# Experimenting with Comics Making as Inquiry

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*I illustrate my comics making approach for the extension of multimodal analysis (MMA) in ethnographic education research. Comics making impacted how I designed my study, generated multimodal data, conducted analysis, and share work to broader academic audiences. I present two examples drawn from my ethnography of an image-based lab's graduate course to show how comics making (1) foregrounded corporeal responsiveness over time; (2) unified the visual and textual with body-sensory perception; (3) emphasized movement, affect, and empathy; and (4) enabled the use of multimodal data generated by research participants and myself. I also provide resources for scholars who are interested in making comics for their research.*

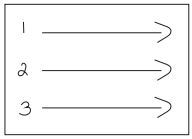
I formatted this article in the style of a zine. Todd and Waston (2006) define zines as, "cheaply made printed forms of expression on any subject...They are like mini-magazines or homemade comic books... Zines can be read by anyone will to take a look" (p. 12). My zine formatted dissertation includes hand-made pictures and comics as well as text. Here are some hints on how to read my work:

**What are Comics?**

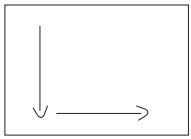
There is no set definition for comics (see Eisner, 1997; 2008). I understand comics as a pictorial and narrative process that can express complex ideas such as embodied thinking, emotion, and motion. In North American English, the word comics is typically used as a *singular noun* when it refers to the medium and process. A person commonly uses the term comic when referring to individual strips or books (i.e. *The Family Circus* comic strip and *Black Panther* comic books). I used comics as a singular noun and comic when I referred an individual sequence.

**How to read my zine formatted research**

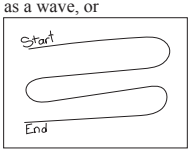
Some pages can be viewed across.




Others can be viewed down and across, or



as a wave, or



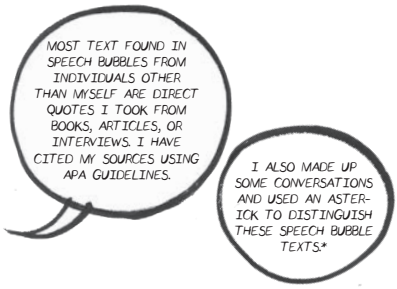

in no discernable pattern.

(instructions adapted from Bennett, 2014, p. 2)

**Understanding My Pictorial Layout**

Some pictures appear as illustrations that support my text.

Others may be part of a comic and are not formatted as figures. Texts and pictures are unified wholes.




Pictures and comics were made either by me or research participants. I noted the pictures and comics made by research participants or by multiple people. In some sections, I copied several drawings from other authors as a pictorial process for quoting. I cited pictures that were originally created and published by someone else in the APA style for in-text citations.

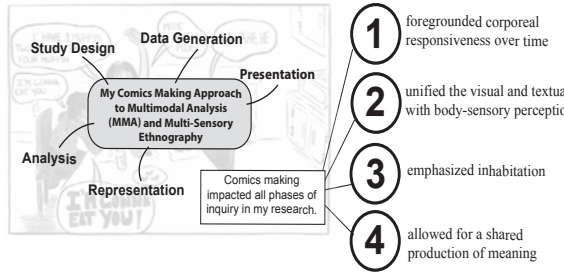
Sometimes, I borrowed unique design elements from other cartoonists to produce some of my comic panels. I used footnotes to cite these panels.

Pay attention to my work as you would a comic strip, zine, or picture book. For example, look at my pictures until you notice something you may not have noticed right away.

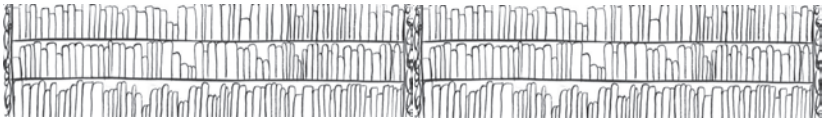
**Fieldwork in a Cartoonist's Laboratory and Preschool Classrooms**


Primary Research Question: How do graduate students, preschoolers, professor Kelly and I become agents in DrawBridge's visualization practices?

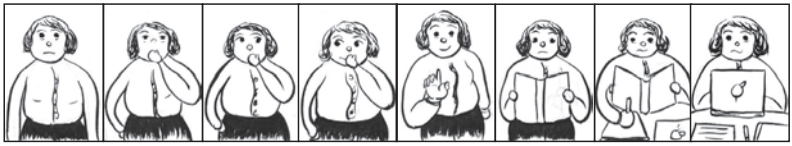

What does a picture-based approach to research **mean**? What does this kind of analytic process **do**?

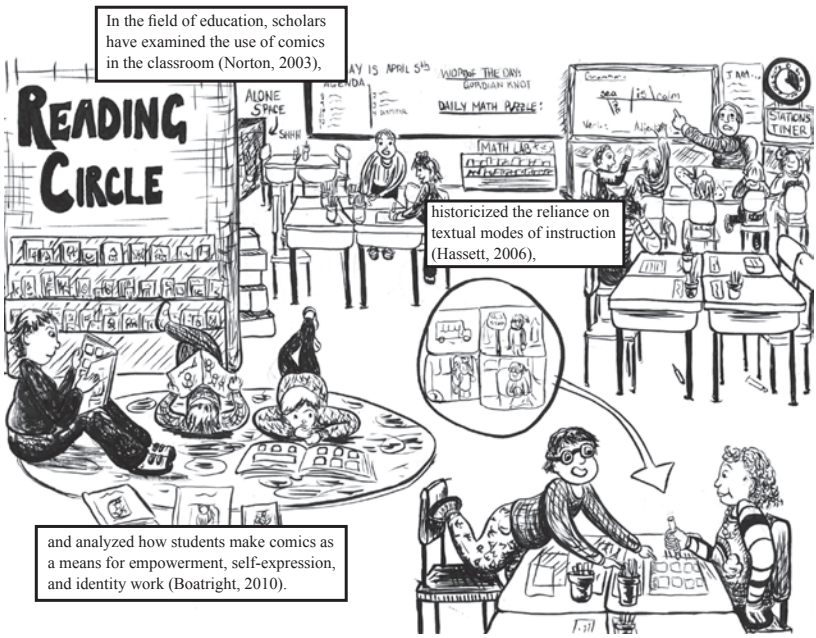


**Comics in Academia**



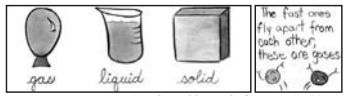
It is well established in academia that comics is a literary genre warranting its own program of study. As evident in a variety of disciplines, comics are typically objects of study used to pursue scholarly inquiry in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (Bukatman, 2012; Chute, 2014; Howard & Jackson II, 2013).






Recently, scholars have also studied the potential value in comics making as an analytical tool in qualitative research (Katz, 2013; Sousanis, 2015; Weaver-Hightower, 2013).

Some studies use comics making to simplify research for wider readership (Berns, 2015; Larimer, 2015),

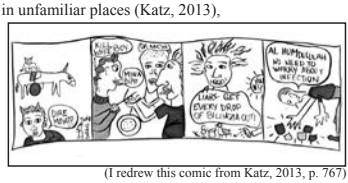



(I redrew this comic from Berns, 2015)

explain pragmatically how to do qualitative research (Galman, 2013),


(I redrew this comic from Galman, 2013, p. 27)

cope with the stress of doing fieldwork in unfamiliar places (Katz, 2013),

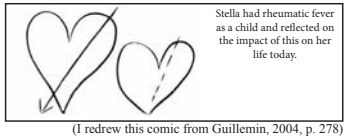



(I redrew this comic from Katz, 2013, p. 767)

employ curricular modifications (Hay, Williams, Stahl, & Wingate, 2013),

(I redrew this comic from Hay, Williams, Stahl, & Wingate, 2013, p. 488)

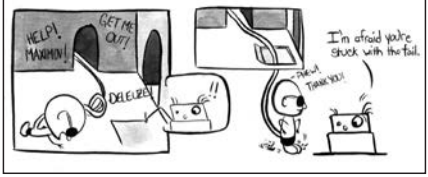
and create data made by research participants (Guillemin, 2004).




(I redrew this comic from Guillemin, 2004, p. 278)

*Figure 1.* At my desk. This single comic panel on the right shows me working on how comics making impacted my research process and transformed existing forms of research such as ethnography and MMA.

Bennett's (2014) dense, visual essay, presents comics making as a form of analysis for her geography research. She experiments with comics making to analyze, interpret, and present theoretical framings of existing scholarship.




(I redrew this comic from Bennett, 2015, p. 3)

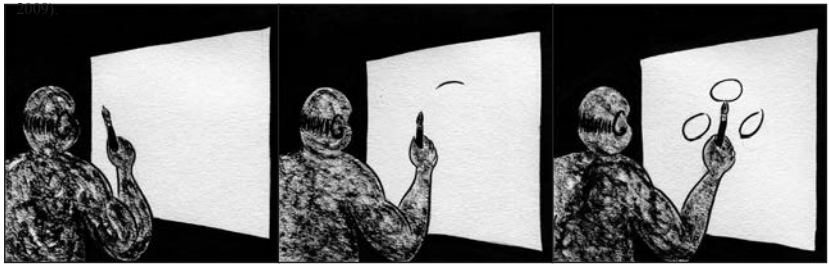
Similarly, Sousanis' (2015) scholarship outlines a theoretical framing for including comics making in academic discourse. However, his work does not expound on how comics making might impact existing modes of research nor specify how comics modify current tools for data generation such as fieldnotes, interviews, or coding methods .

(I redrew the figure on the above, right from Sousanis, 2015, p. 80)

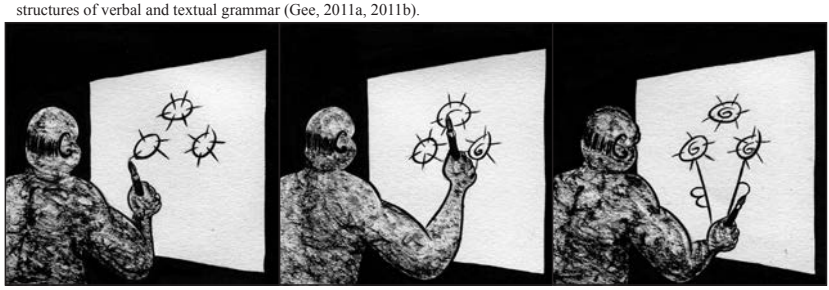
The potential of comics making as a research method remains under-theorized and under-studied.

**Multimodality of Ethnography**

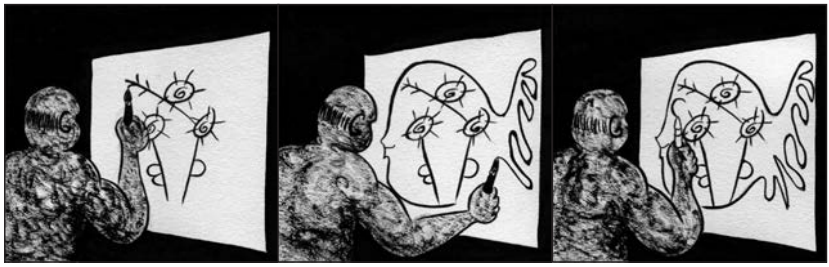
Qualitative researchers who examine how people form and engage in multimodal worlds recognize the importance of the senses and affect in meaning-making (O'Halloran, 2011; Oksanen, 2008; Parks & Schmeichel, 2014). With a multimodal analytic lens, researchers examine how people make meaning about themselves, others, and the environment through multiple modes such as writing, film-making, music making, and picture making (Gee, 2011a, 2011b; Kress, 2009).

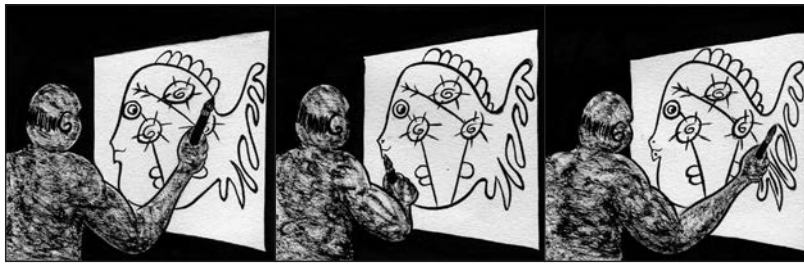


These modes combine and interconnect in a variety of ways through media, such as books, films, pictures, and songs, to create and disseminate knowledge. Derived from social semiotic theory, a multimodal perspective extends linguistic-based analyses to the visual, auditory, and embodied. MMA experiments with words by translating images, sounds, and bodies into another kind of text. Other modes are incorporated into research as additional artifacts, and parallel elemental structures of verbal and textual grammar (Gee, 2011a, 2011b).

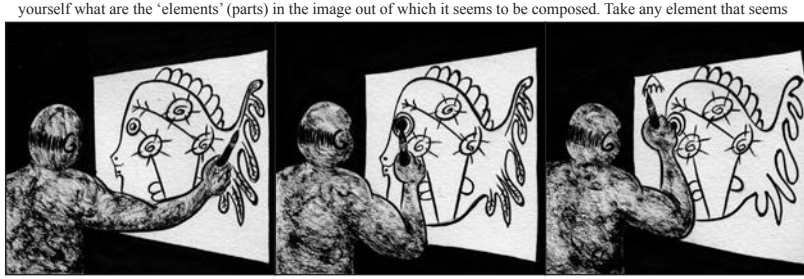


Gee and Kress (2009) suggested the purpose of MMA is to draw out these underlying structures to better understand how people make meaning and communicate. Through a multimodal lens, Kress defined the senses as predetermined, universal, and distinctive. People use their five biological sense faculties to get to know their environment. These senses bring aspects of the world inside a person so that she can make meaning about her surroundings.





Rather than question the five biological sense faculties as a particular Western cultural construct that may not align with the knowledge about sense perception of other groups, Kress universalizes the five sense framework (Pink, 2011). Of these fixed, sense faculties, both Kress and Gee (2011a, 2011b) privileged sight perception when using MMA. For example, Gee defined images in a conventional sense; images are either static, like a painting, or moving, as in a movie or video game. He then compartmentalized images to sight perception: "When you want to analyze an image, start by asking yourself what are the 'elements' (parts) in the image out of which it seems to be composed. Take any element that seems



to be an important 'part' out of which the whole image is composed. This will change for various images you choose and in terms of what you want to analyze" (Gee, 2011b, pp. 187-188). Images did not exist beyond the visual. Words and images juxtaposed one another and could be understood separately. Gee, along with Kress (2009), ignored how images might relate to other sense faculties, a possibility I attempted to address with comics.

*Figure 2.* Picasso demonstrates painting. This comic sequence, which began on the previous page, is of Pablo Picasso. I made this sequence based on my fieldnotes of a DrawBridge class held at the Image Lab. During a class discussion, Professor Kelly played parts of a YouTube video (Julia3happy, 2011). She spliced short videos of Picasso, a physicist, and a girl using various marking instruments. As we watched this video, students drew in the notebook, made handwritten class notes, gazed out of one of the three floor to ceiling windows, ate candy from one of the lab's candy baskets, and laughed at Professor Kelly's remarks about Picasso. The rich multi-sense and multi-genre experience of being of the Image Lab while viewing the video extended image-making practice beyond seeing with ones eyes.

**Coupling multi-sense modality with comics making**

The places where I did my research – the Image Lab and three early childhood centers – images were not necessarily fixed material objects, confined to sight perception or limited to the Western five biological senses model. At the Image Lab, images were described as a place for experiences. At the early childhood centers, image making extended beyond the use of marking instruments (pencil and paper) were commonly part of uninstructed play and pretend. While I draw upon elements of MMA such as the multimodality of knowing, I also align with Pink (2011) and question how ethnographers who use MMA "divide modes up as functioning through specific sensory routes" (p. 5). By making comics, my analysis unified the visual and textual with body-sensory perception.

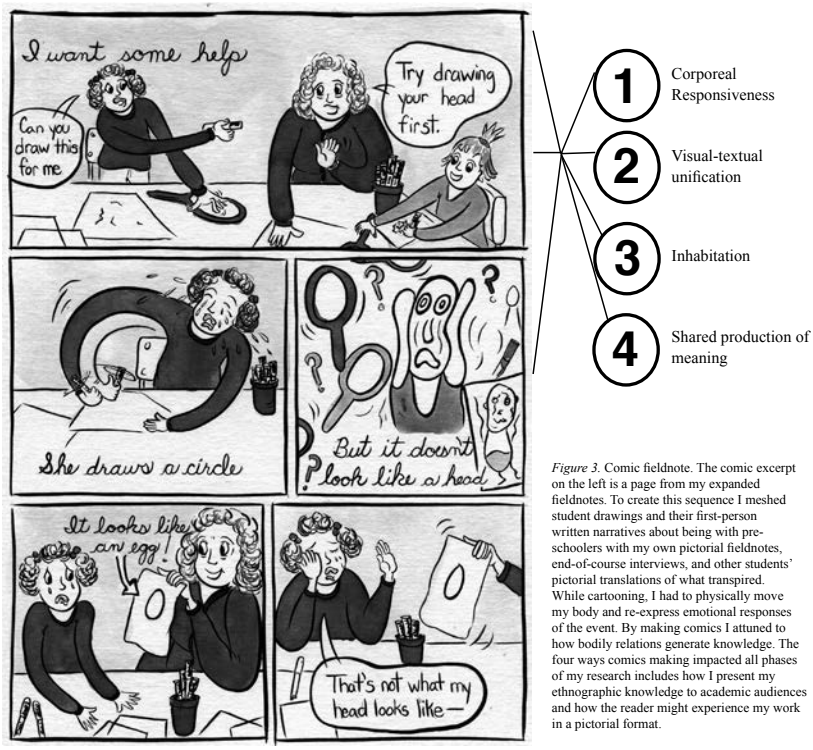



*Figure 3.* Comic fieldnote. The comic excerpt on the left is a page from my expanded fieldnotes. To create this sequence I meshed student drawings and their first-person written narratives about being with pre-schoolers with my own pictorial fieldnotes, end-of-course interviews, and other students' pictorial translations of what transpired. While cartooning, I had to physically move my body and re-express emotional responses of the event. By making comics I attuned to how bodily relations generate knowledge. The four ways comics making impacted all phases of my research includes how I present my ethnographic knowledge to academic audiences and how the reader might experience my work in a pictorial format.

Pink (2011) also noted that researchers who use MMA tend to think about ethnography as a fundamentally observational practice where "culture is readable as text" (a Geerztian notion of culture). Notably, Pink (2004, 2009) highlighted a shift away from these assumptions in recent multimodal ethnographic methods, including her own research practices in sensory anthropology. Although the theoretical rationale for these contemporary methods vary, Pink wrote that researchers understand ethnographic practice as "learning in and part of the world and seeking routes through which to share or imaginatively empathize with actions of people in it" (p. 11). Rather than uphold a classical view of ethnography as observational and textual, newer multimodal methods seek ways to emphasize movement, affect, empathy, and meaning-making as well as challenge static, predetermined notions of human perception.

For example, when Myers' (2015) did fieldwork in protein crystallographer laboratories she used a sensory and affective ethnographic lens to describe scientists' gestures as a kind of "essential dance" in creating protein structures. She illustrated – using literal and colorful textual translations – how scientists' rhythmic movements are also important components for making laboratory knowledge and becoming a scientist. Myers offered a sensory saturated and affective continuity to her theoretical framing, which included the phenomenological works of Mearleu-Ponty (1968, 2002).

*Figure 4.* Scientists' bodywork. The drawing of the left is my illustration of Myers' ethnography (2015). She shows how producing laboratory knowledge labors the entire body.

Parks and Schmeichel's (2014) also experimented with existing MMA and multi-sensory methods. They foregrounded body relations and gesture to better understand power dynamics in their research interviews. They stated that a rationale for text-based translation stems from the enduring use of in-print formats as the norm for representing research and scholarship to broader audiences. Parks and Schmeichel cited comics as a potential way to represent multimodal data, but believed that current examples of comics making in empirical research use up too much page space for analysis. They aligned with an assumption that words convey meaning about phenomena more efficiently than non-verbal modalities and that communication is the primary function of picture-making in research. I made comics in part to experiment with how this practice might be a means to experience and think through my multimodal ethnographic work on a corporeal plane that highlights movement, affect, imagination, and ways of knowing. My process translated specific themes such as agency and vulnerability using a pictorial code and foregrounded my own multi-sense modality in analysis.


*Figure 5.* Preschool firefighters. The four panel comic is from my expanded fieldnotes. In this sequence, I show how I must imagine myself as the person or thing I draw to render the scene. This form of pretend operates on a corporeal plane as inhabitation. I must move and contort my body to cartoon the sequence. These bodily forms of knowing impact my understanding of abstract terms such as agency.

**Inhabitation in comics making**

I must inhabit what I draw to make comics. Comic making calls attention to movement and affect in an imaginative form of dwelling. By making comics I put myself in a unique and precarious position to experience a liveliness in my research that carries over into the finished comic. Comics making uniquely requires (re)imagining lived experience through inhabitation. The graphic journalist Joe Sacco has observed:

> I just don't know if I have the strength to do anything like that [Footnotes in Gaza (2009)] again because it was repulsive doing that book… drawing is a weird thing because you just inhabit everything you draw. And that means you sort of have to appreciate holding up a bat to hit someone over the head. You have to appreciate holding up your arm to stop the bat. And you kind of have to go through the motions of it so you can get the shoulders right as it turns up…When you're drawing, you can't put yourself out of it. To get it better you have to be in it. Drawing is harder than hearing it. Drawing is a lot harder than being there (as quoted in Wilson, 2013, pp. 151-152).

Also, cartoon scholar and theorist, Hillary Chute (2014), asked established cartoonist, Allision Bechdel, about inhabitation:

> One of the things that I'm really keen to talk to you about is this idea of inhabitation. I heard Joe Sacco use the word inhabitation a couple of times this morning, this idea of what happens when you draw someone. And is it a kind of inhabitation of their gesture, for example. What does it mean to draw someone and to draw someone with a certain degree of attention, where you are paying attention to their body and their movement and their psyche? I know that you have a pretty interesting procedure, in which you set up photographs that you pose in. Could you tell me about that? (p. 206).

In response Bechdel said:

> Yeah, I just–(laughter). It's almost an aerobic activity sometimes– I do this for almost all of the figures I draw. I pose. Sometimes I put on

> costumes if I feel like I need to... As Joe said, it gives you this weird insight into the character... As I am doing these poses which are really just quick drawing aids, there is a kind of interesting emotional thing that happens as I have to impersonate these characters (as in Chute, 2014, pp. 206-207).

While drawing and making comics during my research, I moved and contorted my body to gain a literal and tangible sense of abstracted phrases and words I heard while in the field such as "I don't know how," "We can do this!", "Frustrating," and "Uncomfortable." Inhabitation extended my analysis to include sharing in the production of corporeal forms of agency that emerged during fieldwork. Corporeal responsiveness in research matters, particularly in studies that directly involve people, because empirical knowledge is also created through embodiment, affect, and movement (Haraway, 1988; Myers, 2015). Comics making was an explicit means for me to show and experience these more tacit ways of knowing about complex terms like agency, identity, and meaning-making.


*Figure 6.* Inhabitation. The six panels above show how I move to depict the movement and affect of those in my comic. The drawings express the liveness I experience with inhabitation via comics making.

**Generating Multimodal Data**

**Course activities**

As part of the Image Lab course and study design, DrawBridge students, Professor Kelly, and I regularly reinterpreted – through iterative drawing activities – our individual and collective experiences with preschoolers in the early childhood centers. The following comic is of a DrawBridge activity. Professor Kelly assigned this activity to prepare graduate students to draw preschoolers' stories. She read *The Creature of the Black Magoo* a story told by a five year-old in Vivian Paley's book, "Wally's Stories" (2002). Iona, a graduate student who participated in this study, drew the featured panels.

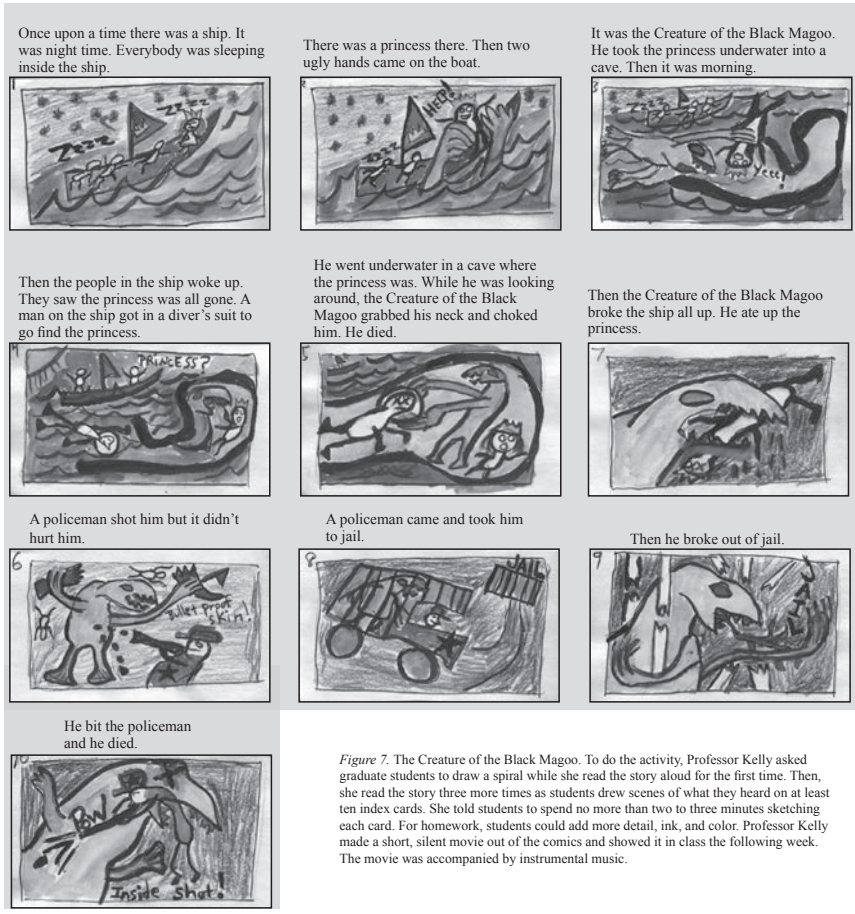



*Figure 7.* The Creature of the Black Magoo. To do the activity, Professor Kelly asked graduate students to draw a spiral while she read the story aloud for the first time. Then, she read the story three more times as students drew scenes of what they heard on at least ten index cards. She told students to spend no more than two to three minutes sketching each card. For homework, students could add more detail, ink, and color. Professor Kelly made a short, silent movie out of the comics and showed it in class the following week. The movie was accompanied by instrumental music.

Following Pink's (2009) multi-sensory ethnographic work, I also strove to treat my research as a "production of meaning in participation with [research participants] through a shared activity in a shared place" (p. 12). Shared production of meaning in my research meant in part that Professor Kelly and I participated in class activities along with students enrolled in the course. For example, the pictures below were made by me, graduate students, and Professor Kelly during a class activity. For this activity, graduate students and Professor Kelly drew pictures of what they heard as I read a short narrative I wrote about what happened that Monday while I was with preschoolers. I wrote this short narrative during a weekly, fifteen-minute writing exercise all students and Professor Kelly did together, immediately after spending two hours with preschoolers. Each early childhood center reserved a space for us to first draw four, three-minute pictures and then write a fifteen-minute narrative of what happened that day. Professor Kelly asked us to refrain from rereading or editing our narrative and pictures until directed by her.


*Figure 8.* Coursework. These pictures were produced by me and several DrawBridge students. The pictures on the left were produced by me as part of a homework assignment. I completed most coursework, including homework, as a way to participant in meaning-making about the course and the Image Lab as well as time spent with preschoolers.

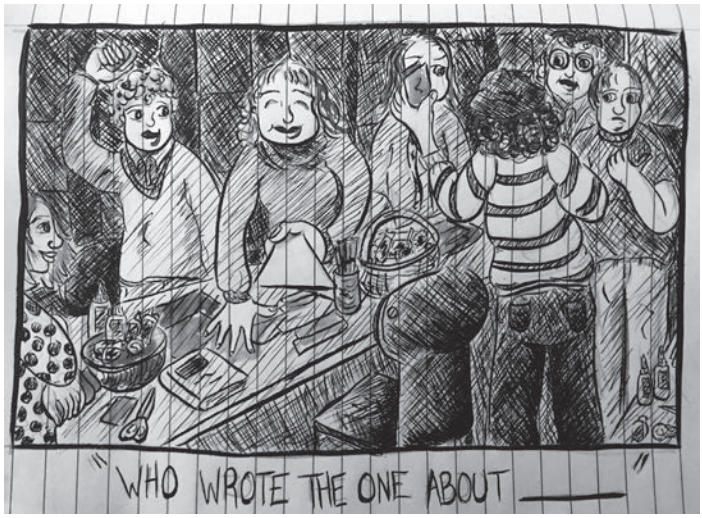



*Figure 9.* Gifting pictures. I made this single panel comic as part of the daily homework assignment to draw for thirty minutes each day. DrawBridge students regularly shared their drawings with one another as part of the course requirement.

Each person read their narratives aloud in the following class while everyone else drew what they heard for three-minutes (we could always decline to read aloud). After everyone read, we gave each of our pictures to the person whose story incited the particular drawing. Each person ended up with eleven scenes drawn by their classmates. We arranged the pictures on the work table and walked around the room to look at them. Then, we redrew the pictures for homework and used them to create a picture book that included segments from the original narrative. This was a way to invite all DrawBridge students to participate in the ethnographic meaning-making about drawing with preschoolers and being in the course.

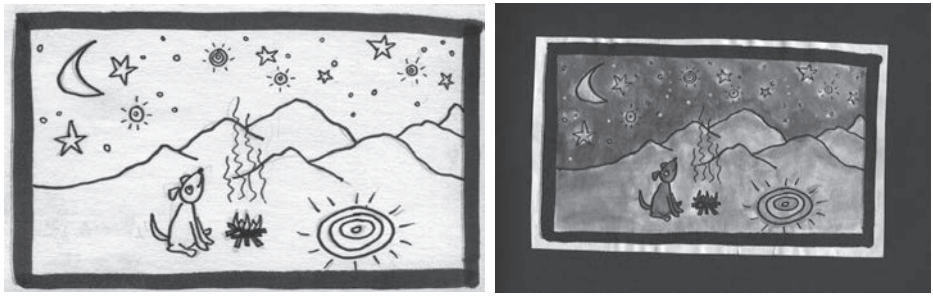
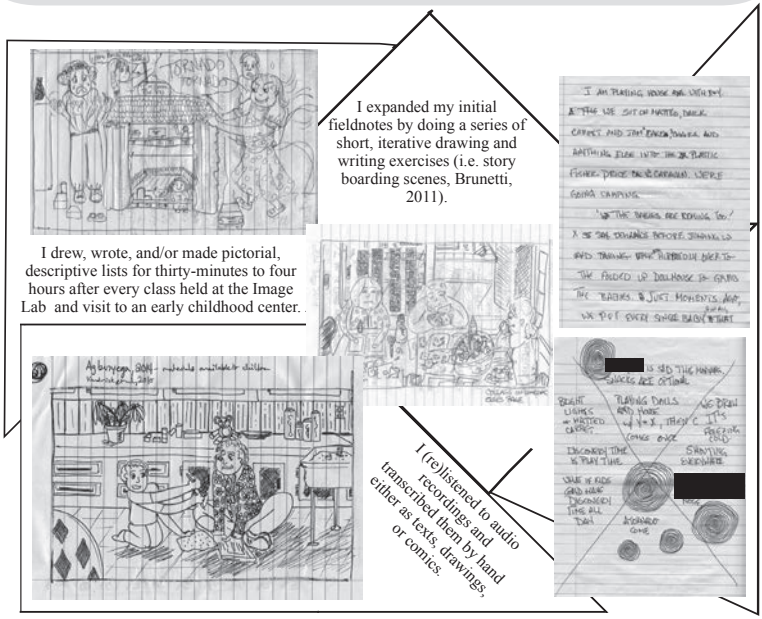


*Figure 10.* Carly copies Dale's drawing for homework. The two drawings above are another example of the classwork and homework activity I described in this section. Dale, a graduate student, drew the picture on the left as he listened to Carly, another graduate student, read her written narration about being with preschoolers. Carly drew the picture on the right as part of the homework assignment to redraw the pictures your classmates made of your narration. Carly's picture is originally in color.

**Pictorial fieldnotes**[5]

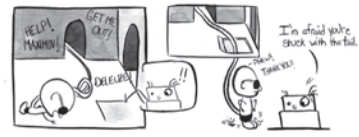
Comics making changed how I asked questions about my fieldsites. I adopted Barry's (2008, 2010, 2014) approach to visual drawing and writing while in the field. This pictorial and sequential practice blended conversations from the field with participants' (including Professor Kelly's and my own) affective responses and bodily movements. My approach also situated experiences in the field with broader socio-cultural and historical contexts. I routinely asked myself the following during fieldwork:

Where are you?
What time of day or night does it seem to be?
Where is the light coming from?
What kind of light is it?
What's the temperature like?
Who else is in the image?
What are you doing?
Why are you there?
What does the air smell like?
What are the sounds you can hear?
What are the objects around you?
What is directly in front of you?
When you look to your right, what's there?
.....left, what's there?
.....behind you, what's there?
.....below and around your feet, what's there?
.....above you, what's there?


[5] I used comic layout elements from John Pham (2007) to make this comic sequence.

I incorporated a reflexive and productive form of multimodal analysis via comics making.




For example, I redrew discursive understandings of image-making practices and the image-maker in styles presented in the class activities to explore what multiple modalities such as discourse, body movement, marking instruments do on a corporeal plane and what these effects achieved rather than what they signified.



I redrew participants' drawings and mimicked their body gestures as I drew.

I translated students' written work as comics by combining their own drawings with other students' comic translations and my own drawings. I pictorially and textually noted how my body moved as I made the comics.

**A comics making approach to interviewing**

As part of my comics making approach to extending MMA, I conducted non-verbal and movement interviews with preschoolers and graduate students. These strategies included tandem drawing, mimicking styles of play and pretend, and showing participants their own or other people's handmade work. I used these methods to experience participants' bodily movements and potential affective responses throughout the duration of the study. I also attended to our surroundings by asking myself the questions listed at the beginning of the pictorial fieldnotes section.

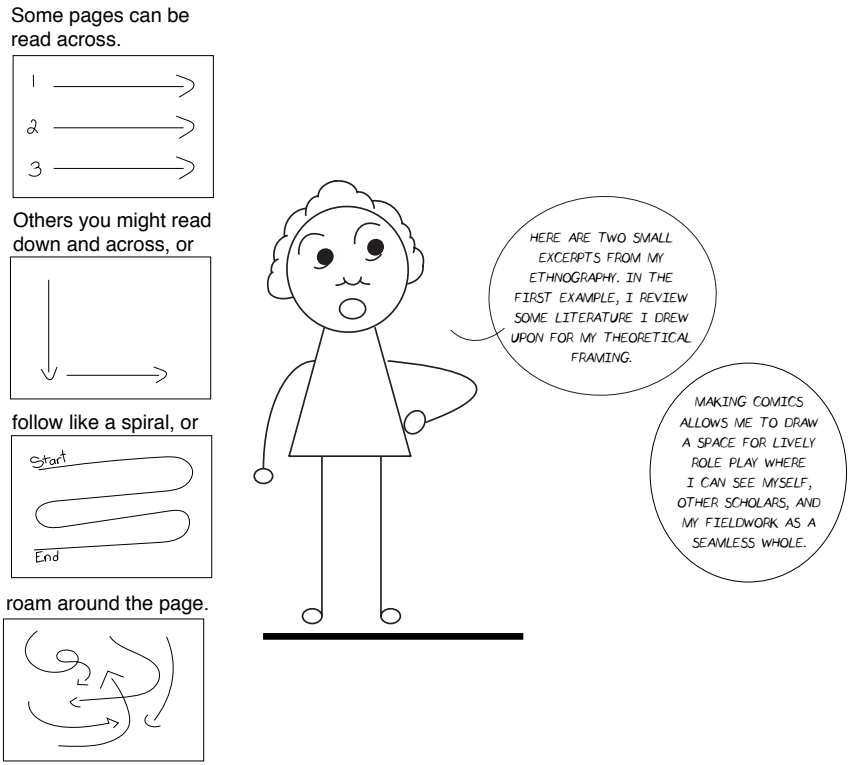
I tandem drew with preschoolers and graduate students and paid attention to body movement and affective expressions. With preschoolers, I asked, "Can I copy you?" when they were drawing during free play. I adopted this approach after spending several months in the field, and by playing with them. When graduate students were collaborating with preschoolers at the early childhood centers, I played with preschoolers and graduate students by using a similar approach. I asked them: "Can I play with you?" I then followed their lead in how they wanted to play with me. I also entered into children's play by playing on my own–stacking with wooden blocks, making train tracks, creating cardboard monsters, pretending to be a monster, or setting up a birthday party. I then waited for preschoolers to ask me, "Can I play with you?" When graduate students were at the Image Lab for Wednesday classes, I also incorporated similar activities, such as tandem drawing, so that graduate students, Professor Kelly, and I might experience each others' way of moving while drawing.


*Figure 11*. Interview Sketch. I drew this single-panel comic on the left immediately after my interview with Natalie. While drawing this scene from my interview, I asked myself the questions I listed in the pictorial fieldnotes section.

**Comic Excerpts from My Ethnography**

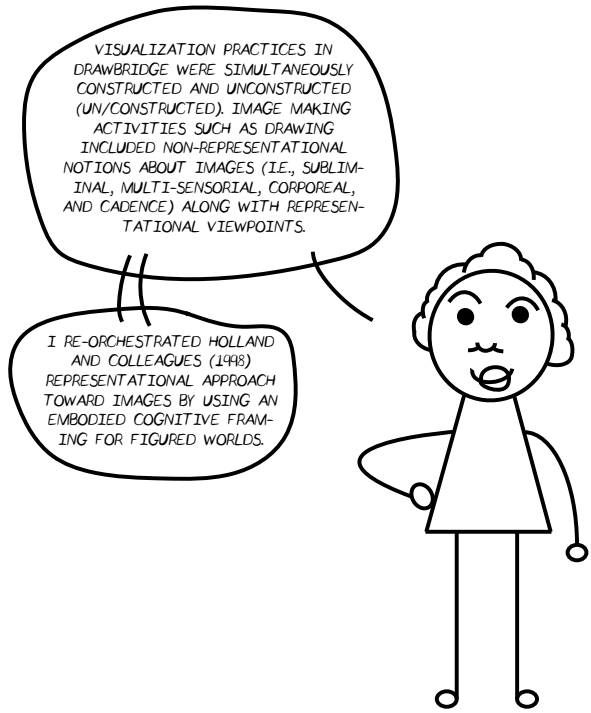
**** A note on how to read this comic:**

One of the unique aspects of comics, from a representational standpoint, is that there can be multiple ways of reading each page besides the romantic and germanic language traditions of left to right, top to bottom. Comics consider the entire page. So, as Bennett (2014) instructed her readers on how to read her dense, visual essay, I'll follow her lead (p. 2) and provide similar directions:



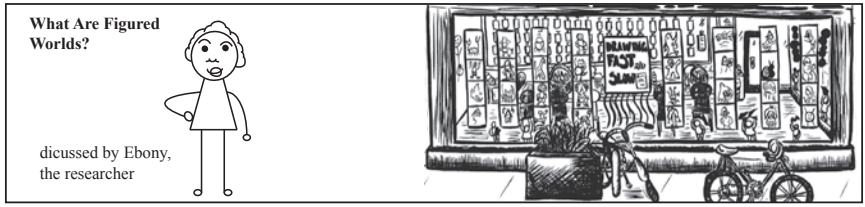
**Example One**

**Which figured world?**

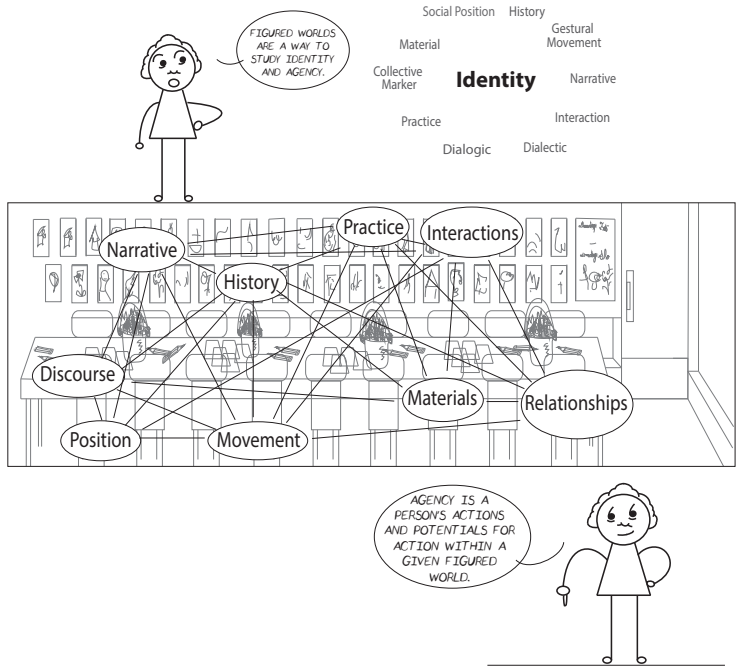



I EXTENDED HOLLAND AND COLLEAGUES' (1998) NOTION OF FIGURED WORLDS. THEY DEFINED THIS TERM AS
Welcome to the Image Lab
SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED REALMS OF INTERPRETATION WHEREBY A PERSON'S SENSE OF THEMSELVES AS AN AGENT EMERGES IN PARTICULAR EVENTS.
BOTH THE IL AND CHILDHOOD ARE MULTI-SENSORY AND ENACTED CULTURAL SPACES WITH SPECIFIC RULES AND RITUALS ABOUT WAYS OF SEEING AND MAKING IMAGES.
HOLLAND AND COLLEAGUES (1998) UNDERSTANDING OF FIGURED WORLDS POSITION IMAGES AS THINGS – WHETHER MATERIAL, CONCEPTUAL, OR SIGNIFYING. PEOPLE POSSESS, MANIPULATE, AND REFLECT UPON IMAGES TO DEVELOP A SENSE OF THEMSELVES AS AGENTS.


I COMPLEMENT THEIR NOTIONS OF IMAGE AND AGENCY WITH NON-REPRESENTATIONAL PERSPECTIVES (IE. SOFFNER, 2007; STOLLER, 1997) TO ACCOUNT FOR MODES OF IMAGING AND IMAGE-MAKING ACTIVITIES IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE IL AND PRESCHOOL.
MY ETHNOGRAPHY FOCUSED ON TWO ASPECTS OF FIGURED WORLDS:
1) CULTURAL ARTIFACTS, OR VERBAL, GESTURAL, AND MATERIAL PRODUCTIONS (P. 17); AND 2) IMPROVISATION, OR DELIBERATE ACTS THAT MANIPULATE PERCEIVED POSITIONS IN SOCIAL INTERACTIONS THAT MIGHT BE UNFAMILIAR OR UNDESIRABLE (P. 15-18).

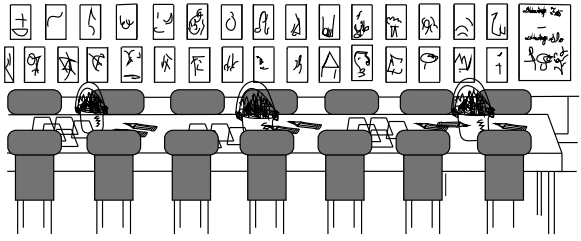



Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) defined figured worlds as a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which people can become actors by assigning significance to certain practices and valuing particular outcomes over others (p. 52).

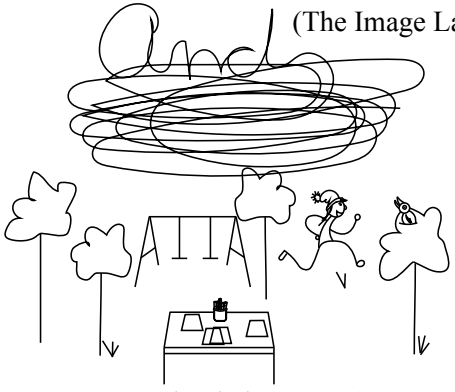



People become part of these "as-if" realms through their dialogical and dialectical capacity "to fantasize, to envision other worlds, and to create other worlds by recombining elements from those we know" (p. 237). Figured worlds "provide a means to conceptualize historical subjectivities, consciousness and agency, persons (and collective agents) forming in practice" (p. 41).

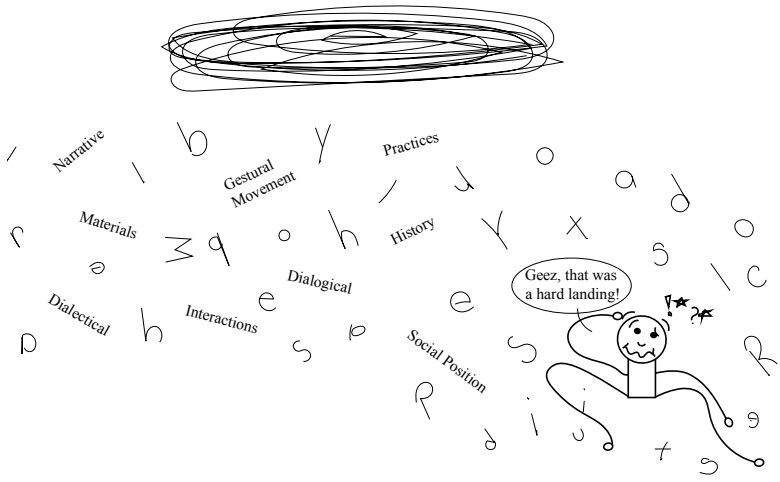

(Entering figured worlds of image-making)



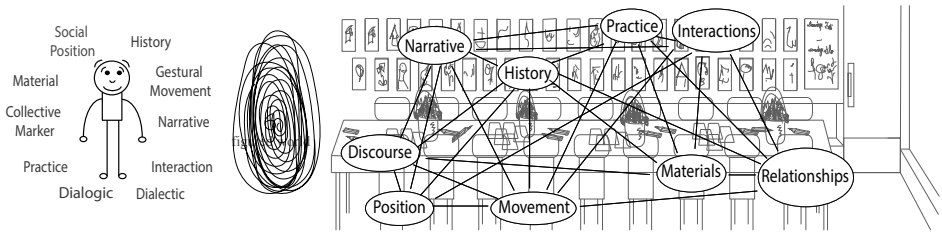
(The Image Lab)



(Preschool classrooms)

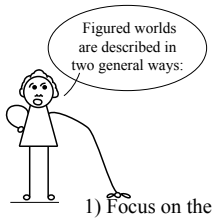



People become agents of a situation and their own experience through deliberate interactions with other people and cultural artifacts — the verbal, gestural, and material productions with a figured world. Holland et al. (1998) defined agency as more than how a person acts in an imposed subject position or respond to a situation. Agency is how people critically appropriate cultural artifacts that we and others produce (p. 17) to reimagine subjecting positioning.



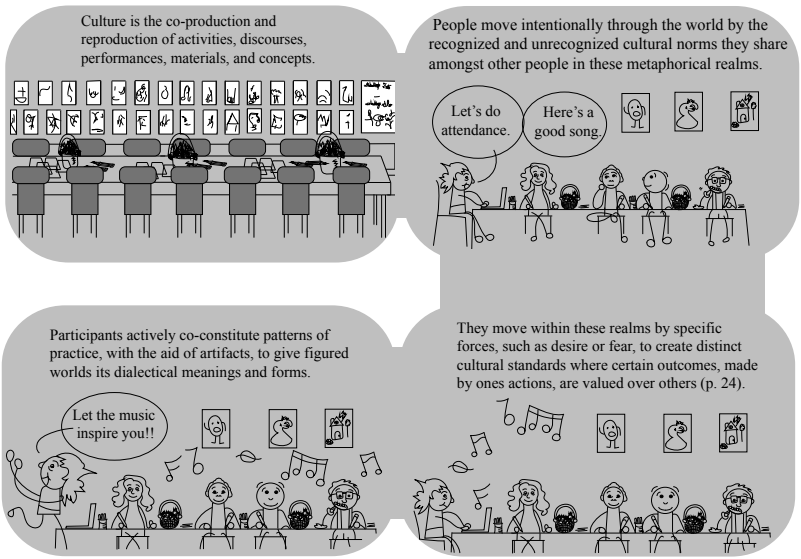

Holland and colleagues' (1998) notion of figured worlds situated meaning-making within an interaction of social constraints, cultural norms, and subjective experiences.

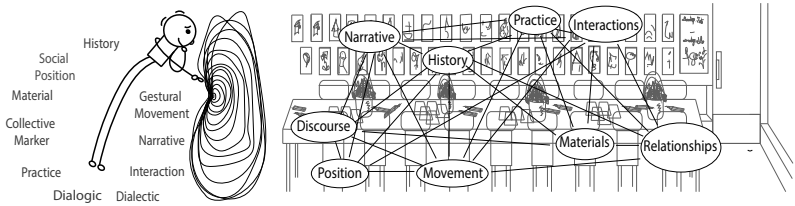
**Individual focus**




Holland et al. (1998) drew upon Vygotsky (as cited on pp. 335-336 of Holland et al.'s text) and Bakhtin (as cited on p. 318 of Holland et al.'s text) to frame culture as developmental, particular, and dialogical.

1) Focus on the Individual

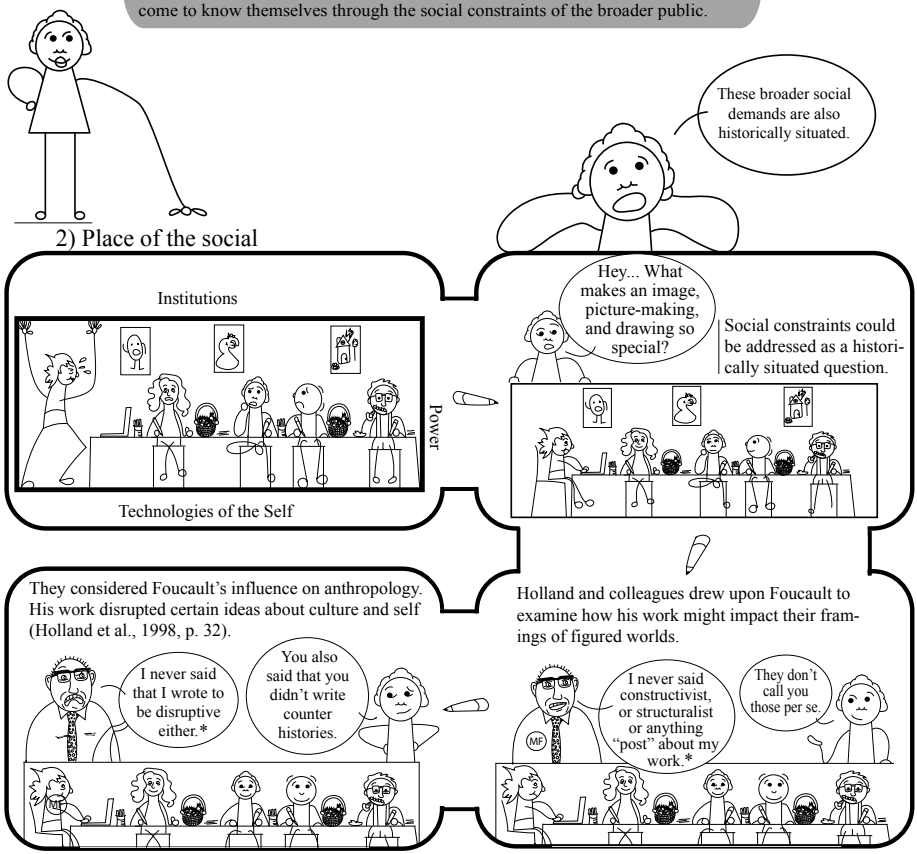


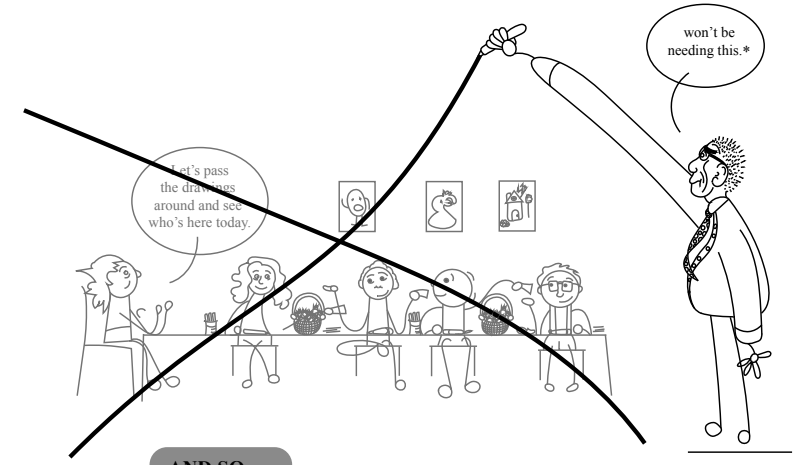



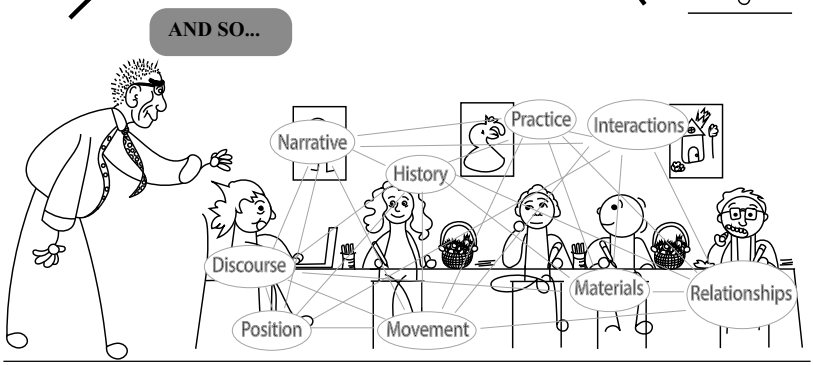

Culture develops as people enter another figured world and interact (intentionally) with each other, material surroundings, and conceptual ideas.

**Social focus**

Holland et al. (1998) also reframed Foucault's *Discipline and Punish, Madness and Civilization,* and *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (as cited on p. 323 of Holland et al.'s text) to address the role of instituitional and social constraints in identity and agency. They believed that a Foucauldian logic showed how people come to know themselves through the social constraints of the broader public.

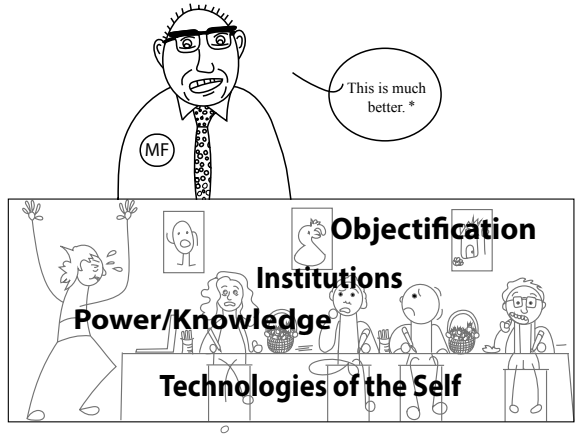




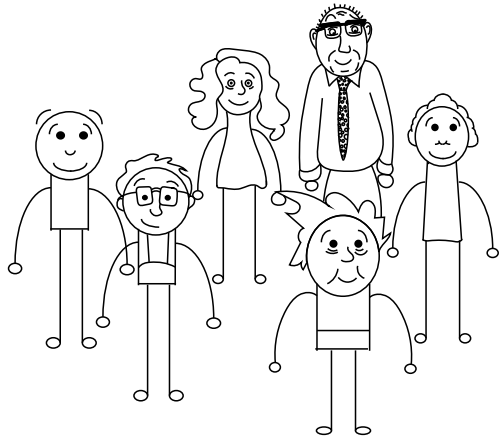




If I drew upon Holland et al.'s (1998) Foucauldian framing of figured worlds in my research, I might have looked at discursive formations for seeing and making images to show how they are a means for social control.

I might have also shown how people are not always aware of how they actively participate in the authoring of these social control mechanisms.




Holland and colleagues challenged how Foucault (based on their understanding of his selected texts) unraveled conventional ideas of what it meant to be a person and to have agency.



The scholars believed that a Foucauldian lens was incomplete for their framing of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998, p. 32-33). They concluded that the logic handicaps one's capacity to do research with an understanding of people as complete and responsible actors who intentionally produce their own actions.

**Example Two**

**What is an Image?**


What's an Image?
HOW COME YOU GOT A HAIRCUT
I NEEDED TO CLEAN MY HAIRFACE
CAN YOU DRAW ME A DOLPHIN
THIS IS AN IMAGE OF A DOLPHIN
I WANT THE DOLPHIN BLUE NOT TEAL
OK. THIS IS AN IMAGE OF A BLUE DOLPHIN
AND I WANT IT WITH A FACE AND FINS AND SMILING
THIS IS AN IMAGE OF A BLUE DOLPHIN. IT HAS A SMILING FACE AND FINS
YOU WANT TO COLOR IT IN?
YES
SHE COLORS IT IN BEAUTIFULLY OBSCURING THE LINES.
I LIKE THE SHAPE


WHAT'S AN IMAGE?


IMAGES ARE THOSE THINGS WE CARRY IN OUR MINDS


LIKE CLOSE YOUR EYES, CAN YOU SEE AN IMAGE OR SOMETHING


YES


A BLACK SPACE

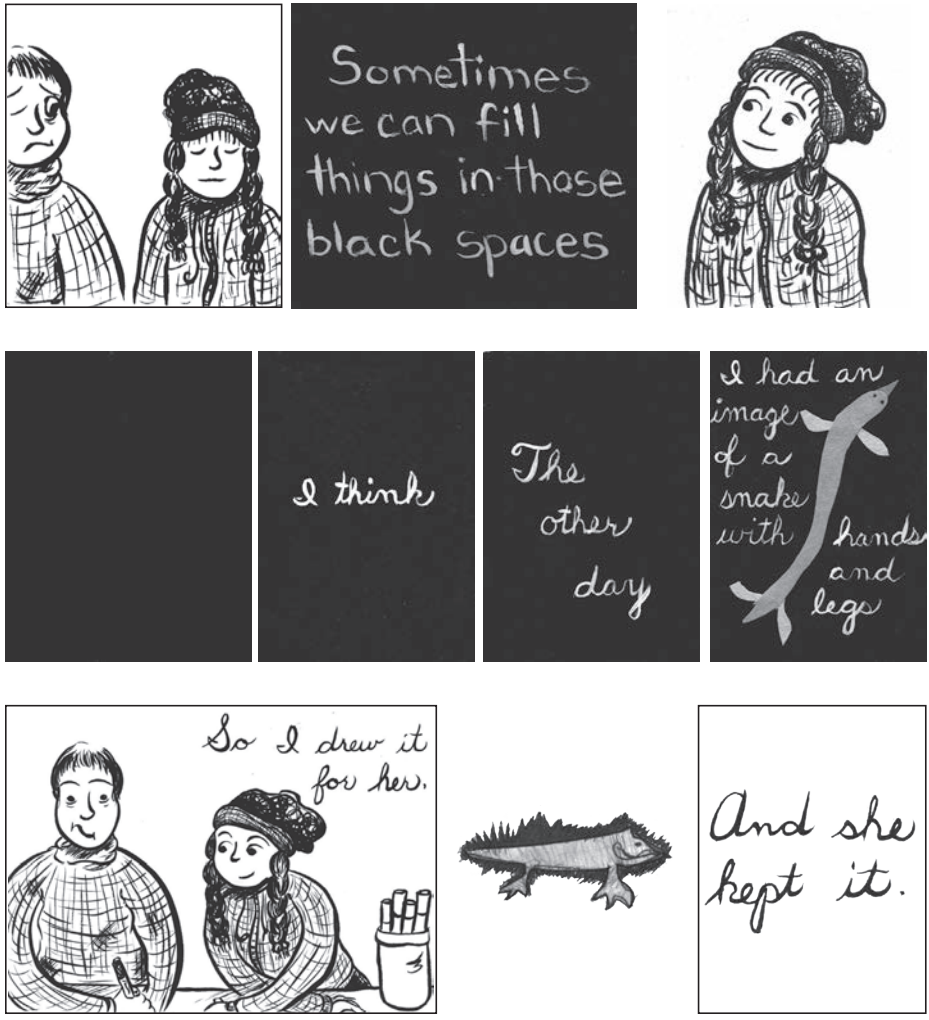



*Figure 12.* What is an Image? Ethan wrote this narrative and I translated it into a comic. The cityscape picture is my copy of Ethan's original picture. Ethan draw the lizard with legs.

## Conclusion

In this zine, I illustrated how my comics making approach for the extension of MMA in ethnographic education research impacted how I designed my study, generated multimodal data, conducted analysis, and share work to broader academic audiences.

**Comics making approach to MMA**


**1**

Corporeal Responsiveness

Change over Time

Movement

Comics making showed change in corporeal responsiveness over time and in relation to abstract concepts such as agency, power, and identity.

**2**

VISUAL

TEXTUAL

T V E I X S T U U A A L L

Comics making unified the visual and the textual with body-sensory perception.

**3**

Inhabitation

Empathy

Ways of Knowing

Affect

Comics making emphasized movement, affect, empathy, and ways of knowing. The approach aligned MMA with the aims of contemporary ethnographic methods, rather than classical practices of observation (i.e. Geertzian) that interpret culture as readable text.

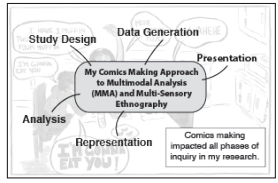
**4**

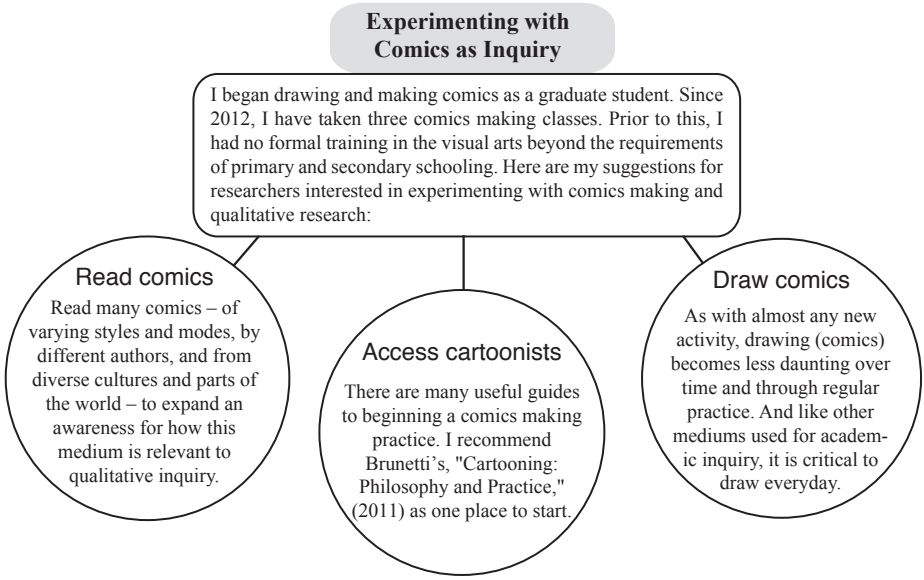
Shared Space

Shared Activity

Shared Production of Meaning

Participants generated multimodal data, such as drawings, as part of their own meaning-making experiences, rather than to be read by me for meanings, intentions, or the use of signs and symbols.




Experimenting with Comics as Inquiry
I began drawing and making comics as a graduate student. Since 2012, I have taken three comics making classes. Prior to this, I had no formal training in the visual arts beyond the requirements of primary and secondary schooling. Here are my suggestions for researchers interested in experimenting with comics making and qualitative research:
Read comics
Read many comics – of varying styles and modes, by different authors, and from diverse cultures and parts of the world – to expand an awareness for how this medium is relevant to qualitative inquiry.
Access cartoonists
There are many useful guides to beginning a comics making practice. I recommend Brunetti's, "Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice," (2011) as one place to start.
Draw comics
As with almost any new activity, drawing (comics) becomes less daunting over time and through regular practice. And like other mediums used for academic inquiry, it is critical to draw everyday.

## Acknowledgments

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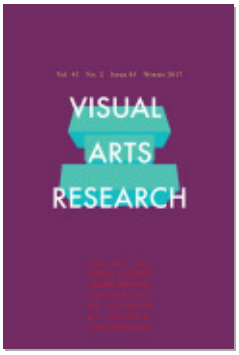
# Experimenting with Comics Making as Inquiry

Ebony Flowers

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