communicate in an environment that they feel is safe (Early, 1993). Due to the experience of fear and mistrust that is either perceived or real to adolescents in most distressed families, bibliotherapy can help create different ways in which therapists can bridge the gap and allow the young clients to share freely, and without reproach (Early, 1993). Due to a lack of information on comic books, my plan in conducting this content analysis was to add to the existing base of knowledge about bibliotherapy and, therefore, assist therapists in utilizing comic books as another therapeutic tool that they can adapt and utilize to their adolescent client's benefit.

Statement of Purpose

The major purpose of this research was to document through content analysis the nature of emotional themes, such as anger, and emotional processing that occurs in superhero comic books published by DC and Marvel Comics in order to identify new ways for therapists and adults to connect to adolescents. The focus of the research was to identify narratives within the stories of the comic books, also called graphic novels, that would allow adolescents the opportunity to process their emotions without reproach. I also looked at types of father/son relationships in comic books in order to describe ways in which conflicts are resolved by the characters portrayed in the stories by different authors.

By identifying narratives and themes as is commonly done in bibliotherapy, adolescents would be afforded the opportunity to relate to the comic book characters, their emotions, and how those characters cope with the various situations that they face. One of the key aspects of bibliotherapy is to have the client reflect on the character's thoughts and actions. By providing introspection concerning the character's emotions and reactions, the adolescent could potentially identify the traits that they relate with that are displayed by the character. Using a strengths-based perspective, the adolescent might then identify ways in which they can utilize their own "powers" to cope with the situations that they face. I intend to create a database from the research findings and conclusions included in Chapters Four and Five in order to potentially provide a working index for therapists to help them determine which comic books and characters would be

best suited for their clients who may have had difficulty expressing and understanding their emotions.

Research Questions

1. How do comic books provide an in-depth narrative concerning the expression and processing of emotions, including anger?

2. What general patterns or themes are associated with the emotions that are ascribed to the characters in the comic books by the artist/writer/publisher?

3. How do comic books portray father and son figures working through problems or emotional problems with each other?

4. Are there certain comic books that are potentially more effective than others in assisting adolescents in processing and understanding their emotions?

Background

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy allows the client to experience cathartic moments through the use of literature (Pardek, 1994). While some adolescent clients may have issues in relating to characters in older literature, comic book heroes can provide an associative means in which the clients can relate to their favorite heroes. The literature can be utilized as a guide in helping the client bridge the gap of trust or to find an identity within the characters they are exploring (Rosalski et al., 2010). The use of bibliotherapy is not a new treatment modality as therapists have frequently chosen to use issue-specific stories in literature for their client in which the protagonist is someone who experiences the same or similar problems as the client (Rosalski et al., 2010). This allows the adolescent to

establish a connection to someone they can identify with (Rosalski et al., 2010). Findings from research that used multisystemic therapies showed that when there was an increase in parental monitoring, cohesion, and family functioning within families, then the delinquent behaviors of children became less frequent (Huey et al., 2000).

Bibliotherapy consists of a therapist assigning a book to a client to read that becomes a tool for helping the client empathize with one or more characters, thus providing the possibility for a cathartic moment for the reader (Catalano, 2008). In a similar fashion, I conjecture that graphic novels and comic books can be used as bibliotherapy. For example, a therapist could assign a specific issue of a comic book that focuses on a particular problem an adolescent is experiencing in their social world or within their family. Upon reading the selected book or graphic novel, the adolescent might gain insight into their own issues and see the problems from a potentially alternative position that could lead to the client to think in a different way or identify different solutions. The therapist helps the client by not only encouraging the client to read the book, but to also facilitate discussion that can help provide insight for the client (Catalano, 2008). In using bibliotherapy, the therapist can take on several roles including coach, discussion leader, as well as devil's advocate in order to provide the client with the opportunity to use critical thinking skills. Comic book therapy mirrors bibliotherapy in both concepts and techniques while incorporating the use of art and design through the pictures that are associated with the stories told.

Theoretical Framework

This research study was based on one modern therapy: cognitive behavior therapy (Beck, 2011), two postmodern family therapies: narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) and solution-focused therapy (de Shazer & Dolan 2007), and art therapy (Edwards, 2004). Postmodern theory, such as narrative therapy, takes the approach that both therapist and client work together to identify ways in which the client can overcome the problem (White & Epston, 1990). While the therapist may be an expert when it comes to theory and specific techniques, the clients are the experts of their own personal life. Through each person's expertise, therapists are able to devise ways to switch the client from being problem-focused to solution-focused. Modern theories, such as cognitive behavior therapy tend to emphasize the expertise of the therapist utilizing their knowledge and understanding to help the client achieve their goals (Dattilio, 2010).

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavior therapy is a type of therapy that focuses on the patterns of a person's thinking in order to help him or her reduce cognitive distortions that affect emotional regulation (Beck, 2011). CBT theorists such as Dattilio (2010) have identified that people over time formulate schemas concerning their perception on the world and others. The schemas act as theories that the person tends to believe about themselves, others, or events going on in their life. For example, someone suffering from depression may develop negative schemas towards one's self and life in general (Reinecke, Washburn & Becker-Weidman, 2007). From their schemas, a person can develop automatic thoughts that can result in the individual immediately jumping to a conclusive

7

thought. Therapists who practice CBT assist the client in identifying alternative explanations and assist in reshaping the way in which the individual thinks concerning the schemas (Dattilio, 2010). Therapists can utilize the model that helps the client identify how emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are intertwined with their experience and how their lens or perspective shape the way in which they view an event. By introducing the client to cognitive distortions, the individual is able to pick up on their maladaptive ways of thinking and can potentially change their schemas, and thus the therapist can help the client change their general perception towards themselves and life (Beck, 2011).

Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy focuses on the telling of a person's story and how the individual arrives at their current problem (White & Epston, 1990). The therapist's focus is to help the family disrupt their familial patterns of thinking and allow the client to create a new story that better fits the dynamics of the family. The theory is based on the concept of seeing humans as interpretive beings that establish meaning based on their personal and interpersonal experiences (White & Epston, 1990). Generally, narrative therapists see their clients as being unable to separate from the problem they are experiencing and, therefore, usually unable to overcome the obstacle as it relates to them. Therapists use varying techniques such as externalization, alternative stories, and unique outcomes to help the client break out of their narrative and to help establish a more positive and solution-oriented perspective (White & Epston, 1990).

Narrative therapy can provide the adolescent client with the opportunity to identify their own story, identify their character's strengths, and how their character

evolves over time (Hedtke, 2014). In relating to the characters in a story, the client is able to explore and manipulate their options in order to help create solutions to their problems. The general process of narrative therapy is to provide the adolescents with a sense of agency in that they have a sense of control in their lives, instead of feeling hopeless; the clients are able to come from a source of strength and resilience in order to overcome the obstacles that they have been facing (Hedtke, 2014).

Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT)

Solution-focused therapy focuses on the present and the future and, rarely, addresses the client's past (de Shazer & Dolan 2007). Save for analyzing what has and has not worked for the client, the therapist helps the client in developing a solution-focused attitude instead of continuing to emphasize the problem. The therapist succeeds within the context of therapy when the client is able to develop different solutions to their problems and can begin to change their negative/problem-focused thinking into a more positive/solution-focused view (de Shazer, & Dolan 2007). Clients are also encouraged to think from a strength's perspective. In identifying their strengths, the clients are able to develop a steady platform where they are able to work on their issues through acceptance and positivity (Pichot & Dolan, 2003).

Therapists use a multitude of techniques in solution-focused therapy including scaling questions, exceptions, and the miracle question. The client is invited to identify situations in which the problem has not been so bad or non-existent and is encouraged to expand on their behaviors and thought process during that time (de Shazer & Dolan 2007). Solution-focused therapy has the ability to treat the adolescent as an expert and

provides the opportunity for the adolescent to identify their personal assets and to identify

goals they would like to accomplish (Georgiades, 2008). In giving the adolescent so

much agency in the course of therapy, they can begin to feel like an active member in the

therapeutic process, and as a result, they will be more engaged in the process and increase

the chances of success in accomplishing therapeutic goals (Georgiades, 2008).

Art Therapy

Art therapy connects the world of art and therapy through the utilization of two

different methods (Edwards, 2004). Therapists may encourage their client to use a free

form method, where the therapist gives no direction but encourages their client to draw or

paint their feelings or emotions (Rappaport, 2010). In a second method, therapists can be

more directive with their client and instruct their client to draw something in particular

with the goal of achieving a cathartic moment that would help the therapist see their

client's issues through their art (Rappaport, 2010). Art therapy is useful in that it not only

helps the clients express themselves creatively, but it is also used as a communication

tool where the therapist can visually see the issues their client is struggling with

(Rappaport, 2010).

According to Rappaport (2010), art therapy promotes empathic attunement, in that

the art enables both the therapist and client to see the same image that symbolizes the

emotions experienced. It can also help the client find separation and distance from a

traumatic event; art therapy provides materials to contain, symbolize, and externalize

within the art process. Clients also report a feeling of catharsis in using art therapy, and

the art itself can be utilized to note change and the progress a client makes throughout the therapy (Rappaport, 2010).

The technique known as comic book therapy allows therapists to use bibliotherapy along with art therapy (O'Connor, 2012); this combination of therapist can also incorporate both narrative and solution-focused concepts. It is through these techniques that the therapist can hope to achieve a connection with the client and allow for connections to be created between not only the therapist and the adolescent but between father and child as well. By looking at the problem of anger in adolescents through a systemic lens, this researcher's goal is to create a safe environment where adolescents can share their emotional processes with their father.

Anger

Anger is a common emotion that is expressed by all people; aggression is the state of mind that includes the intention to do harm to someone else (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). Apart from the potential of putting oneself in harm's way when acting in an aggressive manner, aggressive behavior that is exhibited in adolescents tends to reduce the possibility that these adolescents will create and sustain meaningful relationships outside of their family (Pope & Bierman, 1999). Anger and frustration typically will stem from the relationships that adolescents have with their parents or adult influences when the relationship includes aggression (Nickel, 2006). Problems generally occur when an adolescent is attempting to achieve independence from their parents or other authority figure but feels confined by the rules imposed on them (Fives, Kong, Fuller, & DiGiuseppe, 2011). By improving the communication within the family and focusing on

the familial relationships, the potential for continuing bully-like behavior declines significantly (Nickel, 2006).

Definitions

Bibliotherapy: A type of therapy that uses an individual's insights into book characters to instill reflection and change (Catalano, 2008).

Comic Book Therapy: A type of bibliotherapy therapy that allows clients to express their experiences through personal narratives in a graphic novel or sequential format (O'Connor, 2012).

Frequency Count (Count): A measure of the number of times that an event occurs. In the context of the study, count will measure the frequency in which themes, media, and interactions were identified by the researcher as having occurred in comic books.

Emotional Process: The way in which a person is able to process and successfuly prevail over a stressful life event (Rachman, 1980). Emotional process allows specific and intense feelings to dissipate over time.

Graphic Novel: A book made up of several issues of comics that tell a linear story. Graphic novels can include fiction, nonfiction, and anthologized. Several issues of a comic book may be put together and sold as a graphic novel (Lopes, 2006).

Medium: A means of effecting or conveying something or a mode of artistic expression or communication ("Medium", 2020). For this study, medium is defined as the way in which the emotions were portrayed and expressed throughout the graphic novels (thought, expression, vocalizing, typography).

Typography: The art and technique or arranging type to make written language legible, readable, and appealing when displayed. The arrangement of type involves selecting typefaces, point sizes, line lengths, line spacing, letter-spacing, and adjusting the space between pairs of letters (Bringhurst, 2005).

Assumptions

1.   Themes were analyzed from thought bubbles, speech bubbles, and the visual representation of emotions from drawings.

2.   This content analysis produced tools useful for therapists in their work with families and adolescents.

Delimitations

1.   Researcher pulled data from only Marvel and DC publications.

2.   A sample of publications were pulled from three decades: 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Summary

Exploring the themes contained in comic books can potentially be useful in assisting adolescents in finding ways to relate to different characters and, thus, identifying their own ways in which they process their emotions. The goal of this content analysis was to find themes that are relatable and, therefore, helpful for adolescents to relate to and identify with character story arcs. By identifying certain themes within comic books through content analysis, adolescents may be able to identify their own internal processing and work towards a healthier way to express their emotions with others. Looking at comic books through content analysis provided insight into the way

other people think and feel thereby encouraging empathy. The characters portrayed in comic books also had the opportunity to model behavior and discuss the merits behind the decisions the characters make when facing difficult and emotional decisions. In making these connections, individuals have the ability to become more empathetic and are able to develop ways to address their emotional issues in new and creative ways. Therapists who utilize CBT, narrative, SFT or art therapy will, hopefully, find implementing the excerpts from comic books as natural and beneficial in their work with adolescents and families who may initially be resistant to the standard practices and concepts of therapy. Comic book therapy has the opportunity to make therapy more enjoyable and engaging for adolescents and families who may be resistant or unable to conceptualize or understand the concepts involved in therapy.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

While bibliotherapy has been around since the ancient Greeks, comic book therapy has just become a recent phenomenon (Rubin, 2012). At face value, comic books appear to be an escape for a person of any age to relate to a character that seemingly lives larger than life. Despite having amazing powers, any comic book hero can be deemed relatable because they experience the same emotions and even the same issues as an everyday person (Rubin, 2012). Lopes (2006) identifies that stigmas can serve the function to dispose members to group formation and relationships. With a general stigma against comic books, people may not be willing to give them the general benefit of the doubt in how they can potentially contribute to the art world as well as dealing with social issues that are experienced by people on daily basis.

According to Rubin (2012), comic books have evolved since their creation in the 1930s. In the period known as the Golden Age of comics (1938-1950), comic book heroes were seen as more black and white characters, generally removed from the troubles of standard society. Heroes were seen as purely good or evil and authors did not delve much into character development. During the Silver Age of comics (1950-1970), comic book heroes underwent character development and became more relatable to humans, through the exploration of everyday issues and heroes dealing with dual

identities. The issues that superheroes face today and in recent history (1980-2020) provide therapists with an opportunity to provide a parallel experience for their adolescent clients (Rubin, 2012). This strategy can be a guide for how therapists can interact with those clients who may have an interest in comic books or who would benefit in comparing their own narrative to a work of fiction. This research will also provide a resource for therapists interested in utilizing comic books with their therapies to help better connect with their clients or provide an alternative means of emotional exploration.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson (1982) focused on how people, infants through senior citizens, learn to negotiate their psychosocial development, the interaction between the individual self and society. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development postulates how individuals mature through eight psychosocial stages, each with two potential outcomes; successful completion of each stage, which results in a healthy personality and more positives interactions with others, or unsuccessful completion of each stage, which could result in an unhealthy sense of self (Erikson, 1982). A summary of six of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development that are pertinent to adolescents are provided below.

Trust vs. mistrust. In Erikson's stage one, trust vs. mistrust, children from birth to the age of one proceed through this stage attempting to learn to trust their caregivers and learn to trust themselves. The second stage is autonomy vs. shame and doubt in which children from one to three begin to assert their independence on the world around them. In stage three, initiative vs. guilt, children from three to six years focus on their

16

increasing independence from the family and more with the children that they spend time with (Erikson, 1982).

Inferiority vs. industry. In the fourth stage of psychosocial development, inferiority and industry describe children, ages six to puberty, as they begin to establish a sense of pride based on their accomplishments. Early in this stage, teachers begin to play an important role in supporting the children's achievements and encouraging a better sense of self. As children complete more assigned tasks, they will continue to feel confident in taking on and achieving more goals. Individuals in the adolescent to young adulthood age group focus on identity vs. role confusion.

Identity vs. role confusion. As adolescents continue to explore who they are, they begin to create their self-concept and identity. At this point, they may begin to think about the future, particularly relating what they are good at and relating it to potential careers, as well as establishing relationships outside their family home. Young adulthood is associated with intimacy vs. isolation, during this stage young adults have matured and are dealing with the complexities of long-term commitments including jobs and relationships outside of their immediate family (Erikson, 1982).

The basis for the current study comes from several additional theories and modalities that have been utilized in helping children and adolescents cope with varying issues including: cognitive behavior therapy (CBT; Beck, 2011) narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), solution-focused therapy (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007), bibliotherapy (Pardek, 1994), and art therapy (Edwards, 2004).

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Cognitive behavior therapy focuses on the thought patterns and schemas of an individual (Hollon & Beck, 2013). The proposition behind CBT is that over time, people may learn or develop negative ways in which they view things about others, themselves, or events in general. This negative outlook is believed to lead to potential mental health issues including depression or anxiety (Reinecke et al., 2007). People who develop negative ways in thinking are said to be using cognitive distortions to limit their perspective on the events occurring around them.

Cognitive distortions can include examples such as minimization/magnification where a person will give greater proportional weight to a failure and less to a success (Hollon & Beck, 2013). This means that a person will down play their successes and overemphasize their failures, leading them to have a negative perspective towards themselves. While there are several cognitive distortions, they all generally serve the same purpose in allowing the individual to remain negative towards themselves, particular events, or others around them.

Schemas are the overarching thoughts and beliefs that people have towards life, or any other world view (including people; Beck, 2011). Negative schemas generally tend to be a person's overarching beliefs that people will take advantage of them; therefore, the person who believes this will limit their interactions with others in order to avoid being taken advantage of or will anticipate a negative interaction, altering the situation to fulfill their prophecy of a negative interaction. Cognitive distortions create a form of a feedback loop that perpetuate a person's schemas. An example would be someone who has been

taken advantage of one out of ten interactions, but who learns to give extra weight to the one negative experience as opposed to the other nine positive interactions (Beck, 2011).

Therapists who use CBT assist people in identifying the patterns in which they find themselves in and allows them to explore their experiences through different lenses/schemas (Beck, 2011). As an individual is able to see how they can create biases through their schemas, the goal is to limit or even eliminate the maladaptive schema that has taken hold. While the therapist is generally considered to be the expert, the therapist acts as a guide assisting the client on their path of discovery and assisting them to identify the more positive conclusions on their own.

CBT therapists identify cycles of behavior, thoughts, and emotions that help the client better understand the patterns of their problems (Hollon & Beck, 2013). The cycle illustrates that the three different aspects are generally associated and intertwined with each other. When someone is experiencing anger, he or she is generally experiencing behaviors associated with the emotion, such as clenching the jaw or fists, or experiencing an increase in heart rate or will being vocally aggressive with yelling or the use of swear words. Clients can also understand that their thoughts become distorted in relation to the emotion they are experiencing. This allows the client to put into practice mindfulness, an awareness of self in order to provide clients the opportunity to catch themselves in the act of an emotion (Arch et al., 2012).

CBT can be enhanced with psychoeducation as a means to provide long term solutions for clients where the strategies and information provided during therapy can be utilized in different ways. Clients who are able to succeed in terminating therapy can

continue to use the skills they learned to provide insight into problems they face long after therapy has terminated. By providing basic strategies and information encouraging an awareness of self, clients can potentially see long term benefits from the therapy (Wiles et al., 2016).

Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy focuses on the telling of the family's story and how their problems are related to their personal narrative vs. the main narrative (White & Epston, 1990). In general, the therapist's focus is to help the family disrupt the familial patterns of thinking and allow them to write or create a new version of the same story. This allows for the family to be free from their previous constraints or cycle and pushes them to find a more appropriate story (White & Epston, 1990). Usually, the narrative the family is struggling with is in relation to the main narrative, parents may see other parents who are raising "successful" children and children will naturally compare themselves to others without actually knowing the full story of the others they are comparing themselves to (Hedtke, 2014). People are interpretive beings who make meaning of themselves and their world through the language of stories that have become part of themselves, as well as their understanding of those stories (White & Epston, 1990).

Narrative approaches identify stories or narratives as being the shaper of identity, whether related to culture or personal. Problem saturated stories are generally the experience of the clients who have difficulty in identifying any "contrarian" beliefs to the problem (White & Epston, 1990). Instead the problem can become so pervasive, the clients are unable to see any exceptions or any potential positives related to the narrative.

Narrative therapy utilizes several techniques including externalization, unique outcomes, and creating alternative stories.

The use of externalization changes the focus of the individual as the problem to the problem being the problem. According to narrative therapy, the problem and the person need to be separated as they are not one in the same (White & Epston, 1990). The belief behind this is that the person may have a more difficult time changing themselves as opposed to changing the problem; it also can lead clients to recognize times in which they have dealt successfully with the problem. The problem-saturated stories are typically taken apart before a new story can be constructed. Unique outcomes focus on the times in which the person has been successful in dealing with the issues they are facing. Instead of seeing the problem as having overt control over the family, the family can recognize times in which they have been successful in subverting the issue (White & Epston, 1990). Alternative stories happen after the stories have been successfully deconstructed and the family is able to recognize times in which they have been successful. As a tool, alternative stories can be utilized by the family at any time to realize that any story they have told or recollect can be re-authored. As a tool, alternative stories are something that the client and therapist need to be aware of as they recognize the multiple stories and iterations of a story and how those stories affect the person. It can be said that all people's lives consist of stories that people share with one another.

Solution-Focused Therapy

Solution-focused therapy (SFT) was developed by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg along with their team at the Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). Their group focused on the present and future, having clients address their history only to identify what has and has not worked in the past and to provide empathy when needed. Clients are encouraged to identify exceptions, times when the client may not have experienced the problem or a time where they felt that they were able to manage the problem (O'Connell, 1998). Questions and compliments are also considered to be the primary tools of a solution-focused therapist, focusing on the client's goals and having the client generate a detailed description of what life will be like when they have accomplished their goal or the problem has been dealt with satisfactorily (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007).

Other techniques in SFT include asking the miracle question where the client is asked to imagine a world or a day without the issues that they are facing (O'Connell, 1998). This gives the therapist insight into what their general world would be like without the problem; similarly, the client in working on a comic book can create the solutions to their own problems and establish the ways in which the character in their comic book is able to overcome their own struggles (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). Scaling questions invite the client to measure their own problems and can help describe the experience of the problem with the therapist. While the client is asked to work through some of their issues and focus on the problems in different ways, enabling positive thinking and helping the client create solutions can help build the general confidence for

the client to succeed in overcoming not only their personal issues, but any other issues that the client faces in the future (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007).

While clinicians using solution-focused therapy do not necessarily look at the problem that is troubling the client or the client system, some of the basic techniques of solution-focused therapy have similar traits with comic book therapy. While superheroes normally have a special gift that helps them out of any given bad situation, a parallel can be drawn to how the family or individual will identify their own skills in coping with a specific problem (O'Connor, 2012). The concept of exceptions is similar to narrative therapy, where the therapist may ask if there has ever been a time where the client or system has been able to solve the issues or at least reduce the overall symptoms that they are facing (White & Epston, 1990).

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is the larger genre that includes comic book therapy in that clients are asked to relate to specific characters that are introduced (O'Connor, 2012). Comic books can be effective through the processes of identification, catharsis, and insight. In identifying with a character, the reader gains an alternative position from which to perceive his or her own issues. In empathizing with the character, the client experiences a form of catharsis through hope and releasing emotional tension, which potentially leads to insight and behavior change (Pardek, 1994).

Bibliotherapy consists of reading books, and can also be utilized with a dialogue or activity. While bibliotherapy can be utilized on an everyday, non-supervised basis, it can be helpful in allowing adolescents to discuss topics they may normally be

apprehensive in discussing (Early, 1993). According to Pardek (1994), there are six goals

associated with bibliotherapy:

1. To provide information about problems

2. To provide insight to problems

3. To stimulate discussion about problems

4. To communicate new value and attitudes

5. To create awareness that others have dealt with similar problems

6. To provide solutions to problems.

Pehrsson and McMillen (2007) state that the benefits of bibliotherapy include

increased compassion and understanding of others, a more positive feeling about oneself

and enhanced self-awareness. Comic books can also be a non-threatening way to inspire

student contemplation by enabling them to openly communicate with others about novels

they have read and make personal connections to life experiences (Rosalski et al., 2010).

A therapist using bibliotherapy encourages the reader/client to experience and discuss

aspects of the character struggles as those struggles relate to them, essentially getting the

client to talk about their problems indirectly and finding ways in which the character

could or should have handled their situations, effectively identifying ways in which the

client could do the same for themselves (Catalano, 2008). Clients can also learn through

secondary characters as well by learning about their own behaviors, thoughts, and

attitudes with others. Secondary characters are those characters in books that the primary

character interacts with, but does not necessarily gain any insight into their thoughts.

The therapist's role in bibliotherapy is to provide certain stories or books that would be a good parallel for the client they are seeing. In being able to identify those stories, it is the hope of the therapist that the client will eventually identify with the character in the story in order to identify the parallels between the story and the client's own life. While the therapist may encourage the client to be insightful, the therapist may have to navigate how they will use the story as a means to get the client to open up concerning their own issues (McKenna, Hevey, & Martin, 2010). While some therapists may take the direct approach, it may be beneficial to let the connections be made in a subtle way in order to prevent the client from becoming overly defensive. The therapist may play the role of devil's advocate in order to help the client see the full picture and encourage critical thinking (McKenna et al., 2010).

Art Therapy

Art therapy can be considered a bridge connecting the two different fields of art and psychotherapy (Edwards, 2004). In general, there are two trains of thought in which art therapy can be used; in some cases art in and of itself can be considered therapy, without any general purpose other than to express what the client as an artist is experiencing, feeling, or thinking at that time. The other form is considered to be more intentional in that the artist or client may be instructed by a therapist to create art that can be analyzed by the therapist (Edwards, 2004). Any type of visual art can be utilized within the therapeutic process including drawing, painting, photography, sculpting, and digital art (Thong, 2007). Art therapy can also be in used in conjunction with several

other theories including narrative, cognitive, behavioral, person centered, gestalt, Adlerian, and family systems (Rappaport, 2010).

Generally, therapists who utilize art as a tool will encourage their clients as artists to find ways of expressing themselves and will normally encourage them to draw or write down their emotions that they are experiencing at the time (Rappaport, 2010). When focusing on art therapy, specifically, therapists utilize art as a way of not only allowing the client to express themselves, but they can also use the art as a tool to identify themes and help bridge the communication gap. According to Rappaport (2010), art therapy promotes empathic attunement, in that the art enables both the therapist and client to see the same image that symbolizes the emotions experienced. It can also help the client find separation and distance from a traumatic event, art therapy provides materials symbolize and externalize within the art process. Clients also report a feeling of catharsis in using art therapy, and the art itself can be utilized to note change and the progress a client makes throughout the therapy (Rappaport, 2010).

Wilson and Ziomek-Daigle (2013) discussed the merits of using expressive arts therapy to help teenagers explore abstract thoughts and feelings. The experience of using expressive arts is considered to be process-oriented, emotionally sensitive, and awareness focused. Art therapy can be broken down into three stages: relaxation/imagery, drawing, and the post drawing reflection. First, the client is asked to relax and imagine the image in their head; they will then proceed to draw or paint the image, and afterwards they are asked to reflect on the experience. It is important that the therapist does not place any values or meanings on the art that is created; while the therapist may have some basic

directives, it is important to let the client/artist have free will over their expressions and the general design of their creation (Wilson & Ziomek-Daigle, 2013).

Comic Book Therapy

In discussing the issues that the family or adolescent is facing, comic book therapy is similar to narrative therapy in that it encourages the family to write a story (O'Connor, 2012). While the story may begin like any other as the client focuses on the problem, in comic book therapy the story is changed and the client is encouraged to determine different outcomes. The parallels between storytelling and the stories that people experience can allow for unique outcomes to become more apparent in the family's life, allowing for change to happen (Nelson, 2007).

Nelson (2007) uses a prompt with younger kids to have them imagine what Superman would do in certain troubling situations. The children are then able to act out in their imaginations how Superman would react to a situation and can even help them solve their own problems in a way that they would normally be unable to think of. By harnessing their imagination, children are then able to solve some of their own problems and gain empowerment not only from their own agency, but also being able to create their own solutions. Karniol et al. (2011) used a method of having children identify as Superman to see if it would increase their delayed gratification. Children who wore the cape of Superman were more likely to be able to delay their gratification and receive the reward that they desired after waiting a certain amount of time.

The demonstration of children wearing the superman cape indicated the effectiveness of cognitive self-transformations for a child learning to delay behavior. It is

this ability that indicates the ability to utilize imagination and indexes intelligent behavior (Karniol et al., 2011). The study demonstrates the ability of cognitive self-transformation and its ability to help children cope, whether in a delayed gratification setting or otherwise. As a majority of children are able to engage in cognitive self-transformation, this technique can be applicable in a therapeutic setting in order to help children identify ways in which they can cope with other issues that they may face (Nelson, 2007).

Each superhero in the modern era of comic books seems to be struggling with some aspect of real life that affects every day, ordinary people (Rubin, 2012). In being able to identify with those heroes and their vulnerabilities, it is possible for real life therapists to help clients connect with these characters and learn to embrace and cope with their personal vulnerabilities (Rubin, 2012). In the comics themselves, there are even depictions of psychotherapists working hard with superheroes to provide a glimpse into people's own fragile selves and, on a larger scale, societal vulnerability (Rubin, 2012). There is also the message that there is hope for all, for even as superheroes fall, they will rise again to face the enemies of society and the demons that are held within their own psyche. This reflection in comic books can be transferred to therapy and can be used as a beacon of hope for those suffering from any number of issues, including depression, anxiety, anger, as well as trust issues. It is important to continue and expand the research of comic book therapy to see the potential positive effects it could have a client's life.

Adolescents and Anger

        Anger as an emotion. Anger is a state of affect whereas aggression is viewed as a behavior that is intending to do harm (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). A variety of aggression types exist including verbal, physical, and indirect aggression. While verbal and physical aggressive behaviors are observable, hostility and indirect aggression tend to be more covert in nature and, therefore, substantially more difficult to observe. If an adolescent's anger coincides with aggression, a host of additional damaging consequences may be a result. Apart from immediate physical harm, the possible long-term effects of aggression include peer difficulties (Pope & Bierman, 1999), early school withdrawal, future antisocial behavior (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990) and substance use (Moss & Kirisci, 1995).

        Fives et al. (2011) observed that a major core of adolescent anger and frustration comes from the rules that are established by adults. Adolescents become frustrated because rules are seen as ways of constricting their personal freedoms, including making their own choices and freedom of expression. As adolescents negotiate the terms of independence, it is possible they grow resentful about the boundaries that are levied on them by the school system, in particular when they interpret the school's rules as inhibiting them from achieving their goals in a social context.

        Bullying and anger. Bullying is a form of aggression shown in some youth and is usually considered a marker for more violent behaviors later in life (Smith, Ananiadou & Cowie, 2004). Bullying is not only considered to be physical aggression but includes verbal harassment, and public humiliation. Families of distressed adolescents are

generally illustrated by constant and severe conflict that negatively affects the interactions and communication patterns within the family (Nickel, 2006). By improving the communication within the family and focusing on the familial relationships, the potential for continuing bully-like behavior declines significantly (Nickel, 2006).

Parenting and aggressive behavior. De la Torre-Cruz, Garcia-Linares, and Casanova-Arias (2014) identified parenting styles that lead to aggressive behavior in teens. Comparing authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles showed that children who were parented with an authoritarian style were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors. In identifying the difference between authoritative and authoritarian styles, researchers use two scales: the scale of affect and the scale of rules and demands. An authoritarian behavior is closely associated with a lack of affection, but seeks to control both the behavior and attitudes of adolescents; generally, the parent is trying to maintain control without much expressed love or positive attention (Brown & Bakken, 2011). An authoritative style is associated with an effective balance of high levels of affect and control (De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014). The neglectful style is associated with a lack of general interest on the parent's part and a lack of control. An indulgent style of parenting is based on high levels of affection but limited sense of control (De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014).

Parents who tend to be more open in their communication with their children reduce the likelihood of aggressive behaviors. Misunderstanding and a general absence of communication between parents and children was associated with a greater occurrence of aggressive behaviors (De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014). Children who recognized their

parent's lack of emotional support while experiencing high levels of rejection were considered to engage in more delinquent behaviors as reported by both teachers and parents. Boys, in general, also showed more signs of physical aggression than their female counterparts (De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014).

Adolescents and ambiguous situations. Adolescents who are identified as aggressive tend to show more negative views towards ambiguous situations involving peers (Lansu, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2013). According to Lansu et al., (2013) studies have linked aggression to the reading of ambiguous situations and detection of aggressive prompts, and the bias may even extend beyond aggressive situations. Peers may still have friends despite displaying aggressive behaviors due to positive perception bias. Even though their peers like adolescents who portrayed more pro-social behaviors as opposed to their aggressive counterparts, children will still perceive their friends as important, regardless of the aggression they display simply because the relationship is important to them. Pro-social adolescents were also more likely to perceive an ambiguous situation more positively than their less pro-social peers (Lansu et al., 2013).

Peer groups. Peer groups provide several mechanisms of socialization for adolescents; one mechanism focuses on social interactions that occur within the group. It is assumed that the interactions and socializing within the peer group could increase similarities among the group members (Shi & Xie, 2014). Another aspect of social behavior is a human being's ability to compare themselves to others in order to evaluate their own abilities and opinions. The differences established between the group and the individual will shift in either way so that any discrepancy will be reduced. This is

31

associated with normative influence, a process that proposes that an individual member is motivated to learn and adhere to group norms for fear of experiencing negative consequences such as embarrassment, awkwardness and even rejection. It has shown that individuals with more aggressive tendencies will reduce their aggression when associated with a peer group with lower aggression (Shi & Xie, 2014).

Whether the group or individual will make the changes is usually dependent on the status of the individual within the group. Those with a higher status tend to shape the group, whereas those with a lower status have the group shape them (Shi & Xie, 2014). This even includes aggression and how a high-status individual can assist in encouraging the aggressive nature of the lower status individuals within the same group. However, high-status individuals did not have much influence over other high-status individuals. This may refer back to pro-social concepts that suggest that how individuals with a high sense of self-esteem may be able to maintain a sense of their individuality. The research also recognizes the importance of relationships that are developed between an adolescent and their peers and only reinforces the concept that at this stage in their life the adolescent is looking to their peers for more support as opposed to their parents or family (Brown & Bakken, 2011).

Adolescent self-esteem. Adolescent self-esteem may relate back to the concept of low self-esteem for adolescents who have difficulty in reconciling the parenting behavior they experience, the more authoritarian a parent is in the way they raise their child, the more likely the children's self-esteem would be lower (Brown & Bakken, 2011). As a result, the adolescent may have difficulty in school and look to their peers for guidance

even more so than they already do at that stage. Friendships are also a considerable

factor in self-esteem and how adolescents view themselves (Bowker, Thomas, Norman,

& Spencer, 2011). Bowker et al. (2011) identified that having a positive best friend

throughout adolescence was significantly negatively correlated with fear and negative

evaluation.

Father-son relationships. Grando and Ginsberg (1976) identified the father-son

relationship as important because of the significant influences the father can have on the

son's social development and personal identification throughout childhood and

adolescents. Throughout childhood, a child's main goal is to develop their own personal

identity (Erikson, 1982); therefore, it is important for the child to see his father as caring,

warm and understanding because these qualities are related to a strong identification with

the father (Grando & Ginsberg, 1976). Adolescence is an optimal time to bring father

and son together to help them learn how to communicate efficiently and to develop an

overall greater trust within the relationship. While fathers generally receive the

information concerning their children secondhand (through talking to their spouse), a

father's general lack of awareness and hostility is correlated with the adolescent's anger

and hostility towards their peer groups (Brown & Bakken, 2011).

Levant, Richmond, Cruickshank, Rankin, and Rummell (2014) discussed that

when a father figure is accessible to a child, that child externalized their problems less. A

father's engagement with a child is associated with less frequent behavioral problems for

boys and fewer psychological problems in young women. Levant et al. (2014)

discovered that maternal perception of paternal involvement is negatively correlated with

anxiety, depression, and withdrawal with their children. Andolfi (2013) suggests that violence is a part of the family system that occurs naturally when there is an excess of strong emotions within the family. He notes that violent behavior is not only limited to the adolescent acting out, but also displays an interpersonal meaning on an implicit level. While it can be construed as being overly dramatic, the adolescent uses this as a way to communicate his need for care and appreciation. An adolescent's violent tendency is typically seen as a symptom of a larger problem, usually stemming from marital hostilities (parents), inter-generational distortions, or a lack of identity, and social/family support.

Therapy with adolescents. Jordan et al. (2013) developed a brief, solution-focused program for adolescent offenders who were awaiting trial for domestic abuse of a non-intimate family member. The participant was evaluated to determine the frequency of the sessions that were required in order to complete the program. The solution-focused therapy coupled with the strict no-show policy helped maintain participant compliance and attendance. Participants were evaluated on a short- and long-term outcome basis, short term outcomes included: self-sufficiency, resilience, aggression, mental health, goal attainment, stress and alcohol/substance abuse. The long-term outcomes included the overall reduction of violent offenses for the client that participated and completed the program. Short-term outcomes indicated a positive correlation and were clinically significant. The long-term goal of keeping the participants out of jail was shown to be a success in that none of the participants that completed the program reoffended (Jordan et al., 2013).

Robbins et al. (2006) explored the importance of the therapeutic alliance between the therapist and multiple clients who were attending multi-dimensional family therapy. In their article, Robbins et al. (2006) discuss the importance of the therapist balancing their alliances with each and every member of the family in order to have the clients continue their therapy. A common issue that promotes recidivism is that clients do not always continue with therapy due to the lack of therapeutic alliance between all people that attend therapy. Robbins et al. (2006) were able to identify that the families who were most likely to drop out of therapy were the ones who experienced a decrease in therapeutic alliance between the first two therapy sessions. Robbins et al. (2006) reported that they planned to include interventions in their future research in order to identify any particular methods that not only engaged the family in therapy, but also helped establish a positive working therapeutic relationship between therapist and clients.

Effective communication in families. According to Andolfi (2013), a general lack of emotional communication contributes to the violence that is often portrayed and acted out by the adolescent. As more effective communication is put in place and families become unstuck from their maladaptive roles, the teenager is able to express him or herself more effectively which also correlates with a reduction in violent acts. This appears to relate to research by Levant et al. (2014) discussed how the father's involvement in the family and therapy, as well, can help bring in a new perspective by utilizing different tools that can help the family to become emotionally healthier. However, the stressors that occur between fathers and sons do not necessarily go away because of therapy (Ginsberg, 1995). Still, family therapy remains a safe way for fathers

and sons to learn to communicate and come to a mutual respect despite potentially

different beliefs. As a result, both can still feel good about each other and their

relationship despite their differences in beliefs. In improving their communication, the

therapy provides a context that enhances their relationship and improves the self-concept

of both father and son (Andolfi, 2013).

Comic book therapy. Gavigan (2012) has identified a way to relate with male

students by including comic books in the school library. Further, Gavigan (2012)

suggests that libraries can help engage and foster a nurturing environment for teenagers

by using graphic novels to help young adults develop an understanding of themselves and

others The author identifies the usefulness of graphic novels for young adults in that they

may not be a cure for all the challenges a teenager faces, but reading about comparable

experiences through the lives of fictional characters can help alleviate teenagers' angst

and reminds them that they are not alone. Rubin (2012) discusses how the parallels of

heroes needing help can be a connection that everyday people can make in their own

lives. By admitting to the need for help, the characters indicate a position of strength

instead of weakness in being able to call upon and rely on others for help (Rubin, 2012).

Graphic novels. According to Boerman-Cornell (2013), graphic novels can be

utilized to help teach a number of topics including history, mathematics and English.

Since graphic novels use images to help convey their information, it can be useful for

younger audiences or audiences who have struggled in developing their imagination.

While strong readers may be able to turn words into images into their heads, those that

struggle with reading may find it helpful to see pictures along with the text. While

graphic novels have come to depict a series of comic books telling a linear story, they also include non-fiction pieces, including biographies, memoirs, or straight information non-fiction (Boerman-Cornell, 2013). This information can be useful in teaching a variety of subjects and can help those who may have a difficulty reading, in general, stay engaged while learning a general concept or reading a story that may have relevance in the readers life. According to Boerman-Cornell, (2013), middle school and high school students should be able to do more than just memorize dates and people, and should be able to contextualize, corroborate and differentiate historical events and documents. Graphic novels provide the opportunity for those adolescents to synthesize the information utilizing a combination of written and visual aids to help engage the reader and maintain a general interest in the subject.

Summary

The focus of comic book therapy is to combine a variety of techniques borrowed from different modalities in order to help improve the overall behavior of the adolescent and the family during family therapy. Such theories as CBT, narrative, solution-focused, bibliotherapy and art therapy provide a variety of different theory-based techniques that can be adapted and utilized in association with comic books. Each theory includes a unique perspective and allows for the therapist to employ multiple techniques to help the client explore their emotions. Specifically, using comic books for therapy with families that include adolescents can help resolve conflict and develop a better sense of self for the adolescent. Ideally, the techniques developed can model positive behavior between family members, specifically between child and parent in order to help encourage a

positive self-esteem and prevent any behavioral issues from developing. The utilization

of therapeutic techniques is important, especially at the onset of therapy, as the therapist

works to establish therapeutic alliance between and the therapist and each of the

participating family members. The better the perceived alliance between each client and

the therapist, the more likely the family will continue with therapy. The research

completed in this study can potentially provide not only new techniques that can be

beneficial to the clients, but also provide a tool or reference for other therapists to utilize

in their own practice.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I used a content analysis research design (Krippendorff, 2004) to test four research questions focused on exploring the range of emotions and relationships experienced by comic book characters that appeal to adolescent males. Using content analysis allowed this researcher to draw upon the themes and strengths in comic books as identified through qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods were applied to research questions to explore how or why a phenomenon occurs, to help develop a theory or to describe in better detail individual experience (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). In this study, the qualitative measures allowed this researcher to retrieve, in depth, specific examples of comic book characters and how they react and process their own emotions, as well as provide insight into relationship dynamics focusing on the father/son type relationship.

A content analysis is a research method that utilizes a set of procedures in order to develop valid inferences from what is being studied (Krippendorff, 2004). I opted for a content analysis in order to provide an in-depth view of comic books for the purpose of cataloguing and identifying key theoretical concepts from the material. The theoretical concepts that were addressed in this study include ways in which emotions (particularly anger) are expressed in comic books as well as ways in which conflict is resolved,

specifically with the father/son relationship dynamic in mind. I also discovered and

catalogued instances of emotion, behaviors, and thoughts as they occur in specific events

related to the characters. By indexing the discovered themes, the researcher will be

providing access for therapists to utilize the discovered data in their own practice with

potentially beneficial results.

Research Questions

1. How do comic books provide an in-depth narrative concerning the expression and

   processing of emotions, including anger?

2. What general patterns or themes are associated with the emotions that are ascribed

   to the characters in the comic books by the artist/write/publisher?

3. How do comic books portray father and son figures working through problems or

   emotional problems with each other?

4. Are there certain comic books that are potentially more effective than others in

   assisting adolescents in processing and understanding their emotions?

Procedures

Sample Recruitment

Graphic novels from both DC Comics and Marvel Comics were sampled due to

their popularity in modern day culture; the graphic novels were also sampled from the

following publication dates: 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The researcher determined that 14

graphic novels provided enough information for the concept of validity to be met. This

researcher worked with the TWU librarian to obtain all graphic novels produced from

two publishers, Marvel Comics and DC Comics; in addition, recruitment will include

loans of graphic novels from other libraries. The researcher contacted the librarian and

discussed what graphic novels are available and from what decades. Due to the limited

availability of graphic novels in the TWU library system, the researcher utilized the Fort

Worth library system as well.

Sample of Comic Books

The graphic novels that were included in this sample were published over a period

of three decades spanning from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The researcher intended to

utilize a variety of different comic book characters and selected the novels to be used in

order to ensure that some of the themes are met within the material. For example, the

researcher focused on researching graphic novels that involve not only the primary

protagonist, but also attempted to include partners (side-kicks) or family members that

may be involved in the emotional processing with the primary character. Due to general

availability, more DC graphic novels were able to be coded than Marvel.

<div align="center">

Data Collection

</div>

Fourteen graphic novels were gathered for the purpose of the research, nine from

DC Comics and five from Marvel Comics. This researcher used the following

components (Krippendorff, 2004) to guide the methodology and data collection. The

study focused on unitizing the data by identifying different general emotion expressions

portrayed by the characters and how they were portrayed within story's context. From

there, the data was reduced into three categories: the specific emotion that was identified

(theme), the way in which the emotion was expressed (medium) and who was involved

with the emotion expression (interaction). The researcher was then able to identify specific patterns within the information to provide significant findings.

Coding of Data

      Keywords. The researcher spent time reading through different graphic novels in order to begin standardizing particular words or themes that are prevalent throughout the material (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher categorized the different summaries into categories focusing on emotion, how the emotion was conveyed and who with. From those summaries, a coding guide developed to help steer the research. After finding success in the coding method with the coding sheet, the researcher decided on specific words/codes to highlight the research: emotions identified (themes), the way in which the emotion is expressed (medium) and who the emotion involves (interaction).

      Co-coder. The co-coder who assisted me during the research process was a fellow counselor who has had his LPC license for 3.5 years; he earned his master's degree in Professional Counseling from Amberton University. My co-coder has been a work colleague and peer for the past three years. He has a passion for comic books and when I asked for his participation and assistance, he was more than willing to contribute to the research. I determined that my co-coder was appropriate to assist in the research due to his familiarity with comic books, specifically in how to read and comprehend them. Also after some deliberation on having a co-coder, my committe chair and I determined he would be a good fit because of his training in research from his master's program and having a pre-existing passion for comic books.

Training. Training involved developing the coding sheet and discussing the

concepts with the co-coder so that they understand what each section should look like.

The co-coder was given graphic novels to code after receiving the instructions; and after

completing three graphic novels, comparisons were made between the researcher and the

co-coder. Both researcher and co-coder discussed appropriate changes to the coding sheet

and identified minor differences in coding concerning specificity. Both co-coder and

researcher were then able to implement changes to ensure similar codes.

Coding. Coding initially focused on context/background, emotional expression,

body language/medium and character interaction. From the broad identifiers, the

researcher was able to distill the codes into three different categories that the researcher

deemed appropriate: themes, medium, and interactions. Due to the specificity of the

research, the researcher also developed a sub-category concerning father and son

interactions to set aside and identify interactions as they relate to emotional themes that

were coded.

Patterns and categories. The original code sheet (see Appendix A) was

developed to help break down the different categories that the researcher wanted to

identify, between identifying emotions, the way in which they are expressed and who is

involved in the emotional interaction. After coding several graphic novels, the researcher

identified the column pertaining to limits of medium to be overly redundant, the

researcher decided to remove the column with the co-coder and the researcher's

supervisor agreeing. In order to ensure specificity concerning the codes, three additional

columns identifying specific themes summarized into seven different emotions, four

different mediums, and six different interactions were added to assist in breaking down the different examples (see Appendix B). The researcher was then able to quantify the specific themes, mediums, and interactions included in each coded graphic novel.

Content Analysis

The purpose of this study was to analyze the content of the graphic novels that may be useful as a therapeutic tool with adolescents and other clients. The data analyzed included information from 14 different graphic novels from two different comic book publishers (DC and Marvel). The information initially was defined in basic summaries consisting of the identified emotions, the interactions the characters had with each other, the way in which the emotion was expressed, and the context behind the emotions. From there, the researcher reduced the data into three concepts: themes, mediums, and interactions.

<div align="center">

Reliability and Validity

</div>

The data was researched and encoded by two coders with oversight by the major professor thus ensuring reliability within the research. Reliability is the ability for different coders to interpret the text or content in the same way. Reliability issues generally occur when the content has ambiguity, whether in word meaning, category definitions, or coding rules (Weber, 1990). According to Krippendorff (1980) the reliability coefficient can be artificially inflated due to coders establishing shared and hidden meanings within the coding. In order to avoid this, the researcher developed a set of instructions to be followed. The graphic novels that were coded for reliability included *Wolverine: Origin, Magneto: Testament, X-Men: First Class, Superman: The Dark Side,*

Batman: Chalice, and *JLA/TT: Technis Imperative.* This allowed for other coders to be trained and assist in increasing reliability. The overall average coder agreement was (81.7%), where *Batman: Chalice* (50.0%) was the least agreed upon and *X-Men*: *First Class* (100%) was the most.

The researcher began by creating a code sheet that would be used as a training mechanism for the co-coder. After both the researcher and the co-coder coded the same three books, the researcher reviewed and discussed the coding sheet. Both agreed on the removal of the limitations of the comic book as the limitations were universal per each graphic novel. The researcher made the appropriate adjustments to the coding sheet and reviewed the sheet with the research chair. The research chair approved of the changes and encouraged additional books to be coded to ensure validity and reliability (Neuendorf, 2002). The researcher and co-coder completed three more graphic novels, where both researcher and the research chair felt that validity had been met.

Summary

Data was collected across 14 different graphic novels (see Table 1) from two of the major comic book distributors known as Marvel and DC Comics. The books from DC publications include *Nightwing: Rough Justice, JLA/TT: Technis Imperative, Superman: The Dark Side, Batman: The Chalice, JLA: Justice For All, Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn, Superman: Kryptonite, Trinity,* and *Aquaman: Tempest.* Graphic novels from Marvel comics included: *Wolverine: Origin, X-Men: Magneto Testament, X-Men: First Class, Spider-Man: The Last Stand,* and *House of M.* Several characters from their primary pantheon (the more famous comic book characters/heroes) were Spider-Man,

Wolverine, The X-Men and The Avengers for Marvel and Wonder Woman, Superman,

Batman, The Justice League and The Teen Titans from DC Comics were included in all

of the graphic novels that were coded. The graphic novels also covered different

amalgamations of the characters from individual stories, focusing on one character to

team up with several different characters, providing a varying interpersonal dynamic

between the primary and secondary characters of each story. Each graphic novel provided

multiple examples of emotional expression in a variety of different ways and with

different people. The researcher intended to discover and catalogue instances of emotion,

behaviors and thoughts as they occur in specific events to characters. By creating a

coding spreadsheet concerning the discovered themes, the researcher will then provide

access for therapists to utilize the discovered data in their own practice with potentially

beneficial results.

Table 1

Graphic Novels from Marvel and DC Used in This Study

Marvel	DC
Wolverine: Origin	Nightwing: Rough Justice
X-Men: Magneto Testament	JLA/TT: Technis Imperative
X-Men: First Class (The Wonder Years)	Superman: The Dark Side
Spider-Man: The Last Stand	Batman: The Chalice
House of M	JLA: Justice For All
	Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn
	Superman: Kryptonite
	Trinity
	Tempest

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The focus of the study was on understanding the emotional expression portrayed by the characters from Marvel and DC Comics, who are also written and drawn by different writers and artists. The purpose of the study was to identify examples of emotional reactions portraying the characters reacting emotionally to different situations they experience so that therapists could potentially use the examples found in graphic novels to assist clients who struggle in understanding or expressing their emotions. By identifying the emotional expressions of the characters, I have found that there are a multitude of examples where characters react in different ways to the emotions they are experiencing, which in turn, can be used in treatment to assist clients who are struggling in identifying their own emotions. In particular, the primary focus was finding examples of father and son interactions, to help adolescent males who are struggling with anger to potentially find some congruence with their own life and emotions to the characters portrayed in the comic books.

The researcher identified emotions in graphic novels through spoken word, thought bubbles, and illustrated expressions. Emotional expressions were defined as ways in which people, or in this case comic book characters, exhibit particular behaviors based on reactions to events. CBT shows that thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are intertwined

together, and people generally have difficulty in separating the three concepts from each other, instead, each concept has influence over the other two (Beck, 2011). With this in mind, emotions can be identified through facial expressions, a change in font or sentence structure, or the specific words such as thoughts or vocalizing to others relating to emotions that can be used specifically by the characters.

The characters themselves may identify ways in which they identify their own emotions, or use other characters to observe and report to them that they may be experiencing an emotional reaction. The information contained in the comic books can be relevant to the human experience in that people sometimes are not able to identify their own emotional processes and utilize others as a means of understanding themselves, similar to therapy, or talking to a friend. While there are no known current boundaries to this research, the researcher imposed boundaries to focus on particular comic books and focused on a specific relational dynamic between father and son type characters, this included the mentor/mentee relationship as well as the stereotypical main character/sidekick relationship.

Potential limitations can occur when documents are being collected for content analysis including when a considerable number of the documents are missing, inappropriate records, where the documents collected do not match the definition required for analysis and some documents may need to be discarded due to passages missing within the document or provide ambiguous content. (US Government Accountability Office [GAO], 1996). I have provided a breakdown of the data consisting of themes (emotions), medium (how emotion is expressed), and interactions (who the

character is interacting with). The following section covers the general summaries of each of the books that were reviewed and coded; they provide a brief synopsis of the story and identify emotional themes found throughout each of the books.

Tables

The tables discussed the themes, medium, and interactions found in the graphic novels that will help provide the future readers with an understanding of what to expect concerning emotions and the way in which they are expressed. Not only do the tables cover the emotional expression or themes of the characters as they proceed through the story, the tables show ways in which the emotions are expressed (the medium). The emotional expressions are also identified through the interactions in which they happen, (i.e., the people that the character is around); the interaction will be considered the relationship type the character has with the people he or she is expressing their emotion towards. The last table focuses solely on the emotional themes at it relates to the identified father/son relationship in the comic books.

Themes

As noted in Chapter Three, the research themes in this current study were derived from the basic codes that were identified and agreed upon by the author, the co-coder, and the research advisor. The theme surmises the emotion that is expressed during the specific instance of the graphic novel. The theme is a one-word general explanation or summary of the emotion that is expressed. For example, if a character expressed being terrified, or horrified, the general theme used was fear. In acknowledgement of the fact that humans can experience multiple emotions at once, multiple themes were recorded for

the same instance. In this study, the following emotions were coded: Fear, Anger,

Disgust, Sad, Happy, Surprise and Anxiety (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2

Number of Times Emotional Themes Appear in Marvel Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Fear	Anger	Disgust	Sad	Happy	Surprise	Anxiety	Total
Wolverine: Origin	14	23	5	11	5	3	3	64
X-Men: Magneto Testament	11	8	2	10	2	2	9	44
X-Men: First Class (The Wonder Years)	5	7	-	1	2	4	6	25
Spider-Man: The Last Stand	11	6	1	9	3	1	11	42
House of M	9	7	-	8	2	2	7	35
Total	50	51	8	39	14	12	36	

Table 3

Number of Times Emotional Themes Appear in DC Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Fear	Anger	Disgust	Sad	Happy	Surprise	Anxiety	Total
Trinity	1	8	2	-	-	1	1	13
JLA/TT: Technis Imperative	1	4	-	1	4	3	1	14
Superman: The Dark Side	7	7	-	2	2	-	6	24
Batman: The Chalice	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	5
JLA: Justice For All	3	3	-	2	1	2	2	13
Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn	6	6	-	3	-	-	5	20
Nightwing: Rough Justice	3	2	-	6	5	1	2	19
Superman: Kryptonite	9	4	1	6	4	-	6	30
Tempest	6	11	-	7	2	9	7	42
Total	38	46	3	27	19	16	31	

Summary of themes. In all Marvel and DC graphic novels that were reviewed and coded, the themes anger (count = 97) and fear (count = 86) were coded the most times; the theme disgust (count = 11) and surprise (count = 28) occurred the least times in the publications (see Tables 2 and 3). The third most frequent theme for Marvel was sadness (count = 39), while the theme of anxiety (count = 31) was coded in third place in

DC publications; however, both themes were fairly close in frequency for both publications. The coders found that the Marvel graphic novel *Wolverine: Origin* included the highest number of emotional themes (count = 64) when compared with the other coded Marvel graphic novels (mean = 36.5); anger (count = 23) was the most prominent emotion identified in *Wolverine: Origin* (see Table 2). Interestingly, in the DC graphic novel *Superman: Kryptonite*, Superman portrayed the most fear (count = 9) out of all of the DC publications (mean = 3.6; see Table 3). Generally, both Marvel and DC seem to have a fairly close distribution of the themes that were recorded overall, with only a few minor differences in frequency.

Medium: Portrayal of Emotion

According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, medium can be defined as "a means of effecting or conveying something" ("Medium"). For this study, medium is defined as the way in which the emotions were portrayed and expressed throughout the graphic novels. In the list below, the medium was broken down into four categories: thoughts, expression, vocalizing, and typography (See Tables 4 and 5):

1. Thoughts or the thought boxes in the graphic novels are a common way for the writers of the comic books to provide the reader with insight into what the character is thinking.

2. Expression is the way in which the character is drawn, whether they are standing in a way that expresses an emotion, or via their facial expressions.

3. Vocalizing focuses on what the characters actually say to each other, specifically when speech bubbles are used.

4. Typography can be included with both thought and vocalization, but it specifically refers to the way in which the words are written in the graphic novel. For example, when a specific word is bolded or a larger font size is used.

Table 4

Medium Use in Marvel Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Thought	Expression	Vocalizing	Typography	Total
Wolverine: Origin	5	29	26	16	76
X-Men: Magneto Testament	4	19	13	2	38
X-Men: First Class (The Wonder Years)	1	6	10	4	21
Spider-Man: The Last Stand	11	14	10	7	42
House of M	-	13	14	8	35
Total	21	81	73	37	

Table 5

Medium Use in DC Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Thought	Expression	Vocalizing	Typography	Total
Trinity	2	10	7	3	22
JLA/TT: Technis Imperative	-	8	8	1	17
Superman: The Dark Side	2	9	11	3	25
Batman: The Chalice	1	1	4	-	6
JLA: Justice For All	1	7	9	1	18
Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn	-	10	11	1	22
Nightwing: Rough Justice	6	6	5	-	17
Superman: Kryptonite	9	11	9	1	30
Tempest	8	15	15	9	47
Total	29	77	79	19	

Summary of medium. Both publishers used two mediums, expression and vocalizing, the most to communicate emotion in their graphic novels, DC primarily used speech or vocalizing (count = 79) as their primary method of medium, Marvel primarily used expression (count = 81) to portray their emotions (See Tables 4 and 5). Thought was the least frequent for both publishers (Marvel: count = 21; DC: count = 29), Marvel appeared to use typography more frequently (count = 37) than DC (count = 19; see Tables 4 and 5). While DC has several instances of using typography, Marvel appeared to

use it in a more subtle way throughout their books by bolding single words that illustrated their emphasis to the audience. Generally, the books tend to separate themselves depending on the characters/teams they are depicting, the thoughts occurred more frequently in books where they were focusing more on a single character as opposed to a team up. *Spider-Man: The Last Stand, Tempest, Nightwing: Rough Justice*, and *Superman: Kryptonite* were primarily written from the first-person perspective of the hero and provided insight into the fears and other emotions of the heroes, whereas the team ups such as *House of M, JLA/TT: Technis Imperative*, and *JLA: Justice For All* included more vocal interactions between characters/teammates.

In general, the physical expression and vocalization of emotions were the most consistent medium identified in the majority of the Marvel and DC Comics graphic novels. Given that multiple mediums can be utilized at one time, the percentages included here include the frequency of all of the mediums per graphic novel. For DC graphic novels, the medium occurred as follows: vocalizing, (38.7%), expression (37.7%), thought (14.2%), and typography (9.3%) of the time. For Marvel comics, the medium occurred as follows: vocalizing (34.4%), expression (38.2%), thought (9.9%), and typography (17.4%) of the time. While there are some differences in the most and least utilized mediums for both Marvel and DC, both seem to utilize the same mediums in a similar frequency, and are, in general, within a few percentage points of each other per medium.

Interactions

Interactions consisted of the type of relationship that is assumed to be occurring between the characters in the graphic novel. In some instances, relationships are just beginning and the people interacting could be strangers, or they have met a handful of times and are aware of each other so they may be acquaintances. There are also times where the people who are interacting are close, whether they have been on a team for a long time and consider themselves family, or just consider themselves to be friends. Sometimes, the character will speak out loud to themselves or will be thinking about an issue to themselves, so in a sense they are interacting with themselves. Finally, the heroes typically will be fighting some adversary, and will interact with them beyond fighting.

As an additional focus, family interactions were specified when it focused on a father/son type of relationship. An additional recording of father/son interactions was noted along with it being a familial interaction. In this specific instance, Tables 6 and 7 reflect all familial interactions (including father/son interactions) but only father and son interactions will be indicated in the father/son column.

Table 6

Interactions in Marvel Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Friend	Stranger	Adversary	Acquaintance	Self	Family	Father/Son	Total
Wolverine: Origin	9	-	8	2	3	14	10	46
X-Men: Magneto Testament	7	-	6	2	3	6	6	30
X-Men: First Class (The Wonder Years)	7	-	2	3	1	2	-	15
Spider-Man: The Last Stand	4	-	6	-	8	4	-	22
House of M	10	-	1	-	-	5	3	19
Total	37	-	23	7	15	31	19	

Table 7

Interactions in DC Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Friend	Stranger	Adversary	Acquaintance	Self	Family	Father/Son	Total
Trinity	3	3	2	2	-	-	-	10
JLA/TT: Technis Imperative	5	-	-	1	-	9	4	19
Superman: The Dark Side	3	-	6	3	2	5	4	23
Batman: The Chalice	-	-	1	-	-	3	1	5
JLA: Justice For All	7	-	3	1	-	-	-	11
Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn	3	-	-	-	-	9	2	14
Nightwing: Rough Justice	2	-	1	-	4	7	7	21
Superman: Kryptonite	5	1	1	1	10	5	4	27
Tempest	15	-	3	-	7	1	-	26
Total	43	4	17	8	23	39	22	

Summary of interactions. The most common interactions for both publications were friends talking to each other (Marvel: count = 37; DC: count = 43) followed closely by family (Marvel: count = 31; DC: count = 39; see Tables 6 and 7). The third most frequent interaction in Marvel was between adversaries (count = 23) while in DC the third most frequent interaction was heroes talking or thinking to themselves (count = 23). Both acquaintances and strangers were utilized in interactions the least number of times for both publishers (Marvel: count = 0; DC: count = 4; see Tables 6 and 7). *Wolverine:*

Origin appears to have the largest variety of interactions of all the graphic novels that were coded, including the most father/son interactions (count = 10; see Table 6), while *Batman: Chalice* had the least amount of interactions (count = 5; see Table 7). Father/son relationships accounted for 61% of the family interactions in Marvel and 56% for DC. Overall, the publishers appear to have a fairly similar distribution concerning the interaction of characters with others in their stories.

Father/Son Themes

While family and father/son interactions were included in the previous tables, the Father/Son theme explores the emotions that were included specifically between the father/son interactions throughout the comic books (see Tables 8 and 9). Most interactions that were included involve a father and a son that are related by blood; however, there were a few instances that were chosen by the researcher where the father/son dynamic was evident despite the characters not being related by blood.

Table 8

Father/Son Themes in Marvel Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Fear	Anger	Disgust	Sad	Happy	Surprise	Anxiety	Total
House of M	2	2	-	1	-	1	1	7
Magneto Testament	3	1	-	3	-	1	2	10
Spiderman: Last Stand	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Wolverine: Origin	7	9	3	3	1	1	2	26
Total	13	12	3	8	1	3	5	

Table 9

Father/Son Themes in DC Graphic Novels

Graphic Novel	Fear	Anger	Disgust	Sad	Happy	Surprise	Anxiety	Total
JLA/TT: Technis Imperitive	-	2	-	-	1	2	-	5
Nightwing: Rough Justice	1	2	-	2	3	1	2	11
Superman: The Dark Side	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	4
Batman: The Chalice	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn	2	-	-	-	1	-	2	5
Superman: Kryptonite	2	-	-	2	2	-	1	7
Total	7	7		4	7	3	6	

Summary of father/son theme. Concerning the relational dynamics between fathers and sons, the emotional themes of fear (Marvel: count = 13, DC: count = 7) and anger (Marvel: count = 12, DC: count = 7) were the most commonly portrayed concerning characters from both publications (see Tables 8 and 9). Our DC data analysis yielded the following data: *Nightwing* included the most father/son interactions with fear (count = 1), anxiety (count = 2), sad (count = 2), happy (count = 3), surprise (count = 1) and anxiety (count = 2) being evenly distributed across that graphic novel (see Table 9). Disgust was not coded in any of the DC graphic novels. In Table 8, coding of the

emotional themes in Marvel yielded the following data: fear (count = 13) was the most prominent theme associated with father/son interactions and the most interactions came from *Wolverine: Origin* (count = 26).

Brief Overview of the Graphic Novels Included in this Study

The brief overview for each graphic novel (count = 14) coded in this study will provide some insight into the basic course of the story and the emotional journey experienced with each hero (or group of heroes) that is portrayed. While the overviews do not provide a complete in-depth analysis of the entirety of the story, they provide a basic understanding of the how each hero handled their struggles in their own way as they deal with existential and sometimes world-ending threats. Each overview is followed by a narrative of the emotional themes identified in that graphic novel.

Spider-Man: The Last Stand (Marvel)

Peter Parker aka Spider-Man is distraught due to the kidnapping of Aunt May, his former guardian and parent figure, and he has no clue who has taken her. Spider-Man (as Peter Parker) runs into Max Gargan aka the Scorpion, a "b-lister" villain who Spider-Man fights regularly. Spider-Man struggles with his enemies knowing his identity and attempts to process the way things are happening now between him and his arch-enemies. Spider-Man is challenged when the Scorpion tells him that he will have to spring Norman Osborne aka the Green Goblin out of prison in order to save his aunt. Spider-Man has to make the decision to trust Norman that Aunt May will be safe upon his freedom. Spider-Man talks to his wife, Mary Jane, who disagrees with his decision to break Norman out of jail. While dealing with his relationship issues and his missing aunt, Spider-Man also

recalls his traumatic past and attempts to live down the mistakes he believes he has made and attempts to find a way to reconcile the double life that he leads.

In the end, Spider-Man breaks Norman out of jail with the help of Felicia aka the Black Cat. Upon his escape from prison, Norman (now dressed as Green Goblin) escapes and double crosses Spider-Man by attacking him with the help of several other villains. Spider-Man is about to lose the fight and potentially his life when members of The Avengers arrive to incapacitate the villains. Spider-Man then rushes to the grave of his Uncle Ben where he uncovers a coffin where Aunt May has been confined and sedated with minimal air left before she would probably die. Spider-Man rescues her and once things have calmed down, Spider-Man discusses his role as a husband and nephew and how that contradicts with his being Spider-Man. Aunt May reassures (and claims that Mary Jane agrees) that it is okay to sulk and be down, but that they support and encourage him to continue to be Spider-Man because that is where he makes a difference in people's lives.

Summary. Spider-Man is reeling from his Aunt May (his mother figure) being kidnapped and is scared that he has no idea where she is, or how to rescue her. Due to his family becoming involved in his crime-fighting life, Spider-Man experiences doubt and concern over his continuing to live a double life as Peter Parker and Spider-Man. He is also struggling with aiding a criminal with escaping in order to save Aunt May. Upon rescuing Aunt May, he receives assurance from her that he is doing the right thing by helping several other people as Spider-Man. The most prominently coded themes in this

story were fear (count = 11) and anxiety (count = 11) followed by sad (count = 9) and anger (count = 6; see Table 2).

X-Men First Class: The Wonder Years (Marvel)

This graphic novel covers multiple short stories concerning the X-men portraying Beast, Angel, Iceman, Cyclops and Jean Grey. Each story is unique and generally independent from each other in that they deal with a specific character arc and story. However, there is some overlap between stories where an issue in the first story is resolved later on in a different issue.

Warren Worthington III, Angel. The beginning of the novel focuses on X-man Warren Worthington III aka Angel who has angel wings that grow out of his back making it hard for him to go unnoticed in the world. After hearing some news about his aunt who is missing in South America, Warren attempts to go find her. When Warren finds his aunt and the lost civilization in the Amazon rainforest, Warren feels accepted and feels in place for the first time since growing his wings. Warren struggles with the call to be a hero but enjoys being able to fit in with the people he has recently met.

Aaron, the android. X-men then have a guest named Aaron join the team who is an android (a machine designed to look human) who has abilities to help defend America. Aaron's "father" brings him to the X-men to train and develop social skills in order to become more humanlike. The X-men take Aaron on a mission that leads to Aaron having an identity crisis concerning whether he is a man or a machine.

Iceman and Human Torch team up. In the last issue of the novel, Bobby Drake aka Iceman of the X-men and Johnny Storm aka the Human Torch of the Fantastic Four

have arguments with their respective teams as they struggle to fit in with their more mature teammates. After a chance meeting at a coffee shop, they begin to team up, spending time together fighting criminals. After becoming fast friends who appear to be a capable team, both become aware they are interested in the same girl and struggle to remain friends, leading them to reconcile with their original teams.

Summary. In general, the overarching motif is of fitting in with others. In the first story, Warren struggles with fitting in with general society due to always having to constrict his wings when out in public. Aaron the android has a desire to become human, and a part of that is stripped away when he is damaged and sees that he is metal underneath his human appearance. Bobby and Johnny both feel rejected by their respective teams, and look to each other for support and guidance before a girl they are both interested in causes them to part ways. In this episode, anger (count = 7) was the most prominent theme, followed by anxiety (count = 6) and fear (count = 5; see Table 2).

X-Men: Magneto Testament (Marvel)

Max Eisenhardt aka Magneto is only a 9-year-old Jewish boy who lives in Germany in 1935. The story follows Magneto's story through the Holocaust where he first experiences persecution for being Jewish at the school where he competes with Arian Germans. At this time, Germany has already been taken over by the Nazi party and Max is a witness who takes part in the transition of becoming a second-class citizen and being persecuted by the Nazis for being Jewish. As Max becomes older, he is either involved in or is a witness to several real-life historical tragedies including the Nuremberg Laws, the Berlin Olympics, the Kristallnacht, and ends with Max

experiencing the Einsatzgruppen, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Throughout the story, Max meets and attempts to save several people while attempting to not lose hope in himself or lose himself in the process of surviving the horrors of the Holocaust. Max also deals with the death of his family and experiences survivor's guilt after his father purposefully shields Max from his own potential death. When Max is sent to Auschwitz, the war is still ongoing; there, he finds his old mentor from school who was the only one that ever supported him at his school and was kind to him.

At Auschwitz, he is asked to participate in the interring of dead prisoners by digging mass grave sites for people who are sent to the gas chambers. Max manages to work with his mentor in order to try and save as many people as possible when he can by striking relationships with the guards at the camp.

Summary. This book is unique in that it provides a narrative of a character seen through actual events that happened in human history. The book gives some context to the torture and emotional suffering that Max goes through as a child during the Holocaust. Which leads him to be so prejudiced against normal people when he gains not only his powers but the power and influence that come with his abilities. Of course, the story does not involve Max growing up and does not indicate at any point that Max develops his powers in this book; however, he does shows signs of helping his fellow prisoners -- Gypsies and Jews alike. This is similar to his characterization in other comic books when he develops powers and is fighting for mutant kind as an adult. In this novel,

fear (count = 11) was the most frequently used theme, followed by the themes of sadness (count = 10), anxiety (count = 9) and anger (count = 8; see Table 2).

Wolverine: Origin (Marvel)

James Howlett a.k.a Logan a.k.a Wolverine has a questionable past due to the character himself having memory issues throughout the character's written history. The story begins with a woman, Rose, coming to the Howlett residence to be a companion for a young James Howlett. The two grow to be friends with another boy, Dog, who happens to be the son of the drunken groundskeeper named Logan. Various transgressions happen over the years, specifically between John, the father of James Howlett, and James' grandfather who used to run the household. James grows up, generally seen as a sickly boy, but on a particular night when tensions between the staff and the Howlett family are at an all-time high, his mutation kicks in (Bonelike claws protrude from the back of his hand/wrist). During the altercation, Logan, the groundskeeper is killed. In the aftermath, James is forced to leave the estate due to his "affliction" and is sent out with Rose to establish a difficult lifestyle for themselves working at a mining camp.

After a few years of struggling, both Rose and James (now calling himself Logan and who has no recollection of the specifics of the night where he developed his mutation) have now established themselves at the mining camp. Logan develops a relationship with the man in charge (Smitty) who takes a love interest in Rose. The story ends with Dog (the groundskeeper's son) coming back to claim vengeance on Logan (James); after a fight ensues between Dog and Logan, Rose is killed by Logan's claws. In the aftermath, Smitty is seen attempting to track Logan who has run off into the

wilderness. Attempting to seek out comfort from Logan, Smitty knows he is out there but cannot locate him, Logan is last seen hiding, and then running off into the woods, accepting his "wild" side, Wolverine.

Summary. There are several instances of father and son relationships being portrayed throughout the book. In the beginning, it seems to focus on the leisurely lifestyle of growing up wealthy and the comfort that comes with it. However, tension seems to build between John and his father who disagree on how John runs things. When the big event happens that triggers James' mutation, his life is quickly upturned, causing him to adjust from a life of comfort, to one of hard work and grit. James seems to handle the events by having memory loss, and seems to have no intention of trying to regain his memory. He seems content to move on from the old life that he has forgotten and live his new life as Logan, the hardworking miner and hunter for the camp. It also shows how he comes to accept a part of his wild side, and seems to prefer it when grief or trauma happens in his life. This is particularly evident when Rose is accidentally killed; Logan has the option of talking to his new father figure about it, but chooses to run off into the woods, to again forget about the past and put his trauma behind him. In this novel, anger (count = 23) occurs most frequently followed by fear (count = 14) and sad (count = 11; see Table 2).

House of M (Marvel)

Wanda Maximov aka Scarlett Witch has the ability to shift and alter reality. In an accident, she experienced a nervous breakdown, which caused the deaths of Hawkeye, Ant-Man and her husband Vision. As a result of the incident, Wanda has been

quarantined by her father Max Eisenhardt aka Magnus aka Magneto and Professor Charles Xavier. Xavier who has telepathic powers attempts to treat Wanda's deteriorating condition as she continues to imagine a reality where Vision is alive and they have two children together. Elsewhere, the Avengers (of which Wanda was a team member until the accident) and the X-Men meet to determine the fate of Wanda --whether she should be killed or not due to her potential threat to their current reality. As a result of the impending threat, Pietro aka Quicksilver (Wanda's brother) argues with Magnus concerning the plans of the X-Men and Avengers. Wanda then alters reality where everyone involved wakes up in their "ideal reality;" however, in time, certain heroes recognize the change and go on to find others who have also been affected.

The story continues to identify how Wanda may have been manipulated by Pietro to create the alternate reality where everyone is "happy." As a result, many people have to make peace with their alternative life experiences and go back to their actual reality. Specifically, Spider-Man struggles with the loss of his former girlfriend who had died when he failed to save her. Magnus and Pietro also exemplify a tumultuous father/son relationship where both feel powerless in trying to save Wanda from her nervous breakdown as well as dealing with the possibility of having to kill her in order to maintain reality. The book portrays the grief they experience and the anger that comes with their grief particularly when everyone discovers that Pietro was the one convincing Wanda to change/distort reality.

Summary. Overall, the story appears to be about grief, the grief that Wanda experiences for having accidentally killed her friends and husband. It also explains the

grief that Pietro and Max experience as a family as Wanda continues to deteriorate. In addition, the teammates and friends of Wanda feel grief as they consider that they might have to kill her for the sake of all of humanity and reality itself. Other characters specifically experience the pain associated with grief as well, including Spider-Man who struggles with experiencing a life that could have been and the guilt when he realizes Wanda has changed reality. In this story, fear (count = 9) is the most prominent theme followed by sad (count = 8), anxiety (count = 7) and anger (count = 7; see Table 2).

Trinity (DC)

Bruce Wayne aka Batman and Clark Kent aka Superman have begun a relationship and appear to have worked together enough to entrust each other with their secret identities. When Ras al Ghul (enemy of Batman) finds Bizarro (simple-minded version of Superman and enemy of Superman), they cause an accident that causes Diana Prince (Princess Diana) aka Wonder Woman to reveal herself and question Superman. After Wonder Woman comes to understand her mistake in confusing Bizarro and Superman, she and Superman team up to see who is really behind the plot.

After discovering clues that potentially includes one of Wonder Woman's kin, they follow those clues to Gotham where they meet up with Batman. After several arguments concerning their personal tactics and how to the conduct themselves as heroes, Wonder Woman has a near death experience where she only able to survive by using a Lazarus Pit (a mystical/magical pit that can heal, rejuvenate, and resurrect the dead), which rejuvenates life but can also cause insanity for a period of time. When she comes to, Batman leaves to investigate another clue; upon his leaving, Wonder Woman and

70

Superman who have similar skills and abilities reflect on Batman's tactics and his general demeanor. After hunting down their respective enemies, who plan on using a nuclear bomb to reshape the world for their benefit, the trio of superheroes are able to set aside some of their initial differences and work together to thwart their rivals/enemies' plan.

Summary. In the end, each hero reflects on their new-found friendship and their ability to rely on each other for their specific skills and personalities. Despite having a difference in opinion concerning their tactics, the team identifies each other as heroes and friends and are able to settle their differences and come to an understanding that each of them has the same goals in mind, even if they disagree on the methods to achieve those goals. The most prominent themes in this story include anger (count = 8), disgust (count = 2) with surprise, fear and anxiety being the least portrayed (count = 1; see Table 3).

Nightwing: Rough Justice (DC)

Dick Grayson aka Nightwing, and formerly known as Robin, has recently set out on his own as a unique hero. Dick currently resides in Bludhaven, a city near Gotham, which nearly equals Gotham in its crime and corruption. There, Nightwing attempts to make a name for himself as he separates himself from his history as a sidekick to Batman. Although he left his "job" as Robin under tumultuous terms with Batman, both have seemingly adjusted to Nightwing growing up and becoming independent; however, after Nightwing has a few encounters with super villains, Batman shows up to lend a hand. Nightwing has a difficult time discerning Batman's intention to help/give advice, and struggles with his anger and feelings of inadequacy. Nightwing's fears are intensified

71

for a period of time due to him inhaling Scarecrow's fear gas, causing him to live through his greatest fear of not being good enough and failing.

After shaking off the effects of the gas, Nightwing continues to consider his effectiveness in ridding Bludhaven of crime. Nightwing is able to use Alfred (Batman's butler and father figure) as a means to clear the air and work on his communication with Batman, which helps them reconcile their relationship. Nightwing continues to doubt himself concerning his crime fighting efforts in Bludhaven. He even spends time reflecting on his transition from being the sidekick to being his own hero, in his own right. His doubts then cause him to perceive his relationships with others in different ways, causing potential damage and distance to those he loves and trusts, specifically with Batman and how he tends to think that Batman is coming to Bludhaven because Nightwing believes that Batman thinks he is incapable of handling things on his own.

Summary. Nightwing is still fresh off of transitioning from being Robin and a sidekick to Batman to being his own hero as Nightwing. Nightwing is able to reflect on his changes and how it feels for him to come out of the shadow of Batman and begin doing things his own way. Nightwing has doubts due to the ongoing pressure and high stakes of crime fighting, which causes Nightwing to lash out at Batman due to his own insecurities. Eventually, he finds out that Batman is there only to help him, not because Batman thinks Nightwing cannot accomplish his goals on his own. Nightwing is able to build his confidence after being able to have clear and direct communication with his father figure, Batman. In this book, sad (count = 6) is the most frequently occurring

theme followed by happy (count = 5) fear (count = 3) with anger and anxiety occurring twice (count = 2; see Table 3).

Batman: The Chalice (DC)

Batman has been working in Gotham for several years and appears to have become cynical after thwarting his enemies several times, only to have them be released back into society where they cause mayhem again. Batman reflects on his ability to make a change in Gotham when he has been a witness to the system failing whenever the villains escape from jail only to cause more mayhem and destruction. Eventually, Batman comes to find out he is of a lineage of people that have been sworn to protect the Holy Grail from falling into evil hands. Batman then struggles with the temptation to use the Holy Grail for his benefit while he begins to be attacked by multiple enemies who are seeking the Grail for themselves.

Ras Al Ghul is one of the many parties interested in the Holy Grail; Batman comes to find out that Ras wants the Grail for his daughter (Talia) so that she will have immortality like he does. However, Talia disagrees with Ras concerning his wish for her to become immortal, and while she will still continue to be an obedient servant to his cause, she does not choose the immortal life. Ras is able to understand Talia's wishes and leaves the Grail to Batman, but gives a warning that worse people than him will continue to seek it out and obtain the Grail for themselves by any means necessary. Batman is able to set aside his ego in thinking he could protect the Grail by giving it to Clark Kent aka Superman who agrees to take it to a "safe place."

Summary. Batman has been fighting crime for some years and reflects on his effectiveness as a crime fighter and whether he is actually making a difference. A potential higher calling in the name of protecting the Holy Grail arrives, which gives him a new issue to focus on. After fighting with his enemy Ras al Ghul, he is able to identify his place as Batman the crimefighter and he is happy to continue fighting crime. The story also portrays the desires of a parent for a child, and a child attempting to distance themselves from her parents' desires. While Ras al Ghul was only after the Grail for his daughter, Talia, he never stopped to ask her what she wanted. While he wanted her to be immortal, Talia established the boundary with Ras stating that she is happy to follow in his footsteps, but she prefers to remain mortal. Despite being the villains, the characters provide an example of how two people with opposing beliefs and desires can resolve their conflict. In this graphic novel, fear (count = 2) occurs twice with anger, happy and anxiety themes expressed only once (count = 1; see Table 3).

JLA/Titans: Technis Imperative (DC)

Both the Titans (a younger group of superheroes, mostly comprised of sidekicks) and the Justice League of America become aware of an object in space that is coming towards Earth. With this event, several natural and technological disasters arise as the object approaches. The Titans are specifically targeted by strange robots who kidnap the Titans and take them to an unknown location. After being captured by the robots, the Titans are placed in pods where they are able to see and experience an idealized version of reality, where Barry Allen (the original Flash and Wally's deceased uncle) is still alive for Wally West aka The Flash. Dick Grayson aka Nightwing sees a proud and happy

Batman. Donna Troy aka Wonder Girl experiences having a child, and after being rescued, struggles with the trauma of what could have been.

After realizing that this ideal reality is false and that they are being held on a space ship, the Titans begin to realize that the entity that is approaching Earth is their longtime friend Victor Stone aka Cyborg who had left Earth with a team of superheroes called the Doom Patrol. As a result of the Doom Patrol dying, Cyborg began adding new pieces of technology to himself steadily going from being a human enhanced with technology to being a living, metal planetoid. The JLA tell the Titans they intend to destroy the planetoid before any more damage can be done to Earth; however, the Titans disagree with this plan due to their close connection to Victor. The Titans and JLA fight it out concerning what should be done with Victor.

The Titans are eventually able to get close enough to reach and talk to Victor who has seemingly lost all sense of his humanity. After Garfield Logan aka Changeling and Victor's dad, Silas Stone, talk to Victor, Victor is able to recall his humanity and stop the problems he had unintentionally been causing on Earth. In reality, despite losing his humanity, Victor unconsciously was coming home to Earth, to bring together his friends/family that he had when he was a part of the Titans.

Summary. The graphic novel exemplifies friendship and what it means when people create their own families that do not have to involve blood ties. Younger people were asked to set aside their personal bonds of trust and put themselves on the line to help a close friend of theirs who was struggling with grief and the potential loss of his

humanity. In this novel, happy and anger (count = 6) occur the most, while surprise

(count = 3) and fear, sad, and anxiety (count = 1) occur the least frequently (see Table 3).

Superman: Kryptonite (DC)

In this novel, Clark Kent aka Superman recently started being a "superhero" only

a few months ago. During this time, he has come up against several different foes that

have attempted to kill or harm him utilizing a variety of methods, but none appear to hurt

him in the least. Superman reflects on his abilities, specifically his invulnerability and

talks to his (adoptive) parents John and Martha Kent to share his fears as he continues to

push his limits. Superman also reflects on the effects he feels like he has on the world,

and reports that while he has been able to save several people, he still feels guilty for

some of the mistakes he has made in attempting to save people along the way. During

this time, Superman struggles with his double life where he seemingly has a romantic

interest in Lois Lane, a reporter he works with, when he is portraying himself as Clark

Kent. Superman struggles with withholding his secrets from Lois simply because he is

unsure how she would react, but also because of the potential danger that it could place

her in.

Meanwhile, a strange, green meteorite lands in the Middle East, which takes the

interest of a casino owner who has recently built a hotel and casino in Metropolis. The

green meteorite is made of Kryptonite, a crystal that is from the planet Krypton, which

has since been destroyed but is also the home world of Superman. Unknowingly, the

crystal also contains an alien with telekinetic abilities, who, when in proximity of others

is able to control them. Eventually, through the alien's ability to control the casino owner

he is able to meet with Superman and give him vital information concerning who he is, and where he is from. Superman learns how Kryponite can weaken him. Through deduction, Lex Luthor, Superman's nemesis is also able to make this discovery. In the end, Superman is able to send the meteorite into the sun in order to prevent Lex Luthor from obtaining any amount of the meteorite. Superman manages to survive the ordeal and returns home to be with family and Lois.

Summary. Overall, the novel provides a look into Superman in his formative years. While he has had his abilities for years, he is still unproven when it comes to actually being a superhero. The book highlights the difficulties he faces as he explores love with another person, and the nature of that love. Superman also portrays positive examples of what it is like to be vulnerable despite his being able to achieve superhuman feats, and is able to share his vulnerabilities with his parents, who provide a positive example of love and support. Finally, the novel explores his budding romantic relationship with Lois who appears to be enamored with Superman but who overlooks Clark Kent. It is not until the end that he is able to work up the courage to ask her out as Clark Kent to possibly see if she would love him for who he is and not for his superhuman capabilities. In this novel, fear (count = 9) is the most occurring theme, with sad and anxiety (count = 6), anger and happy (count = 4) and disgust (count = 1) occurring the least frequently (see Table 3).

Superman: The Dark Side (DC)

Traditionally, Superman's general history includes the information that shortly after he was born on the planet Krypton, his parents sent him away via space ship due to

their awareness that their planet would soon be destroyed. Superman's space ship lands in Kansas where he is discovered and then raised by John and Martha Kent. However, in *The Dark Side*, when he is sent off to Earth, his rocket ship is intercepted by people who work for Darkseid, who is generally considered one of Superman's greatest enemies due to Darkseid's superior intellect and overwhelming power. In that story, instead of being raised in Kansas, Superman is raised on Apokolips where he is subjugated to torture, and is conditioned to see Darkseid as his father and master. Apokolips has been at war with the Gods of New Genesis for eternity, but both groups have recently been at peace with each other after both Darkseid and the Highfather (leader of New Genesis) signed a pact where they sent their first-born son to live and be raised by their respective enemies. After Scott Free (the son of the Highfather) successfully escapes Apokolips, Darkseid considers this the end of the peace treaty. Superman is sent to New Genesis to complete an attack and destroy the planet by sending a bomb that is powerful enough to destroy planets.

After Superman is successful in his attack to destroy New Genesis, he then attempts to attack the Highfather who takes Superman to the source wall. There, Superman's true history is revealed to him, the Highfather passes on, and Superman is teleported to Earth. Once on Earth, Superman meets several familiar people including Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen, who show Superman their plight on Earth. Superman eventually begins to see things for himself and not through the lens of Darkseid, despite Darkseid's efforts to continue his control over Superman, the superhero is eventually able to rally the remaining New Gods to defend Earth from Darkseid's attack.

Summary. Overall, the comic book story suggests that despite a person's history their futures are not set in stone. It also highlights the desire of certain people to appease the ones they love even if it means completing horrific acts. It also shows that keeping an open mind and having positive role models around can help a person better establish a sense of what is right and what is wrong. The relationships Superman finds with Darkseid and the Highfather can be reflective in how we see typical negative and positive versions of father/son relationships as well and even though Darkseid has a more significant influence on Superman's rearing, he is still able to process his actions after the fact and begin to determine right vs. wrong. The simple kindness and belief the Highfather had in Superman was enough for him to begin to see how his thoughts and actions were evil. In this novel, fear and anger (count = 7) occur the most frequently, followed by anxiety (count = 6) with sad and happy occurring twice (count = 2; see Table 3).

Aquaman: Tempest (DC)

Garth aka Aqualad, has been training in a secret area with Atlan, a wizard who has been training Garth as he develops new and different powers. Atlan tells Garth that his training is complete and that he is free to return to Earth; Garth, however, is disconcerted and does not believe he is ready to return. Eventually, Garth relents due to realizing he cannot train and hide forever. Garth is told he is a guardian of Earth, Garth shares that he does not like the idea of having his life be pre-ordained and desires to set his future for himself. Garth seeks out his home city in order to obtain his birthright and to expand his powers even more. The plan is thwarted by Slizzath, Garth's uncle who once attempted to usurp the throne against Garth's father. Garth then comes across Tula

aka Aquagirl who has been presumed dead for several years. Garth is quick to accept her back despite her having no knowledge of how she came to be back with him.

Garth eventually finds his people, the Idylists. From them, Garth learns of his destiny to be a hero for his people. Tempest eventually loses his powers due to Slizzath stealing them by tricking Garth into beginning a ritual, but is eventually able to get them to return when he finds out that Tula has been in Slizzath's thrall the entire time. Garth is able to defeat Slizzath with his powers restored and attempts to move on from the ordeal.

Summary. Garth seems to portray a typical teenager who attempts to have everything figured out, but is actually rather uncertain of who he is at heart. The novel portrays his ability to handle the pressure he feels from taking on a new mantle, going from Aqualad to Tempest, where he is a hero in his own right, and no longer a "sidekick." Tempest shows the emotional struggle that the hero faces as he learns to rely on himself to complete the mission. Tempest also delves into the issues of wanting to believe something to be real, even if there are several warning signs indicating otherwise. Garth himself seems to have multiple father figures or mentors that influence him and attempt to aid him along the way. Atlan seems to be the primary figure in his life since he was the one to help train and guide Garth during his mission to fulfill his birthright and gain access to all of his powers and abilities. Ultimately, the story appears to be about grief or the ability to grieve; while Tempest is hopeful that the person he loves has come back to him, he is able to start the healing process and grieve for her in a proper way after finding her to be a fraud. In this novel, anger (count = 11) is the most prominent theme,

followed by surprise (count = 9), with sad and anxiety (count = 7). Fear (count = 6) and happy (count = 2) occur the least frequently (see Table 3).

JLA Justice for All (DC)

This book includes multiple stories that are not necessarily connected together, but involve some of the same heroes throughout the different issues. Some aspects of the stories may be included throughout the series, but in general, each issue is broken up into its own unique story.

General Eiling of the US Armed forces introduces four marines (The Ultramarines) who absorbed radiation and have become metahumans (humans with abilities). The Justice League are also notified of an issue involving Shaggyman, a being similar to what bigfoot looks like but does not and cannot be killed/destroyed. Generally, Shaggyman is considered to be a mindless beast that occasionally becomes enraged and destructive. The Ultramarines are able to recover Shaggyman before the JLA are able to intervene. Afterwards, General Eiling sets a trap for the majority of the JLA where the Ultramarines ambush them in order to take out the JLA. During the battle, the Ultramarines are beating the JLA handedly; however, as both take a moment to recoup, the Ultramarines discuss the fact that the JLA will fight them, but will primarily focus on saving any civilians caught in the middle of the fight. Meanwhile, Superman expresses his anger to the point where he intends to kill the Ultramarines. The JLA discover that General Eiling intends to transfer his consciousness to the Shaggyman while the Ultramarines distract the JLA. The Ultramarines discover they are being played by General Eiling, finding out they will die in a few weeks due to their unnatural enhanced

abilities, The JLA are eventually able to subdue General Eiling with the help of the Ultramarines. The Ultramarines are able to live and choose to move away and create their own city where other metahumans were invited to come live.

The JLA consider expanding as they learn of an attack that will come from the fifth dimension. Ray Palmer aka the Atom has been a member of the League before but had left due to personal issues in relation to being a fulltime hero. The JLA seek him out to join them, but Ray expresses his reluctance, only joining the team after he assists in defeating Amazo, an android that is able to mimic all of the powers of the JLA. The JLA are attacked by the Djinn from the fifth dimension, two powerful beings that are able to change anything with a mere thought. The Djinn's only limitation is that they are confined to an object that can only be wielded by humans.

The book continues on to focus on Triumph, a hero no one remembers as a founding member of the Justice League, who is manipulated by the evil, blue Djinn. Meanwhile a pink Djinn finds a young boy, J.J., who attempts to prevent the world from being destroyed. Triumph uses the Djinn's abilities to restore his powers and attempts to take control of the JLA watchtower (headquarters). The JLA is able to help J.J. and the pink Djinn combat and take over the blue Djinn (making a purple Djinn controlled by J.J.), thus removing Triumph's abilities. Despite Triumph attempting to apologize, he is encased in ice and is left frozen.

The story ends with a group of JLA members being tasked to follow Bruce Wayne who has been behaving in unusual ways. The Bruce Wayne they are investigating is eventually found out to be a White Martian (an alien that can shape shift and look like

any human being). The JLA reveal that in an attempt to "imprison" a group of White Martians, the Martian Manhunter wiped their memories, and made them believe they were humans. The White Martian impersonating Bruce Wayne had been able to recall some of his memories, and attempted to steal Bruce's identity for personal gain. In the end, the JLA are left to rethink their methods in imprisoning the White Martians due to the potential danger in letting them live and thinking of themselves as humans.

Summary. Triumph appears to be an incarnation of jealous and envy in that he had lost everything that he desired when he was no longer included by the Justice League. As a result of finding the Djinn that provides him an opportunity to return, Triumph elects to take his seat back on the JLA by force instead of going to talk to his former friends. Triumph appears to be so caught up in what he lost and the anger towards the people he feels that caused it, that it never occurred to him to reach out and talk to his former team. This could be considered to be the opposite experience for Ray Palmer who has since retired from the JLA to focus on slowing down his life and his desire to just be a professor. While the JLA are wanting Ray to join back up, Ray is reluctant due to becoming content and settled with his current life. In the end, he is convinced to rejoin after establishing some boundaries and talking it over with his friends. In this novel, fear and anger (count = 3) are the most frequently occurring themes, followed by sad, surprise and anxiety (count = 2) and happy (count = 1) the least frequent (see Table 3).

Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn (DC)

Dick Grayson aka Nightwing has struggled throughout his life with his mentor Bruce Wayne aka Batman; however, when Bruce is presumed dead, Dick decides that he

does not have a choice and takes on the mantle as Batman. With the mantle of Batman comes Bruce's son Damian who has taken on Dick's old mantle of Robin. Despite his proficiency in battle and tactics, Damian struggles socially and comes off as a headstrong teenage know-it-all who believes he is the rightful heir to the cowl. Due to the heavy burden it is to be the Batman and the strained relationship he has with Damian, Dick continues to doubt his ability to be the Batman. As a result of their issues that prevent them from helping a girl, she is deformed by the villain Professor Pyg leading to her becoming deranged, and she disappears. When she reappears, she calls herself Scarlett, and she is the sidekick to Jason Todd aka the Red Hood.

Jason is also a former Robin, who took the mantle shortly after Dick and Bruce initially parted ways as partners. As a result of being killed and then resurrected by a Lazarus pit (a mythical pool with the powers to heal and in some cases, bring people back from the dead), Jason has returned to Gotham to rid it of crime; however, he does not hesitate to kill. Despite being on the same side in general, Dick and Jason disagree on each other's means; Dick believes Jason takes it too far, and Jason thinks Dick does not take it far enough. Due to Jason's escalations, a special hitman is called in to rid the city of vigilantes; Jason is almost killed, but the assassin is thwarted with the help of Dick and Damien. After saving Jason, Dick offers Jason the opportunity to redeem himself and encourages him to come stay at the mansion. Jason is then arrested and claims that Dick has the ability to bring Bruce Wayne back but claims Dick will not do it because Dick lives in Bruce's shadow.

Summary. The novel deals with change and adjusting to new roles and, specifically, focuses on how two heroes attempt to adjust to each other. The reader is given insight into Dick Grayson as Batman, specifically, as to how Dick is adjusting to the new role while possibly grieving the death of his surrogate father, all while assisting in rearing Bruce's teenage son Damien. Dick is also then challenged by Jason, who since returning from the dead has kept up with fighting crime with the intent to kill the criminals. The book highlights the possibility of escalation and how people can react when more severe measures are taken. In this book, fear and anger (count = 6) are the most frequently occurring themes, with anxiety (count = 5) and sad (count = 3) occurring the least frequently (see Table 3).

Overall Summary

Overall, each of the novels that were coded provides a unique and different experience through the stories that they tell. The themes, medium, and interactions all seem to be trending in a similar fashion between each of the publishers that were included in the research. While the stories themselves tackled hard to believe, fantastical moments at times, it seems that there is a wealth of information pertaining to emotions, how they are expressed and who they expressed with to provide an individual the opportunity to reflect on their own personal experiences in order to achieve growth. The data indicated that it is plausible for a person to identify specific emotions as they relate to a character's reactions to an event. The emotions could then potentially be processed in a therapeutic environment to assist a client who may be struggling with their own

emotional processing. By breaking down the information into themes, medium, and

interaction, I hope to provide helpful information for therapists to utilize in their practice.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and add a potentially viable medium to bibliotherapy by using graphic novels or comic books. Specifically, I attempted to find particular examples of father and son interactions that could be used in a therapy session to aid in the process of helping family members to understand and communicate their emotions. The research was done to identify specific emotional expressions throughout different graphic novels in order to assist therapists who have difficulty in connecting with adolescent clients. In finding examples of emotional expressions in graphic novels or comic books, I believe that a qualified therapist can then take the identified examples and utilize them in therapeutic ways, specifically using bibliotherapy related techniques to help gain trust.

The modality known as comic book therapy allows therapists to use bibliotherapy along with art therapy (O'Connor, 2012) to provide insight and reflection of self by utilizing comic book characters. The combination of bibliotherapy and art therapy as modalities also can incorporate both narrative and solution-focused theoretical concepts (Hedtke, 2014). By looking at the problem of anger experienced by adolescents through a systemic lens, I believe that there is evidence to support that comic books can be utilized in a similar fashion to bibliotherapy to help an individual, family system, or

group begin to understand their emotions and assist in identifying positive and safe ways to share and connect with others. Several theories were used in this content analysis to better explain the themes that were derived from the graphic novels, those theories include: CBT, solution-focused therapy, narrative therapy, and Erikson's psychosocial development theory. This review discusses how the findings from this content analysis are explained by these theories as well. It is through these theories, that the therapist can hope to achieve a connection with the client and allow for connections to be created between not only the therapist and the client but between the individual's family system as well (Rappaport, 2010).

Discussion of Findings from the Content Analysis

Expression and Processing of Emotion

The research findings from this study are discussed by addressing each of the four research questions. In this content analysis, my first question was "How do comic books provide an in-depth narrative concerning the expression and processing of emotions, including anger?" After a thorough investigation to find and code different emotions to learn more about the many ways emotions are expressed in comic books, I found an abundance of evidence to support the use of comic books or graphic novels by counselors and clients when working with adolescents and families. The findings from the content analysis of 14 graphic novels indicate that there are multiple instances of emotional expression delivered by comic book characters in a variety of ways and through different relationship interactions. Two examples of emotional expression include doubt in being a superhero and anger between father and son. The first example of doubt in being a

superhero is reflected in Superman who is unsure of his invulnerability when he first

starts out and Spider-man who is continually concerned that he is putting his family in

danger. The example of anger is expressed in *Wolverine: Origin*, where there are

multiple examples of strife and even abuse between father and son.

  Comic books use a variety of emotions and include a multitude of mediums to

help convey the story and to provide an in-depth character arc for the characters involved

in the story as indicated by the Marvel and DC graphic novels that were coded for this

specific research. Graphic novels utilize multiple mediums within the limited context of

the comic book page in order to not only share a story, but the emotional process of the

characters as well. This relates to the focus of comic books as a type of bibliotherapy that

helps the client bridge the gap of trust in a relationship or to identify their individual self

within the character they are exploring (Rosalski et al., 2010). The way in which the

emotions are portrayed can vary per example, but can primarily be summed up in four

different categories including: illustrated expression, typography of the words used,

private thought, and vocal communication between different characters (*"Medium"*,

2020). Each of these in their own way allow for readers, such as adolescents, to gain a

substantial amount of information and utilize these mediums to recognize and understand

the emotional journey of the characters. *Nightwing: Rough Justice, Tempest, Superman:*

Kryponite and *Spider-Man: The Last Stand* emphasize the use of thought to give the

reader insight into what the character was thinking or feeling. The way in which the

writers and artists use the medium can also provide a chance for reflection with

adolescent clients who have a difficult time in understanding their own methods of

expression. Therapists can reflect on not only the nature of the emotion but also in how it is expressed to help the client understand their own way of expressing emotions (Early, 1993).

   Emotional expressions. Emotional expressions were evident throughout each of the graphic novels. Expressions were primarily seen through the facial expressions and body language that were identified as the primary identifier for emotion expression. Glaring, gritted teeth, pointing, and punching were the most identified expressions used for anger. Expression was identified most often in *Tempest* (count = 15) and *Wolverine: Origin* (count = 29). Examples of sadness included hugging, crying, and downcast/somber eyes, while examples of happiness expression ranged from hugging to smile and laughter.

   In identifying emotions, empathic attunement can be created for the client and the therapist, leading to a greater understanding of the client's emotional process and their perceptions on emotions as a whole (Rappaport, 2010). An aspect of social behavior that is evident in adolescents is the human being's ability to compare themselves to others in order to evaluate their own abilities and opinions (Shi & Xie, 2014). In a similar fashion, comic book characters can be used to reflect on how a person reacts emotionally to comic book characters as well. Additionally, graphic novels have been helpful in assisting adolescents synthesize information with the assistance of visual and written aids (Boerman-Cornell, 2013). By seeing the examples of emotions illustrated, the adolescent client has the ability to begin to identify their own emotional and behavioral patterns (Beck, 2011).

Specifically, when the stories focus on characters who are young adults or adolescents themselves may help clients relate more to the characters, several of the comics including *Nightwing: Rough Justice, Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn, Tempest, Superman: Kryptonite, Spider-Man: The Last Stand* and *Magneto: Testament* exemplify instances of hardship of varying degrees, from surviving the horrors of the Holocaust (*Magneto: Testament),* losing loved ones (*Spider-Man: The Last Stand, Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn, JLA/TT: Technis Imperative)* to becoming a hero in their own right (*Superman: Kryptonite, Nightwing: Rough Justice, Tempest).* An adolescent could potentially identify with the nature of the emotions that the characters are dealing with, whether it is attempting to branch out and become an adult in their own right similar to Nightwing and Tempest or being comfortable in expressing their uncertainties with people they rely on like Superman, Nightwing, Tempest, and Spider-Man do to dealing with trauma like Max does in *Magneto: Testament*.

Vocalization was one of the more frequent mediums utilized by the characters in comic books. For both DC and Marvel, vocalization was used to express doubt, (*Superman: Kryptonite, Spider-Man: The Last Stand, X-Men: First Class)* anger (*Wolverine: Origin, Trinity, House of M)* comfort (*Nightwing: Rough Justice, Spider-Man: The Last Stand).* Interactions with friends (Marvel: count = 37, DC: count = 43) was followed by interactions with family (Marvel: count = 31, DC: count = 39) showing that the characters portray instances of sharing their emotions with people they trust. In many cases, (*Superman: Kryptonite, Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn, Superman: The Dark Side, Nightwing: Rough Justice, JLA/TT: Technis Imperative, House of M, Spider-*

Man: The Last Stand) the characters are able to share their vulnerabilities and fears with each other.

Patterns and Themes

The next research question that I investigated is "What general patterns or themes are associated with the emotions that are ascribed to the characters in the comic books by the artist/writer/publisher?" There are a wide variety of emotions expressed within the graphic novels. The publishers themselves seem to utilize a variety of different emotions through different contexts and stories to help the reader relate to the characters in the stories (Rosalski et al., 2010). Primarily, anger and fear were the themes that were most present for both DC and Marvel publications. Most of the fear was expressed as doubt or concern for others well-being by the heroes being portrayed such as in *Spider-Man: The Last Stand* or in *Superman: Kryptonite*, both express concerns for their loved ones. While Spider-Man explores the fear that comes with an enemy knowing his secret identity and putting his family in direct danger, Superman explores the concerns he has on how he is putting himself in danger despite the potential fears of himself and the potential effect he would have on his parents if he were to become injured or die. Anger was most prominent in *Tempest* and *Trinity* for DC, Tempest's anger primarily focused on being manipulated and his adjustment to growing into his own hero, while anger was most prevalent between Batman and Wonder Woman in *Trinity* due to them having just met and having a different set of ethical/moral codes where Wonder Woman believes Batman crosses the line on multiple occasions.

92

Happiness is the fifth most common theme for both publications. The majority of the expressed happiness is derived from comic book characters interacting with friends or family. Specifically, for DC in *JLA/TT: Technis Imperative* Cyborg's humanity is reached with the help of his friends and father talking to him and expressing their love and hope for him. In *Nightwing: Rough Justice,* several moments occur where Nightwing reflects on his relationship with Batman and thinks of the happy moments in his life. For Marvel, happiness was most apparent in *Wolverine: Origin* and *Spider-Man: The Last Stand,* Wolverine has fun with his friends growing up and is able to find joy to some degree as an adult with his friend/father figure (Smitty), where Spider-Man reflects on the love and support he receives from his friends and his Aunt May.

Tempest and Nightwing provide examples of how young adults transition into full adults and setting off on their own. Both characters seem to struggle with Erikson's stages of identity vs. role confusion, in that they are attempting to shed their mantle as sidekicks while trying to prove they are capable of handling problems on their own (Erikson, 1982). While the theme of sadness was third most prevalent for Marvel, anxiety was the third most identified for DC. Both disgust and surprise were the least portrayed by both publications. While the specific emotions cannot be fully portrayed by a broad theme, both publications trended towards a similar frequency concerning their themes. This means that a therapist is not limited in the graphic novels that he uses, rather, the therapist can primarily focus on the story that is told, and can identify the appropriateness of the content/story without needing to be concerned about having an abundance of emotional expression in the graphic novel. This is beneficial because the therapist does

not have to worry about the existence of emotional expression in comic books, rather they can focus on the specific emotions expressed and the associated story involving said emotions.

The variety of themes recorded also focused on the medium in which the emotions was expressed. A therapist has the opportunity to ask the client to identify the emotions based on the expression drawn on the page, or ask the client to reflect on what is said or thought by the characters. The therapist can then draw on the client's observations to provide insight for the client in how they may relate to the characters. For both Marvel and DC Comics, it appears that vocalizing and expression were the most prominent mediums through which the emotions were identified. This can provide positive examples in therapy of people discussing their issues with others, or sharing in their happiness; therapist can also utilize CBT techniques where a client is asked to identify their behavior based on a response to an emotion, or how they even physiologically react to an event they experience (Beck, 2011). Thoughts and typography were generally used less frequently; in regards to thought boxes, the majority of thoughts expressed occurred when featuring a single character as compared to a team-centric novel. Marvel primarily seemed to use typography in more subtle ways by bolding singular words within a speech or thought box, allowing the reader to interpret the meanings of the phrase or sentence in different ways. While DC Comics has some evidence of building single words in a sentence, Marvel appeared to be more effective in trying to provide specific interpretations of words through the use of bolding.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

A therapist can utilize aspects of CBT to help a client gain introspection into their own emotions. If a person is struggling with cognitive distortions, they are likely having difficulty in not only identifying their thought patterns, but their emotions as well (Beck, 2011). A therapist could identify the general thought patterns or cognitive distortions that the client is experiencing and then present a specific story or character that is relatable to the client. For example, in *Nightwing: Rough Justice*, Nightwing struggles with his own self-esteem and doubts his abilities to be a hero on his own. Similarly, a client may experience doubt in regards to a new experience (such as a new job); after processing their doubts, the client may be able to identify strengths and receive encouragement from the therapist, much like Nightwing eventually receives encouragement from Batman. The client could then gain insight into the processes and maladaptive behaviors of the character and with guidance could begin to see their own way of processing their thoughts and emotions. By creating this opportunity for the client, the therapist would then be able to help guide the client into identifying their own patterns that might be a part of the issues they experience.

Narrative Therapy

Narrative approaches identify stories or narratives as being the shaper of identity, whether related to culture or personal. Similarly, characters in a comic book may feel that they are shaped by the situations that they are surrounded by, also known as the narrative. Narrative therapy has the potential to work due to the therapist helping the client identify

that the client's life is a story in and of itself. A client could then read a comic book to gain an understanding of the way in which the character understands their own abilities and how to separate themselves from the problem through externalization (White & Epston, 1990). An example of this comes from *Spider-Man: The Last Stand,* where Spider-Man feels directly responsible for putting his Aunt May in danger. While it is a relatively close call in rescuing Aunt May, Spider-Man considers giving up the mantle of Spider-Man and just try to be a good man. Aunt May, who survived the ordeal, is able to give the perspective that while he does not need to be Spider-Man to be a great man, he is able to do great things because he is Spider-Man. Clients can be encouraged to reflect on the way the character is able to make changes within the narrative and can collaborate with their therapist on how they can make the same or similar changes in their own life.

Solution-Focused Therapy

Solution-focused therapy focuses on the ability of an individual to create solutions despite experiencing problems. In general, clients become stuck due to their inability to see the solutions to the problem or that the problem has become too big for them to solve (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). The JLA face this in the *Technis Imperative* where an object is hurtling towards Earth, causing disruption and destruction. While their initial plan is to destroy the object, the Titans identify the object as their friend and attempt to reach out to his humanity. While the client is asked to work through some of their issues and focus on the problems in different ways, enabling positive thinking and helping, the client creates solutions can help build the general confidence for the client to succeed in overcoming

96

not only their personal issues, but any other issues that they face in the future (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007).

Bibliotherapy

Character themes and story arcs can be explored using the basic concepts of bibliotherapy. The therapist can encourage the client to explore the emotional dynamics of the characters portrayed in the graphic novels in order to help gain insight into their own personality. The characters in the books themselves can also provide understanding on how to handle situations, or at least create a dialogue for the client and therapist to explore potential solutions to a problem (Pardek, 1994). A therapist using bibliotherapy encourages the reader/client to experience and discuss aspects of the character struggles as those struggles relate to them, essentially getting the client to talk about their problems indirectly and finding ways in which the character could or should have handled their situations, effectively identifying ways in which the client could do the same for themselves (Catalano, 2008). Even reading from several books, a client can gain perspectives on what they want and relate to different characters. They can begin to compare and contrast different characters. For example, someone who may want to shed the feeling of being a loner may try to separate from the way Batman or Wolverine handles relationships and look more towards Superman, Nightwing, or Spider-Man.

Art Therapy

The expressions in graphic novels were evident in all of the graphic novels that were coded. Art plays a huge part in helping people express themselves in a multitude of ways. In focusing on drawing, painting, and other visual mediums of art, a client can be

encouraged to identify specific instances of emotions that are portrayed in a comic book, specifically looking at facial expressions and body language. A client can then explore their own emotions in an artistic sense through the use of facial expressions and body language. A therapist can elect to use a guided art technique where they request a specific motif or can allow the client to be non-directive in order to allow for the client to guide their own ways of emotional expression (Thong, 2007).

Father/Son Relationships

In this content analysis, I was very interested in finding evidence for the following research question: "How do comic books portray father and son figures working through problems or emotional problems with each other?" Both publications portrayed father/son relationships in a variety of ways, ranging from full of anger and fear (*Wolverine: Origin)* to happiness and support (*Superman: Kryptonite, JLA/TT: Technis Imperative, Nightwing: Rough Justice)*. Ten of the 14 graphic novels that were coded included father/son interactions. More of the stories included in DC trend towards a supportive relationship where the son can turn to the father figure for advice or support when needed. In *Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn,* Dick Grayson struggles with inheriting the Batman mantle and uses Alfred as someone to express his concerns with; Dick also becomes a father of sorts to Damian Wayne (Robin) and struggles to be a positive and consistent influence to him. Nightwing (*Nightwing: Rough Justice)* realizes that his father figure (Batman) has been following up on him not because Batman believes he will fail, but Batman is there to provide support. DC graphic novels overall provided more of a sense of balance concerning the themes in that the characters

appeared to primarily express their fears/anxieties to their mentors/fathers and were

rewarded with being provided reassurance and understanding in return, such as

Nightwing: Rough Justice and *Superman: Kryptonite*.

Marvel graphic novels, on the other hand, seem to trend more towards anger and

fear. While fear is the most prominent theme for father/son relationships in Marvel

graphic novels, anger is the one that seemed to be more prevalent. This is in part due to

Wolverine: Origin, which included several instances of a combative father/son

relationship. This can also be seen in *House of M* in the relationship of Magnus and

Pietro who are attempting to process grief while expressing anger towards each other.

Overall, there is an abundance of father and son interactions that occur despite the

randomness of the novels that were collected and coded. There were also instances where

instead of a son relationship, a father/daughter relationship is focused on (*Batman:*

Chalice) and a mother-figure/son relationship is explored (*Spider-man: The Last Stand*).

When in therapy, fathers and sons may also be able to identify that they want a

relationship that is more like Clark and John Kent (*Superman: Kryptonite)*, and less like

Magneto and Pietro (*House of M).* Having an awareness of their relationship could help

improve the overall self-esteem of the adolescent son, and prove to assist in reducing

their overall anger and aggression (Nickel, 2006). The overall benefit that the graphic

novels provide is that there are a multitude of scenarios involving fathers and sons; the

therapist benefits from this because they can provide the different examples to the clients

to help them explain how they feel with each other. Father and sons, in particular, who

have had difficulty in the past may balk at the idea of sharing their thoughts and feelings

with each other (Levant et al., 2014). This may benefit someone who has a difficult time in expressing their emotions, specifically teenagers who may be reluctant in sharing their feelings. The graphic novels can provide a model, both good and bad, of what a father and son relationship can look like.

Adolescent Processing of Emotions

My final research question focused on identifying how comic books could be used with various issues experienced by adolescents, as follows: "Are there certain comic books that are potentially more effective than others in assisting adolescents in processing and understanding their emotions?" Looking at the numbers concerning themes, mediums, and interactions, there seem to be some graphic novels that have more examples for adolescent individuals to relate to. Specifically looking at *Wolverine: Origin, Nightwing: Rough Justice,* and *Tempest* each deal with different characters who are in or near their adolescent years. Each character faces uncertainty, doubt, and even fear in relation to their friends and family. This coincides with Erikson's theory (1982) about adolescence because the comic book characters are either dealing with industry vs. inferiority or identity vs. role confusion. The characters face challenges in their struggle to adapt to the new psychosocial stage of development that they are working through. Each character also provides different ways in which they share their fear, like attempting to ignore it or forget about it like Wolverine (*Wolverine: Origin)* does, or finding someone to talk to about it like Nightwing, even if they are not alive such as when Tempest (*Tempest)* talks to the grave of his dead friend.

Although frequency is important in helping individuals in identifying different emotions, there are times where, despite the low frequency of emotional expression, graphic novels can still provide a meaningful and process-oriented experience for the reader. One of the amazing aspects of graphic novels and comic books is that they provide acknowledgement of a wide array of emotion whether it is processing through the emotion in a thought bubble or sharing their concerns with a teammate or a loved one. One example is in *Batman: Chalice* where Batman expresses his concerns and frustrations with Alfred, his butler and surrogate father; another example is in *House of M* where several friends attempt to work together to resolve an issue that potentially means killing a friend/colleague/family member. Building off of variety, there may very well be graphic novels that are better suited for a particular person, specifically due to the stories that the graphic novels are able to tell. Because of this, one individual may have a more emotional experience reading through *Wolverine: Origin* if they experienced abuse, while others may relate to the growing pains of being a young adult attempting to establish themselves like in Nightwing (*Nightwing: Rough Justice), Batman & Robin: Batman Reborn).*

Overall, graphic novels and their effectiveness may very well rely on the individual that is reading them, simply due to their own personal journey that they have taken. That is, it is not for the researcher to specifically state which graphic novels are the most appropriate beyond identifying appropriateness for the client/individual themselves. Some themes may be considered more graphic and possibly traumatizing to the

individual and should be handled with caution, whereas other books may focus on specific emotions, however, that are not as triggering as others.

Applications

The themes, expressions, and interactions provided by comic books can assist therapists who may be struggling in getting a client, especially an adolescent to engage in therapy. The benefit of comic books is that they can help the therapist provide the adolescent with an avenue for self-reflection and increased understanding by encouraging the adolescent to reflect on the emotional journey of the characters in the comic books. While the goal of bibliotherapy is to provide cathartic moments through the use of literature (Pardek, 1994), comic books appear to provide another modality for therapists to utilize in a similar fashion as classic literature. It would be important for a therapist to have specific knowledge of the comic book that he or she provides for their client in order to ensure that the comic book they read is appropriate and is mostly in line with the client's experiences. For example, if a client is dealing with grief, it would be important for the therapist to identify a graphic novel or comic book that exemplifies grief, instead of anger or satisfaction. The therapist helps the client by not only encouraging the client to read the book, but to also facilitate discussion that can help provide insight for the client (Catalano, 2008). The following paragraphs provide examples of how therapy could look across the different therapeutic modalities that are typical settings for a therapist.

Adolescents and Anger

Adolescents become frustrated because rules are seen as ways of constricting their personal freedoms, including making their own choices and freedom of expression. Fives et al. (2011) observed that a major core of adolescent anger and frustration comes from the rules that are established by adults. As adolescents negotiate the terms of independence, it is possible that they grow resentful of the boundaries that are levied on them by the school system, in particular when they interpret the school's rules as inhibiting them from achieving their goals in a social context.

Within the comic books, there are several examples where adolescent or young heroes feel they are being restricted by boundaries set by their superiors like in *Tempest* where Garth, the hero is attempting to shed his old code name of Aqualad and establish himself as his own hero as Tempest. Garth is able to grow by realizing that the people around him are trying to push him to be better, not because they just want to tell him what to do. Similarly, Bobby Drake and Johnny Storm in *X-Men: First Class* struggle with being the younger teammates who want to have fun, despite their more serious and older teammates. They are able to find camaraderie due to their similar outlooks on life, possibly due to being alike in age. Nightwing also struggles with feeling like he is being over looked by Batman in *Nightwing: Rough Justice*; he expresses fear and concern that Batman does not trust him, when in reality Batman is there to be a partner and a friend, not his overseer. Each of the characters express frustration and anger within each of their stories; fortunately, all of them are able to realize that their perceptions may not be

accurate and that their colleagues are actually trying to treat them in a more positive manner.

While not every graphic novel or comic book will be directly applicable to a particular individual, graphic novels overall seem to provide a multitude of stories that many adolescents might identify with. Comic book therapy can hopefully provide the same opportunities afforded in bibliotherapy where the goal is for the client to achieve a cathartic moment (Pardek, 1994) by reflecting on similar issues experienced by the characters in the story. In seeing their emotions reflected through the character, the adolescent may become more at ease in opening up and sharing their story because they do not feel as isolated and alone in their emotions, thus creating more positive interactions with family and leading to greater fulfillment and fewer aggressive behaviors (De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014).

Individual Therapy

Individual comic book therapy could include a variety of different methods that could be utilized by the therapist to assist the client in working through their emotional difficulties. The therapist could begin by orienting the client to the process of bibliotherapy and help the client identify their specific needs. The therapist can then determine an appropriate graphic novel that parallels the client's experiences, similar to bibliotherapy (Catalano, 2008). First and foremost, the graphic novels could help the client/reader connect to their own emotional journey and the therapist could frame the sessions to identify differences between the way the character in the comic book reacts or behaves as it pertains to their specific emotional reactions and journey. This would allow

the client to gain insight into how they process their own emotions and encourage them to think about how they behave in certain situations when they are experiencing a specific emotion. By introducing the client to cognitive distortions, the individual is able to pick up on their maladaptive ways of thinking and can potentially change their schemas, and thus can help the client change their general perception towards themselves and life (Beck, 2011). From there, the therapist and client can work together to identify potentially positive and negative outcomes for the client themselves. Narrative therapy is based on the concept of seeing humans as interpretive beings that establish meaning based off of their personal and interpersonal experiences (White & Epston, 1990). Narrative therapy could be used collaboratively by the client and the clinician to help explore the character's traits and help the client become more aware of the way in which they interpret their own personal experiences (Hedtke, 2014). Solution-focused therapy could compare the strengths of the characters found in the books to the client to help them see the solutions to their own issues.

Working on the emotional process by incorporating narrative and art therapy, a therapist could suggest reading through several graphic novels to help the client understand their own narrative. When the therapist believes the client has understood the concepts and is able to reflect on their emotions and emotional expressions (White & Epston, 1990), the therapist can provide a homework assignment where the client is encouraged to design and write their own comic book (Edwards, 2004). The client gets the benefit of finding something that is engaging and allows them to identify and express their own emotions through the comic book story that they get to design. Clients also

report a feeling of catharsis in using art therapy, and the art itself can be utilized to note change and the progress a client makes throughout the therapy (Rappaport, 2010). Ultimately, the primary focus of the therapy is to assist the client in reflecting on their own emotions, the means in how the therapist assists the client is at the therapist's discretion.

Family Therapy

Similar techniques can be utilized by both individual and family therapy; however, the important aspect to keep in mind is the emotional processing that occurs within the contexts of relationships. In narrative therapy, the family therapist's focus is to help the family disrupt the familiar, negative patterns of thinking and allow the client to create a new story that better fits the dynamics of the family (White & Epston, 1990). In identifying specific comic books that focus on a team or a family, family members who agree to comic book therapy may benefit in seeing multiple examples of how family dynamics are portrayed within the comic books. Individuals in the family system may begin to identify with specific characters in the story and are able to express their relatability to the specific characters with their family members (Hedtke, 2014). For example, in the *X-Men First Class* graphic novel, both Bobby Drake and Johnny Storm feel like the outcasts and scapegoats of their team/family. When the older group members of their respective teams appear to be frustrated by their antics, both Bobby and Johnny reflect on feeling shunned and not fitting in; therefore, they strike up a friendship through their feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Robbins et al. (2006) discuss the importance of the therapist in balancing their alliances with each and every member of the family in order to have the clients continue their therapy. Through the use of comic books, the therapist can help maintain a sense of balance concerning the therapeutic alliance by giving everyone an opportunity to be heard. By promoting positive listening behaviors within therapy, not only will the therapeutic alliance have a greater chance of being established, the family can also practice the modelled behavior outside of therapy, hopefully leading to greater satisfaction between family members. Levant et al. (2014) discuss that when a father figure is accessible to an adolescent that adolescent will very likely externalize their problems less frequently. A father's engagement with a child is associated with less frequent behavioral problems for boys and fewer psychological problems in young women.

Family therapy with graphic novels may help family members work through their personal emotions and help them see past their perspectives in order to help heal and identify new ways in which they can communicate with each other. While it is still essential to focus on the emotional processing of the multiple individuals involved in the therapy, the therapist can assist the family system by encouraging the sharing of their emotions in positive ways (Levant et al, 2014). The comic books can still provide both good and bad examples of this, where clients are encouraged to identify ways in which they interact negatively, but the comic books can also provide positive examples of family interaction and can model that behavior for the clients as well.

Group Therapy

Comic book therapy can be utilized in group therapy in that this type of therapy gives a group of people an opportunity to share their own reactions to the same story (Giannini, 2001; Yalom, 2005). While there are many types of groups that exist (anger, bereavement, addictions), comic books can potentially help by providing potential talking points for the group. Much like any other book group that exists that does not necessarily pertain to therapy, the comic books can provide talking points where the readers can reflect on the journey of the characters and even allow the individuals in the group to identify with a specific character (Giannini, 2001). The group gets the opportunity to solely focus on the characters' character arc, the overall story progression, and are able to reflect with other group members about their experience. According to Giannini (2001), primary issues and process can occur spontaneously when clients in a group setting are asked to discuss literature. The graphic novels can be tailored to the specific topics of the group and can allow for discussion and an overall reflection of their emotional processing.

One of the primary focuses for the therapist during group sessions is to ensure that the groups stays on track with the group discussion and ensures that the individuals in the group do not deviate too much from the general focus of the group (Giannini, 2001). Generally, any therapeutic modality could be used to help drive the group focus; for example, CBT would help clients explore the possible cognitive distortions and schema the characters have and can help clients relate to and understand the emotional/cognitive process of the characters they are reading about (Beck, 2011). In similar ways to

individual therapy, group therapy can help clients associate with comic book characters and help them work out their personal issues, the therapist can interject and help the clients by differentiating between positive and negative examples and help guide individuals in the group to their individual goals.

Limitations

I sampled only nine DC graphic novels and five Marvel graphic novels from the period of 1980, 1990, and the 2000s. This decision allowed me to look at these publications in depth but prevented me from looking at other graphic novels published by other groups. The findings in this content analysis concerning emotional expression and characterization may not be applicable beyond Marvel and DC publications. While examples exist of familial interactions being coded, only father and son relationships were specifically explored at this time. Further exploration could incorporate different relational dynamics such as father/daughter, mother/son, and mother/daughter.

Implications

The opportunity to utilize comic books utilizing bibliotherapy techniques is evident. There are multiple instances throughout all of the graphic novels that were researched that indicate emotional processing and character growth. Therapists can utilize the concepts provided and those who are familiar with bibliotherapy would benefit from having an additional resource that could be more palatable for the clients that they see in their practice. Not only do the comic books provide insight into the characters through the use of thought and speech bubbles, the individuals in therapy can also identify visual aspects of the emotions that are displayed, potentially providing deeper insight into their

own emotional processes that allows for the possibility of catharsis in similar ways as bibliotherapy (Pardek, 1994). While this does not prove the efficacy of comic book therapy, the research indicates that there is potential for therapists to have another resource they can utilize in their practice. The research completed in this study hopes to be the foundation in which therapists can begin to utilize and develop comic books as an effective strategy in reaching their clients.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist, I hope to begin to utilize the graphic novels I have coded to assist adolescents and families, specifically with focusing on relationships with fathers and sons. I will use the findings in this current study to develop both an index and database that I will share at conferences and workshops to help therapists serve adolescents and families.

I do believe that the work that has been started can be continued and expanded upon. In time, a working index can then be provided for therapist, possibly as an addition to identifying key techniques that work within the comic book therapy model.

Future Research

Future research could include expanding the concepts and specifiers related to the comic books. Specifically, graphic novels can continue to be coded, focusing not only on emotional expression, but focusing on specific issues that may prove important to the consumer/client. Included in this would be focusing on gender issues, racial issues, substance issues and abuse/trauma related issues while also continuing to expand the focus on father/son or familial issues in general. While all of the graphic novels in this study provided evidence of emotional expression, identifying the context of the emotions

within the stories would prove beneficial in helping therapist identify specific novels that would be appropriate for their clients to read, allowing for a more suitable connection to the characters and aiding in client growth. Adding to this would add another layer of preference for the client, in that, they do not always have to be assigned a specific character due to specific story; instead over time the therapist could provide options of characters for the client to select from due to the possibility of similar stories involving different characters from different publications.

As the research on the graphic novels is continued, eventually the researchers may also have an opportunity to focus on the different aspects concerning the characters from the different publishers (DC and Marvel Comics). Writers and artists can also be included in the comparison, as it would be interesting to compare how each writer and artist portray the nuances of the characters they are writing or drawing, specifically when it portrays two different characters experiencing the same or similar event.

Additional research can also focus on developing a specific modality that focuses on the utilization of comic books in therapy. The modality of therapy can draw from multiple other modalities such as bibliotherapy, art therapy, narrative therapy, CBT and solution-focused therapy. Several techniques have the potential to overlap with the utilization of using comic books in therapy room. The research would focus on identifying the issues of the client, and using available comic books by the researcher/therapist to identify different aspects of therapy that the client finds to be helpful in their process. While the researcher has some conceptualization of what therapy

can look like, any therapist that is comfortable in implementing comic books in therapy can find effective and creative ways to work with a client.

Adding to that, I believe that comic book therapy would benefit adolescent males who may struggle in expressing their emotions to others, specifically with their family. The explicit purpose of my research was to identify specific stories that family members (specifically fathers and sons) could identify with that would enable them to create a dialogue for a better relationship. I do believe that I was able to identify specific content in the graphic novels that were coded that would be of some benefit for this specific population, and I hope that the information that was uncovered could then be used to help both adolescent males and their fathers work through issues of anger and other emotions with each other.

Conclusion

The focus of this content analysis was to identify the potential use of comic books for therapeutic purposes, specifically focusing on emotional expressions, anger. The interactional process between fathers and sons was also specifically identified through the process of identifying examples of emotional expression throughout the comic books. The information gathered indicates that there is an abundance of examples concerning emotional expression within comic books. The emotions were broken down into seven different general categories where each one was identified from the 14 graphic novels that were used. Father and son interactions were identified in 10 of the 14 graphic novels utilizing a variety of different mediums to portray the interactions. The possibility of continuing to find different relatable interactions and stories can prove to be helpful in

finding ways to approach and interact with clients who have difficulty in opening up and sharing. The results of the study prove to be promising in continuing to find creative new ways to engage with potentially resistance clients and has potential to help those process their emotions in a less invasive and direct manner.

REFERENCES

Andolfi, M. (2013). Engaging fathers in family therapy with violent adolescents. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 34,* 172-185. doi: 10.1002/anzf.1015.

Arch, J. J., Eifert, G. H., Davies, C., Plumb Vilardaga, J. C., Rose, R. D., & Craske, M. G. (2012). Randomized clinical trial of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) versus acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for mixed anxiety disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 80*, 750-765. doi: 10.1037/a0028310

Beck, J. S. (2011). *Cognitive behavior therapy: Basics and beyond* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Boerman-Cornell, B. (2013). More than comic books. *Educational Leadership, 70,* 73-77.

Bowker, J. C., Thomas, K. K., Norman, K. E., & Spencer, S. V. (2011). Mutual best friendship involvement, best friends' rejection sensitivity and psychological maladaptations. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 40*, 545-555. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9582-x

Bringhurst, R. (2005). *The elements of typographic style*. Vancouver, Canada: Hartley & Marks.

Brown, B. B., & Bakken, J. P. (2011). Parenting and peer relationships: Reinvigorating research on family-peer linkages in adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 21*, 153-165.

Catalano, A. (2008). Making a place for bibliotherapy on shelves of a curriculum

materials center: The case for helping pre-service teachers use developmental

bibliotherapy in the classroom. *Education Libraries: Children's Resources, 31*,

17-22.

Dattilio, F. M. (2010). *Cognitive-behavioral therapy with couples and families: A*

comprehensive guide for clinicians. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

de Shazer, S., & Dolan, Y. (2007). A brief overview. In H. Korman, T. Trepper, E.

McCollum, & I. K. Berg (Eds.). *More than miracles: The state of the art of*

solution-focused brief therapy (pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Routledge.

De la Torre-Cruz, M. J., García-Linares, M. C., & Casanova-Arias, P. F. (2014).

Relationship between parenting styles and aggressiveness in adolescents.

Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 12, 147-169. doi:

10.14204/ejrep.32.13118

Early, B. P. (1993). The healing magic of myth: Allegorical tales and the treatment of

children of divorce. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 10*, 97-106.

Edwards, D. (2004). *Art therapy*. London, UK: Sage.

Erikson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton &

Company.

Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed

methods designs-principles and practices. *Health Services Research, 48*, 2134-

2155. doi: 10.1111/1475-6773.12117

Fives, C., Kong, G., Fuller, J. R., & DiGiuseppe, R. (2011). Anger, aggression, and irrational beliefs in adolescents. *Cognitive Therapy & Research, 35*, 199-208. doi: 10.1007/s10608-009-9293-3

Gavigan, K. (2012). Caring through comics: Graphic novels and bibliotherapy for grades 6-12. *Knowledge Quest, 40*, 78-80.

Georgiades, S. D. (2008). A solution-focused intervention with a youth in a domestic violence situation: Longitudinal evidence. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 30*, 141-151. doi: 10.1007/s10591-008-9067-1

Giannini, A. J. (2001) Use of fiction in therapy. *Psychiatric Times*, *18,* 33-34.

Ginsberg, G. (1995). Parent-adolescent relationship program (PARD): Relationship enhancement therapy with adolescents and their families (fathers and sons). *Psychotherapy, 32*, 108-112.

Grando, R., & Ginsberg, B. G. (1976). Communication in the father-son relationship: The parent-adolescent relationship development program. *Family Coordinator, 4*, 465-473.

Hedtke, L. (2014). Creating stories of hope: A narrative approach to illness, death and grief. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 35*, 4-19.

Hollon, S. D., & Beck A. T., (2013). Cognitive and cognitive-behavioral therapies. In M. J. Lambert (Ed.). *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (6th ed., pp. 393-394). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Huey, S. J., Henggeler, S. W., Brondino, M. J., & Pickrel, S. G. (2000). Mechanisms of change in multisystemic therapy: Reducing delinquent behavior through therapist

adherence and improved family and peer functioning. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 68*, 451-467. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.68.3.451

Jordan, C. Lehmann, P., Whitehill, K., Huynh, L., Chibgu, K., Schoech, R., Cummings, J., & Bezner, D. (2013). Youthful offender diversion project: YODA. *Best Practices in Mental Health, 9(*1), 20-31.

Karniol, R., Galili, L., Shtilerman, D., Naim, R., Stern, K., Manjoch, H., & Silverman, R. (2011). Why Superman can wait: Cognitive self-transformation in the delay of gratification paradigm. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 40*, 307-317. doi: 10.1080/15374416.2011.546040

Krippendorff, K. (1980). Validity in content analysis. In E. Mochmann (Ed.). *Computerstrategien für die Kommunikationsanalyse* (pp. 69-112). Frankfurt, Germany: Campus. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/291

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kupersmidt, J. B., & Coie, J. D. (1990). Preadolescent peer status, aggression, and school adjustment as predictors of externalizing problems in adolescence. *Child Development, 61*, 1350–1362.

Lansu, T. M., Cillessen, A., & Bukowski, W. M. (2013). Implicit and explicit peer evaluation: Associations with early adolescents' prosociality, aggression, and bullying. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23*, 762-771. doi: 10.1111/jora.12028

Levant, R. F., Richmond, K., Cruickshank, B., Rankin, T. J., & Rummell, C. M., (2014).

    Exploring the role of father involvement in the relationship between day care and

    children's behavior problems. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 42*, 193-

    204. doi: 10.1080/01926187.2013.814390

Lopes, P. (2006). Culture and stigma: Popular culture and the case of comic books.

    Sociological Forum, 21, 387-414. doi: 10.1007/s11206-006-9022-6

McKenna, G., Hevey, D., & Martin, E. (2010). Patients' and providers' perspectives on

    bibliotherapy in primary care. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, 17*, 497-

    509. doi: 10.1002/cpp.679

Medium. (2020). Retrieved March 5, 2020, from https://www.merriam-

    webster.com/dictionary/medium

Moss, H. B., & Kirisci, L. (1995). Aggressivity in adolescent alcohol abusers:

    Relationship with conduct disorder. *Alcoholism, Clinical and Experimental*

    Research, 19, 642–646. doi: 10.1111/j.1530-0277.1995.tb01561.x

Nelson, C. A. (2007). What would Superman do? In L. C. Rubin (Ed.), *Using*

    superheroes in counseling and play therapy (pp. 49-67). New York, NY:

    Springer.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nickel, M. (2006). Influence of family therapy on bullying behaviour, cortisol secretion,

    anger, and quality of life in bullying male adolescents: A randomized,

    prospective, controlled study. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 51*, 355-362.

O'Connell, B. (1998). *Solution focused therapy*. London, UK: Sage.

O'Connor, P. (2012). *What is comicspedia?* Retrieved on January 3, 2015 from

www.comicspedia.net.

Pardek, J. T. (1994). Using literature to help adolescents cope with problems.

Adolescence, 29, 421-427.

Parsons, A., & Howe, N. (2006). Superhero toys and boys' physically active and

imaginative play. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 20*, 287-300. doi:

10.1080/02568540609594568

Pehrsson, D., & McMillen P. S. (2007). Bibliotherapy: Overview and implications for

counselors. *Professional Counseling Digest, 2*, 2-3. doi:

10.1080/08893675.2012.654944

Pichot, T., & Dolan, Y. M. (2003). *Solution-focused brief therapy*. New York, NY:

Haworth.

Pope, A. W., & Bierman, K. L. (1999). Predicting adolescent peer problems and

antisocial activities: The relative roles of aggression and dysregulation.

Developmental Psychology, 35, 335– 346.

Rachman, S. (1980). *Emotional processing*, Behaviour Research and Therapy, 18(1), 51-

60.

Rappaport, L. (2010). Focusing-oriented art therapy: Working with trauma. *Person-

Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 9*, 128-142. doi:

10.1080/14779757.2010.9688513

Reinecke, M. A., Washburn, J. J., & Becker-Weidman, E. (2007). Depression and

    suicide. In F. M. Dattilio & A. Freeman (Eds.), *Cognitive-behavioral strategies in*

    crisis intervention (pp. 31-94). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Robbins, M. S., Liddle, H. A., Dakof, G. A., Turner, C. W., Alexander, J. F., & Kogan, S.

    M. (2006). Adolescent and parent therapeutic alliances as predictors of dropout in

    multidimensional family therapy. *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*(1), 108–116.

    doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.20.1.108

Rosalski, M., Stewart, A., & Miller, J. (2010). Bibliotherapy: Helping children cope with

    life's challenges. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 47*, 33-37.

Rubin, L. (2012). Superheroes on the couch: Exploring our limits. *The Journal of*

    Popular Culture, 45, 410-431. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2012.00931.x

Shi, B., & Xie, H. (2014). Moderating effects of group status, cohesion, and ethnic

    composition on socialization of aggression in children's peer groups.

    Developmental Psychology, 50, 2188-2198. doi: 10.1037/a0037177

Smith, P., Ananiadou, K., & Cowie, H. (2003). Interventions to reduce school bullying.

    Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 48, 491-499. doi:

    10.1177/070674370304800905

Thong, S. A. (2007). Redefining the tools of art therapy. *Art Therapy: Journal of the*

    American Art Therapy Association, 24, 52-58. doi:

    10.1080/07421656.2007.10129583

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). (1996). Content analysis: A

   methodology for structuring and analyzing written material. Retrieved August 15,

   2018, from https://www.gao.gov/products/PEMD-10.3.1.

Wagner, M. (2004). *Batman/superman/wonder woman*: *Trinity*. New York, NY: DC

   Comics.

Watson, A. (2019). Frequency of reading comic books by age U.S. 2018. Retrieved

   March 8, 2020, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/943127/comic-book-

   reading-frequency-by-age-us/

Weber, R. (1990). *Quantitative applications in the social sciences: Basic content analysis*

   Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781412983488

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York, NY:

   WW Norton.

Wiles, N. J., Thomas, L., Turner, N., Garfield, K., Kounali, D., Campbell, J., …

   Hollinghurst, S. (2016). Long-term effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of

   cognitive behavioural therapy as an adjunct to pharmacotherapy for treatment-

   resistant depression in primary care: Follow-up of the CoBalT randomised

   controlled trial. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 3, 137-144.

   doi: 10.1016/ S2215-0366(15)00495-2

Wilson, B., & Ziomek-Daigle, J. (2013). The use of expressive arts as experienced by

   high school counselor trainees. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 8*, 2-20.

   doi: 10.1080/15401383.2013.763674

Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed). New York, NY: Perseus Basic Books.

APPENDIX A

Initial Coding Template

Appendix A

Page #'s	Limits of medium	context/ background	emotional expression	Body language/ medium	Character Interaction	Keywords	Inferences	Code
	Any limitations concerning the medium of the comic goes here	What is going on historically/ currently to elicit an emotion	What emotion is being expressed	How is it being expressed? In what way through the comic book itself?	Is the character interacting with anyone or thinking to themselves	Key words used by characters in talking or thinking	What does the coder infer concerning emotions/ behaviors/ thoughts	General summation of emotion

APPENDIX B

Final Coding Template

Appendix B

Page #'s	context/ background	emotional expression	Body language/ medium	Character Interaction	Keywords	Inferences	Code	Theme	Medium	Interaction
	What is going on historically/ currently to elicit an emotion	What emotion is being expressed	How is it being expressed? In what way through the comic book itself?	Is the character interacting with anyone or thinking to themselves	Key words used by characters in talking or thinking	What does the coder infer concerning emotions/ behaviors/ thoughts	General summation of emotion	Fear, Anger, Disgust, Sad, Happy, Surprise, Anxiety	Thought, Expression, Vocalizing, typography	Family, Friend, Stranger, Adversary, Acquaintance, Self

1