"WHERE THE POCKET STARTS": RESISTING OPPRESSION WITH GRAPHIC NARRATIVES, CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, AND ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract

Divisive political discourse today reflects a need to address issues of oppression in North American society. Accordingly, teachers can help students confront these problems. Linking critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory, this interdisciplinary research examines whether reading and discussing *March Book Two*, a historical nonfiction graphic narrative written by civil rights activist John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, led students in a British Columbian Adult Basic Education English class to transform their perspectives on social-justice related issues. Qualitative data were collected from student work, classroom observations, and post-semester interviews in an instructor-led action research case study. Results suggest that reading and discussing *March Book Two* assisted shifts in students' perceptions of racism and nonviolent activism, but also that participating in this action research process supported the researcher/instructor's reflective and reflexive practice. Significantly, these results suggest that transformative learning is facilitated by reading graphic narratives, addressing a gap in the academic literature.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family: Sophie, Claire, and Rebecca.

I love you.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

In the essay "White Fragility," Robin DiAngelo suggests that many White[1] people are sheltered from racial stress due to their social environments but are likely to become defensive when experiencing trivial levels of racial stress.[2] Correspondingly, Statistics Canada reports that the number of hate crimes in Canada "has been steadily climbing since 2014," with 2017 being the worst year on record, due to increases in attacks on Muslim, Jewish, and Black people.[3] Addressing these issues of racism and oppression requires complex solutions, but as an educator at a post-secondary institution, I believe that teachers of adult students are able to contribute to these solutions through their instructional practice, and, as responsible citizens, are ethically and morally obligated to do so.

In the article "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism: Notes on the Death of History," Henry Giroux describes how the culture of positivism leaves unquestioned economic, social, and political problems.[4] By addressing problems isolated from their social and historical contexts, western forms of education promote, replicate, and legitimize forms of Antonio Gramsci's regressive hegemony or consent to domination by denying the critique of the dominant forces in society.[5] In more concrete terms, teachers must carefully adhere to approved class material and enforce strict grading schemes, practices that encourage

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[1] Hanna Thomas and Anna Hirsch, *A Progressive's Style Guide*, 30, accessed 9 January 2019, http://bit.ly/1TuH4Te; Thomas and Hirsch note that "Black/White are sometimes capitalized and sometimes lowercase."

[2] Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 3 (2011): 55-57.

[3] John Rieti, "Hate Crimes Reached All-Time High in 2017, Statistics Canada Says," *CBC News*, last modified 29 November 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/statistics-canada-2017-hate-crime-numbers-1.4925399.

[4] Henry Giroux, "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism: Notes on the Death of History," in *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 13.

[5] Giroux, "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism," xxx.

oppressive transmission-based methods of education.[6] Bell hooks suggests while some White instructors in academic contexts benefit from appearing progressive and enlightened by discussing race, others are labelled in negative ways. According to hooks, anyone can be punished for challenging systems of White domination.[7] As I will suggest later, while I did not experience these challenges as I completed my research, I suspect that classrooms at the College of New Caledonia (CNC) in Prince George, BC, Canada are not exempt from these issues.

Prince George, a small city of approximately 75 000 people, is located in central British Columbia. Approximately 15 percent of the city's population self-identify as Aboriginal, while eight percent identify as part of a visible minority group. According to the latest Statistics Canada Census, the median household income of residents in Prince George was approximately $75 000, higher than the overall Canadian household median income.[8] However, while numerous students at the College of New Caledonia originate from Prince George, many are drawn from smaller communities in the central interior region of the province.

According to the latest publicly available data, students at the College of New Caledonia cover a wide range of demographics. As of the 2016-17 school year, 19 percent of the domestic school population is Aboriginal, while international students make up 21 percent. Approximately 540 students took Upgrading and Access courses in 2016-17. This program area includes the Adult Upgrading department, the college's adult basic education

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[6] Bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 156-157.
[7] Bell hooks, *Teaching Community* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 27.
[8] "Statistics," City of Prince George, accessed 11 January 2019, https://www.princegeorge.ca/Business%20and%20Development/Pages/Economic%20Development/About/Statistics.aspx; the City of Prince George webpage cites the 2016 Statistics Canada Census for the statistics I have noted.

(ABE) courses.[9] My thesis is focused on one course: English 045, an advanced ABE course for students who need to improve their reading and writing skills. Students often take the course to meet entrance prerequisites for other programs. Students in English-Advanced level ABE courses have to meet 46 required learning outcomes, divided into four categories: Critical and Creative Thinking; Speaking and Listening; Reading, Research, Reference; and Written Communication.[10] In my experience, students in English 045 often have competing demands for their attention besides their education. Students may suffer from social, emotional, and financial distress, and flexibility is often required of their instructors in order to increase levels of student success.

Students in ABE English courses display a wide range of cultural differences. While the website for the Ministry of Advanced Education notes that 19 percent of ABE learners identify as Aboriginal in British Columbia's postsecondary institutions in 2013/2014 (the most recently available information),[11] my general observations as an instructor in Prince George suggest that the percentages of Aboriginal students in ABE courses at CNC are higher. The latest publicly available data suggest that 49 percent of ABE learners in BC are younger than 26, while 23 percent of ABE learners are 40 years older or more. Some ABE students are recent high school graduates, while others are returning to school after many years. Most English language learners at CNC enter the English as a Second Language (ESL)

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[9] College of New Caledonia, *Education Plan 2017-2020* (2017), 7. http://www.cnc.bc.ca/Exploring/Services/Administration/Education_Plan.htm

[10] Government of British Columbia, "Adult Basic Education: A Guide to Upgrading in British Columbia's Public Post-Secondary Institutions," 2018, 97-99, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/adult-education/adult-upgrading.

[11] Government of British Columbia, "ABE Student Enrolment Infographic for the Public Secondary and Post-Secondary Education System in B.C.," accessed 22 June 2017, http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/adult-education/abe_leaners_bc_mar22_2016_final_for_2016_post.pdf.

program,[12] but some take ABE courses instead. Very few international students take ABE courses.[13]

Bounded by both place and time, this study took place in my English 045 class at the College of New Caledonia Prince George, BC campus. We occupied one classroom for the duration of the semester, which lasted from January 2nd to April 16th 2018, when students wrote their final exams. At the end of the semester, seven students agreed to participate in my study. Five of those seven students agreed to be interviewed. Three interviews were able to be completed within two weeks of the semester ending, while two more were done later in May and July. These boundaries will influence the limitations of my study, which I discuss in Chapter Five of this thesis.

As Giroux suggests, uncritically presenting students with course content reinforces dominant and oppressive ideologies, which I wish to address in my own practice. Additionally, Roni Berger has suggested that researchers gathering qualitative data need to be reflexive about their researcher position. She suggests that researcher position includes a variety of "personal characteristics such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical political and ideological stances, and emotional responses" and that these

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[12] ESL faculty are currently in the process of updating the CNC's ESL curriculum, including changing the name of the department to the English Language (ENLA) Program.

[13] Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents of Canada do not pay tuition fees for ABE courses in British Columbia. However, International students must pay $1560 for each ABE course; see page 236 of the *College of New Caledonia Program Guide and Course Calendar 2018-2019*, http://www.cnc.bc.ca/programs-courses/calendar.htm. For a brief history of how the BC Liberal provincial government in 2014 began to charge non-international students tuition for ABE courses until being reversed by the new NDP provincial government in 2017, see Suzanne Smythe, "Lifting Tuition Fees for Adult Basic Education is Just the Beginning," *PolicyNote.ca*, last modified 19 August 2017, https://www.policynote.ca/lifting-tuition-fees-for-adult-basic-education-is-just-the-beginning/.

positions influence research.[14] Thus, I have noted a few of these characteristics that I possess here. I am a White, heterosexual, married, nondisabled, Canadian male working at the CNC teaching ESL and English to ABE students. Also, I have an interest in teaching first-year and second-year history and English courses. I hold constructivist ontological and epistemological values, and I have worked with many marginalized students and been a member and chair of the Faculty Association of CNC's Human Rights and International Solidarity committee. Additionally, I have been reading comics in various genres for most of my life. According to Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics*, comics (more popularly known as graphic novels or graphic narratives) are "juxtaposed, pictorial, and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer." They have incredible potential "to command viewer involvement and identification."[15] This thesis is an attempt to utilize this potential in the classroom in order to address issues of racism and oppression in society.

My thesis contains five chapters. This first chapter is an introduction to my study, clarifying the context of my research problem, the purpose of the study, my research question, and the significance of my research. The second chapter includes a description of my theoretical framework and a synthesis of the scholarly literature in four domains: using graphic narratives as teaching resources in English and history classes, the theory of critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action-research studies involving adult education. The third chapter describes the methods of my study, including descriptions of the

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[14] Roni Berger, "Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Research* 15 2 (2013): 220.

[15] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 9, 204; I prefer to use the term "graphic narrative" instead of the more informal term "comic," or the more popular term "graphic novel," as it encompasses a wider range of content, including historical nonfiction; see Hillary Chute, "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative," *PMLA* 123 2 (March 2008): 452-453.

study's setting in the English 045 class at the College of New Caledonia, my student participants, instructional materials, measurement instruments, procedures, participant protections, and data-analysis techniques. It reflects both my plan for the study and how the study actually proceeded. The fourth chapter explains the results of my study. Because of the qualitative nature of my research, this chapter focuses on the narrative themes that emerge from my data and a discussion of the results of my study. My final chapter describes the significance of my results, the limitations of my study, and my recommendations for future research.

Statement of the Problem/ Research Question

To link my educational and social-justice-based values and situate my study within the scholarly literature, I have taken an interdisciplinary approach to this thesis and linked four domains of research: the practice of teaching with graphic narratives; the theory of critical pedagogy; the theory of transformative learning; and action research with adult learners. However, each domain contains its own issues and controversies.

The practice of teaching with graphic narratives is not straightforward. When using the term comics, people often think of the superhero comics produced by the leading comic publishing companies: Marvel Comics and DC Comics.[16] Comics have often been seen as childish texts and have been subjected to different forms of disparagement. To begin, as comics reached their highest level of popularity in America in the 1940s and 1950s, academics and educators were critical of the effects reading comics had on youth, noting that research on comics stressed that comics displaced the development of traditional literacy in

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[16] Douglas Wolk, *Reading Comics* (Da Capo Press, 2007), 89.

children.[17] As a result of pressure placed on comic publishers and hearings in the US Senate linking reading comics to juvenile delinquency, the Comics Magazine Association of America Comics Code was instituted in 1954, imposing strict moral standards through the practice of censorship on mainstream American comics.[18] The restrictions enforced through the code would shape the development of comics through the 1950s and 1960s.[19]

Today, graphic narratives directly address contemporary concerns. Many important non-superhero comics have been published in the last half century, ranging from testimonies of genocide in the Bosnian Civil War in the 1990s to stories of anthropomorphized lions wandering the streets of war-torn Iraq.[20] As graphic narratives have changed, comics study has emerged as an academic pursuit worthy of the post-secondary classroom. Accordingly, Charles Hatfield argues that "comics study has to be at the intersection of various disciplines."[21] He describes a controversy in comics studies over whether graphic narratives are primarily a form of literature or visual art.[22] In addition, teaching graphic narratives often requires supplementary classroom support. In spite of widespread popularity in North America, Europe and Japan, graphic narratives involve a "specific visual grammar" that students need to adjust to.[23] In fact, Alex Romagnoli's dissertation on the use of graphic narratives in college-level English classes suggests that despite the scholarly consensus suggesting that the fusion of visuals and text in graphic narratives has the potential to engage

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[17] Charles Hatfield, *Alternative Comics* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 33.

[18] Hillary Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2016), 99.

[19] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 102.

[20] Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Goražde* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2015); Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon, *Pride of Baghdad* (Broadway, NY: DC Comics, 2014).

[21] Charles Hatfield, "Indiscipline, or, The Condition of Comics Studies," *Transatlantica: Revue d'Études Américaines* 1 (2010): 1, http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/4933.

[22] Hatfield, "Indiscipline," 7.

[23] Christian W. Chun, "Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels for English-Language Learners: Teaching *Maus*," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53 2 (2009): 151.

students, "the ability to interpret and analyze those images in relation to an academic discussion of themes is not a natural ability most students have."[24] Indeed, students may develop anxiety about reading a graphic narrative instead of a feeling of engagement.[25] Finally, citing Gramsci and Giroux, Christine Jarvis acknowledges the role escapism in popular fiction plays in supporting dominant ideologies.[26] As a result, teachers who intend to utilize graphic narratives in their courses must carefully select their texts if they wish to engage in emancipatory or critical pedagogies.

Critical pedagogy is an ideological theory of education "grounded on a social and educative vision of justice and equality."[27] Modern understandings of the theory of critical pedagogy stem from the work of several notable thinkers. Its origins can be traced from the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School and Antonio Gramsci to Paulo Freire, his work developing adult literacy in Brazil, and his famous text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Influenced by Freire, the Frankfurt School and others, Giroux established the study of critical pedagogy in the early 1980s as a reaction against the political repression of education in western political contexts.[28] Later scholars extended Freire's work into new spheres, including hooks' feminism, Donaldo Macedo's emancipatory literacy, and Ira Shor's application of Freirean theory to the North American context.[29] Today, scholars like E. Wayne Ross wrestle with how to apply the lessons of critical pedagogy from the mid- to late-twentieth century to the context of education and society in the early twenty-first century, by

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[24] Alex Scott Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom: A Pedagogical Exploration of College English Teachers Using Graphic Novels," PhD Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2014, ERIC (ED563751): 178.

[25] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 194-195.

[26] Christine Jarvis, "Fiction and Film and Transformative Learning," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, edited by Edward W. Taylor, Patricia Cranton, and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 489.

[27] Joe L. Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 6.

[28] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, 77.

[29] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, 83-87.

attempting to increase the scope of critical pedagogy to include alternative philosophical traditions, including the work of theorists John Dewey and John Holt.[30] The key ideas in the complex foundation of critical pedagogy are built on the work of these scholars.

Practitioners of critical pedagogy face many problems of their own. Despite appealing to pedagogues interested in addressing inequality, the theory of critical pedagogy has received feminist, practical, and ideological critiques, including concerns that opposing oppressive ideologies in education may simply substitute other oppressive ideologies in their place.[31] Joanna Joseph Jeyaraj and Tony Harland recognize that critical pedagogy has been criticized for imposing a left-wing narrative.[32] In addition, hooks argues many self-proclaimed followers of critical pedagogy still utilize oppressive practices.[33] Other research suggests that White undergraduate teachers beginning sociopolitical developmental training often are unable to perceive their own racist assumptions and racial identities and are blind to racism inherent in their educational institutions.[34] Indeed, Trevor Warburton suggests that White anti-racist teachers often resist the critiques of others, ignoring the role of whiteness in their own practice.[35] Further complicating this issue is the suggestion that liberation for the oppressed is possible but cannot be enacted without their action, thus implying that White men's resisting oppression on the behalf of marginalized groups is simply a different form of

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[30] E. Wayne Ross, "Broadening the Circle of Critical Pedagogy," in *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, edited by Antonia Darder et al, (New York: Routledge, 2017): 608-615.

[31] Alfred A. Z. Siha, "'Imagining the Moon': Critical Pedagogy, Discourse Tensions, and the Adult Basic Writing Classroom," PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2012, *ERIC* (ED554677), 46-47; Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59 3 (August 1, 1989): 314.

[32] Joanna Joseph Jeyaraj and Tony Harland. "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy in ELT: The Problems of Indoctrination and Risk," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 24 4 (January 1, 2016): 588-589.

[33] Hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 17-18.

[34] Shelley Zion, Carrie D. Allen and Christina Jean, "Enacting a Critical Pedagogy, Influencing Teachers' Sociopolitical Development," *Urban Rev* 47 (2015): 919.

[35] Trevor Warburton, "Turning the Lens: Reflexivity in Research & Teaching with Critical Discourse Analysis," *Critical Questions in Education (Special Issue)* 7 3 (Fall 2016): 252.

oppression.[36] Educators must also address the proposition that because of the uncertain economic context of neoliberal North America, students generally have abandoned concerns regarding liberation in favour of issues of personal economic security.[37] But one of the most pressing issues facing scholars of critical pedagogy is that open resistance to authority in the classroom may have repercussions. In some authoritarian societies, these repercussions may include violence. [38] For instance, Jeyaraj and Harland's study includes testimony from critical pedagogues who "taught in countries that they judged to have limits on freedom of speech because State or religious bodies did not always welcome criticism." They believed both students and teachers could be imprisoned for their actions in the classroom.[39] In contrast, the discipline of history has more academic concerns with critical pedagogy.

In the case of history education, the ideology of critical pedagogy reflects a recurring controversy in the discipline of history involving the concepts of presentism and usable history, where radical historians have in the past attempted "to remake the present and the future" by presenting a version of history that suits their political goals.[40] Historians commonly reject presentism as contrary to the foundations of the discipline, as "a bias in which people assume that the same values, intentions, attitudes and beliefs existed in the past as they exist today."[41] Some historians suggest the search for a usable history has stemmed

[36] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 20th anniversary edition* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 27-31, 48.
[37] Kristopher M. Lotier,"On Not Following Freire," *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 17 2 (April 2017): 152.
[38] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy,"595.
[39] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy,"593-594; participants expressed concerns about Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, and China.
[40] Howard Schonberger, "Purposes and Ends in History: Presentism and the New Left," *The History Teacher* 7 3 (May 1974): 448.
[41] Tim Huijgen et al., "Promoting Historical Contextualization: the Development and Testing of a Pedagogy," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* (2018): 4. doi: 10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724.

from partisan assumptions in order to generate progressive political support and resulted in a "drastic simplification of issues."[42]

A final concern for critical pedagogy involves one of its most celebrated theorists, Paulo Freire, and one of his key concepts: conscientization. Freire defined his concept of conscientization (or critical consciousness) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[43] Despite being an important foundation for the theory of critical pedagogy, Freire's views on this topic contain some problematic elements. He and many of his followers acknowledge that the methods and tools he used to foster conscientization in illiterate Brazilian peasants are not universal.[44] While each classroom will have a unique educational, social, political, and economic context to consider, critical pedagogues may struggle to identify how to support their students. For example, while Sean Carleton suggests historically based nonfiction graphic narratives can aid students in their development of critical consciousness, he does not provide methods for doing so.[45] Raymond Allen Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres note that Freire distanced himself from the term conscientization as it became popular and improperly applied. However, Morrow and Torres also acknowledge conscientization's connection to transformative learning theory.[46]

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[42] Schonberger, "Purposes and Ends," 456-457.

[43] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 17.

[44] Quoted in Lotier,"On Not Following Freire," 153.

[45] Sean Carleton, "Drawn to Change: Comics and Critical Consciousness," *Labour/Le Travail* 73 (Spring 2014): 165.

[46] Raymond Allen Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Social Change* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 151.

Originating from research Jack Mezirow conducted in 1975 and 1978, transformative learning theory attempts to describe a complex cognitive procedure: how adults modify their beliefs and values when learning. Mezirow originally suggested that transformative learning

> refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. [47]

According to Mezirow, these habits of mind that make up our frames of reference are broad sets of assumptions that we exhibit through our specific expectations, or points of view.[48] When these assumptions are challenged, the experience can be "intensely threatening [and] emotional."[49] While Mezirow suggests that the disorienting dilemmas that challenge these assumptions can be catalysts leading to sudden changes, other research argues that transformations are more likely results of a culmination of minor events.[50] Therefore, to foster both sudden and incremental transformations, Mezirow suggests that instructors need to be supportive of their students, and encourage them by cultivating environments where everyone feels safe to reflect upon and discuss critically their various beliefs and values, in order to "become active agents of cultural change."[51] Despite having gone through various changes and iterations, Mezirow's work forms the foundation of most discussions of transformative learning theory.

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[47] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in Taylor, Cranton, and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, 76.

[48] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 82-83.

[49] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 75.

[50] Laurent A. Parks Daloz, "Transformative Learning for the Common Good," In *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress,* edited by Jack Mezirow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 106; Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 86.

[51] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 92.

However, despite its active development, Mezirow's version of transformative learning theory has received three major criticisms that are relevant to my research. First, his version of transformative learning theory has been accused of being overly focused on rational/cognitive issues.[52] For example, he suggests that critical thinking is "coextensive with rationality."[53] Conversely, one research study suggests that this focus is insufficient to explain the complex issues that adult learners face.[54] Other researchers argue that transformative learning is "much more than a rational process: it's complicated, personal, and often powerfully emotional."[55] Second, Mezriow's work has led to a minor controversy among scholars of transformative learning and adult basic educators. In 2004, citing Mezirow, Sharan Merriam proposed that adult students who have not completed education at the secondary level lacked the cognitive and scholarly development needed to participate in critical discourse, and therefore transformative learning.[56] Third, despite being influenced by Freire and Habermas, Mezriow's theory has been criticized for prioritizing individual transformation over social transformations.[57] This divergence from Freire's work leads transformative learning theory to neglect the role of hegemony in society. Patricia Cranton notes that these criticisms may be ignoring Mezirow's contribution to emancipatory pedagogies, but she also suggests that transformation theory has transitioned away from social issues as it has evolved.[58]

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[52] Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*. 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 22.

[53] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 90.

[54] Brenda Wright, Patricia Cranton, and B. Allen Quigley, "Literacy Educators' Perspectives on Transformation and Authenticity," Adult Education Research Conference (2007) http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2007/papers/107.

[55] Sharan B. Merriam, and SeonJoo Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning: What Methodology?" in Taylor, Cranton, and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, 68.

[56] Wright, Cranton, and Quigley, "Literacy Educators' Perspectives," 2-7.

[57] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting*, 43-44.

[58] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting*, 55.

Moreover, both transformative learning and critical pedagogy share ethical concerns, including the danger of indoctrination. Cranton and other scholars of transformative learning warn educators that transformative learning is fraught with challenges for learners: conflicts may arise in class; students may be unduly influenced by their instructors; and transformations may lead to danger, both emotional and physical.[59] Stephan Brookfield proposes that students may resist learning about topics like racism or challenging oppressive governing forces because of hegemonic influence, such as internalized racial stereotypes and cynicism regarding politics.[60] Kathleen King and Lisa Wright counsel against the "manufacture [of] specific qualities" in learners.[61] Dorothy Ettling begins her chapter on the ethics of transformative learning by cautioning educators interested in fostering change that their practices can be unintentionally oppressive.[62] She suggests that several common classroom activities, such as fostering disclosure, unveiling conflict, and expecting collaboration include ethical dilemmas.[63] Similarly, in regards to critical pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth suggests that critical pedagogues have not appropriately addressed the nature of the authoritarian relationship between teacher and student.[64] Jeyaraj and Harland define indoctrination as "the full and uncritical acceptance of ideas by students ... or using a teacher's power to manipulate them."[65] They suggest that teachers need to manage their political ideology to mitigate this risk of indoctrination, in order to ensure that students are not unduly influenced regarding controversial political topics.

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[59] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting*, 174-175.

[60] Stephan Brookfield, *Powerful Techniques for Teaching Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 150-151.

[61] Kathleen P. King, and Lisa Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains in the ABE Classroom: Transformational Learning Results Considered," *Adult Basic Education* 13 2 (Summer 2003): 104.

[62] Dorothy Ettling, "Educator as Change Agent: Ethics of Transformative Learning," in Taylor, Cranton, and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, 536.

[63] Ettling, "Educator as Change Agent," 540-543.

[64] Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?" 306.

[65] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 591-592.

Supporting my argument that transformative education can lead to emancipatory outcomes, I have linked these scholars of transformation learning theory and critical pedagogy to demonstrate how the process of transformative learning and Freire's concept of conscientization produce both individual and collective changes. Moreover, based on the work of these scholars, I argue that teachers who wish to support social justice have a responsibility to their communities to be active change agents in spite of ideological criticisms. However, in order to explore how graphic narratives can lead to these critical transformations in a case study with my own adult students, I required a research framework that supported my practice as an ABE instructor: action-research methodology.

Action research is a methodology that utilizes cycles of reflection, research, and action in order to enable teachers to improve their practice, working conditions, and the learning outcomes of their students.[66] Importantly, critical action research is a form of research methodology for researchers who intend their research to promote emancipatory goals.[67] Yet teachers who utilize action-research methodologies face other problems. Dario Luis Banegas and Luis S. Villacañas de Castro discuss several issues that need to be addressed when planning an action research project. First, they highlight the requirement for continuous consent and the ability of student research participants to terminate that consent without penalty.[68] Next, they describe how conflicts regarding power and roles of authority are entrenched in educational systems, which impacts researchers' abilities to maintain professional relationships.[69] Other scholars note that teachers' taking the role of researchers

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[66] Richard Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, 2011), 4-5.

[67] Bridget Somekh, "Action Research," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008): 4, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n4.

[68] Dario Luis Banegas and Luis Sebastián Villacañas de Castro, "A Look at Ethical Issues in Action Research in Education," *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3 (May 2015): 60.

[69] Banegas and Villacañas de Castro, "A Look at Ethical Issues," 62-64.

can have a negative effect on student learning due to inherent conflict between roles.[70] Additionally, Kimberly Kinsler suggests that despite the wide use of this methodology for in-class research, action research has become co-opted and no longer provides an opportunity to meet its original goals related to emancipation.[71] She also notes an argument between educational theorists concerning whether critical self-understanding can or cannot warrant strategic action, and how individual action research projects can struggle to make effective widespread social changes when they are confined to individual classrooms.[72]

The key ideas of these fields allow me to connect my values and pedagogical practices to the issues of power and equality in adult education and Canadian society. This analysis suggests multiple overlaps among my four domains: teaching English and history with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action research with adult learners. For example, action research and critical pedagogy are often utilized together in educational studies, and there are multiple studies linking the teaching of history and critical pedagogy. In addition, while I did not invent using graphic narratives to teach adult students to think critically, no studies exist linking these domains. Furthermore, no studies exist linking transformative learning theory to graphic narratives. My research addresses these gaps in knowledge and extends the study of critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory into the emergent field of comics studies. Hopefully, my study will provide critical pedagogues in adult education with evidence of a practical strategy to

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[70] Amanda L. Nolen and Jim Vander Putten, "Action Research in Education: Addressing Gaps in Ethical Principles and Practices," *Educational Researcher* 36 7 (January 1, 2007): 402; Kimberly Kinsler, "The Utility of Educational Action Research for Emancipatory Change," *Action Research* 8 2 (2010): 186-187.

[71] Kinsler, "The Utility of Educational Action Research," 172-173.

[72] Kinsler, "The Utility of Educational Action Research," 177-179,

utilize in their classes that supports learners as they develop a critical awareness of social issues.

To summarize, researching how graphic narratives can be used as teaching tools for adult students while facilitating emancipatory pedagogies contains challenges connected to the unfamiliar visual/textual form of graphic narratives and the maintenance of ethical relationships between instructors and students, leading to reduced levels of student success. Despite these concerns, in order to address issues of racism and oppression, I studied this interdisciplinary research question:

> Can historical nonfiction graphic narratives be used as resources in adult history and English courses in such a way that they meet the requirements of the course but also foster critical awareness of social issues?

To explore this research question, I completed a bounded action-research case study with a theoretical framework synthesizing aspects of historical thinking, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning theory. This instrumental case study took place in an English 045 class (an Advanced-level ABE course) that I taught in the winter 2018 semester at the Prince George College of New Caledonia campus from January to mid-April. I studied changes in student affect[73] as students completed their coursework by reading, discussing, and writing about *March Book Two*, a nonfiction graphic narrative. The data provided by my research allowed me to answer these sub-questions:

> a. As befits my action-research methodology, how did events in the classroom differ from my planned theory of action?

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[73] W. James Popham, "All About Assessment/Assessing Student Affect," *Teaching Social Responsibility* 66 8 (May 2009): 85; Popham describes student affect as, "the attitudes, interests, and values that students exhibit and acquire in school."

b. How did reading and discussing *March Book Two* affect my students?

c. How did leading this research study affect me?

Answering these questions required me to address the concerns I raised previously regarding these four domains. Supporting my argument that transformative education can lead to emancipatory outcomes, I have linked scholars of transformative learning theory and critical pedagogy to demonstrate how the process of transformative learning and Freire's concept of conscientization produce both individual and collective changes. Moreover, based on the work of these scholars, I argue that teachers who wish to support social justice have a responsibility to their communities to be active change agents in spite of ideological criticisms.

Research confirms that both textual and visual narratives can lead to transformations. However, graphic narratives are hybrids of both text and visual art. As hybrids, they share the potential power of images to inspire and transform viewers described above, as well as the potential transformative power of narrative. As noted earlier, McCloud's work in *Understanding Comics* suggests that the power of graphic narratives is tied to intense reader reactions, emotional responses, and engagement through visualization. Carleton's research with critical pedagogy suggests that graphic narratives can certainly be emancipatory and transformative. For example, Clark's research study examined how selected graphic narratives, including Zinn's *A People's History of American Empire*, helped undergraduate education students recognize historical agency in ways that echo the emancipatory goals of critical pedagogy, including through revealing injustice, expanding the historical narrative to include subaltern groups, humanizing groups who occupy contexts different than our own, rejecting historical inevitability, and making moral judgements about the choices of historical

actors.[74] Any of these aspects could lead to a disorienting dilemma for students, but Clark's

findings strongly resonate with Laurent A. Parks Daloz's emphasis on constructively

engaging with "others." Thus, by providing students opportunities to engage with the

viewpoints of others, graphic narratives have the ability to foster transformative shifts.

Background and Need

Historically, scholars in each of my four domains (teaching with graphic narratives,

critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action research with adult learners)

have attempted to address the issues described above, but some gaps in the scholarly

consensus exist. To illustrate the main overlaps and key ideas regarding issues of equality

and power that relate to my values, I will summarize each domain's relevant historical

background and responses to the issues suggested earlier. Additionally, I have developed a

brief timeline that reflects the historical intersections between key figures in my research.

While the scholarly consensus now proposes that teaching with graphic narratives can

be effective,[75] graphic narratives were vilified for the effects they had on children in the

1950s. However, the development of some of the most important texts in comics studies

stems from this vilification. After the implementation of the Comics Magazine Association

of America Comics Code, comics creators began to self-publish experimental and subversive

comic stories, leading to the development of nonfiction graphic narrative autobiographies.[76]

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[74]J. Spencer Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency: The Value of Nonfiction Graphic Novels in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 4 (2013): 495-500; these results are an important component of my visual schematization of my theoretical framework in Chapter Two.

[75] Currently, many teachers and librarians have utilized comic books to engage young readers who struggle to develop their interest in reading and various literacy skills. These skills include not only the ability to read text, but the ability to read images as well; see Adam Bessie, "Literacy and the Graphic Novel: Prejudice, Promise and Pedagogy," *Critical Survey of Graphic Novels: History, Theme, and Technique*, edited by Bart Beaty and Stephen Weiner (Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2012), 115-116.

[76] Chute, "Comics as Literature?" 456.

The first example was *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* by Justin Green in 1972, detailing his internal struggles with undiagnosed Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and strict Catholicism. Later comic nonfiction autobiographies by artists like Harvey Pekar but especially Art Spiegelman and his story *Maus,* first published in 1986, would be instrumental in comics' being widely accepted as forms of literature.[77] Being comparatively free from censorship today, with the support of educators, creators of graphic narratives have greater influence on the development of society than ever before.
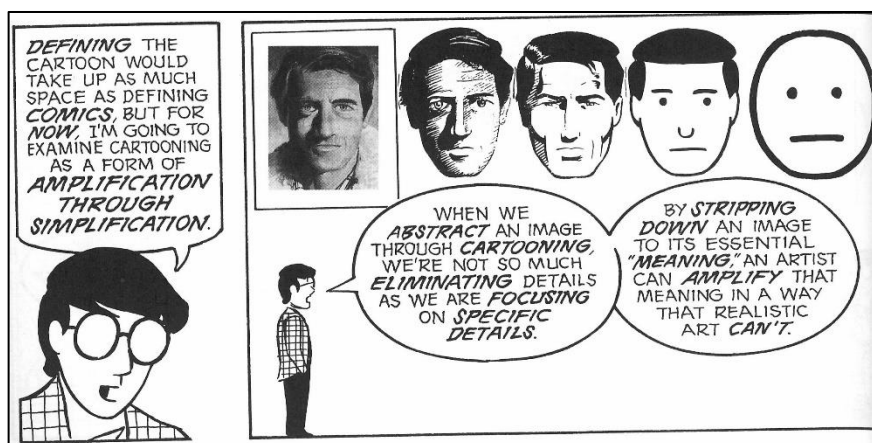
Two key theorists have influenced my approach to comics studies. The first is Hillary Chute, who connects the study of comic literature to the discipline of history. In her text *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics and Documentary Form*, she critically examines how nonfiction graphic narratives portraying war and atrocity, including *Maus* by Spiegelman, *Barefoot Gen* by Kenji Nakazawa, and *Safe Area Goražde* by Joe Sacco, can creatively document violent histories. Her text explores how visual/verbal art depicting war has developed, including a detailed discussion of Jacques Callot's *Les Grands Misères et Les Malheurs de La Guerre (The Miseries of War)* and Francisco Goya's *Los Desatres de la Guerra* (*Disasters of War*) as precursors to the work of Spiegelman and Sacco. The second comics studies theorist whose work has influenced my analysis is Scott McCloud. His book *Understanding Comics* provides a framework that enables analysis of the hybrid textual/visual nature of comics. McCloud examines several important aspects of comics as literature and art, including the foundational pieces of comics, such as the gutter between images or the lines of an illustration. He also describes the universality of cartoon imagery

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[77] Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 131.

and how the human mind interprets comic art and differentiates graphic narratives from more abstract, non-visual texts.[78]

While graphic narratives often contain fewer words than traditional written fiction and lack the auditory components of film and television, the power of the comics medium has been demonstrated and analyzed in academic literature for some time. For example, in *Understanding Comics*, McCloud's

Fig. 1 Amplification through simplification. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 30.

theory of "amplification by simplification" suggests that simple cartoon images have the power to intensify reader reactions by concentrating their attention on important details.[79] Summarizing the development of impressionistic and expressionistic art, McCloud notes many examples of how cartoon art expresses emotions and draws attention to transitions of reality in ways commonly accepted in other artistic mediums.[80] McCloud also argues that readers of graphic narratives are active participants in comic stories through the concept of "closure" or visualization of the actions occurring in the "gutters" between panels.[81] Of course, McCloud's work has been criticized. In the article, "Indiscipline, or The Condition of Comics Studies," Hatfield summarizes academic criticism of *Understanding Comics*'s

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[78] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 31-38.
[79] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 30.
[80] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 123-124.
[81] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 68.

formalism and McCloud's attempts to provide an exclusionary academic definition of comics.[82]

Other writers have extended McCloud's theories. For example, Tristram Walker proposes that it is the author of comics depicting trauma and violence who is ultimately responsible for the violence that readers envision during the process of closure, citing the traumatic images of genocide in eastern Bosnia in Sacco's *Safe Area Goražde*.[83] Responding to Walker, Charles Acheson contends that the gutter can be used to augment reader comprehension of traumatic events in comics. Acheson suggests that the visual nature of comics forces readers to make inferences between panels and create pseudo memories of trauma, thus becoming vicarious witnesses. Through this process of inference, readers are active in their mental constructions of the brutal and traumatic events of comic texts, contesting Walker's claim that responsibility for the level of brutality in the comic is primarily Sacco's.[84]

Modern analysis of the power of comics also includes a biological and psychological component. Suzanne Keen notes that visuals in graphic narratives are processed prior to textual ones, producing internal responses in readers before any words are read.[85] Chute also compares the nature of comic images to photography and cinema, noting that comics are "evidently staged, built, made images, as opposed to 'taken' ones." In addition, while photos are frozen in time, and cinema controls the pace of viewing, comics differ: they are read at

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[82] Hatfield, "Indiscipline," 5-6.

[83] Tristram Walker, "Graphic Wounds: The Comic Journalism of Joe Sacco," *Journeys* 11 1 (June 2010): 76.

[84] Charles Acheson, "Expanding the Role of the Gutter in Nonfiction Comics: Forged Memories in Joe Sacco's *Safe Area Goražde*," *Studies in the Novel* 54 3 (Fall 2015): 291-307.

[85] Suzanne Keen, "Fast Tracks to Narrative Empathy: Anthropomorphism and Dehumanization in Graphic Narratives," *SubStance* 40 1 (2011): 135.

the reader's pace, an important concept when considering traumatic images.[86] Spiegelman suggests that comics allow the past and the present to coexist simultaneously, unlike film and television, where the past is continually displaced by the onscreen present.[87] While Hatfield notes that autobiography in both traditional literature and graphic narratives mixes historical accuracy with creative licence,[88] he suggests that non-fiction graphic narratives that address the impossibility of depicting objectively accurate historical truths are ironically more authentic than those graphic narratives that do not.[89] He provides a strategy that autobiographical comics creators can use to increase the authenticity of their works: ironic authentication, "a means of graphically asserting truthfulness through the admission of artifice." This technique represents the recognition of the impossibility of perfect accuracy in nonfiction narrative, and provides both comic creators and readers opportunities to share emotionally authentic depictions of events.[90] These aspects of graphic narratives are commonly overlooked. Knowingly or unknowingly, graphic narrative creators are utilizing a medium that has a powerful ability to influence readers.

Graphic narratives have had a meaningful role in supporting resistance to authority and illuminating racism. In his autobiography *Walking With the Wind*, John Lewis refers to a short comic pamphlet published by an antiracist group, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, that he read in 1957 titled *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*. According to Lewis, the graphic narrative provided readers with a summary of the nonviolent strategy of passive resistance. He also notes that the graphic narrative was popular with Black college

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[86] Chute, *Disaster Drawn,* 21-22.
[87] Art Spiegelman, *MetaMaus* (New York: Pantheon, 2011): 165.
[88] Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 112.
[89] Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 114.
[90] Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 131.

students, many of whom would volunteer in the civil rights movement.[91] Andrew Aydin, who would later work for Lewis and co-author the *March* graphic novel trilogy, wrote a Master's thesis titled, "The Comic Book that Changed the World," where he argues that the *Montgomery Story* helped lead to a spontaneous sit-in protest against segregation in Greensboro, North Carolina at a Woolworth's lunch counter, coinciding with a larger series of sit-ins at department-store lunch counters in Nashville, organized in part by John Lewis and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).[92] Eventually, segregation at lunch counters was ended in both Greensboro and Nashville. Aydin also observes that the comic spread through Latin America and South Africa, where it was eventually banned because of its subversive content.[93]

Like the portrayals of racism and nonviolent resistance in *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, other graphic narratives can certainly be emancipatory and transformative. For example, in his *500 Years of Resistance Comic Book,* Gord Hill states that his text is a model of radical history with the goal of developing greater historical understanding around Indigenous resistance to colonialism, in order to better resist oppression.[94] Furthermore, Carleton synthesizes the work of Freire with McCloud and other comic critics in order to demonstrate that the visual and inference-driven nature of comic books forces readers to actively interpret progressive comics with their own worldviews,

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[91] John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 83.

[92] Andrew Aydin, "The Comic Book that Changed the World," Master's Thesis, Georgetown University, 2012, *DigitalGeorgetown*, https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/557709: 72-74.

[93] Aydin, "The Comic Book that Changed the World," 77; J. Michael Lyons, "From Alabama to Tahrir Square: *Martin Luther King and The Montgomery Story*: Comics As a Civil Rights Narrative," *Journalism History* 41 2 (Summer 2015): 109.

[94] Gord Hill, *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010), 6.

permitting the growth of critical consciousness.[95] Finally, in the article, "Images of Struggle: Teaching Human Rights with Graphic Novels," Kenneth Carano and Jeremiah Clabough argue that historical graphic narratives not only humanize historical figures but also provide opportunities for students to connect with historical atrocities like the Holocaust and the oppression of Palestinian refugees that are often difficult to visualize.[96]

March Book Two is part of a graphic autobiography of John Lewis's life from 10 November 1960 to 15 September 1963. Lewis's story of resistance is juxtaposed with his experience on 20 January 2009 as a member of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress watching Barack Obama's inauguration. Written by Lewis and Andrew Aydin, Lewis's Digital Director and Policy Advisor, the text is part two of a trilogy illustrated by Nate Powell. The *March* trilogy examines Lewis's time as a civil rights activist, culminating in the Selma-to-Montgomery march and the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The series vividly illustrates Lewis's
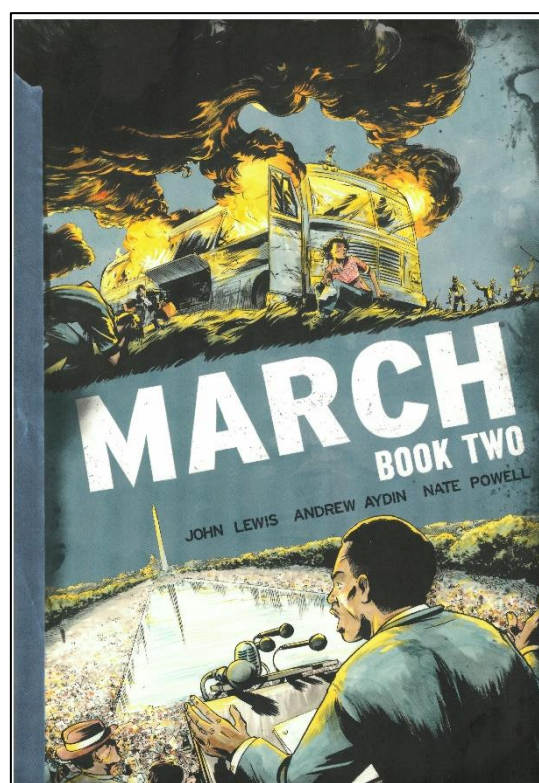
Fig. 2 *March Book Two* cover

experiences with racism, segregation, and police brutality, but also his encounters with prominent figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Kennedy, and Malcolm X.

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[95] Carleton, "Drawn to Change," 161-162; Another useful comic text edited and published by the Graphic History Collective not mentioned in Carleton's article is *Drawn To Change: Graphic Histories of Working Class Struggle*.

[96] Kenneth T. Carano, and Jeremiah Clabough, "Images of Struggle: Teaching Human Rights with Graphic Novels," *The Social Studies* 107 1 (January 2016): 15.

There are many other graphic narratives that would have suited my research project, but I chose to use *March Book Two* for several reasons. Like the graphic narratives previously mentioned, *March Book Two* is tied to history. According to Carano and Clabough,

> The authors do an excellent job of contextualizing the issues and values of people during this time period. A reader is able to see the diverse perspectives of those involved in the movement on best tactics and approaches to address segregation in the 1960s. Key historical figures of the time period are presented with distinct personalities that make their values and beliefs accessible to the reader. A reader unfamiliar with this topic can learn about the key events and figures with this movement through reading *March Book Two*.[97]

Lewis, Aydin, and Powell's efforts to educate their readers on the history of the civil rights movement is valuable for the purpose of conscientization. According to Giroux, the study of history is tied to developing historical consciousness and feelings of social justice.[98] He writes, "students need to be able to reach into history, so as to transform historical into critical thought."[99] In addition, the content of the text is relevant to issues students may face in northern British Columbia, without placing Aboriginal students in the awkward position of having a White instructor teach them about Aboriginal history. Perhaps most importantly, *March Book Two* is written at a level appropriate for an Advanced ABE English course in British Columbia, while the content, structure and language of many other texts would be difficult for some readers at the Advanced ABE level. Confirming this conclusion are the several teachers' guides for *March Book Two* available on the Top Shelf website that demonstrate how this text meets American Common Core learning standards in grades 9-

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[97] Carano, and Clabough, "Images of Struggle," 16-17.
[98] Giroux, "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism," 13.
[99] Henry Giroux, "Ideology and Agency in the Process of Schooling," in *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 91.

12.[100] Thus, I determined that *March Book Two* was a suitable text for me to use to evaluate whether historical graphic narratives could be utilized to promote the emancipatory goals of critical pedagogy.

One of the most important ideas in critical pedagogy is the ideological goal of justice and equality through resistance to oppression. In practice, this takes the form of respect for students and rejection of teaching practices that attempt to establish control or oppression in the classroom.[101] This idea that education is not neutral but potentially oppressive has its origins with John Dewey but also Gramsci's critique of education and his concept of regressive hegemony. Gramsci, a Marxist activist and philosopher, redefined hegemony as "the maintenance of the authority of dominant groups not primarily by force but through ideas dispersed through society in the form of common sense or cultural knowledge that prevents the development of alternate viewpoints."[102] Gramsci also argued that education could increase class divisions by classifying students into narrow vocational streams.[103] Finally, he suggested the concept of contradictory consciousness, where uncritically absorbed ideas lead people to a passive stasis rather than active resistance.[104] His concepts would later be important in the development of Freire's liberation pedagogy.

Freire extended Gramsci's concept of hegemony further into the educational sphere, perhaps most famously through his critique of transmission-based methods of education as "banking," where teachers deposit information into passive students.[105] Also, Freire's

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[100] Francisca Goldsmith, "A Teacher's Guide to March Book Two," *TopShelfComix.com*, http://www.topshelfcomix.com/guides/march-book-two-teachers-guide.pdf: 2; Meryl Jaffe, "Using Graphic Novels in Education: March: Book Two," *Comic Book Legal Defense Fund*, accessed 27 July 2017, http://cbldf.org/2015/02/using-graphic-novels-in-education-march-book-two/.

[101] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer,* 6.

[102] John Schwarzmantel, *Gramsci's Prison Notebooks* (New York: Routledge, 2015): 93.

[103] Schwarzmantel, *Gramsci's Prison Notebooks,* 84.

[104] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1972): 333.

[105] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53.

liberation pedagogy argues that a fear of freedom and a culture of silence imposed by oppressors on the oppressed limit them from taking the risks that resistance to authority requires, much as Gramsci's regressive hegemony enables dominant groups to rule subaltern groups. Freire suggests that oppressed individuals may adopt oppressive practices in the process of striving to resist domination, thus becoming sub-oppressors over others who have not gained independence from oppression.[106] Accordingly, transmission-based forms of education in the classroom mirror oppressive practices in society. However, because they identified schools as places of oppression, Gramsci, Freire, and Giroux all identified a central role for teachers as transformative intellectuals.

Therefore, as critical pedagogy recognizes the oppressive nature of modern, transmission-based, western educational institutions and the importance of striving to emancipate students and society from this oppression, teachers have the active role of promoting change. Gramsci suggests that hegemony is enacted by both regressive and progressive intellectuals in a struggle to create or reject the consent of the masses to be governed. He argues that subaltern groups need to establish their own intellectuals in order to establish their own progressive hegemony.[107] Giroux explicitly calls for teachers to fill this role, and become transformative actors in the public spheres where they work, i.e., schools.[108] Giroux also argues that, "Teachers at all levels of schooling represent a potentially powerful force for social change,"[109] and notes in a different text that education is

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[106] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 27-28.
[107] Schwarzmantel, *Gramsci's Prison Notebooks,* 75-76.
[108] Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1988): xxxiii-xxxiv.
[109] Giroux, "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism," 28.

"a moral and political practice."[110] Some of Freire's most famous concepts reflect the emancipatory practices to foster change that teachers can use: dialogue and critical reflection.

For Freire, dialogue is a way for educators to resist the banking/transmission forms of education that oppress students through a one-way transfer of information. To Freire, emancipation cannot be given, only achieved. Therefore, contextually sensitive dialogue is the only way for the oppressed to recognize their oppression and become active in their resistance to it. Any other method of one-way communication to the oppressed is a form of oppression. Without the ability to construct their own critical understanding of the world, subaltern groups will be unable to emancipate themselves.[111] To enable this, Freire suggests that teachers utilize problem-posing education, a dialogue between students and teachers that transforms the authoritarian and submissive roles of banking education into a process where all participants learn. In Freire's problem-posing method, teachers and students work through contextually relevant problems presented by the teacher in order to create ever-newer critical understandings of real-world issues.[112] This process includes a second important piece of Freire's liberation pedagogy: praxis. Praxis, a concept valued by Marx and Gramsci, is defined by Freire as "reflection and action on the world in order to transform it."[113] Through praxis, Freire suggests that the oppressed can develop conscientization, or "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[114]

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[110] Henry Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation: Democracy Beyond the Culture of Fear* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 173.
[111] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47-48.
[112] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 60-62.
[113] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 33.
[114] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 17.

Education is not an ideologically neutral act, and so scholars of critical pedagogy have attempted to address the concerns I identified earlier. Jeyaraj and Harland note that critical pedagogues can and do often attempt to avoid indoctrination through various strategies, including withholding personal views from students.[115] Jeyaraj and Harland advise teachers to be open and accountable about their aims for teaching, including engaging in peer-reviewed action research projects where their decisions and actions can be evaluated publicly.[116] On the topic of adult education, Freire emphasizes the importance of promoting the discussion and mutability of reality and history and the ability of people to change the world.[117]

In addition, alternative responses to criticisms of critical pedagogy exist. Morrow and Torres suggest that while Freirean methods have the potential to be used to indoctrinate students, this criticism ignores the value of dialogue and opposition to oppression that Freire held. Indeed, this criticism ignores the role oppressive educational systems play in maintaining regressive hegemony by demanding objectivity.[118] Parkhouse goes further in rejecting the charge of indoctrination, by suggesting:

> Critical teachers should not fear that they are imposing their 'own' values, but rather recognize how, through reflection on their own contradictory consciousness, they have come to an understanding of normative questions that the common sense of their

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[115] Some research suggests this strategy is problematic. Hillary Parkhouse's dissertation on the use of critical pedagogy in history classrooms found examples of instructors' using a similar strategy. But both studies showed that teachers' withholding their personal views from students led students to reinforce contradictory consciousness, or regressive hegemony in the forms of stereotypes involving race, gender, and class differences. For example, in a student-led discussion of women in the 1920s, Parkhouse observed some students express and defend sexist views. She argues that the instructor should introduce a critical viewpoint if it is absent from the conversation; Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 591-592; Hillary Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in U.S. History Classrooms: Conscientization and Contradictory Consciousness," PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2016, *PsychINFO* (2016-58391-019), 74-76.

[116] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 592.

[117] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 79.

[118] Morrow and Torres, *Reading Freire and Habermas,* 143.

students (and most people) may be preventing. Teaching for social justice implies a worldview that teachers should not fear proclaiming.[119]

Furthermore, in response to other feminist critiques of Freire, hooks provides a quote from Freire:

> If the women are critical, they have to accept our contribution as men, as well as the workers have to accept our contribution as intellectuals, because it is a duty and right that I have to participate in the transformation of society. Then, if the women must have the main responsibility in their struggle they have to know that their struggle also belongs to us, that is, to those men who don't accept the [chauvinist male] position in the world. The same is true of racism. As an apparent white man, because I always say that I am not quite sure of my whiteness, the question is to know if I am really against racism in a radical way. If I am, then I have a duty and a right to fight with black people against racism.[120]

In *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, Antonia Darder proposes a modified theory of critical bicultural pedagogy to extend critical pedagogy beyond issues of class. Her theory suggests critical pedagogy must be reliant on cultural democracy, utilize a dialectical worldview, identify cultural invasion, allow for students of colour to critique and transform the world through dialogue, recognize how education is political and affected by power, and be committed to empowerment and liberation for all.[121] Finally, Joe Kincheloe notes that the practice of challenging the neutrality of the educational system is often labeled as indoctrination. In response to this charge, he suggests that teachers who are transparent in their emancipatory goals with their students while refusing to impose these positions are not engaging in indoctrination. However, mainstream critics who refuse to acknowledge issues of power in education and the dominant status quo in the name of neutrality and objectivity are, in reality, the ones indoctrinating students.[122] As E. Wayne Ross suggests, these

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[119] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 198-199.
[120] Hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 57.
[121] Antonia Darder, *Culture and Power in the Classroom* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1991), 97.
[122] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer,* 11.

controversies within in critical pedagogy are best addressed through integration with other theories. In this thesis, I link critical pedagogy to transformative learning theory to provide progressive educators with a tool to study shifts in student affect regarding issues related to social justice.

Indeed, transformative learning theory was influenced by critical pedagogy. In a review of Mezirow's contributions to transformative learning theory, Andrew Kitchenham summarizes how Kuhn, Freire, and Habermas were Mezirow's initial influences. Kitchenham links different elements from these three scholars to transformative learning, such as Freire's concepts of conscientization and dialogue to Mezirow's disorienting dilemma and critical discourse.[123] In addition, Patricia Cranton suggests that Habermas's concept of emancipatory learning "based on the critical examination of instrumental and communicative knowledge," formed an important component of Mezirow's original version of transformative learning theory.[124] However, Sharan Merriam and SeonJoo Kim note that Mezirow's original research "was not critical in that he was not attempting to change and empower participants through the research. Nor did his research analyze the power dynamics involved in a transformative learning experience."[125] Kitchenham's article also describes the multiple revisions Mezirow made to his theories between 1978 and 2006 as he elaborated on the individual aspects of the theory. These changes include additional examinations of assumptions, critical reflection, discourse and meaning perspectives.[126]

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[123] Andrew Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Journal of Transformative Education* 6 2 (April 2008): 106-109.
[124] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting*, 18.
[125] Merriam and Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning," 59.
[126] Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John," 110.

According to transformative learning scholars, there are several significant ways that transformations occur.[127] The foremost way Mezirow suggests transformations are enabled is through discourse. In Mezirow's framework, reflective discourse refers to discussions where a person's assumptions are critically evaluated.[128] To Mezirow, this process is how most transformations occur.[129] It leads to the second path to transformation I want to emphasize: critical examination of assumptions (or habits of mind). Mezirow suggests that transformations can occur after individuals engage in objective and subjective reframing, or the processes of critically examining the assumptions of others or their own.[130] The third aspect I want to highlight is how transformations can occur when people attempt to imagine and take on the viewpoints of others.[131] If social responsibility is an end goal of transformative learning, Daloz suggests that opportunities to constructively engage otherness may be the most important experience for learners. In a study of one hundred socially responsible people, Daloz found that all had developed an "emphatic connection with people different from themselves,"[132] which had led to some form of perspective transformation that encouraged "a long term commitment to the common good."[133] Importantly, Mezirow argues that all of these internal transformations are not complete without actions.[134] Furthermore, these transformations are not inevitable results of education. For example, a study of perspective changes of women in crisis concluded that the institutionally enforced

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[127] Admittedly, Mezirow and others suggest additional processes that lead to transformations, but my focus is on these three.
[128] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 78.
[129] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 114.
[130] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 87.
[131] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 86.
[132] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 110.
[133] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 105.
[134] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 87; Mezirow argues both delayed and immediate actions demonstrate complete transformations.

powerlessness of homeless and incarcerated women engaged in adult basic education

prevented them from experiencing transformations.[135]

In response to common criticisms of transformative learning theory, Chad Hoggan,

Kaisu Mälkki, and Fergal Finnegan added three significant ideas to the literature in order to

address personal, relational, and social aspects of learning: continuity, intersubjectivity, and

emancipatory praxis. Adding the concept of continuity addresses concerns around sudden

modifications to meaning perspectives, suggesting a process of change occurs, rather than a

shift. The addition of continuity also addresses concerns regarding the goals and

consequences of transformative learning. [136] Reflecting on the intersubjectivity humans

experience addresses concerns regarding emotional and social action in Mezirow's

theories.[137] Finally, expanding perspective transformation theory to include components of

emancipatory praxis addresses concerns around the individualistic focus of Mezirow's work

by enabling new ways to comprehend both political and apolitical learning experiences and

increased recognition of the role of society in learning.[138]

In addition to Hoggan, Mälkki and Finnegan, other academics have written on the

role of emotions and other non-rational forces in transformative learning theory. For

example, R. E. Y. Wickett suggests that transformative learning theory has "important

spiritual implications" and allows students to learn by examining "the spiritual aspects of

life."[139] Christine Jarvis argues that some transformations stemming from fiction and film

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[135] Merriam and Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning," 66.

[136] Chad Hoggan, Kaisu Mälkki, and Fergal Finnegan, "Developing the Theory of Perspective Transformation," *Adult Education Quarterly* 67 1 (February 2017): 50-53.

[137] Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan, "Developing the Theory," 54-56.

[138] Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan, "Developing the Theory," 56-60.

[139] R. E. Y. Wickett, "The Spiritual and Human Learning," In *Human Learning: An Holistic Approach*, edited by Peter Jarvis and Stella Parker (New York: Routledge, 2005), 159.

"rely on intense and passionate emotions, empathy, and identification."[140] In a discussion of the limitations on Mezirow's work, Merriam, Rosemary Caffarella, and Lisa Baumgartner demonstrate how Mezirow's focus on rationality privileges White middle- and upper-class males. They cite a number of studies that demonstrate how transformations are holistic experiences.[141] Mezirow's continued work on transformative learning theory reflects these criticisms; for example, he sees transformative learners as potential change agents when their goals include "social or organizational change."[142] Finally, John Dirkx suggests that emotional experiences "can help learners develop a deeper understanding of themselves" and calls for researchers to expand on the role of emotion in definitions of consciousness and personality as central factors of transformative learning theory.[143]

Multiple transformative-learning scholars have argued that reading fiction can trigger transformative learning. In a paper presented to the Eight International Transformative Learning Conference in 2009, Cranton analyzes how reading fiction promotes transformations that support social justice. To demonstrate that reading fiction encourages readers to take perspectives of individuals different than themselves and develop empathy, Cranton interprets four Canadian short stories. Her interpretations suggest social justice is promoted through how reading and telling stories encourages socializing, questioning our own beliefs, and becoming more interdependent with others.[144] Cranton also collaborated with Hoggan to produce a qualitative study of a diverse group of 131 adult learners

[140] Jarvis, "Fiction and Film," 498.

[141] Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Caffarella, and Lisa M. Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 151-152.

[142] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 92.

[143] John Dirkx, "The Meaning and Role of Emotions in Adult Learning," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 120 (Winter 2008): 16.

[144] Patricia Cranton, "Transformative Learning and Social Sustainability through Fiction," In *Eighth Annual Transformative Learning Conference: Reframing Social Sustainability in a Multicultural World*, edited by Patricia Cranton, Edward Taylor and Jo Tyler (Middletown, Pennsylvania: Penn State Harrisburg, 2009), 78-83.

(undergraduate and graduate students) that suggests the use of fiction can enable transformative learning. Students read a short story, then discussed and critically reflected on it. Hoggan and Cranton extracted themes from the student reflections that suggest reading fiction can help students promote change, develop new perspectives, and critically reflect. Their other findings suggest that students reading fiction may make connections to their own personal experiences, have emotional responses, and identify role models.[145]

Finally, Jarvis argues that fiction and film can act as disorientating dilemmas for readers and viewers, leading to perspective transformations. She suggests that presenting narratives allows readers and viewers to develop empathy for and identify with the characters in the stories they study. She examines a number of examples of films and texts that demonstrate how stories allow their audiences to make connections with those who are much different than themselves, identify subconscious obstacles to transformation, challenge the construction of reality, and recognize how social injustice is subtly perpetuated.[146] Learning through stories, as presented by M. Carolyn Clark and Marsha Rossiter, suggests that students experience stories in a complex way that allows them to build on prior experiences, construct new meanings, and recognize how they occupy and are affected by wider narratives.[147] The research of Cranton, Hoggan, M. Carolyn Clark, Rossiter, and Jarvis demonstrates that the transformative ability of narratives echoes Daloz's assertion, stated earlier, that constructively engaging otherness is an important factor in the development of

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[145] Chad Hoggan, and Patricia Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning through Reading Fiction," *Journal of Transformative Education* 13 1 (January 1, 2015): 22.

[146] Jarvis, "Fiction and Film," 498-499.

[147] M. Carolyn Clark, and Marsha Rossiter, "Narrative Learning in Adulthood," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 119 (Fall 2008): 66.

social responsibility in individuals. But written narratives are not the only means of prompting transformations in learners.

As suggested above, film, visual, and creative forms of art can lead to transformative learning. In her discussion of film and television fiction, Jarvis submits that the framing of a scene or camera shot combined with the use of sound can lead audiences to instantaneously experience the narratives from the perspectives of the characters themselves, as well as "signal connections between themes and character and reinforce mood," leading to emotional impacts on the audience and the development of a connection between the audience and the characters.[148] In an attempt to expand the adult education literature, Randee Lawrence argues that visuals can bypass the limits of abstract language. She cites the practice of labeling as an example of this limit, where assigning a label to an object such as a maple tree may lead to recall of general facts, but may obscure an accurate description of meaningful details such as textures, shades, and so on. Instead, she claims that the emotions fostered by experiencing visual art can lead to transformative experiences.[149] Elizabeth Tisdell contends that movies (and other media in general) "can affect our beliefs about ourselves, and about others from different race, class, gender, and sexual orientation groups, as well as our beliefs about social issues," and gives the examples of *Brokeback Mountain* and *Sicko* as films that encourage questioning assumptions and promote critical dialogue.[150] Her research suggests that media have the potential to help learners recognize alternative narratives and develop "expanded thinking about marginalized others and hegemonic processes."[151] She concludes by

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[148] Jarvis, "Fiction and Film," 488.

[149] Randee Lipson Lawrence, "Powerful Feelings: Exploring the Affective Domain of Informal and Arts-Based Learning," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 120 (Winter 2008): 67.

[150] Elizabeth J. Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy and Transformative Learning," *Journal of Transformative Education* 6 1 (January 2008): 52.

[151] Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy," 57-58.

connecting Dirkx's research on the role of emotions and transformative learning to discussions of the emotionally charged images in popular media.[152] Finally, Brookfield proposes that adult educators can engage with art in their classes in order to critique power in a way that can support the development of emancipatory praxis.[153] His text provides instructors with a bevy of classroom activities, including collages, drawing, and theatre, that encourage students to critique and create art in a way that minimizes anxiety but also discusses issues of power and oppression.[154] Accordingly, this research confirms that both textual and visual narratives can lead to transformations.

Various transformative learning scholars have responded to ethical concerns in the same manner as critical pedagogues. Cranton insists that educators need to be explicit with their values, but encourage students to question them.[155] She has expressed a commitment to social sustainability through her practice, defining it as "a commitment to humanity in which social justice for all is the goal, so as to preserve the future of the human race. This commitment involves an identification with and love for all humanity, a recognition of our interdependence, and a breaking down of the self-other dualism."[156] Ettling suggests that teachers can minimize ethical issues by reflecting on their own transformations, being humble, modeling personal disclosure, and acknowledging and challenging their own ideologies and values.[157] Daloz weighs the arguments for educative neutrality, but concludes,

> "Emancipatory learning," is not about *escape from* but rather about a deeper *immersion into* the rough-and-tumble of human relationship. An education that reveals and enhances our radical interdependence with all creation frees us from a "false consciousness" of our separateness into a richer understanding of our

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[152] Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy," 63-64.
[153] Brookfield, *Powerful Techniques for Teaching*, 187-188.
[154] Brookfield, *Powerful Techniques for Teaching*, 185-216.
[155] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting*, 175.
[156] Cranton, "Transformative Learning," 79.
[157] Ettling, "Educator or Change Agent," 544.

underlying relatedness… Our responsibility is to work to bring about transformation at the individual and societal level that will enable us to realize our fundamental interdependence with one another and the world.[158]

Finally, Mezirow concurs, stating, "Adult educators are never neutral…[they] do not indoctrinate; in our culture, they create opportunities and foster norms supporting freer, fuller participation in discourse and in democratic social and political life."[159]

The ethical issues raised earlier regarding action research are also surmountable. In the article, "The Emancipatory Character of Action Research, its History and the Present State of the Art," Ben W. M. Boog examines how action research originated and evolved as a tool for liberation and links critical action research with critical social theory, critical psychology, and critical pedagogy. He argues that action research facilitates the placement of research participants as equals with researchers, criticism of power structures, and transfiguration of oppressive environments into egalitarian ones.[160] According to Banegas and Villacañas de Castro, the ethical issues in action research can be addressed through strict adherence to informed consent and by ensuring the confidentiality of participants and the ability of participants to corroborate research conclusions prior to publication. Banegas and Villacañas de Castro also suggest that action researchers must be explicit about the personal benefits they receive, often in the form of academic credentials, for performing their research if participants are truly to have informed consent.[161] In order to protect student research participants, Amanda L. Nolen and Jim Vander Putten discuss how the practice of action research requires data-collection methods that give students the ability to present the

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[158] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 120.

[159] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 92.

[160] Ben W. M. Boog, "The Emancipatory Character of Action Research, its History and the Present State of the Art," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 13 (2003): 428.

[161] Banegas and Villacañas de Castro, "A Look at Ethical Issues," 62-64.

appearance of participation, while not actually permitting the use of their data.[162]

Furthermore, Boog recommends that action-research projects must begin with the goal to

emancipate participants and states that the relationships between researchers and researched

subjects are what determines the success or failure of the research project. He suggests action

researchers should have a strong knowledge base of action-research theories and practices,

including adult education, and understand the context of the lives of the research

participants.[163] Finally, Kinsler argues teacher-practitioners of action research need to

prioritize the importance of learning for participating students and aid marginalized students

in their work towards their own emancipation rather than focusing on the development of

theory and research outcomes regarding issues of equality.[164]

Here is a brief timeline of the historical intersections between events in the fields of

comics studies, history, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning theory that are

relevant to my thesis:

- 1633: *Les Grandes Misères et les Malheurs de la Guerre*, a collection of eighteen printed images of war, is published. Created by Jacques Callot, it is "widely recognized as one of the most powerful extant works of art about war – and expressions of witness to its depredations."[165]
- 1846: Marx and Engels write *The German Ideology*, which contains the basis for Marx's theory of historical materialism, which would revolutionize the study of history and influence the development of critical theory.[166]
- 1863: *Los Desastres de la Guerra* is published. Influenced by Callot, Francisco Goya's collection of 80 prints of war-themed art has been referred to as "the greatest anti-war manifesto in the history of art."[167]
- 1888: *Theses on Feuerbach*, written in 1845 by Marx and Engels, is published for the first time, defining praxis as the goal of philosophy.[168]

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[162] Nolen and Putten, "Action Research in Education," 405.

[163] Boog, "The Emancipatory Character," 434-435.

[164] Kinsler, "The Utility of Educational Action Research," 186-187.

[165] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 41.

[166] Peter Singer, *Marx* (Toronto: Oxford University Press), 30.

[167] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 52.

[168] Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan, "Developing the Theory," 57.

- 1896: W.E.B. Du Bois publishes *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*.[169] Kincheloe argues that Du Bois is an important figure in critical pedagogy despite preceding the development of critical theory because of his consideration of important issues like oppression, race, and resistance.
- 1937: Horkheimer and Marcuse of the Frankfurt School present the critical theory of society.[170] Formed in part as a response to Marxist historical theory, critical theory has been an important influence on many scholars interested in social justice.
- 1937: Antonio Gramsci dies in an Italian prison.[171] Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were translated into English after his death, and his theory of hegemony would spread to scholars in the 1950s and 60s.
- 1957: The Fellowship of Reconciliation publishes *Martin Luther King & the Montgomery Story*, a graphic narrative that details King's success using nonviolent tactics to desegregate the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama.[172]
- 1958: John Lewis learns the principles of nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation's Jim Lawson.[173]
- 1963: Lewis speaks at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom with Martin Luther King Jr. [174]
- 1965: Lewis leads the March to Montgomery, which is brutally attacked by White police officers and soldiers.[175] The attack on the peaceful protesters in Selma became an important catalyst for the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
- 1970: Paulo Freire publishes *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, introducing his concepts of praxis and conscientization.
- 1972: Justin Green publishes the first autobiographical graphic narrative: *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*.[176]
- 1978: John Mezirow introduces the theory of transformative learning.[177]
- 1980: Howard Zinn publishes the first edition of *A People's History of the United States*.[178] Zinn's explicit goal for his history is to reject American imperialism and aid in the development of historical consciousness of social and economic conflicts in

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[169] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy*, 61.

[170] Phil Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School* (London: Routledge, 1977): 26; see Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy*, 46-50 for a more detailed summary.

[171] Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy*, 65.

[172] Aydin, "The Comic Book that Changed the World," 63.

[173] John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, *March Book One* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2013): 77.

[174] John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, *March Book Two* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2015): 166-171.

[175] John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, *March Book Three* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2016): 191-209.

[176] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 153-154.

[177] Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John," 110; Kitchenham's article provides a description of the evolution of Mezirow's theory to 2006.

[178] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2003); for a summary of Zinn's criticisms and influence, see Christopher Phelps, "Howard Zinn, Philosopher," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* February 12, 2010, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Howard-Zinn-Philosopher/63833.

American history, conflicts that often demonstrate the vast inequalities between the powerful and oppressed.

- 1980: Art Spiegelman publishes the first selections of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* in RAW magazine.[179]
- 1988: Henry Giroux publishes *Teachers as Intellectuals*.
- 1994: Bell hooks publishes *Teaching to Transgress*.
- 1994: Scott McCloud publishes *Understanding Comics*.
- 2008: Howard Zinn publishes *A People's History of American Empire*, a graphic narrative describing historical examples of American imperialism.
- 2013: John Lewis and Andrew Aydin publish *March Book One*.
- 2016: Hillary Chute publishes *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*.
- 2017: To address concerns with Mezirow's regarding on transformative learning theory, Chad Hoggan, Kaisu Mälkki, and Fergal Finnegan suggest adding key concepts to the process of perspective transformation: continuity, intersubjectivity, and emancipatory praxis.[180]

Purpose/Significance of the Study

As my theoretical approach is influenced by an interdisciplinary array of scholars, it is appropriate that my study utilize a methodology that is adaptable to the unique demands of my ABE setting and my political aims: critical action research. Because my study is bounded by both time and place, it has inherent limitations common to many action research studies, including the studies in my literature review. These limitations often include small numbers of participants and results that are restricted by context: geography, demographics, curriculum, or other concerns.[181] However, as I noted earlier, action research enables teacher-researchers to address these issues through cycles of reflection, research, and action.[182] Importantly, critical action research is a form of research methodology for researchers

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[179] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 152.
[180] Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan, "Developing the Theory," 49.
[181] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 66.
[182] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook,* 4-5.

intending for their research to promote emancipatory goals.[183] Thus, despite some limitations, action research is clearly an appropriate methodology for this project.

I have developed my conceptual framework for this case study with action-research methodology based on the procedures described in two texts: *All You Need to Know about Action Research* 2nd edition by Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, and *The Action Research Guidebook* by Richard Sagor. Sagor's text has provided me with a clear set of instructions regarding the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of an action research project, including planning, designing, and implementing a theory of action, research questions, and a data collection plan. In contrast, McNiff and Whitehead's text helped me connect my professional values as an educator to my personal values regarding power, social justice, and equality through its description of action research as a "morally committed" values-driven practice.[184] The methods of my study were as follows:

- To protect participants, I could not know which of my students would participate in my study, so the College's Research and Ethics Board (REB) handled the initial consent process at the beginning of the January semester. Initial consent to contact forms were kept sealed until after I submitted final grades to the college.

- Throughout the semester, I kept a reflexive research journal and noted any relevant observations of my students, my practice, or deviations from my lesson plans. I sorted all observations into relevant student files.

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[183] Somekh, "Action Research," 4.

[184] Jean Mcniff and Jack Whitehead, *All You Need to Know About Action Research 2nd Ed*. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 28.

- I pre-taught my students how to read a graphic narrative, the historical context of the civil rights movement, and the life of John Lewis, the author of the autobiographical graphic narrative *March Book Two*.

- We read and discussed *March Book Two* in class.

- Students wrote three reflective journal entries on *March Book Two* and completed reflective self-assessments for each. I photocopied and filed each of these documents.

- I photocopied any final research essays that addressed issues related to power and oppression and sorted them into relevant student files.

- After final grades were submitted, I identified which students agreed to be contacted with the aid of the College's REB department. The REB immediately shredded any documents related to students who did not consent to participate in my research.

- I contacted and interviewed willing participating students in a classroom at the college, selected for privacy and participant confidentiality, but also close proximity to a security phone to address researcher safety concerns. Students signed final consent forms at this time, or if unwilling to return to the college, consented to participate in the study through email.

- I compiled all research artifacts (student journals and self-assessment sheets, observation notes, my reflexive research journal, all relevant lesson plans/attendance sheets, and interview transcripts) and coded and extracted qualitative themes. My multiple sources of data allowed me to corroborate and triangulate my evidence to ensure validity and reliability.

In accordance with the action-research guidelines in Sagor's *The Action Research Guidebook,*[185] I developed a theory of action for this case study that reflects these methods. The development of this theory of action involved the creation of a visual representation of my theory, which I have included here:
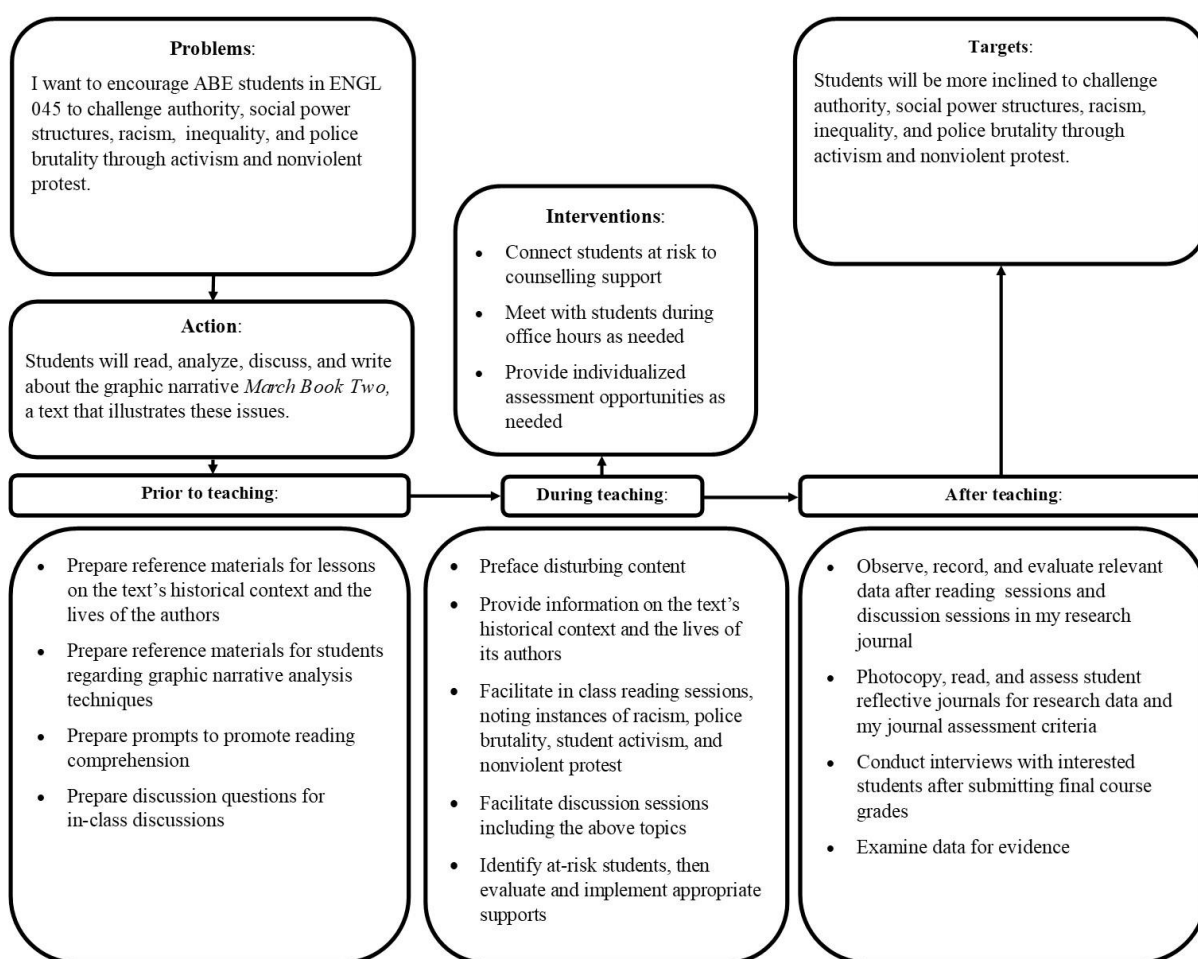

Fig. 3 My theory of action

While my goals for this study included addressing oppressive social issues in society, I must also be clear that the expected outcomes of my study include my personal benefit. Successful completion of my study and this thesis will result in my being awarded a Master's

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[185] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 56.

of Arts Interdisciplinary degree from the University of Northern British Columbia, which

may result in increased teaching opportunities and job security at my place of employment:

the College of New Caledonia. In addition, the process of reflection involved in the various

stages of research for this study has led me to identify ways that I unintentionally have

perpetuated racism in my classes as a teacher, and that I cannot claim to have completed the

development of my anti-racist identity. Going forward, I am excited to discuss these issues

with my students, a practice which is supported by the conclusions of a study implemented

by Shelly Zion, Carrie D. Allen and Christina Jean.[186]

As suggested earlier, the case study I have completed is significant as it addresses

some interdisciplinary gaps in the scholarly consensus regarding the use of graphic narratives

and the implementation of theories of critical pedagogy and transformative learning in ABE

classrooms in northern BC. My research will also inform scholars interested in action

research, educational theory, and the use of educational practice to influence social values

and policy.[187] In *Pedagogy of Indignation*, a text that collected Freire's last writings and

recognizes how anger is a natural response to identifying oppression, Freire describes how

"one of the conditions for continuing the struggle against a dominating power is to recognize

ourselves as losing the fight, but not as defeated." He continues,

> For this reason, all liberating educational practice – which values the exercise of will, of decision, of resistance, of choice, the role of emotions, of feelings, of desires, of limits, the importance of historic awareness, of an ethical human presence in the world, and the understanding of history as possibility and never as determination – is substantively hopeful, and for this very reason, produces hope.[188]

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[186] Zion, Allen, and Jean, "Enacting a Critical Pedagogy," 927; according to the results of their project measuring the effects of participating in a critical civics curriculum action research project on the sociopolitical development of educators, comfort discussing issues of race and oppression with students was the most commonly developed skill.

[187] Mcniff and Whitehead, *All You Need to Know*, 246.

[188] Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, 23-24.

On the topic of adult education, Freire emphasizes the importance of promoting the discussion and mutability of reality and history and the ability of people to change the world.[189] It is in this spirit of hope, and the belief that the world does not have to be the way it is, that I humbly feel my efforts and my project are grounded. While its effects will be likely minor, this study and what I and my students have learned from it will help me fulfill my desire to make the world a more just place.

Chapter Summary

Synthesizing the research on transformative learning theory, critical pedagogy, and graphic narratives suggests that not only does transformative learning have the potential to change individuals and societies in an emancipatory fashion through a process akin to Freire's conscientization, this change can be fostered through the study of graphic narratives. Of course, conscientization or transformative learning is never guaranteed to occur in any classroom. However, when it does occur, the results can be dramatic. For example, Daloz's paper "Transformative Learning for the Common Good" examines the life and transformation of Nelson Mandela, a hero of the twentieth century, in order to demonstrate the importance of fostering connections with disparate groups of people with the intention of promoting transformations in social justice.[190] In Chapter Two, my theoretical framework and review of the scholarly literature establishes the links between these theories in order to situate my study with this goal in mind.

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[189] Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, 79.
[190] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 106-109.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

This interdisciplinary research project required me to critique case studies and literature from four domains: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action research involving adult students. In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework I have developed for this research and a literature review, where I examine three case studies from each of these domains.

Theoretical Framework

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of my project, my approach requires a synthesis of concepts from the disciplines of history, English, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning theory. This synthesis of concepts forms my theoretical framework.

As my proposal involves the study of history, my thesis is shaped by how the data and findings of my study promote historical understanding, historical consciousness, and historical agency while utilizing the theory of critical pedagogy. Recognizing that these terms are contested, I have adopted these definitions. First, Christian Laville defines historical understanding as "the process of searching for meaning in a given text, of attempting to understand the author's intentions and presuppositions,"[191] while Branko Mitrović suggests that historical understanding is the concept that historical documents require being interpreted "in relation to their historical context, which presumably differs from the historian's own by [their] conceptual frameworks, fundamental beliefs, or reasoning

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[191] Christian Laville, "Historical Consciousness and Historical Education: What to Expect from the First for the Second," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 173.

principles."[192] Furthermore, W. B. Gallie emphasizes narrative as an important component to historical understanding. He suggests that possessing historical understanding as the ability to follow a story means being aware of differing possibilities,[193] differentiating between individual and institutional narratives,[194] and recognizing the actions of historical actors without moral judgement.[195] By avoiding either placing blame or admiration on historical figures, historians and students of history are practicing historical empathy, a form of historical perspective-taking connected to historical understanding. Historical empathy requires students to distinguish between the conditions of the present and the past and how these differences affected the decisions and principles of past peoples, shaping the events that occurred.[196]

Second, Peter Seixas provides a definition of historical consciousness as, "the understanding that things change in very fundamental ways – that worlds are made and unmade –, that ordinary people play a role in historical change, and that orientating oneself in relation to historical change is a central task for all people."[197] Mallihai Tambyah provides a similar definition for historical consciousness: "the individual and collective cognitive awareness of links between the past and the present which help inform the future."[198] Finally, J. Spencer Clark provides a definition of historical agency as,

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[192] Branko Mitrović, "Historical Understanding and Historical Interpretation as Contextualization," *History and Theory* 54 (October 2015): 311.

[193] W.B. Gallie, "The Historical Understanding," *History and Theory* 2 (1963): 157.

[194] Gallie, "The Historical Understanding," 175-176.

[195] Gallie, "The Historical Understanding," 183.

[196] Kaya Yilmaz, "Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools," *The History Teacher* 40 3 (May 2007): 331.

[197] Peter Seixas, "Historical Agency as a Problem for Researchers in History Education," *Antíteses* 5 10 (2012): 547.

[198] Mallihai Tambyah, "Teaching for 'Historical Understanding': What Knowledge(s) do Teachers Need to Teach History?" *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 42 5 (2017): 35.

> The relationship between structural forces that shape historical events and the ways people influence, shape, and are affected by these events. That is, human beings are autonomous agents with abilities to affect change, yet there are social structures that constrain and limit what individuals can do.[199]

These three terms help me present the contents of my case study in a manner reflective of current practices in the discipline of history.

The major theorists of critical pedagogy have always recognized the importance of history and the historicity of knowledge. Returning to the definitions of historical understanding and historical consciousness proposed earlier can clarify how these concepts are linked. Giroux suggests that new emancipatory curriculum must recognize the historical, social, and situational contexts it occupies and replaces. He suggests that curriculum is an "extension of historical consciousness ... [and should] be viewed as part of an ongoing development of complex, historically bound social conditions of formations," while not pretending to be value-free.[200] As suggested earlier, historical understanding requires an awareness of the nature of institutional narratives throughout history. In addition, Tambyah's definition of historical consciousness emphasizes the importance of how the past influences the present and thus the future. Furthermore, Gallie's suggestion that historical understanding means being aware that history did not unfold in a prescribed manner, mirrors one of Giroux's key arguments. Giroux suggests educational practices are historical constructions related to their unique contexts and thus did not form as an inevitable process but are instead open to change, a claim that encourages criticism of educational practice.[201] Darder argues that critical pedagogy requires history education to be a main focus in all levels of schooling.

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[199] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 493.
[200] Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals*, 19.
[201] Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals,* 129.

However, she cautions that this history education must not follow traditional methods examining the great men of history, but rather:

> Teachers should assist students in understanding history as a social process – a process that incorporates both the participation of social movements and the state, as well as the economic and cultural forces acting as significant determinants in society. Further, since historical events often conceal more than they reveal, a critical historical understanding is also closely predicated on deconstructing events, texts, and images of the past.[202]

Gramsci's work also has a strong reliance on history. As a Marxist, Gramsci focused his history on class issues, but he saw education as an important tool for combating folklore[203] and "common sense" that lead to contradictory consciousness. To support this goal, he suggested that education would lead to good sense through critical reflection or praxis where the contradictory and oppressive aspects of common sense and folklore would be examined and possibly rejected.[204] Freire agrees, suggesting that education for conscientization "combat[s] harmful myths and contradictions ... creat[ing] new knowledge to solve problems related to ... oppression."[205] This concept of critical consciousness must be tied to social action. Students should learn in social studies classes "not simply how the forces of social control work, but how they can be overcome."[206] Again, this suggestion parallels how historical consciousness requires recognizing that historical change is influenced by human actors. Finally, one of the earliest goals of historical consciousness was to connect people to the past through moral narratives. Seixas writes that historical thinking

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[202] Darder, *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, 78-79.
[203] Gramsci saw "folklore" as "a living 'conception of the world and life' which stands in implicit opposition to 'official' conceptions of the world," and as something that needed to be critiqued in order to connect members of the lower classes in Italy in dialogue with intellectual elites; see Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 37.
[204] Schwarzmantel, *Gramsci's Prison Notebooks,* 218-219.
[205] Quoted in Carleton, "Drawn to Change," 161.
[206] Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals*, 36.

has an ethical dimension where "judgements are unavoidable."[207] Indeed, he suggests that

historians must "accept the burden of normative judgements: different forms of historical

consciousness are supported by and, in turn, promote different social and political

arrangements. Promoting an open, democratic, and just society implies certain value

commitments in respect to historical consciousness."[208]

Additionally, there are multiple overlaps between critical pedagogy and the concepts

of historical understanding and agency. Seixas suggests that a commonality among historical

scholars regarding historical agency is that many recognize the "possibility of action" even if

it is separate from individuals.[209] While an important component of critical pedagogy

involves individuals' engaging in critical reflection to develop conscientization, Parkhouse

suggests that students benefit from being presented with examples of organized, collective

resistance in order to combat the individualism present in regressive hegemony and historical

education focused on important individuals.[210] Furthermore, in order to guide teacher

practices, Parkhouse illuminates student responses to critical pedagogy and adds to research

of critical pedagogy in social studies settings. She promotes explicit teaching of oppression

and resistance including encouraging students to take action. The results of her study suggest

that the students she observed demonstrated they had developed critical consciousness

related to racism and citizenship, but less so in relation to other dominant oppressive

ideologies like sexism, capitalism, and neocolonialism. She argues that critical instructors

will benefit their students by incorporating lessons on the intricacies of hegemony and the

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[207] Peter Seixas, "A Model of Historical Thinking," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49 6 (2017): 602.
[208] Peter Seixas, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 10-11.
[209] Seixas, "Historical Agency as a Problem," 547.
[210] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 152, 168.

social structures that oppress subaltern groups.[211] She also critiques the common practice of citizenship transmission in American social studies classes.[212] Citing Darder's call to develop critical historical understanding in students by deconstructing events, texts, and images of the past, Parkhouse argues that critical pedagogy aids learners in recognizing "that current inequalities are not inevitable and understand[ing] the social forces that have shaped these current conditions."[213]

 In her article "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry in History, Social Studies, and Civic Education," Angela Burmudez provides an additional link between the theory of critical pedagogy and the concept of historical understanding. She suggests that while history education and critical pedagogy (and moral education and critical thinking) are rarely combined, they are not incompatible.[214] For Burmudez, historical understanding provides "a reflective basis for values such as global awareness, pluralism, and respect for diversity, independent thinking, and openness to controversial issues."[215] She links Freire's problem-posing strategy to critical inquiry in history classes by proposing that Freire's strategy allows students to generate problematic questions and enables cycles of critical reflection on the connections among past, present, personal, and collective experiences. To Burmudez, problem-posing activities prevent students from closing their minds prematurely.[216] She also connects the concept of multi-perspectivity to both definitions of historical understanding

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[211] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 192.

[212] To Parkhouse, "citizenship transmission" involves persuading students that the nation's current systems of democracy and capitalism are ideal, which means that any unfortunate historical episodes such as slavery or displacement of Native Americans must have been an inevitable "price to pay for 'progress'"; see Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 23.

[213] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 23.

[214] Angela Bermudez, "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry in History, Social Studies, and Civic Education," *Revista De Estudios Sociales* 52 (April 2015): 104.

[215] Bermudez, "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry," 105.

[216] Bermudez, "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry," 107.

and the theory of critical pedagogy.[217] Finally, she submits that systemic thinking, the practice of deconstructing and reconstructing complex concepts and events, informs definitions of historical agency by connecting social issues to individual challenges. Doing so draws attention to one of the key ideas of critical pedagogy suggested above, that "current social arrangements are but one possibility, open to transformation."[218] Thus, even though my study occurs in an English ABE classroom, critical pedagogy's reliance on historical thinking demonstrates the need for its inclusion in my thesis.

Likewise, the development of historical understanding is not automatically disrupted when an instructor's ideological beliefs influence his or her teaching practice, as in critical pedagogy. However, there are examples of radical historians whose emancipatory goals override the practice of academic history. Perhaps the most famous example is Howard Zinn, the author of *A People's History of the United States,* who like Giroux and other critical pedagogues advocates that any use of historical information is ideological, in contrast to the historians noted earlier who claim that history teachers should "present material in class without any commentary."[219] According to Zinn, emphasizing any aspect of history supports some form of economic, political, radical, or social interest, often resulting in the legitimization of violence and murder "in the name of progress."[220] Zinn's explicit goal for his history is to reject American imperialism and aid in the development of historical consciousness of social and economic conflicts in American history, conflicts that often demonstrate the vast inequalities between the powerful and oppressed.[221] Similar to Gramsci

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[217] Bermudez, "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry," 109.
[218] Bermudez, "Four Tools for Critical Inquiry," 112.
[219] Sarah A. Mathews, "Using Howard Zinn's *A People's History of American Empire* to Develop a Critical Stance: Possibilities and Pitfalls," *History Teacher* 48 2 (February 2015): 239-240.
[220] Zinn, *A People's History*, 8-9.
[221] Zinn, *A People's History*, 686.

and Giroux, Zinn suggests that history education is not neutral, but commonly utilized to promote regressive policies and concepts. However, he has been criticized for a lack of academic rigour, exemplified in his oversimplification of American history.[222] Other minor criticisms of Zinn's most famous text suggest that it is written not for experienced historians of American history but for those unaware of many of the conflicts Zinn describes.[223] For this reason, Zinn often ignores the academic conventions of the discipline of history, including its "taboo on presentism."[224]

As discussed earlier, presentism and usable history are controversial topics in the discipline of history, but they can be addressed by history educators. Zinn's radical history is just one example of radical history that attempts to use the past to influence the present. Nevertheless, not all uses of history and presentism are negative. Lynn Fendler suggests that presentism is unavoidable and notes that generating a usable past does not always supplant the disciplinary standards of history.[225] Indeed, she suggests the use of a strategic presentism that allows for the denaturalization of history and the ability to challenge the narratives of dominant groups in society.[226] In fact, like Giroux and other critical pedagogues, some historians have attacked the concept of a neutral, objective history as hypocrisy. Schonberger suggests that accusations of presentism were levelled against progressive historians during the cold war as "a political weapon" that obscured the presentism of the conservative historians who supported the status quo.[227] In order to ensure that students can adjust their

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[222] Phelps, "Howard Zinn, Philosopher."

[223] Robert Cohen, "The Second Worst History Book in Print?: Rethinking *A People's History of the United States*," *Reviews in American History* 42 2 (June 2014): 198.

[224] Cohen, "The Second Worst," 201.

[225] Lynn Fendler, "The Upside of Presentism," *Paedagogica Historica* 44 6 (2008): 687.

[226] Fendler, "Upside of Presentism," 686-687.

[227] Schonberger, "Purposes and Ends," 458.

perceptions of history and are not unduly influenced by the concerns of the present, history

educators can encourage the development of historical empathy through contextualization.[228]

In this way, educators can connect the study of historical understanding and consciousness to

the emancipatory, ideological goals of critical pedagogy. For Zinn, the focus of his histories

on the oppression of subaltern groups in America is a limitation but not a failure for critical

pedagogues in the discipline of history.

   Critical pedagogy can also be linked to transformative learning theory. While

transformative learning theory is not explicitly ideological like critical pedagogy, Stephen

Brookfield argues that it is necessary for transformative educators to contemplate the same

emancipatory struggle to resist the hegemony of dominant groups through consideration of

critical theory. While Mezirow suggests that individual transformations lead to social ones,[229]

Brookfield suggests the opposite. He states, "If the self is understood as politically sculpted,

then learning to transform oneself is a political project requiring political transformation.

Hence, any research on transformative learning must, in critical theory's terms, attend to the

ways dominant ideology fosters or constrains what people consider to be transformative."[230]

To Brookfield, the goals of critical theory in education are to expose how oppressive

ideologies like capitalism manage to perpetuate themselves through consent; to identify and

challenge instruments of oppression; and to reject individualism and form new communal

values.[231] These goals are transformative, and Brookfield argues the processes described by

transformative learning theory can be applied to broader society.[232] Paralleling these

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[228] Huijgen, "Promoting Historical Contextualization," 2.
[229] Quoted in Merriam and Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning," 66.
[230] Stephen Brookfield, "Critical Theory and Transformational Learning," in Taylor, Cranton, and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, 131-132.
[231] Brookfield, "Critical Theory and Transformational," 138.
[232] Brookfield, "Critical Theory and Transformational," 143.

conclusions, Merriam and Kim cite studies that demonstrate how transformative experiences can be influenced by critical and social contexts.[233] However, they distinguish Freire's version of transformative learning from Brookfield and Mezirow's, noting that for Freire, "personal and social transformations are inseparable processes."[234] Thus, the emancipatory goals of critical theory can correspond to and be enabled by the suggested transformative learning process, and this can be further seen in the number of overlaps between transformative learning theory and critical pedagogy.

As previously stated, Freire was a strong influence on both Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Giroux's critical pedagogy. A key argument of this thesis is that Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas and the perspective transformations and actions they lead to can be clearly traced to Freire's idea of conscientization.[235] Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner summarize Freire's social-emancipatory philosophy as a sociocultural lens to view transformative learning. They describe the process of conscientization as beginning with dialogue that triggers learners slowly to realize how dominant forces affect their lives, which leads them to engage in praxis: "reflection and action on the world in order to transform it."[236] Furthermore, Hoggan, Mälkki and Finnegan describe Freire's collectivist focus and Mezirow's individualist focus as sharing "an ethical commitment to participatory democracy derived from Habermas and Dewey."[237] The importance Mezirow places on reflective discourse and action can be linked with these Freirean concepts of dialogue and praxis.[238]

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[233] Merriam and Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning," 59-60.
[234] Merriam and Kim, "Studying Transformative Learning," 66.
[235] Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John," 108.
[236] Quoted in Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 140-141.
[237] Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan, "Developing the Theory," 58.
[238] Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John," 108.

      To demonstrate the synthesis between the theories of historical understanding, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning theory that forms my theoretical framework for this interdisciplinary research, I have developed this visual schematization based on the research that I have cited in Chapter One and above:
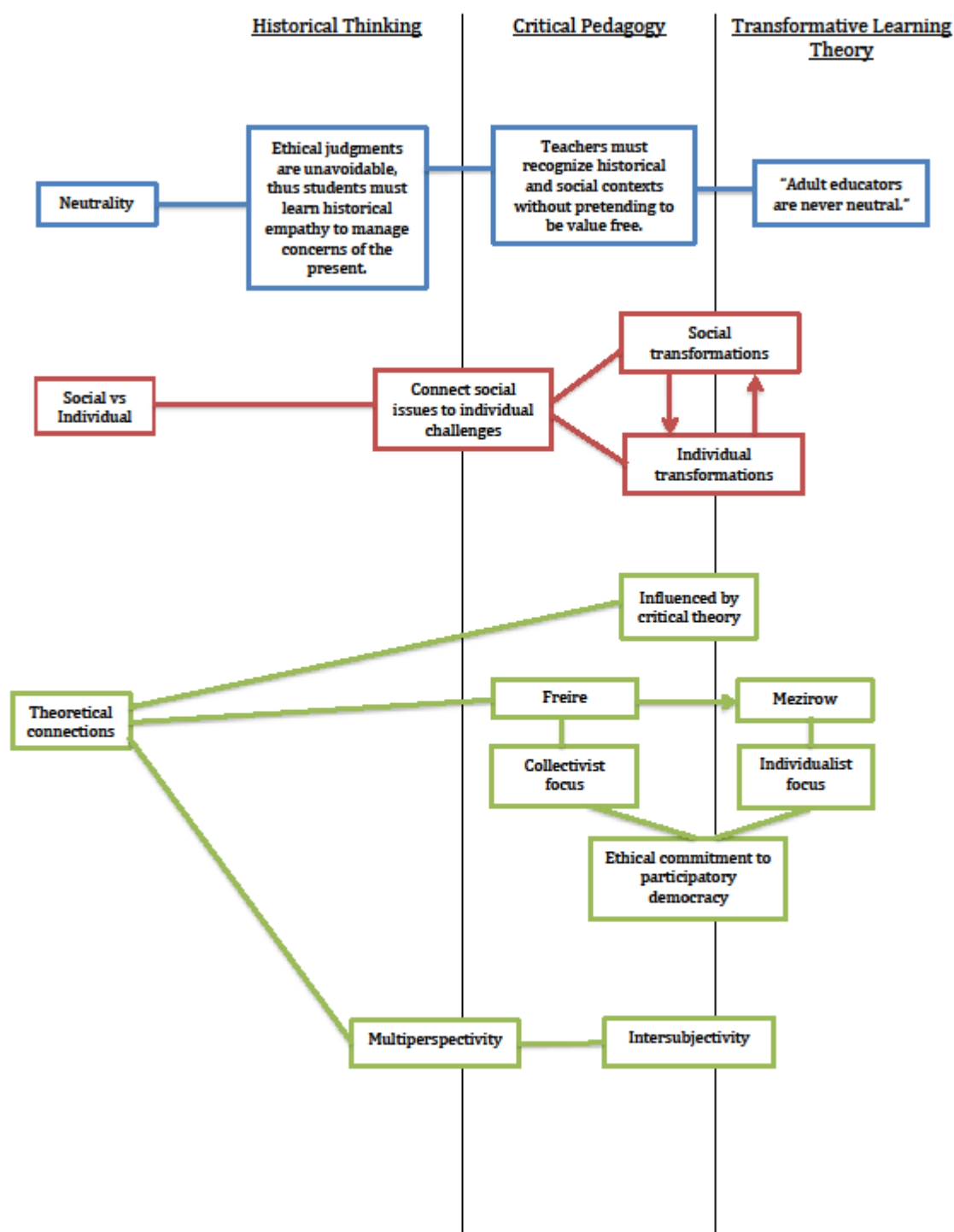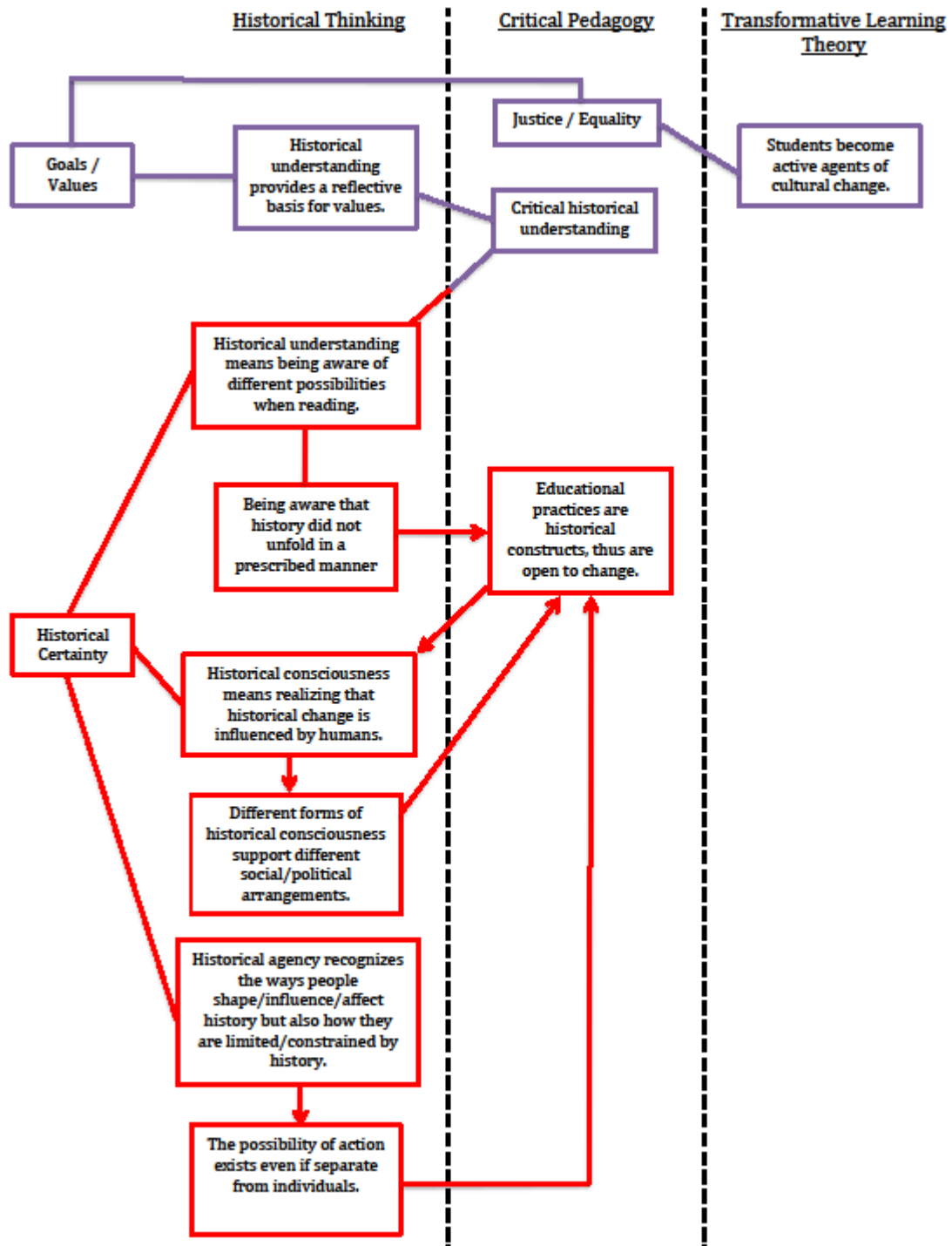
Fig. 4 Part one of my visual schematization

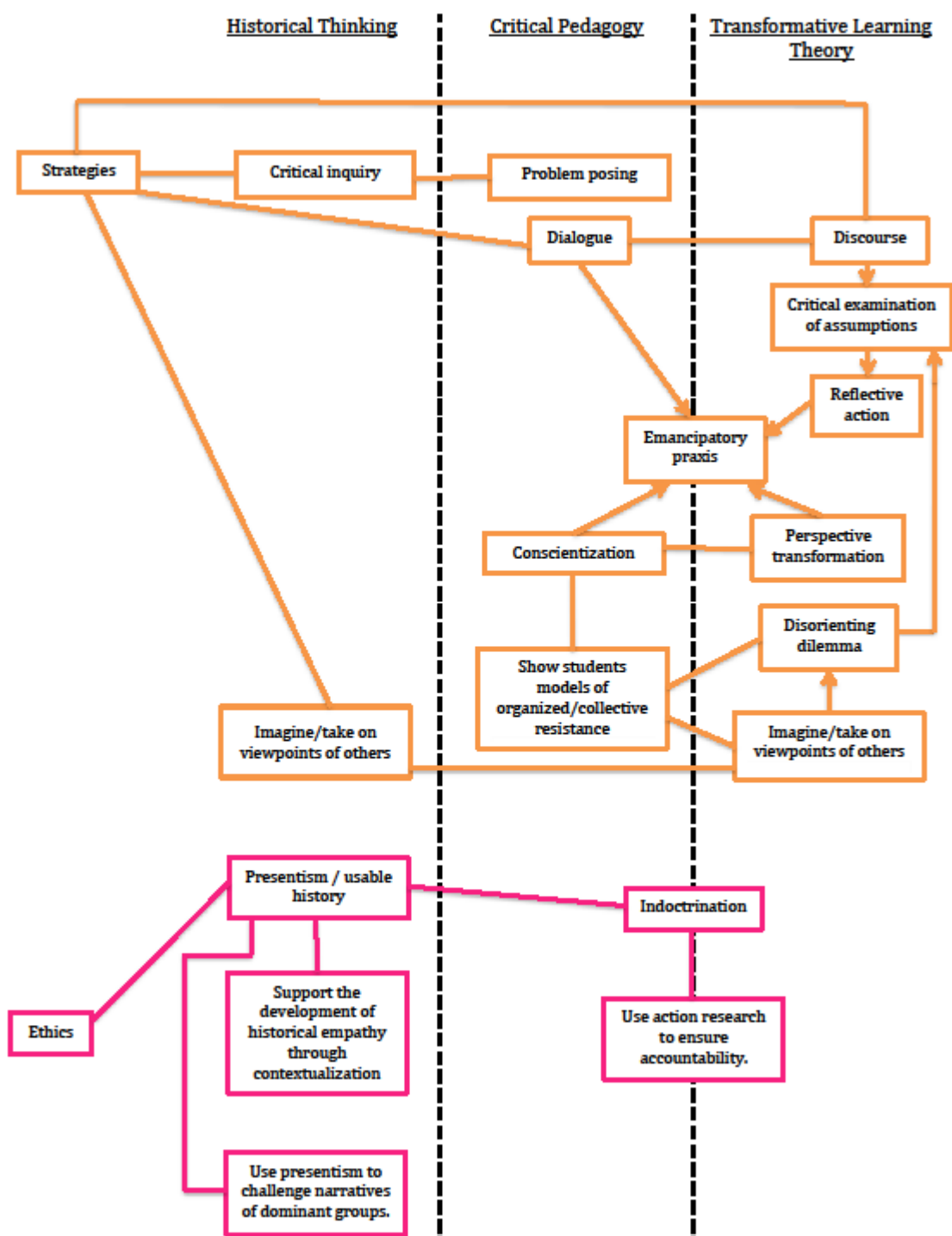Fig. 5 Part two of my visual schematization
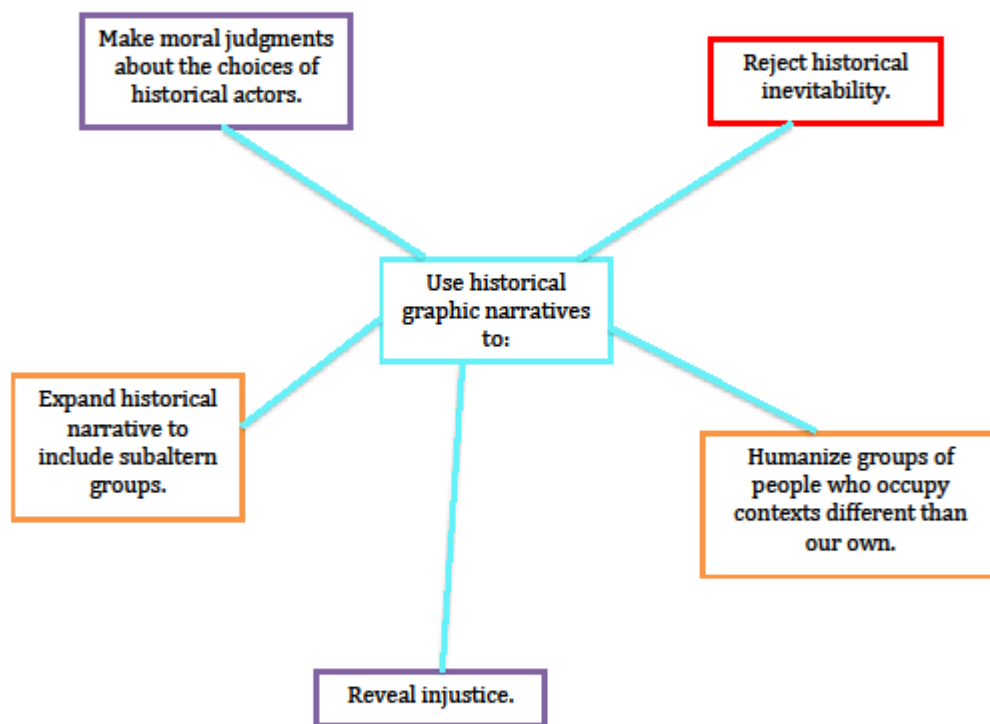
Fig. 6 Part three of my visual schematization

Fig. 7 Part four of my visual schematization

Literature Review

Rather than analyze each study individually, I have organized my literature review thematically. The first section addresses themes relating to teaching with graphic narratives. The second section addresses themes relating to the theory of critical pedagogy. The third section addresses themes relating to transformative learning theory. Finally, the last section addresses themes relating to action research involving adult learners.

Teaching with Graphic Narratives

The research studies I highlighted in this domain are William Boerman-Cornell's PhD dissertation "Learning to See History: A Content Analysis of the Affordances of Graphic Novels for High School Teaching," J. Spencer Clark's article "Encounters with Historical Agency: The Value of Nonfiction Graphic Novels in the Classroom," and Alex Scott Romagnoli's dissertation "Comics in the Classroom: A Pedagogical Exploration of College English Teachers Using Graphic Novels." Boerman-Cornell's dissertation uses a modified content-analysis approach including a multimodal case analysis and individual case studies of multiple historically based graphic narratives including both quantitative and qualitative assessments[239] to determine if graphic narratives are useful tools for teaching contextualization, sourcing, and corroboration skills to high-school history students.[240] Clark's article is a qualitative case study of 24 preservice history teachers and how they evaluated multiple graphic narratives as classroom resources in order to demonstrate the potential relevance of graphic narratives in history education. [241] Romagnoli's dissertation is

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[239] William Boerman-Cornell, "Learning to See History: A Content Analysis of the Affordances of Graphic Novels for High School Teaching," PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, 2012, *ERIC* (ED552105), 35-37.
[240] Boerman-Cornell, "Learning to See History," 8.
[241] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 491.

a modified cross-case analysis of how and why three post-secondary English instructors use graphic narratives in their classrooms.[242] While Boerman-Cornell's dissertation analyzes the content of selected graphic narratives in order to determine their usefulness to history teachers, both Clark and Romagnoli's studies involve research on human subjects and use similar methods to collect data, including analyzing student homework and one-on-one post-semester interviews. I chose these graphic-narrative-related studies including both English and history classes to represent the range of disciplines that my research will cover.

Other studies involving graphic narratives and education exist. Jie Y. Park's study "'He Didn't Add More Evidence': Using Historical Graphic Novels to Develop Language Learners' Disciplinary Literacy" connects historical graphic narratives to the development of historical literacy in high-school English language learners.[243] Ramzi Darwazeah's study "Migration Narratives: Using Graphic Novels in Teaching Social Studies" examines a grade nine classroom in Amman, Jordan, where several graphic narratives are used to teach a social studies unit on migration.[244] Another of Clark's studies, "'Your Credibility Could Be Shot': Preservice Teachers' Thinking about Nonfiction Graphic Novels, Curriculum Decision Making, and Professional Acceptance," describes how preservice teachers are reluctant to utilize graphic narratives in their high-school social studies courses despite recognizing the value of graphic narratives as resources.[245] Christian W. Chun's study "Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels for English-Language Learners: Teaching *Maus*" examines how the use

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[242] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 64-66.

[243] Jie Y. Park, "'He Didn't Add More Evidence': Using Historical Graphic Novels to Develop Language Learners' Disciplinary Literacy," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 60 1 (July 1, 2016): 35-43.

[244] Ramzi Darwazeah, "Migration Narratives: Using Graphic Novels in Teaching Social Studies," Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2016, https://dspace.library.uvic.ca//handle/1828/7549.

[245] J. Spencer Clark, "'Your Credibility Could Be Shot': Preservice Teachers' Thinking about Nonfiction Graphic Novels, Curriculum Decision Making, and Professional Acceptance," *Social Studies* 104 1 (January 1, 2013): 38-45.

of the graphic narrative *Maus* affected language learning in a high-school English as a second language (ESL) class.[246] Alicia C. Decker and Mauricio Castro's study "Teaching History with Comic Books: A Case Study of Violence, War, and the Graphic Novel" describes the use of a graphic narrative (*The Unknown Soldier*) to teach students about war and violence in an undergraduate history classroom.[247] Finally, Meghan Hawkins, Katie Lopez, and Richard L. Hughes' study "John Lewis's *March Book Two*: Assessing the Impact of a Graphic Novel on Teaching the Civil Rights Movement" examines how use of the graphic narrative *March* impacted student learning in two US high-school history classrooms.[248] These studies demonstrate that the body of literature regarding the use of graphic narratives as teaching tools is robust.

The first theme I synthesized relates to a lack of consensus in academia regarding how comics are identified. Boerman-Cornell differentiates between nonfiction history texts and historical novels by using the term graphic history for nonfiction historical works, and graphic novel for more traditional comic texts.[249] Clark attempts to clarify how nonfiction texts in graphic form are often labeled "novels," but continues to use the term throughout his article.[250] Romagnoli indicates that the difference between comics and graphic novels involves text length.[251] Indeed, in the wider literature, Sean Carleton has analyzed the debate, with some critics preferring the arguably less loaded term "comic." [252] As previously discussed, I prefer to use the term "graphic narrative," suggested by Hillary Chute, as it does

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[246] Chun, "Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels," 144-153.

[247] Alicia C. Decker, and Mauricio Castro, "Teaching History with Comic Books: A Case Study of Violence, War, and the Graphic Novel." *The History Teacher* 2 (2012): 169-188.

[248] Meghan Hawkins, Katie Lopez, and Richard L. Hughes, "John Lewis's *March Book Two*: Assessing the Impact of a Graphic Novel on Teaching the Civil Rights Movement." *Social Education* 80 3 (May 2016): 151-156.

[249] Boerman-Cornell "Learning to See History," 21.

[250] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 491-492.

[251] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 16.

[252] Carleton, "Drawn to Change," 151.

not present the contradiction inherent in discussing nonfiction comics as "novels."[253] Tied to this debate on labels in the scholarly consensus is a controversy in comics studies involving the privileging of nonfiction or "art comics" over the much larger genre of superhero comics in academia. Addressing this issue, Romagnoli cites critic Douglas Wolk at multiple points throughout his thesis, as the teachers participating in his study make reference to the controversy in discussions about personal taste in graphic narratives.[254]

A second major theme synthesized from these studies suggests that reading graphic narratives requires specific skills from both instructors and students, but also fosters the development of skills. Romagnoli concludes that using graphic narratives requires also teaching the necessary literacy skills needed to understand multimodal texts.[255] His study also suggests a controversy in the literature. While Romagnoli's literature review contained information that suggests the visual nature of graphic narratives engages students in ways that traditional texts do not, the results of his study argue that the participating instructors were more passionate about the graphic narratives than were the students being taught.[256] Boerman-Cornell and Clark's studies examining the teaching of history with graphic narratives also recognized the efficacy of graphic narratives but implied that teaching history with graphic narratives requires different skills than teaching literature does. Clark cites how historical understanding and historical agency can be developed through the use of historical narratives.[257] As I noted in Chapter One, the participants of Clark's study documented multiple examples of historical agency in specific graphic narratives. His participants

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[253] Chute, "Comics as Literature?" 452-453.
[254] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 69.
[255] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 173.
[256] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 195.
[257] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 490, 492.

identified how Black soldiers faced injustice in the Spanish-American war, how opposition to the Second World War developed in America, how the 9/11 terrorist attacks were not unavoidable, and how the actions of Malcolm X and Ché Guevara were informed by the events and contexts of their lives.[258] In addition, Boerman-Cornell's dissertation indicates that the graphic narratives he analyzed contained many ways for students to develop skills contextualizing, sourcing, and corroborating historical narratives.[259] Indeed, both Clark and Boerman-Cornell suggest that the split visual-textual medium of graphic narratives provides opportunities for historical learning that traditional texts cannot. Clark suggests that the cues present in graphic narratives, the dialogue and nonverbal responses, "personalize and problematize ... historical events."[260] Furthermore, Boerman notes that partitioning comic panels with gutters allows for clear contrasts to be drawn in multiple accounts of the same event, encouraging the practice of corroboration and sourcing.[261]

To summarize, the three studies examined here indicate that graphic narratives are legitimate resources for teaching in multiple disciplines when student learning is properly scaffolded. But these studies have several limitations. For example, while Clark's study concluded that the selected graphic narratives could be appropriate resources in both secondary and postsecondary history courses, Boerman-Cornell's study focuses only on using graphic narratives to teach high-school history. In addition, while Clark and Romagnoli's studies involved human subjects, Boerman-Cornell's study is purely theoretical. Conversely, because Clark's study involved the students he was teaching, not only was he

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[258] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 495-500.
[259] Boerman-Cornell, "Learning to See History," 111.
[260] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 503.
[261] Boerman-Cornell, "Learning to See History," 115-116; however, Boerman-Cornell notes that the graphic histories examined in his dissertation did not present complete versions of each account, suggesting students "contrast traditional text accounts once they master the idea."

not able to manage the demographics of his participants, he acknowledges that in contexts where the classroom teacher has a dual role as researcher, there is a risk that the data provided by students can be prejudiced. To address this concern, Clark managed participant confidentiality by remaining unaware who had consented to participate until after the course was over, and then conducting interviews. But he does not address how this solution addresses the ethical risk inherent in the student/participant-teacher/researcher power imbalance.[262] Finally, Romagnoli notes how qualitative case studies, including his study, are usually not generalizable, due to factors including geography, demographics, curriculum, or other sociocultural concerns.[263] He also notes that his study was limited by the small number of participants (three) and focused on the teachers' perspectives of graphic narratives, not the students'.[264] Like Clark, I was not able to manage the demographics of my participants, and my methods describe how I used a similar system to control participant confidentiality. I argue that this system where the researcher/teacher does not know which student plans to participate in the study also manages the unavoidable concerns regarding the power imbalance, by ensuring the student has the ability to complete the course without punishment for not participating in the study. Finally, like Romagnoli's, my study is limited in size, with only seven participants. However, through my thorough data-collection methods, I have been able to develop qualitatively rich descriptions of the events and results of my study.

While these studies inform the portion of my research question dedicated to graphic narratives, they do not explicitly address how instructors can engage in critical discussions of power and oppression. Romagnoli, in particular, notes that the goal of his study does not

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[262] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 494-495.
[263] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 66.
[264] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 190-191.

"aim to critically instigate change on the part of college English teachers, nor did it look to transform the researcher through participation."[265] However, developing the skills of historical understanding and agency through the portrayal of injustice in graphic narratives (as described above) can be linked to the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, as I will describe in the next section of this review.

Critical Pedagogy

The research studies I highlighted in this domain are Joanna Joseph Jeyaraj and Tony Harland's article "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy in ELT: The Problems of Indoctrination and Risk"; Hillary Parkhouse's PhD dissertation "Critical Pedagogy in U.S. History Classrooms: Conscientization and Contradictory Consciousness"; and Alfred A. Z. Siha's PhD dissertation "'Imagining the Moon': Critical Pedagogy, Discourse Tensions, and the Adult Basic Writing Classroom." Jeyaraj and Harland's article is a qualitative study of how critical pedagogy is viewed and used by 13 English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers in post-secondary institutions worldwide to discover what barriers critical pedagogues face.[266] Parkhouse's dissertation is a post-critical ethnography examining the critical pedagogy of two American high-school history teachers[267] and their students' perspectives to demonstrate that critical pedagogy can support instructional practices.[268] Finally, Siha's dissertation is a qualitative critical action-research study utilizing a social constructivist method with 21 students in an adult basic writing class[269] that examines how critical pedagogy can

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[265] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 67.
[266] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 590.
[267] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 35.
[268] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 2.
[269] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 85.

simultaneously help students develop Freire's concept of critical consciousness and improve their writing skills.[270] Both Jeyaraj / Harland and Parkhouse's studies prioritize responding to criticism of the theory of critical pedagogy, and both Parkhouse and Siha's studies include discussions of effective critical-pedagogy teaching strategies for discipline-specific learning outcomes. I chose to focus on these three studies because they represent the range of issues in the scholarly literature relating to research involving teaching with critical pedagogy.

Certainly, there are other recent studies involving the theory of critical pedagogy that I did not highlight. For example, Tova Yaakoby's study "Teachers' Reflections on the Perceptions of Oppression and Liberation in Neo-Marxist Critical Pedagogies" examined how ten teachers working in northern Israel used a reflective dialogue with each other in order to influence concepts of capitalist oppression and liberation in the theory of critical pedagogy.[271] In addition, Shelley Zion, Carrie D. Allen, and Christina Jean's study "Enacting a Critical Pedagogy, Influencing Teachers' Sociopolitical Development" evaluated how participating in a critical civic-inquiry project affected the sociopolitical growth of five instructors.[272] Despite my interest in the results of these studies and the reflective practices they encourage, these studies do not share the same links to my other research domains.

The first theme present in the three studies I highlight involves defining critical pedagogy: a valid, justice-based theory involving challenging oppression through critique of mainstream notions of teaching and learning. Jeyaraj and Harland trace the origin of the term critical pedagogy to Henry Giroux in the early 1980s and emphasize how the theory centres on teaching students to "oppose and reorganize social forms that are exploitive and

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[270] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 11.

[271] Tova Yaakoby, "Teachers' Reflections on the Perceptions of Oppression and Liberation in Neo-Marxist Critical Pedagogies," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 45 10 (October 2013): 992-1004.

[272] Zion, Allen, and Jean, "Enacting a Critical Pedagogy," 914-933.

damaging."[273] Parkhouse studies how key concepts in critical theory, such as hegemony and contradictory consciousness, were developed by Antonio Gramsci, influencing her analysis and the field itself.[274] She also quotes Paulo Freire and connects his concept of "naming the world" to understanding how social hierarchies are preserved through control.[275] In addition, Siha scrutinizes the assumptions of critical pedagogy: that education is inherently politically biased and traditional transmission-based (or banking) education is a form of oppression.[276]

A second theme emerging from both Parkhouse and Siha's dissertations was the discussion of practical critical pedagogical strategies teachers can use in their classrooms. The history teachers participating in Parkhouse's dissertation utilized two general strategies in their classrooms: identifying historical or contemporary oppression and the forces that resist it; and encouraging dissention, nonconformity, and self-critique.[277] Both teachers in Parkhouse's study promoted dialogue in their classrooms, defying traditional "banking" methods of education, with the students using their resulting autonomy to engage in meaningful critique of course content and developing "a complicated understanding of history."[278] By helping their students understand how issues have multiple, complex viewpoints, the teachers in Parkhouse's study supported the development of empathy, an essential component of critical pedagogy.[279]

Furthermore, Siha's study also notes the importance of dialogue as a teaching strategy, but examines a context where the instructor has adapted methods of instruction and

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[273] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 588.
[274] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 10-12.
[275] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 83.
[276] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 36-38.
[277] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 185-187.
[278] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 81.
[279] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 139-140.

course content to address student concerns and involve students in the decision-making process for course planning and instruction. In addition, students moved toward educational independence through leadership roles in group discussions.[280] Siha also explored how supplemental course readings fostered critique of dominant educational discourses through the development of critical consciousness. He identifies how the practice of critical pedagogy must encourage students to question education's inherent political biases and then question the answers they are provided.[281] His research suggests that while students did not consciously link the stories he selected to the course goal of improving their writing skills, their responses imply that the stories enabled them to connect their prior knowledge to the critique of dominant discourses in adult basic writing courses.[282]

Additionally, both studies identified critical pedagogues' encouraging their students to act. Parkhouse notes how one of her participating teachers encouraged her students to vote in order to effect change in American society.[283] Parkhouse also includes data suggesting that the students who participated in the study were becoming politically engaged and understood the value of collective action.[284] Siha made addressing local problems an important part of his writing course by developing a major writing assignment around researching the cause and effect of a personal or local problem with his students.[285]

The third theme I synthesized from these studies is how various educational disciplines experience and challenge oppression differently. As discussed above, the studies represent the use of critical pedagogy in English language teaching (ELT), history, and ABE

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[280] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 164.
[281] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 41.
[282] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 174-175.
[283] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 163.
[284] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 167-168.
[285] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 266.

courses. Jeyaraj and Harland note that ELT instructors often avoid controversy in course content in order to promote language learning as a mechanical procedure. In practice, this often means glamorizing Anglo culture and neglects the prior experiences of students.[286] In contrast, Parkhouse connects the study of history to critical pedagogy when she quotes Darder: "since historical events often conceal more than they reveal, a critical historical understanding is also closely predicated on deconstructing events, texts, and images of the past."[287] She also links students' developing an understanding of the historicity of knowledge and human agency to the possibility of influencing social transformation.[288] Additionally, Siha notes how ABE writing classrooms are commonly sites of oppression, where grammar drills and sentence skills are used to isolate students from their home cultures and impose "a system of beliefs and values that in turn reproduces existing social structures."[289] Moreover, Siha identifies the issues facing ABE students in terms of access to education in a cultural and social system that oppresses them by forcing them to assimilate into "dominant cultures and language conventions."[290] To address these issues, Siha's research suggests students need to be provided with a more holistic understanding of writing that considers their lived experiences and interests.[291]

The fourth theme I synthesized from these studies addresses the criticisms levelled at the theory and practice of critical pedagogy. First, I will address criticisms of the theory itself contained in these studies. The fear of indoctrination and abuse of power concerned all post-

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[286] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 589.

[287] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 23.

[288] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 177.

[289] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 28; Siha suggests this replacement of language "positions the culture of the 'other' as something to flee from, rather than to learn from, and it perpetuates the myth that being illiterate in the dominant culture is equivalent to being cognitively deficient."

[290] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 13, 225.

[291] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 57.

secondary instructors participating in Jeyaraj and Harland's study. In order to address this concern, some of these critical pedagogues attempted to conceal their political opinions. However, Jeyaraj and Harland suggest that instead instructors should use self and peer critique to remain accountable and avoid indoctrinating political dogma.[292] In her literature review, Parkhouse cites Elizabeth Ellsworth's critique of the "rationalist assumptions" in critical theory, which also suggested the politically ambiguous term "critical" is used to shield theory from more explicit terms: "anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, anti-ableist, anti-classist and so forth."[293] Conversely, Siha identifies two common critiques of theoretical critical pedagogy. The first is a feminist critique, which notes Freire's notions of oppression and humanization do not reflect the diversity of the human condition.[294] In this discussion, Siha also refers to Ellsworth's analysis and her suggestion that the theory of critical pedagogy is excessively rational and avoids contextual factors in education. Echoing Jeyaraj and Harland's concern, the second critique of critical pedagogical theory that Siha notes is ideological: opposing oppressive ideologies in education may simply substitute other oppressive ideologies in their place.[295]

These studies also contained more practical challenges of critical pedagogy. Multiple participants in Jeyaraj and Harland's study taught in countries under authoritarian rule and were in danger of imprisonment, torture, or death if their teaching practices were widely known. Tangentially, Jeyaraj and Harland discuss the dangers students face for engaging in

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[292] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 591-592.
[293] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 28; Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?" 300; Ellsworth critiques the assumptions, objectives and instructional methods of critical pedagogy based on her experiences teaching a class with the goal of addressing the racism at her post-secondary institution.
[294] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 44-45.
[295] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 46-47; Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?" 314.

criticism of the totalitarian regimes they live under.[296] Parkhouse notes that critical

pedagogical teaching strategies depend on local contexts, and thus cannot be prescriptive.[297]

She cites a source that suggests classroom discussion can reinforce repressive concepts in

students' minds.[298] In addition, she recognizes that despite generally demonstrating that they

had developed forms of critical consciousness, the participating students of her study

continued to exhibit contradictory consciousness, or oppressive ideologies regarding sexism

and other concepts.[299] Finally, Parkhouse does not deny that the results of her research

suggest that aiding the development of sociopolitical mindfulness in students does not always

result in the students' taking action to resist oppression.[300] She argues, "the power of

dominant ideologies and their pervasiveness in all aspects of students' lives outside of these

classrooms (e.g., families, church, popular culture, other classes) are probably too strong for

one or two years with a critical teacher to transform students into agents of social change."[301]

To summarize, the three highlighted studies indicate that critical pedagogy is an

ideologically based educational theory devoted to social justice through enabling students to

liberate themselves from oppressive ideologies, but practitioners of critical pedagogy must

recognize discipline-specific challenges and the importance of learners' individual

frameworks in order to avoid further oppression in the forms of indoctrination and

transmission-based teaching practices. In addition, these studies did have certain limitations.

Jeyaraj and Harland's study relies solely on interviews for its data. Jeyaraj and Harland do

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[296] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 593-594.

[297] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 29.

[298] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 74.

[299] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 175.

[300] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 151; certainly, interventions in a single course cannot be expected to transform students completely. As I suggested in Chapter One, transformations are often not the results of a single disorienting dilemma, but an accumulation of multiple events; see Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 86.

[301] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 188.

acknowledge that depending on participants' self-reported experiences affects the validity of

their conclusions, but they do not attempt to corroborate their data in other ways.[302]

Parkhouse concedes that her study contains several limitations: her participating students and

teachers are not substantially involved in the analysis of data and Parkhouse's observations

of students are limited to the school setting. In addition, Parkhouse only interviewed one

third of the students she observed. Parkhouse notes that she had developed friendships with

the teachers she observed prior to beginning the study and recognizes that this could be

problematic. However, she argues that postcritical ethnography suggests "all knowledge

production is subjective, and critical self-reflexivity on how this subjectivity figures into the

work may paint a more complex, nuanced picture of their teaching than would a purportedly

objective and unreflexive analysis."[303] Siha notes that his study is limited by its short one-

semester time frame, and by the fact that only six students were still participating in the class

at the end of the semester. Like Romagnoli, Siha accepts that his qualitative research may not

be generalizable. Additionally, Siha's study has the same unavoidable ethical concern as

Clark's: data can be compromised when a researcher also occupies the position of teacher of

the participants he or she is studying.[304] Siha addressed the issue in the same manner as

Clark, by not knowing which of his students were participating in the study until the semester

was over and final grades were submitted.[305] As my research consisted of a case study of a

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[302] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 590.

[303] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 55-57; While I recognize the possible ethical conflict, I do not dispute Parkhouse's response to the ethical issue of having friendships with her research subjects. My epistemological and ontological positions agree with her argument. In addition, I like to think that I developed a form of friendship with my research participants during our class time together, as I do with many of my students.

[304] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 19.

[305] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 92-93.

small, one-semester class where I was both researcher and instructor, it contains several of these inherent limitations, but I managed them in the same manner as did Clark and Siha.

These studies concern the portion of my research question regarding the theory of critical pedagogy, but they illustrate that there is a gap in the literature. While Siha's study included a discussion of the readings he utilized to foster critique of dominant educational discourses as I discussed earlier, none was a graphic narrative. Additionally, in the conclusion to her study, Parkhouse calls for more research on different approaches to teaching with critical pedagogy.[306] By examining critical education with graphic narratives, my study will inform this need. Finally, as I discussed earlier, peer and self-critique is one method that permits critical pedagogues to remain accountable and avoid indoctrinating their students. To do this, Jeyaraj and Harland suggest teachers engage in action research,[307] the final domain of my literature review. However, as I demonstrated in Chapter One, critical pedagogy shares many links with transformative learning theory, the domain I discuss next.

Transformative Learning Theory

The research studies I highlighted in this domain are Chad Hoggan and Patricia Cranton's article "Promoting Transformative Learning Through Reading Fiction"; Kathleen P. King and Lisa Wright's article "New Perspectives on Gains in the ABE Classroom: Transformational Learning Results Considered"; and Andrew Alan Robinson and Leah Levac's article "Transformative Learning in Developing as an Engaged Global Citizen." Hoggan and Cranton's qualitative analysis of a diverse group of 131 adult learners

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[306] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 199-200; Carleton, "Drawn to Change," suggests comics can be connected to the development of critical consciousness, but does not test this suggestion in a case study involving human learners.
[307] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 592.

(undergraduate and graduate students) suggests that reading fiction can enable transformative learning.[308] King and Wright's qualitative, mixed-method, descriptive research study of a diverse group of 19 ABE students argues that ABE students experience perspective transformations.[309] Finally, Robinson and Levac's study explores whether 24 students in a university course on civic engagement and global citizenship experienced transformations when learning and reflecting on privilege and oppression.[310] Each study explores the process of transformative learning, including the role of critical self-reflection and the expansion of transformative learning theory beyond the focus on rational and cognitive domains suggested by Mezirow. Nonetheless, I chose these studies to highlight the connections between my other research domains.

I considered highlighting several other studies that involved the theory of transformative learning. Sharon Reynold and Jerry Johnson's study "Pillars of Support: A Functional Asset-Based Framework for ABE Learners" examines how individual, family, institutional, and community factors influenced the success of 60 model ABE students, leading to transformations.[311] Julie Willans and Karen Seary's study "'I'm Not Stupid After All' – Changing Perceptions of Self as a Tool for Transformation," proposes that ABE learners who are provided opportunities to engage in critical reflection of their learning

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[308] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 6.

[309] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 105; I recognize that being published in 2003 is a concern for the validity of my literature review. However, I believe that the focus and results of this study are valuable to the themes in the transformative learning literature that I want to highlight.

[310] Andrew Alan Robinson, and Leah Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing as an Engaged Global Citizen," *Journal of Transformative Education* 16 2 (2018): 109.

[311] Sharon Reynolds, and Jerry Johnson, "Pillars of Support: A Functional Asset-Based Framework for ABE Learners," *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education* 3 3 (Fall 2014): 39; student participants in this study were selected for their exemplary "academic achievement, hours of program attendance, or community service."

abilities undergo positive transformations.[312] Sarah McNicol's study "'We Can Do It Imaginatively First!': Creating a Magic Circle in a Radical Community Education Setting," analyzes how creating comics aided the exploration of political themes in a community workshop of eight participants.[313] Finally, Elizabeth Tisdell's article is a cross-case analysis linking transformative learning theory and critical media literacy with the results of three studies of adult learners and media in post-secondary education.[314] Like the articles I highlighted previously, these articles link transformative learning theory to my research domains and provide redundancy for the themes that I discovered during this literature review.

The first theme I synthesized from my highlighted articles illustrates the processes of transformative learning theory and how it has evolved over time. All three studies reference the transformative processes designed by Mezirow.[315] Hoggan and Cranton's study suggests that fiction can catalyze disorienting dilemmas in readers.[316] Additionally, their study found that some readers saw some fictional characters as role models to emulate or reject.[317] King and Wright's study was similar. Their study noted how transformative learning describes "the process whereby adult learners reconsider their values, beliefs, and assumptions," and how perspective transformations, "entail fundamental reframing of how individuals understand and conceptualize their worlds."[318] Finally, Robinson and Levac's study connects

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[312] Julie Willans, and Karen Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All' – Changing Perceptions of Self as a Tool for Transformation," *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 47 3 (November 2007): 433-434; this study, along with Reynold and Johnson's, corroborate the themes I extracted from King and Wright's study.

[313] Sarah McNicol, "'We Can Do It Imaginatively First!': Creating a Magic Circle in a Radical Community Education Setting," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 49 1 (2017): 47.

[314] Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy," 54-55.

[315] For an additional summary of the influence of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, see Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John," 120.

[316] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 20.

[317] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 21.

[318] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 102.

the pedagogy of the privileged[319] to transformative learning theory, and how their students' habits of mind were affected by studying about privilege and social justice.[320] Robinson and Levac's article cites Mezirow's description of the process of transformative learning through a process of reframing, discourse, and reflective action.[321] Finally, Robinson and Levac also frame their results as changes in four of Mezirow's proposed habits of mind: philosophical, psychological, epistemological, and moral-ethical.[322] However, despite this reliance on Mezirow's work, these studies also reflect the evolution of the theory of transformative learning.

As I suggested in Chapter One, while transformative learning was originally described by Mezirow as a cognitive and rational process, the scholarly consensus now recognizes that transformations can also be emotional and non-rational events. All of these studies reflect this shift. Hoggan and Cranton identify that transformative learning has been associated with various research paradigms, including Jungian psychology, depth psychology, ecology, and arts-based perspectives.[323] The results of their study also indicate that fiction helps students make "emotional and sympathetic connections" with the characters and possibilities suggested in these stories.[324] In addition, Hoggan and Cranton argue that reading fiction supports an emotional distancing that provides opportunities to question "deeply engrained ways of thinking and being."[325] These connections and questions

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[319] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 115; Robinson and Levac describe the pedagogy of the privileged as "a process through which privileged students come to understand and come to terms with their own privileged social position." See also Ann Curry-Stevens, "New Forms of Transformative Education: Pedagogy for the Privileged," *Journal of Transformative Education* 5 1 (January 2007): 33-58.
[320] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 110.
[321] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 112-113.
[322] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 118-121.
[323] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 10.
[324] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 20.
[325] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 21.

illuminate unconsidered viewpoints that may lead to critical reflection and transformations. Furthermore, King and Wright note that in regards to the evolution of transformative learning, "the growing theoretical and research literature, however, has begun to explore affective, spiritual, ethical, and collaborative dimensions of the theory as well."[326] Finally, while Robinson and Levac accept that rationality is an important component of transformative learning theory, they maintain that rationality is not the only component for adjusting frames of reference. Indeed, they identify ways that the appeal to rationality has historically been used to oppress various groups, such as women, slaves, and Indigenous peoples.[327]

The potential of transformations to be emancipatory is the second theme that I extracted from these studies. While Mezirow originally subsumed Habermas's emancipatory learning domain into his theoretical process of transformation, as noted in Chapter One, he recognized that students could become active agents of cultural change.[328] All three studies reflect this link between transformative learning and change. The results of Hoggan and Cranton's study suggest that exploring new ideas as a result of reading fiction led to a desire for change in some students.[329] While Hoggan and Cranton do not explicitly label these changes in their participants, the student responses demonstrate progressive changes. For example, one student describes how reading the story caused him or her to reflect on and modify previous views on race mixing and homosexuality.[330] Conversely, ABE students in King and Wright's study experienced transformations in confidence and empowerment.[331]

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[326] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 102.
[327] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 112.
[328] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 78, 92.
[329] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 22.
[330] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 18-19.
[331] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 108-109.

These led to instrumental and emancipatory learning that allowed them to "identify needs and proceed in meeting them for themselves."[332] Finally, Robinson and Levac's study proposes that transformative learning theory contains multiple strands, one of which focuses on "the social context of learning and draws heavily upon critical theory."[333] Robinson and Levac argue that due to their social justice orientations, improving frames of reference is tied to an "emphasis on illuminating and addressing oppressive social structures."[334] The results of the study suggest that through discussion and written assignments involving privilege and oppression, students adjusted their perspectives regarding global citizenship, dominant cultures, and social change.[335] The connections among these studies support my synthesis in my theoretical framework of critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory.

A subtheme I found in the transformative learning literature encompasses the challenges ABE students face, as well as their capacity for transformation. But because Hoggan and Cranton's and Robinson and Levac's studies do not address ABE learners, I have included my analysis of Reynolds and Johnson's study as well as Willans and Seary's study instead. King and Wright argue that many ABE students often lack academic self-esteem due to prior negative academic experiences.[336] Echoing this claim, Reynolds and Johnson note how ABE students often have multiple issues that restrict their access and success in education. [337] Willans and Seary concur, stating, "When adult learners return to formal education after a period of absence, coping with change is a constant and often

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[332] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 110-111.
[333] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 114.
[334] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 112.
[335] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 122-123.
[336] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 109.
[337] Reynolds and Johnson, "Pillars of Support," 36.

omnipresent challenge."[338] Like King and Wright, Willans and Seary recognize that ABE

learners are also often hindered by self-doubt, as well as "past and present educational,

social, or cultural circumstances."[339] The results of Willans and Seary's study suggest that

many ABE students hold negative assumptions about their own intelligence's affecting their

educational success and ability to express themselves.[340] To address these issues, King and

Wright suggest that classes need to be "safe, supportive, collaborative and learner

centered,"[341] while Reynolds and Johnson encourage teachers to promote student

development of self-awareness by giving students opportunities for reflection on their

strengths.[342]

However, despite the minor controversy in the transformative learning literature

suggested in Chapter One, these studies involving ABE students all recognize their potential

capacity for transformations. As suggested earlier, King and Wright found that ABE learners

experienced changes in their confidence and sense of empowerment regarding their academic

ability.[343] Similarly, students in Reynolds and Johnson's study "spoke positively about their

futures, expressing a growing sense of optimism and hope. Their narratives suggest that

"choices exist for them now, where none existed previously."[344] Correspondingly, Willans

and Seary argue that participating in ABE leads many adult students to modify their self-

perceptions as part of a transformation in perspective.[345] Indeed, the results of all three of

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[338] Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 433.

[339] Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 438.

[340] Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 447-448.

[341] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 117.

[342] Reynolds and Johnson, "Pillars of Support," 46.

[343] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 108-109.

[344] Reynolds and Johnson, "Pillars of Support," 41.

[345] Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 434-435.

these studies conclude that participating in ABE classes led some students to experience transformations.[346]

A summary of these themes suggests that transformative learning theory is evolving and emancipatory but can also be used to describe the shifts that occur in ABE students. But I would also like to note the limitations of my highlighted studies. Like Jeyaraj and Harland, Hoggan and Cranton recognize the limits of self-reported data extracted from interviews.[347] They also acknowledge how their study on the transformative effects of fictional literature was affected by the content of the story they studied with their students.[348] While this was their goal, the implication is that teachers must carefully evaluate which fiction to utilize in their classes, as I have done in Chapter One for Lewis and Aydin's *March Book Two*. Hoggan and Cranton also acknowledge that reading one story may not lead to transformations.[349] Robinson and Levac note a common issue for all three of these highlighted studies: that the researchers are seeing "a snapshot" of each student's progress in the transformative process.[350] As their study was limited to one semester, Robinson and Levac found there was little confirmation that students had completed the process of transformation by engaging in reflective action.[351] Similarly, my research occurred over a period comparable to Robinson and Levac's. Having the same expectations, I attempted to reflect this concern in the data gathering and analysis tools I will describe in Chapter Three.

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[346] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 121; Reynolds and Johnson, "Pillars of Support," 46; Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 450.

[347] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 13.

[348] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 12-14.

[349] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 9.

[350] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 109.

[351] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 123; all three of my highlighted studies shared this limitation. Only Robinson and Levac addressed it.

Nevertheless, the most important limitation in these studies involves the issues of power described earlier when researchers also occupy the role of teacher for their participants. Hoggan and Cranton acknowledge the issue, and attempted to minimize it by asking students to submit their written reflections anonymously.[352] King and Wright identify the ethical dangers in transformative learning theory for their students, but do not identify how they managed their study to avoid them.[353] Finally, while Robinson and Levac note that their study was reviewed and approved by the research and ethics board of the university at which it occurred, they do not explain the participant protections they utilized.[354] As I suggested earlier, like the studies of Clark and Siha, my study managed these concerns by ensuring participant anonymity throughout the duration of the course.

These studies also reflect a gap in the literature. While Hoggan and Cranton's research concludes that reading fiction can prompt transformative experiences in students, they do not discuss the potential of graphic narratives. Additionally, King and Wright call for further study of

> prototype teaching methods and materials that may be used in a variety of ABE settings to promote skills that prepare adults for experience in transformational learning … to assist in the professional development of adult literacy educators who may have little background in this theory and its application to their learners.

To facilitate this evolution in transformative theory and practice, King and Wright, like Jeyaraj and Harland, call for more teachers to participate in action research.[355]

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[352] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 14.

[353] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 119-120; as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, King and Wright also identify the danger regarding the "manufacture" of specific traits in learners, see King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 104.

[354] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 118.

[355] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 120; see also Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 592.

Action Research Involving Adult Learners

The research studies I highlighted in this domain are Phil Askham's article "Context and Identity: Exploring Adult Learners' Experiences of Higher Education"; Carrie Johnson, Vicky Duckworth, Cindi Apelbaum, and Marie McNamara's article "A Tale of Two Adult Learners: From Adult Basic Education to Degree Completion"; and Arch Chee Keen Wong's article "Moving From a Transmission to a Social Reform Teaching Perspective: Using Teacher's Action Research as Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education." Askham's study is a longitudinal action-research study with the goal of informing course review at his institution and identifying appropriate ways to support students by analyzing the experiences of 22 students in a two-year undergraduate program.[356] Johnson et al.'s article examines an action-research study designed to gain in-depth knowledge from the dialogue between two successful ABE students.[357] Finally, Wong describes her study as an action-research project intended to enable self-reflexivity as she modified her educational practices as an instructor of 15 students in a graduate theological program to "disrupt students' developing understanding of the subject matter by engaging them in the teaching and learning process."[358] While all of these studies utilize action-research methodologies and include adult learners as participants, I have chosen these studies because they represent the different features of action-research methodologies that are deployed in academic research.

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[356] Phil Askham, "Context and Identity: Exploring Adult Learners' Experiences of Higher Education," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 32 1 (February 1, 2008): 85.

[357] Carrie Johnson, Vicky Duckworth, Cindi Apelbaum, and Marie McNamara, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners: From Adult Basic Education to Degree Completion," *NADE Digest* 5 2 (September 1, 2010): 58-59.

[358] Arch Chee Keen Wong, "Moving from a Transmission to a Social Reform Teaching Perspective: Using Teachers' Action Research as Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education," *Canadian Journal of Action Research* 15 3 (January 1, 2014): 49.

I have examined other studies that have utilized action-research methodologies. For example, Nathalis Guy Wamba's study "Developing an Alternative Epistemology of Practice: Teachers' Action Research as Critical Pedagogy," describes how Wamba and his students in a post-secondary teacher administration program collaborated in the construction of participatory learning objectives and related challenges.[359] Additionally, Luis Sebasti n Villacañas de Castro's study "Meta-Action Research with Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study," is an analysis of how Villacañas de Castro and his 50 students in a participatory action-research study evaluated the benefits of engaging in action research, including how action research encourages reflexivity.[360] Similar to Clark and Siha, Wamba and Villacañas de Castro are both researcher and instructor. However, Wamba and Villacañas de Castro's studies do not share other synergies with my other research domains.

The first theme I synthesized from my highlighted articles defines the broad nature of action-research methodology. Askham describes how action research follows cycles of planning, action, observation, and review, and how it parallels the way many educators describe their own practice.[361] Similarly, Wong identifies action research as a three-part reflective process: look, think, and act.[362] Citing Freire, Johnson et al. identify how participatory action research has developed as a version of action research increasingly connected to "social transformation" and "consciousness raising."[363] However, other descriptions of action-research methodology do not necessarily agree with this definition.

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[359] Nathalis Guy Wamba, "Developing an Alternative Epistemology of Practice: Teachers' Action Research as Critical Pedagogy," *Action Research* 9 2 (June 2011): 162-178.
[360] Luis Sebastián Villacañas de Castro, "Meta-Action Research with Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study," *Educational Action Research* 22 4 (2014): 534-551.
[361] Askham, "Context and Identity," 85.
[362] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 52-53.
[363] Johnson et al., "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 58.

The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods suggests that critical action research emerged as a research methodology in the 1980s under the influence of Stephan Kemmis and Wilf Carr as a way for researchers to encourage resistance to oppressive ideologies in professional organizations, including educational institutions. However, Kemmis and Carr also noted that technical or practical action research could be used as a tool for reflective researchers to pursue professional development without promoting emancipatory goals.[364] In further contrast, the encyclopedia suggests that participatory action research is not consistently defined throughout the scholarly consensus and should be considered a form of critical action research where research participants have a large amount of control over the comprehensive research process.[365] One crucial connection Wong makes is to link Freire's process for teaching and learning (name, reflect critically, and act) to her spiral of action research.[366] While Wong's study is the only one in this domain that explicitly links critical pedagogy to action research, as I mentioned above, Johnson et al. cite Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, an important text in the development of critical pedagogical theory.

A second theme that I synthesized from these studies, also found in the literature on transformative learning theory, is that mature students often face unique challenges as they return to their education as adults. Askham's study suggests that students find adapting to academic culture at post-secondary institutions strange and threatening.[367] In addition,

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[364] Somekh, "Action Research," 4; for further examples of action research as a "morally committed," values driven practice, see Mcniff and Whitehead *All You Need to Know* 28; Boog, "The Emancipatory Character," 428; Kinsler, "The Utility of Educational Action Research," 172-173; as I noted in Chapter One, Kinsler argues action research has been subverted and is not effective as emancipatory action as it has been in the past.

[365] Steve Jordan, "Participatory Action Research (PAR)," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* edited by Lisa M. Given, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008): 2, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n311.

[366] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 52.

[367] Askham, "Context and Identity," 90.

Askham suggests adult learners often suffer anxiety during their return to school surrounding

their perceived personal limitations, prior educational experiences, and the length of time

spent out of school.[368] Johnson et al.'s study elaborates on this point by recognizing that

students returning to ABE programs often suffer from poverty and have negative educational

histories, both of which contribute to low self-esteem.[369] The results of the study suggest that

teachers have to help students "unlearn messages from their past" in order to overcome these

negative internal expectations concerning their learning potential.[370] Moreover, Wong notes

that students returning to school are often hampered from learning new concepts that conflict

with their prior views.[371] To address these issues, educational theorist and critic bell hooks

suggests developing a feeling of community in classrooms, and ensuring that every student is

given opportunities to have his or her voice heard during class.[372]

A third theme I synthesized from these studies is that action-research methodologies

have inherent ethical issues when the researcher holds an additional position of power, such

as teacher, over the participants in the study. To address these ethical issues, researcher-

teachers must make continuous, informed consent[373] and participant confidentiality

priorities.[374] But these concerns are not always addressed in the manner that Clark and Siha

utilized in their studies. Of the three major studies that I am evaluating in this domain,

Wong's is the only one where the researcher held this dual role. To address this concern,

Wong gathered the majority of her data from her personal observations rather than artifacts

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[368] Askham, "Context and Identity," 92-93.

[369] Johnson et al, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 58.

[370] Johnson et al, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 64.

[371] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 48-49.

[372] Hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 36-40.

[373] Banegas and Villacañas de Castro, "A Look at Ethical Issues," 60-61.

[374] Banegas and Villacañas de Castro, "A Look at Ethical Issues," 63; as I suggested in Chapter One, some critics suggests that this dual role impacts student learning negatively, as in Nolen and Putten, "Action Research in Education,"402.

or testimonials from students. But in order to evaluate the effect of her modifications upon her teaching practices, she held a focus-group interview where students could freely discuss the project.[375] In an endnote to her study, Wong recognizes that the process of gathering data from her own students is "problematic" but suggests, "extreme care has been taken to minimize invalidity and maximize validity by way of the methodology and research design so that there is confidence and authenticity to the collected data."[376] Clark and Siha's method of giving students the ability to present the appearance of participation while not actually permitting the use of their data is the clearest way to avoid this ethical power dilemma.[377]

The final theme I have synthesized suggests that participating in action research benefits both teachers and students. Askham's article suggests that the data collected in classroom-based action research can be used to improve the courses and programs being taught by highlighting areas where change is needed. But Askham also concludes by noting how participation in action research encourages both teachers and students to become more reflective learners, a goal that may make future education easier.[378] Johnson et al.'s article suggests that the collaborative study drew the participating teachers' attention to the impact of their actions on their students and the need to reinforce the positive aspects of their students' lives and behaviors. Additionally, the student participants became more confident and assertive after reflecting on what they had achieved as successful ABE students.[379] Thus, by providing teachers with an opportunity to improve their practice, action research can help improve their working conditions as well as the learning outcomes of their students.[380]

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[375] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 55.
[376] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 61.
[377] For a more detailed analysis of this strategy, see Nolen and Putten, "Action Research in Education," 405.
[378] Askham, "Context and Identity," 90.
[379] Johnson et al, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 65.
[380] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 4-5.

Summarizing these studies suggests that while using action-research methodologies may introduce ethical obstacles to research, action research is commonly practised by teachers to facilitate research that addresses the challenges both inside and outside the classroom. However, these studies do contain meaningful limitations. Unlike Wong, Clark, and Siha, Askham does not address the researcher's position in his study, ignoring the ethical questions raised earlier. Johnson et al.'s study does not corroborate the data extracted from the student online dialogue, raising questions of validity. Furthermore, Wong's study relies on her observations and transcripts from a mid-semester focus group, signifying potential ethical conflicts in her data. In addition, she notes that the consent form her students signed indicated that the research ethics board of her institution had approved the project,[381] a practice prohibited at the University of Northern British Columbia because of the potential to influence prospective participants and subvert the informed consent process. My study addresses all of these issues by triangulation of data from multiple sources and careful adherence to ethical procedures. Certainly, my study has attempted to minimize all the limitations and ethical concerns presented in each of my four domains.

Chapter Summary

To conclude, a review of relevant literature demonstrates that graphic narratives can be utilized as effective classroom resources in a variety of disciplines, including history and English classrooms with adult learners. In addition, critical pedagogy is an educational theory devoted to promoting positive change in society by enabling students to develop critical awareness of social injustices in the hope they will take action. Transformative learning

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[381] Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 55.

theory describes a process that explains how the perspectives of adult learners change. Graphic narratives such as *March Book Two* can be used to combine these concepts, by providing students with opportunities to learn the historical foundations of current conditions and how activists in the past have struggled for social change.[382] Moreover, action research is a commonly used research methodology when instructors want to measure how changes to their instructional practice affect their students. Action research produces the most valid results when researchers minimize ethical power issues. However, when working with adult learners, care must be taken in order to address the anxiety that accompanies students returning to the classroom. This caution also applies to the application of transformative or critical pedagogical practices, in order to avoid further indoctrination of students. Additionally, these qualitative studies also demonstrated common methods of data gathering, with the teachers of the most inclusive studies able to corroborate their results through classroom observations, self-reflection, student-created artifacts, and post-semester interviews. My study utilizes these practices and contributes to this existing literature by extending the critical pedagogy of history into an ABE English classroom, and examines how historically based nonfiction graphic narratives can be effective tools to aid students as they transform and develop critical consciousness. My study addresses a gap in the scholarly consensus and provides instructors with a testimony of an exciting new tool to use in their critical practice. My next chapter describes the methods of this study.

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[382] Hawkins, Lopez, and Hughes, "John Lewis's *March Book Two,*" 156.

Chapter Three: Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I introduced the four domains that my case study covers: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action-research methodologies involving adult students. Additionally, I described how my theoretical framework synthesizes research involving historical thinking with critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory, while my literature review summarized themes I extracted from a variety of case studies comprising my four domains. This chapter of my thesis describes the methods I utilized in my case study itself. As I noted previously, my study is a bounded action-research case study based on a theory of action I developed to inform my research question. The study examined the changes in student affect[383] that occurred as my ABE English 045 class read, discussed, and wrote about *March Book Two* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. Qualitative data extracted from daily research observations and reflections, student work, and post-semester interviews were analyzed through a coding process.

Setting

This study took place in an ABE English 045 class at the College of New Caledonia (CNC) in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada during the January – April 2018 semester. ABE programs in British Columbia provide "access to courses and skills training ranging from basic literacy through to provincial level and adult secondary-school

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[383] Popham, "All About Assessment/Assessing Student Affect," 85; as I noted in Chapter One, Popham describes student affect as, "the attitudes, interests, and values that students exhibit and acquire in school."

completion."[384] As a public community college instituted in 1969, with six campuses located in central British Columbia, CNC serves approximately 5000 students in a wide variety of programs each year.[385] While the various CNC campuses overlap with 21 different First Nations communities, the Prince George campus is located in the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation.[386]

For the 15 week semester, our class occupied a single classroom containing tables and chairs to seat approximately 22 students. The class was scheduled for five days a week, from 8:30 am to 10:00 am each day. In order to facilitate dialogue among students, we arranged the desks in our class in a "u" shape facing a whiteboard and computer projector screen at the front of the classroom. The walls of the classroom were decorated with posters created by past students as well as a series of graphic works created by the Graphic History Collective titled "Remember, Resist, Redraw" that depict "alternative perspectives on well-known historical events, and … histories of Indigenous peoples, women, workers, and the oppressed that are often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream historical accounts."[387] Post-semester interviews were held in a different classroom, selected for privacy and participant confidentiality, but also close proximity to a security phone in order to address researcher safety concerns.

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[384] Government of British Columbia, "Adult Basic Education," 6; this document also includes a timeline of brief highlights in the history of ABE in the public BC education system on pages 7-9.

[385] College of New Caledonia, *2016-2020 Strategic Plan – Promoting Student Success* (2016), 3. http://www.cnc.bc.ca/Exploring/Services/Administration/Our_CNC_Strategic_Priorities/Resources_and_Templates.htm; CNC's Education Plan, released in 2017, notes that CNC served 7876 students in the 2016-2017 year; see College of New Caledonia, *Education Plan 2017-2020*, 7.

[386] College of New Caledonia, *2016-2020 Strategic Plan – Promoting Student Success*, 4.

[387] Graphic History Collective, "Remember, Resist, Redraw: A Radical History Poster Project," 2018, http://graphichistorycollective.com/projects/remember-resist-redraw.

Sample

As in some of the studies analyzed in my literature review, my research participants were all drawn from the class in which the study occurred. Accordingly, I had no control over who participated in my study. While 20 students were registered in the course through the semester, the number of students in the class varied as students withdrew or entered the course late. Of the 10 students who completed reading and discussing *March Book Two*, seven students agreed to participate in my research. These students are broadly representative of the diversity in ABE classrooms at CNC. Of these seven students, two were female and five were male. However, as the most recent statistics of ABE learners in British Columbia suggest that 41 percent are male and 58 percent female, female ABE students are therefore underrepresented in my research.[388] Conversely, while I noted in Chapter One that 19 percent of ABE learners in post-secondary educational institutions identified as aboriginal, two of my seven student participants are Indigenous First Nations people. Thus, First Nations people are slightly overrepresented in my study. Nonetheless, as I suggested in Chapter One, my experience teaching ABE suggests that the percentage of First Nations ABE learners in Prince George is higher. Three of my participants were immigrants: one held Syrian-Armenian heritage, one was from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and one participant was from the USA. Two final participants had been born in Canada. All students were adults, with a wide range of ages: two having recently exited high school, one in his late twenties, two in their thirties, and two students in their forties and fifties. All of these students were categorized as domestic students and thus did not have to pay tuition.[389]

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[388] Government of British Columbia, "ABE Student Enrolment Infographic."

[389] As I noted in Chapter One, for a brief history of how the BC Liberal provincial government in 2014 began to charge non-international students tuition for ABE courses until this policy was reversed by the new NDP provincial government in 2017, see Suzanne Smythe, "Lifting Tuition Fees for Adult Basic Education is Just the

As one of the goals of action research is to improve performance through reflective practice, I feel it is valuable to include a short summary of my own researcher positionality.[390] At the time this study occurred, I was a 34 year old White, heterosexual, married, nondisabled, cisgender male with two children. I hold a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education from UNBC but am also proud to have graduated from CNC in 2003 with an Associate Arts diploma, and again in 2007 with an ACE TESOL certificate.[391] I have been teaching at the College of New Caledonia since 2007. Perhaps most importantly, as I suggest in Chapter One, I believe that education is not neutral, and that teachers have a responsibility to be change agents and resist oppressive hegemony in society. My research positionality was expressed in my research design through my selection of *March Book Two,* an anti-racist historical nonfiction graphic narrative, told from the perspective of an African-American male. My positionality as a White male also influenced how I designed my research to be sensitive to racial issues in my classroom. In addition, there may have been unintended effects of my researcher positionality. I certainly suspect that I benefitted from both White and male privilege during this research. Simply by having the ability to choose to engage in research challenging White supremacy yet not experience reprisals, I have benefitted from White privilege.[392] Accordingly, as a White male, I may have faced students more amenable to my anti-racist philosophies than if I had been a person of colour or a woman.

Beginning," *PolicyNote.ca*, last modified 19 August 2017, https://www.policynote.ca/lifting-tuition-fees-for-adult-basic-education-is-just-the-beginning/.

[390] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 4.

[391] My B.A. includes a major in history and a minor in English; I followed the elementary school teacher stream in my B.Ed.

[392] Extending Cory Collins definition of white privilege to male privilege, I define both as a "built in advantage, separate from one's level of income or effort." See Cory Collins, "What is White Privilege, Really?" *Teaching Tolerance* 60 (Fall 2018), https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really.

Materials

While the class occurred over a 15 week period, it would be cumbersome to examine

every document that I provided my students, despite the fact that I collected data from many

classroom activities tangential to the reading and discussion of *March Book Two*. Instead, in

Appendix A, I have attached the documents that were directly relevant to how we used

March Book Two in the classroom. These documents include the Reading Journal

Assignment and matching Self-Evaluation of Response Journals sheet that I gave to students

at the beginning of the semester; discussion questions for the three sections of the graphic

narrative; and two PowerPoint presentations titled, "How to Read a Comic," and "Lewis &

the Civil Rights Movement." The reading-journal assignment and matching self-evaluation

sheet were adapted from documents that I and other instructors had used in previous English

045 classes. As discussed in Chapter One and echoed in my literature review, I developed the

PowerPoint presentations in order to address the concerns in the scholarly literature regarding

the difficulty some students have with graphic narratives and to provide a historical context

to the contents of *March Book Two* itself. This practice demonstrates a portion of my

preparation for this project, or how I followed the cycle of action research described by

Sagor: clarifying vision and targets; articulating theory; implementing action and collecting

data; and reflecting on data and planning informed action.[393] I created the discussion

questions in order to give students the opportunity to demonstrate they had met some of the

required learning outcomes of an Advanced ABE English course, as required by the province

of British Columbia, while also informing my research questions.[394] Finally, the most

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[393] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 4.
[394] Government of British Columbia, "Adult Basic Education," 97-99; by reading and discussing *March Book Two*, students should be able to demonstrate that they were able to "recall and interpret information (identify subject/topic, main ideas, supporting ideas, and sequence); draw conclusions; respond to information;

important piece of instructional material was *March Book Two* itself. As I noted in Chapter One, it contrasts a period in John Lewis's life as a civil rights protester in the 1960s with the inauguration of Barack Obama in 2009. As with most of the texts used by the English ABE instructors at the Prince George campus of CNC, students were able to borrow copies at no charge from a class set of texts from the CNC library for the duration of the semester.[395]

Measurement Instruments

Synthesizing the suggested procedures for developing action-research projects in both Sagor and McNiff and Whitehead's texts led me to develop several reference documents for this research proposal, including my visual theory of action mentioned in Chapter One of my thesis. I also developed a Priority Pie chart demonstrating the percentages of class time I planned to use on different portions of my plan with a matching summary, a data collection plan with an accompanying Data Collection Matrix, and basic assessment criteria regarding measurement of the relationship between my actions and changes in student affect.

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demonstrate effective listening skills and respond appropriately to listener feedback; respond appropriately to thoughts, opinions, and work of others; critically evaluate, make inferences, and draw conclusions; identify, discuss, and evaluate literary elements (plot, theme, character, setting, conflict); establish co-operative working relationships with others; recognize and respect diversity and individual differences; [and] challenge assumptions constructively."

[395] Other texts we used include the short story, "Because My Father Always Said He Was The Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' At Woodstock," by Sherman Alexie, which, among other topics, describes the legacy that a violent act at an antiwar protest has on the son of a Native American protester. In addition, we read the play *Berlin Blues* by Drew Hayden Taylor, which humorously illustrates cultural appropriation and exploitation of Aboriginal culture on a fictional Ontario reserve. Prior to reading *March Book Two* in class, we read a short article by Joe Sacco titled, "The Underground War in Gaza," written in the form of a comic, which examines the bulldozing of Palestinian homes on the border between Palestine and Egypt. The final text we read is titled *An Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead* by Frank Meeink and Jody M. Roy. This text describes Meeink's life in and out of the American White-supremacist movement, his relationships with his alcoholic biological father and abusive stepfather, his time in jail, his drug addictions, and his experience being sexually abused while hitchhiking. Students were able to borrow copies of all these texts from the library for the semester.

This following chart, my "Data Collection Matrix," is a summary of data sources I obtained, and the data I planned to obtain from them:

Data Collection Matrix

Summarized Research Question and Sub-questions	What are the relationships between reading *March Book Two* and changes in student attitudes towards topics related to power, oppression and social justice?
Data Source	**Data Regarding**
Lesson plans with tracked changes	What I intended to do in class, and what we actually did in class.
Attendance sheets	Which students were present for each activity
Time Priority Tracking forms	The differences in predicted time used on each activity (in my Priority Pie) and actual time used in class
Photocopied reflective journal entries from each student	What students thought was interesting enough to write about
Photocopied student reflective journal self-assessment sheets	What students felt about their own responses
Reflexive researcher journal entries	What I observed daily regarding student behaviour, my notes on the research process including any deviations from my planned theory of action due to educational or ethical necessity, and any other information that could possibly be relevant
Other student work, including final research essays/in class presentations, and final exams	What students wanted to learn more about
Transcripts of post semester interviews	What students believed regarding any changes in their attitude related to my actions and the text

Of these data sources, the data I extracted from my photocopied student work, including but not limited to their reflective journal entries, reflexive researcher journal entries, and transcripts of post-semester interviews, were key in developing the themes I describe in Chapter Four. At the end of the semester, my files of student work included a completed student information page,[396] photocopies of seven to eight reflective journal

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[396] Students completed their information pages at the beginning of the semester, which included their names, preferred names, phone numbers or email addresses I could reach them at in case of emergency, brief summaries of their background in English classes, lists of skills that students could indicate they wished to

entries, photocopies of students' final research essays, photocopies of pages from their final exams, and copies of their consent-to-participate documents. I also included an email sent by one student, Richard,[397] describing a trip he took to South Carolina in the summer after the course ended. My students' reflective journal entries made up the bulk of their file, including three entries and reflections on *March Book Two* itself. As students wrote their journal entries, I encouraged them to respond to what they had read, demonstrate they had reflected on the story, record any questions they had about the text, and make connections between the texts they had read and other items, such as stories they had previously read or watched. For example, Cameron wrote that,

> *March Book Two* taught us how the movement did not put down the hand for [give up on] equality while Black and White people were joined together. If I was there that time, I would have to protest with the movement of the students. All of my life, I liked to rebel against things I did not agreeable [sic] with it.

Copies of the journal assignment were handed out to students and discussed on the third day of class. Students were marked on completing the assignment according to the requirements, often receiving grades of 100 percent. In cases where students merely summarized the story they had read or had not written enough to meet the requirements of the assignment, students received grades of 75 percent or 50 percent. Because I did not make sentence skills such as grammar or punctuation a requirement for success in this assignment, students were able to spend more of their cognitive ability on critical, reflective action.[398]

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improve over the semester, and space to write a brief introductory paragraph. I have included a blank student info page in Appendix A.

[397] In order to comply with ethical research practices, student names have been changed in order to respect their privacy and protect their identities; my participants are Cameron, Warren, Geoff, Erin, Rachel, Heather, and Richard.

[398] The learning outcomes of English 045 do include sentence skills such as grammar and punctuation, and I certainly assessed them in other assignments. For the reading journal, students were expected to "recall and interpret information; adjust content and style of writing to suit purpose, audience, and situation;" and demonstrate that they were able to read to "critically evaluate, make inferences, and draw conclusions." See Government of British Columbia, "Adult Basic Education," 97-99;

My reflexive researcher journal is made up of 69 entries, spanning 2 January 2018 to 11 July 2018. After each class, I would spend several minutes reviewing how the events that occurred could provide useful data for my case study and transcribe any observations that I had recorded in my research journal. Entries also include descriptions of shifts from my lesson plans, summaries of in-class discussions with students, self-evaluations, and a brief outline of the results of an attempt to express my beliefs and corresponding values in regards to pedagogy, *March Book Two*, and theories of historical thinking. For example, after my class on 19 February, I wrote,

- We read the final section of *March* in class and handed out the final discussion questions, including Dr. Holler's modification.
- After the end where the church is bombed, I responded to Heather's question and described the situation briefly – 4 girls dying (I could/should have (?) added the comparison that I had read before – "this event was like 9/11 for Black people" in the south).
- I reminded students they could read the final book in the library if they wanted – It was dryer than this one (Erin implied this one wasn't dry at all) but I clarified that *March Book Three* has more political wrangling.

I continued to create reflexive journal entries after the end of the semester as I began the post-semester interview process.

I conducted post-semester interviews with five of my seven participants. To address privacy and confidentially concerns, interviews took place in a classroom some distance away from both my office and the classroom we occupied during the semester. Interviews took 24, 95, 26, 56, and 43 minutes respectively. I asked personal, semi-structured, probing, open-ended questions that referred to our class discussions and the text in order to generate narratives. Each interview was recorded on a digital recording device, then transcribed. To increase the validity of my data, I utilized a form of member-checking by emailing each interview transcript to the appropriate student and asking him or her to make any changes or

clarifications. Only one student, Rachel, made any modifications to her transcript. For reference, I have included my Post-Semester Interview Script in Appendix A. It included a brief introduction that summarized the interview's role in my research, how I might ask follow-up questions to participants' answers, and how students or I could terminate the interview at any time if it became too upsetting. The interview script included 23 possible questions and follow-up questions connecting reading, discussing, and writing about *March Book Two* and my participants' views on nonviolent protest, racism, police brutality, and their classroom experience with *March*.

Process/Procedures

The process I followed for this research project can be categorized into six sections: pre-class, beginning of class, pre-*March*, *March*, post *March* and post-class. In the pre-class period before the course started, I developed my case study based on the action-research guidelines in Sagor's *The Action Research Guidebook*.[399] After I identified my goals for this action-research project, as Sagor suggests, I developed the theory of action that I referenced in Chapter One.[400] As I noted earlier, this process involved the development of a visual Priority Pie that reflected the percentages of class time I planned to spend pre-teaching, reading, and discussing *March Book Two* in class:

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[399] Many action-research-based methodologies involve three- or four-step cycles of planning, acting, and reflecting; see my references in Chapter Two to Askham, "Context and Identity," 85; and Wong, "Moving from a Transmission," 52-53.

[400] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 56.

**Planned % of Class Time Spent on Activities
with *March Book Two***

15 10 5

35 35

■ Historical Background   ■ Graphic Narrative Skill Development

■ Time for Reading and Reflecting   ■ Classroom Discussion
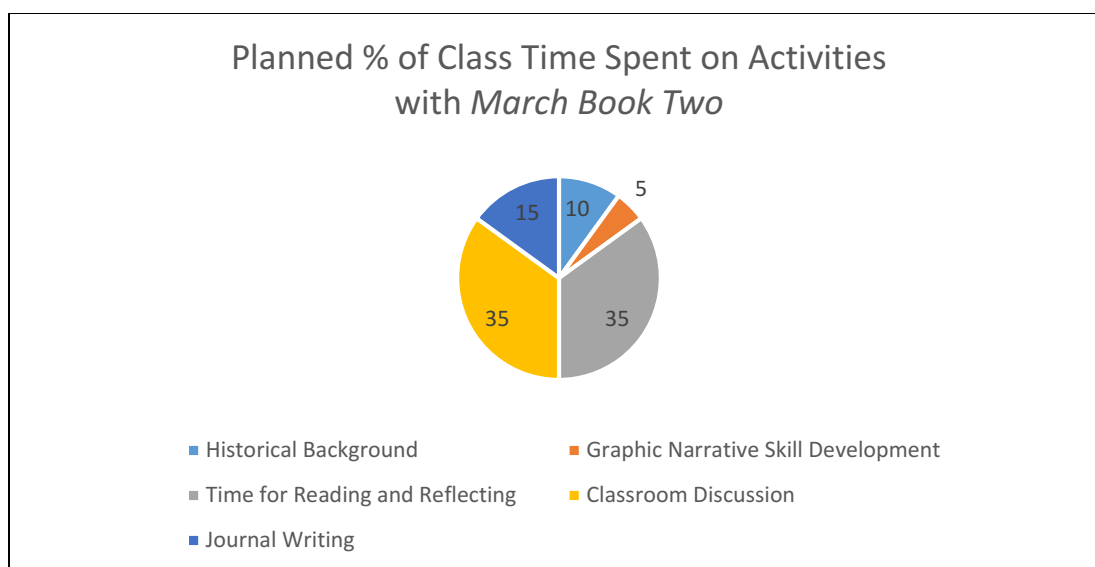
■ Journal Writing

Fig. 8 My initial priority pie

For my students to engage with *March Book Two* and develop their critical consciousness, I planned to use class time to learn about the historical background of the American South and the text's authors John Lewis and Andrew Aydin. I noted that my students would also need direct instruction in skills necessary for reading and analyzing a graphic narrative. I also planned for my students to complete three written reflective journal entries and participate in three class discussions.

As I found in my literature review, students enter the Advanced level of Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses in British Columbia with a wide range of abilities and experiences. Also, because the academic literature I cited in my literature review suggests that reading graphic narratives requires specific skills, I noted that some time learning how to read a graphic narrative would be useful as many students may not have had experience reading one. I believed spending class time reflecting on the historical background of the segregated American South was necessary if students were to develop a better understanding of the oppression that John Lewis and other activists resisted. Therefore, I had planned to allocate 15 percent of our class time to these pre-reading activities. My previous experience teaching

Advanced ABE English courses taught me that students at this level often enter the course with low literacy levels, and as a result, spending class time reading the novel would lead to greater comprehension and engagement and would help students clarify their understandings of the novel and its themes. Because of this, I planned to allocate 70 percent of class time to reading and discussing the text. Finally, while I strongly value my students' reflections on the texts they read, I hoped most of their reflective writing would be done outside of class. Thus, I planned to allocate 15 percent of class time to writing in reflective journals. While these percentages aided my lesson planning, I felt that good classroom practice would require being responsive to my students' needs. Therefore, as Sagor suggests, I completed daily time-priority tracking forms during the period of the semester where we read and discussed *March Book Two*, in order to compare the difference between what I planned to occur in class and what actually occurred.[401]

Prior to beginning the class in January, I had to complete a number of final pre-class preparations. These included my normal instructional practices such as creating initial lesson plans, attendance sheets, and spreadsheets for grading, as well as developing and photocopying any handouts for students for the first week of class. Following the procedures approved by the Research and Ethics Boards of the College of New Caledonia (CNC) and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC),[402] I created my filing system of labelled folders for my photocopies of student work and made photocopies of my consent-to-contact forms for the support staff of the CNC's Research and Ethics Board (REB) to distribute to my students in the first week of class. I also purchased a small notebook that I planned to bring to class every day to record any relevant observations of students. In practice, I often

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[401] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 91.
[402] I have attached copies of letters of permission granted by the REBs of UNBC and CNC in Appendix B.

found that the amount of interaction and scaffolding my students required left little time to sit and record in-class observations.

On the first day of the course, in addition to my traditional plans for the first day in English 045 classes,[403] I briefly summarized my case study, how I would collect data, and how students would be able to participate or not participate without my knowledge. While I noted in my reflexive journal that the response was unenthusiastic, I was optimistic about the semester. Two members of the CNC's REB support staff came to class the next day to invigilate the permission-to-contact process that I developed in order to address the ethical concerns of being a teacher-researcher described in Chapter Two. Like Clark and Siha,[404] in order to manage the power issues inherent when conducting action research in my own class, I asked the REB to distribute, explain, collect, and store consent-to-contact forms that asked my students if they were willing to let me contact them after the semester was over and their final grades had been submitted. These forms were linked to consent-to-participate forms that students who consented to be contacted would be given after the semester was finished. I have included both of these forms in Appendix B. Not every student was present for this presentation. As a result, when new students attended the class on later dates, I brought them to the REB office after class for them to receive the REB's presentation and have the opportunity to complete a consent-to-contact form. In order to protect students further, part of the presentation and the consent-to-participate form noted that students were able to go back to the REB office and change their consent forms at any time, without my knowledge.

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[403] My reflexive journal entry also notes that I "introduced self (tried to be funny, maybe came off as arrogant)" and handed out the course syllabus.

[404] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 495; Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 92-93.

At the end of the second week of class, the CNC's Wellness Coach, Dana Hansen,

gave a presentation to the class that I had arranged as part of my participant-protection

process. She provided my students with a package of documents that included a summary of

the supports she could offer students, such as crisis intervention, stress management, and

referrals to counselling at CNC. Her documents also included a list of phone numbers for

mental health organizations in Prince George and a bookmark for the CNC Health and

Wellness Centre, which included information about booking appointments and emergency

after-hours contact numbers. I have included scans of these documents in Appendix B.

The pre-*March* period of the semester began on the 22nd day of class, 31 January,

when I gave students my PowerPoint presentation titled, "How to Read a Comic," in order to

address the concern I raised in Chapters One and Two regarding the visual literacy skills

required to read and analyze a graphic narrative in an academic setting. Strongly influenced

by Scott McCloud's text *Understanding Comics*,[405] my presentation made brief points on the

elements of a comic page, reading a comic page left to right (or not), the use of the gutter

between comic panels to suggest time and movement, and visual short cuts in the form of

icons and symbols. Students could listen to me speak, look at the PowerPoint displayed on

the screen, or read along with the colour photocopies of the PowerPoint I supplied them,

which included the notes I gave for each slide. I have included a copy of the PowerPoint

document that I supplied students in Appendix A. After we discussed how to read graphic

narratives, we examined a graphic narrative written by Joe Sacco titled "The Underground

War in Gaza."[406] We read it as a class twice, taking turns to first read the text in each panel,

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[405] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 9, 61, 68, 95, 97, 98, 115.

[406] Joe Sacco, "The Underground War in Gaza," in *Advanced Level English Anthology [TEXTBOOK]*, ed. Carolyn Bax (Prince George: College of New Caledonia, 2015).

then to describe the images in each panel. Students were able to follow the narrative of the text and noticed many minor details in Sacco's artwork, such as a comparison of Sacco's depiction of rubble in Gaza and the intact buildings in Egypt.

The following day I gave students my PowerPoint presentation titled, "The Civil Rights Movement & John Lewis," in order to provide my students information about the historical context of *March Book Two* and its authors. I used a combination of historical photos and panels from *March Book One* to summarize racism and segregation in the American south, Lewis' background, the principles of nonviolence, the civil rights movement, and the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville and Greensboro, North Carolina that led to wider desegregation. Again, I provided students with colour photocopies of the presentation. As I noted earlier, I have included a copy in Appendix A. I originally planned to use twenty minutes for the presentation and any discussion, but we ended up taking an additional fifteen minutes to discuss personal anecdotes of racism and connections between the civil rights era and the present. We began reading *March Book Two* in class the day after.

For the first class reading of *March Book Two*, we took turns reading the text panel by panel until we had read to page 65, or the first third of the 180-page graphic narrative. As we did with Sacco's "The Underground War in Gaza," we had enough time in class to review the visual images that we had seen. This segment of the text illustrates how Lewis and his fellow students in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) transition from successful lunch-counter sit-in protests to the Freedom-Rider protests. While I had originally planned to spend 50 minutes of class reading this section, the other portion of the class took slightly longer than I had planned, leaving us with only 40 minutes for reading and discussing some of the text's artwork, including how some images with many details can be

read very slowly. At the end of class, I gave students the discussion questions that would

form the basis of our next discussion:

1. How do the students use nonviolent protest tactics (at the restaurant and movie theatre)? What reactions are they getting in response?
2. What is Lewis doing in 2009? Why is the story split up this way?
3. Lewis goes to jail willingly. Is it worth it? What do you think about people who break the law to protest?
4. Who are the Freedom Riders, and what do they do? Why are they important? What happens to them?
5. How are the people in the south (Alabama & South Carolina) different than the people in Nashville? How are the police different?

Students were encouraged to record their answers on paper so they could reference them

during their discussions. The next day, I separated students into groups of four or five and

had them share their answers for each question. As students spoke quietly to each other, I sat and listened at a table apart from each group, recording observations in my

Fig. 9 A lunch-counter sit-in protest in *March*. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 10.

notebook, but also contributing to discussions if students asked questions. For example, one

group of students asked if Lewis's being absent from the bombing of the Freedom Rider bus

was planned.[407] I suggested that because the text is from his point of view, we can think

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[407] Lewis, Aydin and Powell, *March Book Two*, 44-45.

about how he might not want to show himself being a coward. However, the rest of the text and the public record suggest he bravely stood up to worse violence. When the students had shared answers to each question, I gave students the opportunity to share some of their answers with the class and discuss each question together. Finally, students had the remainder of the class to begin writing their journal entry on this section of *March Book Two*. I originally planned to spend 25 minutes on the discussion portion of the class, and 20 minutes to write in class, but when the discussions took 30 minutes, we only had 15 minutes remaining in class for students to begin writing. Students were asked to finish their journal entry for homework and submit it the next day.

We spent a majority of the next class reading from pages 65 to 124. I had originally planned to read to page 125, but we ran out of time, as a non-*March*-related lesson took longer than I planned. Thus, instead of spending 50 minutes reading, we were only able to read for 45 minutes. This second segment illustrates the fallout from the Freedom-Rider protests, including Lewis's incarceration, conflicts within
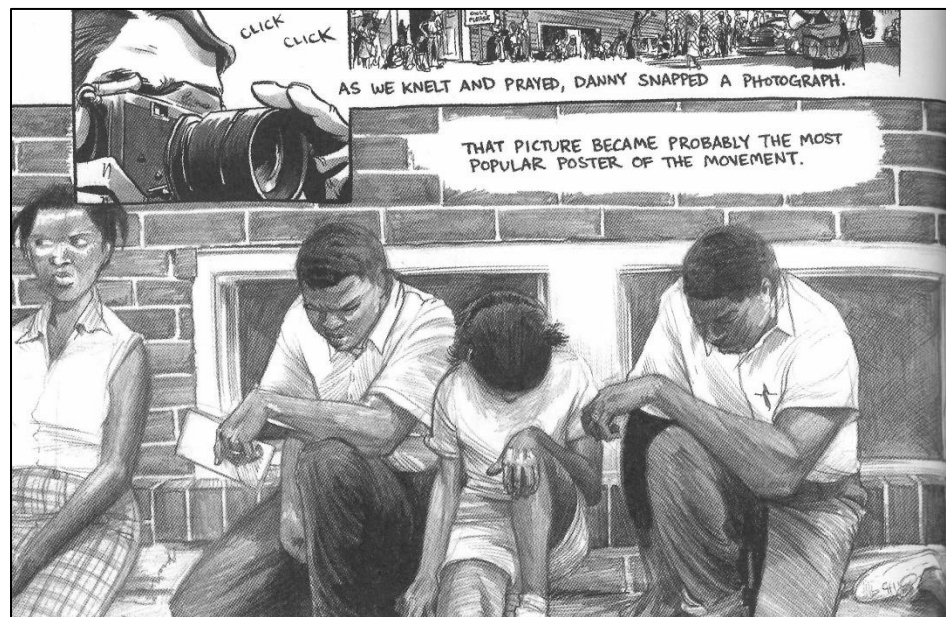

Fig. 10 A drawing of a photograph of protesters praying in *March*. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 120.

the SNCC, and Alabama Governor George Wallace's declaring "Segregation forever." At the

end of the class, students were given a copy of a Self-Evaluation of Response Journals worksheet to complete that included the option to submit the journal the following day if more time was necessary in order to meet the assignment requirements.[408] Students were also given a new set of questions to prepare them for the next discussion:

1. What happens in Montgomery, Alabama when the bus arrives? Which government representatives try to help? Who is responsible for this incident?
2. What does Martin Luther King Jr. do in this section? How do people respond to his actions and decisions?
3. How was Lewis's experience in Mississippi jail? What challenges did he and his fellow riders face?
4. What challenges did the activists in the civil rights movement face in this section? From Whites? From each other?
5. What comic panels stand out the most to you in this section?

A heavy snowfall the following day led me to delay the discussion for two days as many students were late or absent from class. When we returned, we had the next discussion in the same manner as the first: I listened, made observations, and contributed as students discussed their answers to the questions in smaller groups and then with the whole class.[409] Additionally, while I had planned for the discussion to occur for 25 minutes, followed by 20 minutes of time for students to start writing their next reflective journal entry, we spent 40 minutes discussing the questions and had no time left for students to start writing. Some topics the students discussed included the identities of key government officials; comparisons between Martin Luther King Jr. and the SNCC; and the violence of White racists. As before, students were asked to be ready to submit their reflective journal entries in the following class, which occurred after a one-week reading break.

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[408] I have included a copy of this sheet in Appendix A.
[409] Hoping to encourage more dialogue, I placed students in smaller groups in the second discussion, after I noticed that some students were "quite quiet in their discussion groups," during the first discussion.

We finished reading the final third of *March Book Two* the day students returned from reading break. I had planned to use 55 minutes to cover the final pages. However, we were only able to use 45 minutes when other classroom activities took more time than I had estimated. This final section illustrates the beginning of the SNCC's Birmingham Campaign, followed by the brutal, televised response by Bull Conner and the
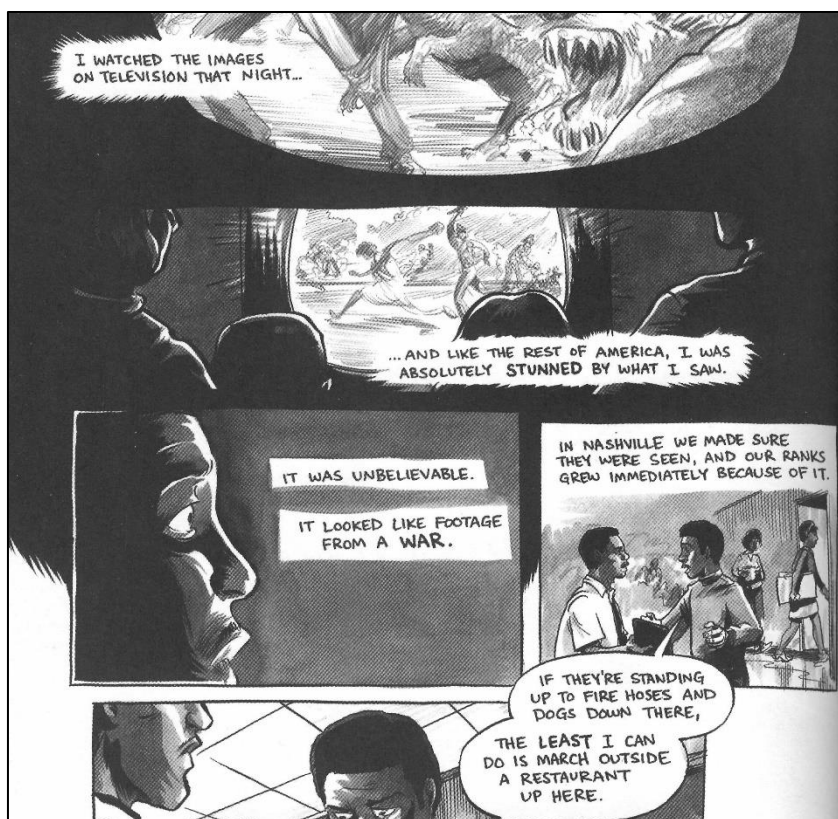
Fig. 11 Televised police brutality in *March*. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 138.

Birmingham police to a peaceful protest involving children and how the march on Washington unfolded as a result. Students again completed self-evaluation sheets for their second *March Book Two* journal entry, and I gave students a set of discussion questions for our final class discussion in the next class:

1. What happened when the children of Birmingham marched? What were the results?
2. What was the march on Washington about? Who organized it? Why didn't SNCC support it? How did it go?
3. What do you know about Malcolm X? How is he different from Lewis/MLK?
4. Why did people have a problem with the first draft of Lewis's speech? Was he right to make the changes he made?
5. How was reading this comic? Would it have been better as a normal book/short story/play?
6. What do you like to read? Do you notice a difference when you read fiction or nonfiction?

The final *March* discussion followed the same format as the first two: I recorded observations as students discussed their answers to the questions in small groups and then with the whole class. Again, I often participated in the discussions. While I had planned to spend 30 minutes of class time on discussion and 20 minutes on journal writing, we needed more time for a different assignment earlier in the class, and we ended up spending 45 minutes discussing the text, with no time left again for starting the written journal entry, which was due the next day.[410] As I suggested in Chapter One, because I was not aware of who would participate in my case study at this point, once I had marked students' journal entries and provided them with feedback, I filed photocopies of their work.

Throughout the remainder of the semester, *March Book Two* was occasionally discussed. Students had the opportunity to write an in-class paragraph question about it on their midterm exams. Students occasionally compared John Lewis and the racism in *March* to Frank Meeink and the racism in *An Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead*, the final text I had assigned for students to read that semester. I also answered questions on several occasions about my research, including my own educational background, my goals, and the ethical procedures involved in my research. As the broad focus of a major four-page research essay was to study a problem faced somewhere in the world, I copied the final drafts of my students' essays for my files. The final exam asked students to reflect on several aspects of the semester, including what they learned about reading, writing, and making connections between ideas. I photocopied and filed the sections of students' final exam responses that connected to my research question and sub-questions.

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[410] A large percentage of students often decided they needed additional time to complete their journal entries and elected to take an extra day or two to submit them.

After the conclusion of the semester, I returned to the time-priority tracking forms that I had completed during the period of the semester where we covered *March*, in order to compare what actually occurred in class to what I had planned. As I discussed earlier, I had to adjust my lessons on multiple occasions. This adjusted Priority Pie reflects these changes:
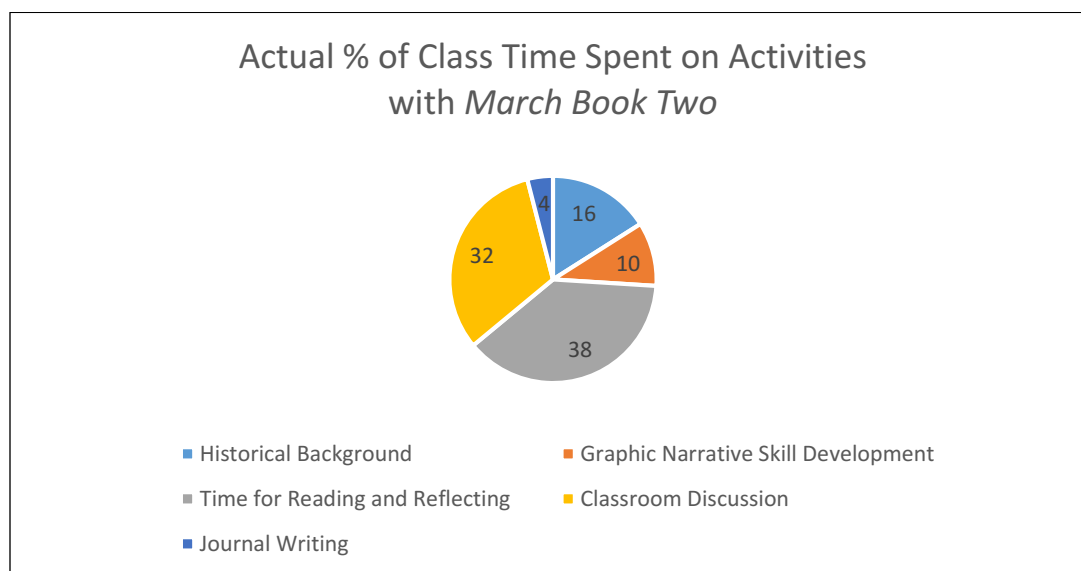
Fig. 12 My revised priority pie

As planned, the majority of class time was spent reading and discussing *March Book Two*. The percentages of class time spent previewing the historical background of the text and the skills necessary for reading a graphic narrative increased while the percent of class time spent writing in journals decreased. These results have small implications for further research that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Following my participant-protection protocols, after I submitted my students' final grades, the CNC REB provided me with the names of students who had consented to be contacted. I then developed this Invitation to Participate/Interview Phone script for the phone call to the six students who wished to be contacted by phone:

1. Call the number that the student used on their signed consent to contact form
2. Ask to speak to the student
    a. If asked who I am, say that I am Keith Tedford, an English instructor at CNC
3. Thank them for agreeing to be contacted.

4. Remind the student that their final grade has been compiled, and that they are under no obligation to participate in the study.
5. Ask if they are willing to come back to the college to sign a consent-to-participate form and participate in an interview for approximately 30 minutes.
   a. If the student is willing to come back to CNC, ask when they would be willing to meet (so that I can book an appropriate classroom). Tell them I will call them back with the room number as soon as I can. If that isn't possible, I can meet them by my office and walk to the classroom together.
   b. If the student isn't willing to return to the college but wants to participate through their work, ask them for their email so they can consent electronically.
   c. If the student isn't willing to participate, thank them for their time, wish them luck.
6. Thank the student for their time!

I emailed an amended version of this script to the student who preferred to be contacted through email. As I suggested earlier, all seven students who were willing to be contacted were willing to participate in my study, but two were unwilling or unable to return to the college and participate in an interview.

As I noted before, each of my five post-semester interviews took place in a classroom located away from both my office and the classroom we occupied in English 045. As I arranged interviews around participant availability, no interviews occurred on the same days, minimizing opportunities for students to identify other participants in my study. For each interview, I placed my digital recorder onto a small table, and sat across from the student. To begin each interview, I read an introductory statement verbatim and asked approximately 23 personal, semi-structured, probing, open-ended questions that referred to our class discussions and *March Book Two* in order to generate narratives.[411] As I had developed a relationship with each student over the previous four months, each interview had an informal tone, with students feeling comfortable enough to make jokes and laugh, despite the serious subject matter being discussed. Interviews occurred in this order: Warren, Erin, Rachel,

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[411] As I noted earlier, I have included my Post-Semester Interview Script in Appendix A.

Cameron, and Richard. After each interview, I transcribed my digital recording into an electronic Microsoft Word document. When I finished transcribing my final interview, I began the coding process that I detail later in this chapter.

Data-Analysis Techniques

Both Sagor's and McNiff and Whitehead's assessment strategies for action research influenced my data-analysis process. Sagor's proposed models and strategies for developing action-research criteria focus on goals that are relatively easy to measure such as student performance and process goals, [412] but lack criteria for measuring changes in student attitude. Rather than rubrics, McNiff and Whitehead's strategies for data collection take the form of looking at changes in data over time[413] during the course of the research project, including declarations from participants, and producing examples of people acting in new ways.[414] Importantly, Sagor notes that long-term changes such as in student attitude or affect take incremental steps, and a short research project may only record slight changes.[415] Accordingly, I created this simple chart, "Measuring Change in Student Attitudes and Values after Reading *March Book Two*," to synthesize both action-research perspectives but also to allow me flexibility to respond to changes in student affect that I had not yet considered:

Measuring Change in Student Attitudes and Values after Reading *March Book Two*			
	No change	**Slight change**	**Significant change**
Student Attitude/values/ affect	No shift in writing or speech regarding topic	Minor shift in writing or speech regarding topic	Drastic shift in writing or speech regarding topic

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[412] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 42-45.
[413] McNiff and Whitehead, *All You Need to Know About Action Research*, 134.
[414] McNiff and Whitehead, *All You Need to Know About Action Research*, 136.
[415] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 49.

I concluded the data-gathering portion of my study by transitioning to a thematic analysis of my data. As I intended to study changes in student affect, after the semester finished, I engaged in a coding process, including open coding and selective coding components.[416] First, I read through my participants' work multiple times in order to develop codes for my data-analysis process, while attempting to be open to ideas that I had not intended to study in order to minimize my bias.[417] As I engaged in "a close line-by-line reading"[418] of my interview transcripts, reflexive journal entries, and files of photocopied student work, I determined eight broad categories of observations: school/learning, identity, issues/solutions, theory, external factors, history, comic, and values/beliefs/ideology. While I initially formulated a small number of initial codes based on my research questions and my experiences during the semester, as I reviewed my sources of data further, other qualitative codes emerged in conjunction with the eight broad categories of observations that I previously mentioned.[419] Using my final list of 142 codes,[420] I adapted Sagor's "bins and matrix" strategy and developed a digital spreadsheet where I could enter qualitative data and sort it by student, code, data source and page number.[421] Each chunk of qualitative data was assigned the appropriate codes. The final version of my spreadsheet contained 1499 entries of

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[416] Lucia Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Lisa M. Given, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008): 3, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n48.

[417] Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," 3.

[418] Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," 3.

[419] My codes were influenced by the examples in Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook 3rd Edition* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 75; for a brief discussion of the controversy regarding beginning the coding process with codes in mind, see Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," 3; she notes that many researchers recognize that it is impossible to remain uninfluenced by "existing ideas and concepts." Instead, researchers should keep open minds in order to allow new ideas to emerge.

[420] As there were some overlaps between categories, the number of unique codes is smaller. I have included a copy of my code list in Appendix B.

[421] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 153; Sagor writes, "The bins and matrix strategy … is a process of sorting and resorting qualitative action research data to identify and contrast tendencies and patterns as they evolve in a particular context."

qualitative data.[422] As Sagor suggests, I reviewed my sorted data in order to determine whether they answered my research questions and let me draw tentative assertions.[423] I reviewed my sorted data and engaged in selective coding in order to "reconceptualiz[e] and incorporate[e]" my data into "broader, more abstract categories."[424] This final review of my data suggested the five major themes and two supplementary findings[425] that I describe in Chapter Four. Finally, after compiling an edited draft of Chapter Four, I engaged in a form of member checking by asking two participants, Richard and Warren, to review the results of my data in December 2018.[426] While Warren declined to review the results, Richard was happy with how I had described the information he had provided me.

Participant Protections

As a normal part of my practice, I attempt to provide interventions to students during my instructional activities as necessary. I connect students at risk to counselling support, meet with students as needed, and provide individualized assessment opportunities when possible. However, as I previously mentioned, action research has inherent ethical issues that must be addressed. As both the teacher and researcher for this project, I created a power imbalance that had the potential to compromise my research. In order to manage this issue, I took several steps to ensure that my research met the ethical standards set out in the CORE

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[422] Again, as some chunks of data were assigned multiple codes, the number of unique chunks is smaller.

[423] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 162.

[424] Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," 4.

[425] For an example of a study where supplementary findings are reported alongside major themes, see Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 18 -19; like Hoggan and Cranton, I feel that it is important to include these supplemental findings because of their links to critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory.

[426] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 150; I asked Richard and Warren to review my results because the data they provided seemed more sensitive than those of other participants. Also, I had remained in contact with them over the year.

TCPS2 training required by the Research and Ethics Boards at CNC and UNBC.[427] In order

to conduct my research and avoid the conflict of interest involved in being both an instructor

and researcher, I had my students complete and seal consent-to-be-contacted forms without

my presence. In the first week of class, a member of the REB at the college facilitated the

consent-to-be-contacted process without me, thus ensuring that I remained unaware which

students planned to agree to participate in my research. The consent-to-be-contacted form the

students completed had two parts: an information sheet explaining my research methods and

goals, and a consent-to-be-contacted sheet which specified their preferred method of contact,

to be signed and sealed until after I submitted all students' final grades. Students were free to

go to the CNC's REB to modify their forms, which were stored in a locked cabinet, thus

ensuring that my ethical obligations regarding continuous consent were met.

As the semester progressed, I collected data according to my data-collection plan. All

photocopies of student work were stored in a filing cabinet in my locked office or a locked

filing cabinet in my immediate possession, until after the end of the semester, when I

unsealed all student consent-to-be-contacted forms in the presence of a member of the REB. I

immediately destroyed any photocopies of student work belonging to students who did not

consent to be contacted. I contacted the remaining students according to their preference by

phone or email to arrange a time for them to sign a consent-to-participate form and complete

the post-semester interview. In order to prevent this process from becoming onerous for

students, I allowed them to consent through email if they were unable to return to the Prince

George CNC campus. This allowed students to participate in the study even if they were

unable or unwilling to come back after the semester had finished. The remaining

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[427] Government of Canada, "TCPS 2 (2014)," accessed 4 July 2017, http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/; I have attached my Certificate of Completion in Appendix B.

photocopies of student work and all additional data (including post-semester interview transcripts) that students consented for me to use will be again stored in my locked office or my locked filing cabinet at home until five years after I have completed my thesis, whereupon I will destroy the remaining data in the presence of a member of the CTL, including the raw and analyzed transcripts of post-semester interviews. No one but myself and my graduate supervisor has been allowed to see the data that I have collected.

Before the semester began, I identified several risks besides ethical conflicts of interest that my research contained. These included psychological/emotional risks, where students could have been distressed or traumatized by the depiction and discussion of physical violence, police abuse, and extreme racism contained in *March Book Two*. There was also a possibility that students could have also discovered their own racial or racist biases and become upset, traumatized, or embarrassed. However, this risk is common to nearly any post-secondary class in which contemporary social issues are discussed and would have been present whether the student consented to participate in my project or not. I addressed these risks by providing students with a referral list of support resources in the Prince George community, including information about counselling at CNC, counselling in the Prince George community, and crisis hotline information, through the CNC's Wellness Coach.

Another possible social risk existed. Students could have disclosed their plans to consent or not consent to participate in my research to each other, and could have faced peer pressure regarding their decision to participate or not participate in my research (including the post-semester interview). In order to minimize this risk, I included a brief summary of this issue on the consent form, and encouraged students to respect the choices of their peers.

A third risk could have occurred if students decided they "wish to be identified for their contributions to the research" which is their right, according to TCPS 2 policy. In the event that any participants had chosen to waive their right to anonymity, I would have discussed possible consequences with them about having their name attached to a study that could appear to be critical of the behaviour of police forces in Canada. I would have also considered if revealing their identity would threaten the anonymity of the other participants (for example, if every participating student but one wanted to be recognized). If so, TCPS 2 policy would have required me to reject the request to be identified.

This research was approved by the REBs of both CNC and UNBC, and thus I have attached letters from the REBs of CNC and UNBC approving my project to Appendix B.

Chapter Summary

In order to link the four domains I examined in my literature review with my research question and sub-questions, this chapter describes my study's setting, participants, instructional materials, measurement instruments, procedures, data-analysis techniques, and participant protections. Also, by demonstrating how I adjusted my study as it progressed, I have answered one of my research sub-questions: how events in the classroom differed from my planned theory of action. As described above, I collected and coded my data into a sortable spreadsheet. Sorting this qualitative data in various ways, such as by code or by student, allowed me to extract themes that form the results of my study, which I describe in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Introduction

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I introduced the four domains covered by my research: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action-research methodologies involving adult students. My theoretical framework and literature review identified themes linking the scholarly research in these domains, and my methods chapter detailed how I developed and implemented a bounded case study observing the changes in student affect[428] that resulted from reading, discussing, and writing about *March Book Two* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell in an ABE English 045 class. My methods chapter also described how events in the classroom differed from my planned theory of action, answering one of my research sub-questions. My methods chapter also describes how, over the four-month semester, I collected the majority of my qualitative research data from student classwork, my reflexive research journal entries, and post-semester interviews. In order to answer my remaining research questions, this chapter explores the major themes and supplementary findings that emerge from this data, demonstrates how I maximized the validity of my findings, and discusses how my results compare to the academic literature.

Results

The data extracted from my research suggest five major themes: reading *March Book Two* helped change my students' perceptions of racism; students recognized the value of

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[428] Popham, "All About Assessment/Assessing Student Affect," 85; as I noted in Chapter One, Popham describes student affect as "the attitudes, interests, and values that students exhibit and acquire in school."

nonviolent activism; the graphic-narrative format supported learning; other factors

contributed to changes in students; and leading this research encouraged me to be reflexive

and reflective. The data also suggest two supplementary findings: *March Book Two*

supported historical thinking, and students acknowledged other issues besides racism

throughout the semester.

Major Theme #1

Reading *March Book Two* helped change my students' perceptions of racism.

Students linked civil-rights-era segregation to modern racism, including

discrimination against First Nations people in Canada. Additionally, students also generally

perceived violence and racism to be larger problems outside of Canada. Several students

demonstrated how their perspectives shifted in minor ways.

In a journal entry, Geoff wrote that "[the comic] can be very brutal at times with the

violence and racism, but I think it makes it feel more realistic." Geoff, like most of the

students in this study, explicitly identified the racist Whites as the oppressors in *March*. He

wrote that *March*'s depiction of the civil rights nonviolent protests "really make you realize

how awful some of the White people were to the Black people, even when they're just buying

a movie ticket or sitting down for coffee." Students connected these historical examples of

segregation and racism against Black Americans to a variety of modern examples, including

the arrest of two Black men in a Philadelphia coffee shop[429] and the mass murder at a Quebec

City mosque on 29 January 2017. Some of the students also linked the civil rights struggle in

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[429] Associate Press, "Starbucks CEO Offers 'Face-To-Face Apology' After Arrest of 2 Black Men Sparked Outrage," *CBC News*, last modified 18 April 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/starbucks-arrest-black-men-apology-philadelphia-1.4620764.

March to historical examples of oppression and challenges that First Nations peoples of Canada still face, including the shooting of 22-year-old Colten Boushie on a Saskatchewan farm,[430] violations of human rights by the RCMP on First Nations reserves, loss of language and culture, poverty, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, [431] and the Highway of Tears.[432]

However, while some of the students in my study acknowledged that many of these issues were present in Canada, most students perceived violence and racism to be larger problems outside of Canada. For example, Richard, a middle-aged White male, described his experiences growing up in Portland, Oregon, and experiencing racial tension between the White neighbourhood he grew up in and the nearby Black neighbourhood. In the post-semester interview, he said,

> I just saw more, kind of violent aspects of race when I lived in the States, … you felt unsafe in your areas, or you hear[d] stories where people would get rolled, or the school I was supposed to go to ... They had like a cop with a gun, and they had like a security guy, and that was in the eighties.

Erin, a White man in his mid-to late twenties, saw American President Donald Trump as a racist influence in politics, suggesting, "[racism] is something that again, Trump is known for." Cameron described the dangers of the police and paramilitary contractors hired to protect cobalt-mining companies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Additionally, Rachel noted examples of conflict in Syria, Armenia, Israel, and Palestine, and conversely, argued, "As long as we're here in Canada, we're kind of [a group of] diverse people." Both

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[430] Guy Quenneville, "What Happened On Gerald Stanley's Farm the Day Colten Boushie was Shot, as Told by Witnesses," *CBC News*, last modified 12 February 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/what-happened-stanley-farm-boushie-shot-witnesses-colten-gerald-1.4520214.

[431] "Our Mandate, Our Vision, Our Mission," National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, accessed 5 December 2018, http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/mandate/.

[432] "Highway of Tears: Preventing Violence Against Women," Carrier Sekani Family Services, accessed 5 December 2018, https://www.highwayoftears.ca/.

Erin and Warren, a young First Nations man, suggested that the current Canadian Prime Minister was a positive influence in politics. Warren cited Trudeau's apology to First Nations as "a way better celebration to welcome all that Justin Trudeau did for the communities of Aboriginal people."

Students demonstrated that their awareness and perceptions of racism had shifted in a number of ways. Generally, students reported a willingness to intervene when witnessing racism, either in the form of a hypothetical modern situation where a non-White person is being spit on at a local movie theatre, or by imagining being present in Birmingham, Alabama, on 3 May 1963, when the chief of Birmingham's police, Bull Conner, ordered the use of fire hoses and police dogs on child protesters. As an example of support in regards to the protesters in Birmingham, Cameron wrote, "If I was there at that time, I would have to protest with the movement of the students. All of my life, I liked to rebel against things I did not agreeable [sic] with it." In addition, several students demonstrated clearer shifts. In one of his journal entries, Richard suggested that *March Book Two* "opens your eyes and mind to the struggles of the African Americans. … We were never taught about the African-American history." He suggested that his childhood in Portland had exposed him to racial tensions and led him to racist beliefs: "I found there was a big divide between the Whites and Blacks at age 10. Most Blacks I encounter[ed] had a chip on their shoulder towards the Whites." However, by the end of the class, Richard felt that reading *March Book Two* had affected him in a positive way: "It opened my eyes, the whole learning process at college has opened my eyes up to racism. And how I see race per say. I was close-minded in a lot of aspects until I read the books. … The *March* book opened my eyes to the struggles [that] the Black people have made to get to where they are today." As I noted in Chapter Three,

Richard sent me an email during a trip to South Carolina that he took after participating in a post-semester interview. In it, he demonstrated how he is now attuned to African-American history. He wrote, "Racism isn't as prevalent in the South as I thought. I found the standard of living is equal for both African Americans and Whites. Both cultures of people are side by side everywhere … Lots of references to slavery. At historical sites and buildings." Richard also included two photos in his email of a historical church marker that references the burial of a founder of missions to slaves in South Carolina, and a plaque describing the conditions of the slave quarters on the University of South Carolina as well as some of the slaves' names. Richard also noted that he had multiple

Fig. 13 A sign noting a buried founder of missions to slaves. One of Richard's private photos

conversations with his parents about *March*. For example, he described a conversation he had about the Freedom Riders with his parents: "And even like my parents, when we went on the walk, I was telling them about the freedom ride, and they knew a lady somehow, Washington, the university, and her husband was maybe one of the guys killed, or something

like that. So it was a connection which I never knew." Richard's awakening to Black history corroborates his assertion that he has "opened his eyes," to racial issues.

Cameron, a Black male, also demonstrated that his awareness of racism had shifted as a result of reading *March Book Two*. In both his student work and the post-semester interview, Cameron reiterated how reading *March* had been a positive experience. He stated, "I was so happy to understand … the book, and [Lewis] was my history, he was part of my history." He described how the story, "made me sad to know how African Americans sacrificed their lives. If I didn't read the book, I wouldn't know what [had happened] with them." Like Richard, Cameron also demonstrated how *March*

Fig. 14 A plaque describing the slave quarters at the precursor to the University of South Carolina. Another of Richard's private photos

had affected him by having conversations about it outside of class. He described how he showed his neighbours his copy of *March Book Two*, how they were shocked by the events of the text, and how he concluded that they were open-minded. Unlike Richard, Cameron

was already accustomed to Black history. However, *March Book Two* provided him with a new event to celebrate.

Finally, Erin suggested that reading *March* had led him to positive shifts. In his interview, Erin stated, "I think this book [*March*] kinda changed me personally, in the fact that racism and everything." However, Erin did not specify how *March* had affected him. Conversely, Erin did reflect on how his position as a White male born and raised in Canada meant that it was likely he did not experience racism as some of his other classmates did. In his post-semester interview, he suggested that visualizing the racism faced by Lewis and the other civil rights activists was difficult, stating, "but it's kind of hard, imagination-wise for me. Being that I have never seen even remotely close to this kind of stuff ... jumping into the deep end of the pool and it's pretty cold…" Erin noted that he had been "blindsided" by the racism described in *March Book Two*. He also acknowledged that Richard, another White male, had had a lot of experience with racism due to his childhood experiences in America. Additionally, when I interviewed Erin, I noted that I had been "pretty ignorant about racism" as a high-school student. Erin replied, "Yeah. I was really about the same until I read this book, and the things that were going on, right?" As with Richard, the descriptions of racism in *March* were shocking to Erin, but he felt that reading and discussing *March* had made him more aware of the severity of racism that Black Americans faced in the last century.

Of course, these shifts regarding racism were not drastic. Despite expressing support for racial and cultural diversity, a few students demonstrated that they were still struggling to analyze how race intersects with various issues.[433] One student noted that "One of the biggest

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[433] I recognize that despite using pseudonyms to protect my students' confidentiality, members of the class may be able to determine the identity of the participants in my study. Thus, I have deliberately chosen to further obscure the identities of my participants for this paragraph in order to minimize possible harm.

social problems on reservations is the alcoholism." Another student described how in his or her opinion, the government was providing First Nations people, "like free education, free hunting and fishing, and all that crazy stuff that the government just allows, when a lot more of it should be just to help the people, and I don't think it's really going towards that … the Canadian government, I feel, needs to step in and make movements with that." Another student blamed the homeless for abusing drugs and being "half the reason [that]… Indigenous people are still getting treated like dirt." A fourth student suggested that a majority of Black families were being raised by single mothers. Additionally, one student argued against intervening when witnessing racism or oppression: "if somebody always stepped in before something bad happened, maybe a lot of the movement wouldn't have happened. Maybe a lot of stuff wouldn't have eventually came to be… But for real progress to happen, sometimes, bad things need to happen." This student also argued that, "People should focus more on their own countries before they try to fix other countries." Finally, several students suggested racism could never be eliminated. One wrote,

> I feel that racism, hatred and evil will never come to an end. Some people thrive on causing pain onto one another. Children often absorb it from what happens around them, from home life and from society in general, which is a vicious cycle. I feel we will never live in a world of equality; no matter how hard we embrace it, we will have limitations and barriers because there will always be abuse and hatred in the hearts of many, that prevents them from forgiving and moving forward.

While reading and discussing *March Book Two* clearly affected my students' views on racism, as I predicted, the shifts were certainly not all-encompassing. However, my students did link the practice of opposing racism to the next theme that I extracted from my data: recognizing the significance of nonviolent activism.

Major Theme #2

Students developed an appreciation for nonviolent activism.

Students generally expressed admiration for various activists, recognized the strategic benefits of nonviolent protest strategies, rejected violent protest strategies, identified multiple reasons to protest, and linked civil-rights-era protests to other more modern protests. Additionally, students demonstrated how reading and discussing *March* led them to shift their perspectives, while they acknowledged inherent issues associated with nonviolent protest, identified key elements of successful protest movements, and suggested advice for modern activists.

My students expressed admiration for a number of activists, including John Lewis, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King Jr., and their struggle for equality despite the violence they experienced. Students' views on student activism were generally positive. In the first class discussion of *March*, I noted that both female students, Rachel and Heather, spoke out in favour of Lewis's decision to go to jail. Rachel argued that she believed that breaking the law to protest is okay if it is for a good cause. Heather concurred, suggesting that going to jail was acceptable if protesters believed in their cause. In addition, both Rachel and Cameron liked how the activists imprisoned in jail maintained their positive attitudes. Rachel also agreed with the SNCC's refusal to "cool down" after the Freedom Riders were brutally attacked in Montgomery, Alabama. She noted, "It is better to keep going. They can change their plan, but not to stop or cool down. Otherwise, the against part [sic] will take it as a backward step or sort of defeat." Finally, my students generally noted that the civil rights activists were successful over time. Warren wrote in a journal entry, "Martin Luther King and John Lewis did a great thing. Following up on the Gandhi beliefs. Nonviolent acts to

show them what's up, explaining you can beat me, but I will continue to move onward to greatness. And it took some time, but they made [it] with a lot of great people that passed along the way." Other students also recognized the sacrifices that the civil rights activists had to make. In a conversation after class, Cameron explained how the protesters in *March* were inspirational to him because of the sacrifices they made and how important they are to today's society. Erin described the protesters in *March* as martyrs "making a statement."

Raising awareness through self-sacrifice was not the only strategic benefit of nonviolence that my students recognized. Erin explained nonviolent protest as "turning the other cheek" and "actually a more internal fight you want to cause within your prosecutor," as an attempt to make any attackers or oppressors question themselves. Rachel suggested that by asking for rights in a nonviolent way, protesters can "earn more trust" and "If they show they're peaceful, maybe they will gather more people around." Warren noted that the nonviolent protests provided Black Americans with a voice. He wrote, "Having a voice in a racial movement is important. I can see why doing marches through a lot of states and making sure all the White people at that time are aware. Making [White people] aware that this needs to stop and that making [Whites] see [that Black Americans] are a part of America as well." Finally, Cameron argued that protests that lead to positive change benefit people in the future, including those in other places: "Those Black people committed their lives to bring unity" and "for us to be safe in this country." However, while most of my students suggested that nonviolence was preferable to violence, Warren did not agree completely. In a post-semester interview, he told me, "Like it was [the civil rights activists'] choice to do the non-violent protest, but I don't think that's a good way to do it in the States... if you're going up against the KKK, and you're not gonna do anything, I guess it's just not a good choice to

make." Despite this concern, it is clear Warren and my other students recognized the value of nonviolence by identifying its strategic benefits.

Besides recognizing the benefits of nonviolent protest, my students demonstrated that they had recognized the value of nonviolence by identifying multiple reasons to protest. Students suggested that people could protest because of unfair incarceration; racism; human and civil rights; wages; gun control and violence; education; government corruption and incompetence; animal rights, including eating meat and wearing fur; and abortion. Erin also noted that protests also occur after football or hockey teams lose. More specifically, students connected the civil rights protests depicted in *March Book Two* to modern events, including Black Lives Matter; the tearing down of Confederate statues; protests in North Dakota over the development of pipelines through Native American land; anti-school shooting protests; a protest in Armenia that led to the resignation of its Prime Minister; anti-mining protests in the Congo; segregation in Israel and Palestine; and the investigation of Donald Trump and his connections to Russia during the 2016 American presidential election.

Several students demonstrated that reading *March* had explicitly shifted their thinking regarding nonviolent protest. Cameron described how in the past, he would have intervened violently when witnessing racism: "I would react bad … I'm going to fight…. I don't care if [the racist is] strong or not, but I will react… I will do everything, like, I will shoot." But he argued that now he would utilize nonviolence as it was presented in *March*: "So if I was there, for me, I can be strong or not strong, I have to respect. … we have to use the strategy, we have to use the brain, you know?" Rachel, as a refugee from a country that had restrictions on the right to engage in public criticism, suggested that *March* provides readers with a model for action: "It's a good way to show us … things like [racism and segregation]

could [be] happening, you know, and if [they] happen again, maybe [nonviolence is] a better way to deal with [them]? Or if something happen, if you could do something, you have to do something." Richard and Rachel expressed that they would have been willing to intervene and protect the child protesters attacked by Bull Conner in Birmingham. Of course, students qualified their willingness to participate in activism or intervene when witnessing racism based on their perception of the potential level of violence and danger each situation contained. Echoing this, Erin noted that he would possibly be willing to intervene when witnessing someone spit on a protester at a movie theatre in Prince George: "If I was with a group of my friends, and I saw this happening between two people, we would step in. But me as myself, I would be nervous right? And if I parked far enough away, and [the person spitting on a protester] didn't know which car I got out of, I would be helping." Erin also suggested that reading *March* could lead to widespread changes. In the post-semester interview, he summarized his point:

> And I think that it's important for people who want to protest things, and people who want to realize that they want to fight for justice, that it's important to have these pockets that start somewhere, and maybe this classroom is that somewhere. Where the pocket starts right? But all it takes is enough people in enough parts of Canada to start reading a book like this, and it starts to make developmental changes and issues right?

Accordingly, these testimonies demonstrate that reading *March Book Two* affected students' perceptions of nonviolent activism.

However, similar to how their willingness to act was moderated by levels of perceived danger, students acknowledged other issues with nonviolent activism. Erin thought that it would be difficult for some protesters to "bite their tongues" in the face of abuse. Rachel noted that nonviolent protests could be "long-term" and require patience. As suggested earlier, students had learned from *March* that nonviolent protesters could face

extreme levels of violence. In class, Cameron suggested that people in the Congo are afraid to protest against resource-extraction companies because they will simply be murdered, but also that this fear has spread to higher levels of the Congolese government. One student, Warren, simply was not moved to action by *March*. When asked what he would do if he witnessed a politician say something racist, Warren replied, "What can I do then? Just get mad, sitting at home, watching the TV." Evidently, he did not feel that the actions that the civil-rights-era protesters took would be as effective today. Other students in this study attempted to address this concern by implying that in order for activists to be successful, they need to avoid confrontations where there is little chance of success. Erin used the example of confronting a large group by himself to suggest that the danger he could potentially face would not make a confrontation advisable. Richard used his experience to echo this, maintaining, "In the States, you don't really want to get involved because you might get shot." By qualifying their willingness to act or intervene, my students demonstrated how they had developed a nuanced view of nonviolent protest, which allowed several of them to propose a number of key elements of successful protest movements.

By synthesizing their knowledge of civil-rights-era protests from *March Book Two* and more modern protests, students suggested three key elements of protest movements: leaders, organization, and numbers. For example, Rachel noted that people required courage in order to become protesters, and could find that through the inspiration of leaders "who represent others." Referring to the civil rights era, Cameron argued, "protesters needed to have a leader with good ideas, and also [Lewis] needed to have good support." Cameron also suggested that the organization of the civil-rights-era protesters was "very good. And they worked so a lot. And it was through their heart; it was their heart that was there. And they

used their brain as they used their heart. Everything, they showed the world; we are human. They showed the world together." Conversely, in a post-semester interview, Erin argued that having larger numbers of people was important to the success of protests. He stated, "a larger group … makes more of a statement. So the thing is, the more they can rally together, the better off it will be." He continued later, "It's kinda the understanding that you kind of have to fight the fight on your own, but together it's gonna have more movement, and feet on the ground. More feet on the ground would be just a better movement right?" Rachel agreed with this point, citing a protest in Armenia: "It can't be like with a small like number of people, I guess. If they show they're peaceful, maybe they will gather more people around and they'll be like more people. Because this is what happened in Armenia. They started at like 10 or 20, and like as I told you, it end[ed] up as a million."

Not every student seemed as engaged with modern protests as Rachel and Erin. Richard insisted that he "didn't follow the news much… I do read a little bit about it, but I'm not really engulfed in it, 'cause I'm engulfed in other things, aspects of my life … I'm not really in tuned to it because I'm so busy with other things." However, some students, including Richard, believed that today's widespread social media and technology (including the proliferation of cameras) would play a role in making social change occur by holding racists accountable. While reflecting on how the problems in *March* are present today, Erin suggested that the media and the proliferation of cameras make distorting the truth more difficult. In addition, Richard argued that this proliferation of personal cameras gives individuals a nonviolent way to intervene when witnessing police brutality. Evaluating the importance of different aspects of activist movements reveals part of how my students engaged critically with this topic.

This critical engagement supported my students' efforts as they recognized nonviolent activists as heroic, identified the strategic benefits of a nonviolent protest strategy, documented different reasons why people protest, acknowledged modern protest movements, described how their perspectives shifted, and evaluated different components of activist movements. These activities demonstrate the value that students placed on nonviolent activism as a result of reading and discussing *March Book Two*. How reading and discussing a historical nonfiction graphic narrative supported student engagement with the concept of nonviolent activism leads to the third major theme that I extracted from my data.

Major Theme #3

The hybrid visual-textual graphic-narrative format supported student learning.

Students came to the class with a range of experiences with graphic narratives. Cameron and Rachel had never read comics before. Erin and Heather had little experience with nonfictional graphic narratives or "serious comics with underlying themes." Warren liked reading superhero comics but had also read Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in high school, and as a child, Richard had read an alternative comic called *The Freak Brothers* that included, "mature/adult/hippie/drug content." As I had prepared for this wide range of background with graphic narratives, the data I collected regarding graphic narratives formed this third major theme of my research: reading a graphic narrative reinforced my students' learning. My research data reveal some effects that reading *March* had on my students, with an important emphasis on how reading and discussing *March* encouraged students to make connections between themselves and others. Students also reported a number of criticisms of *March* and graphic narratives in general.

The majority of students felt reading *March* was a positive experience. Cameron described his experience looking at the comic prior to class as being "like I was in an ocean, I was floating, I [didn't] know where to go," but in a conversation I had with him (and documented in my reflexive journal) after I gave the class my "How to Read a Comic" PowerPoint presentation, he revealed that he had been very confused by previous instructions I had given to him about how to read a comic. He explained that he had tried to read Sacco's "Underground War" left to right, top to bottom, but I had not made it clear that those instructions included reading from panel to panel. So he had read the captions in the top two panels first, then the dialogue, etc. Fortunately, my presentation clarified my earlier instructions. Later, Cameron told me that, "I was happy. If I have a little bit of trouble, I just look. So when I read, I just look the picture, so I can make guess. And the reading [became a] more interesting thing." Rachel was in a similar situation. During her interview, she admitted that reading *March* had not been easy for her. However, she continued, "I am so glad that you really recommended this book to us." Geoff admitted that the book was "a pleasure to read," and Erin told me in a post-semester interview that "Reading [*March*] was actually a lot more of an enjoyable experience" than reading the texts he had read in high school. These positive responses to *March* were also closely tied to the hybrid visual-textual nature of graphic narratives.

My data indicated that students especially appreciated the visual component of *March Book Two*. As English was not Cameron's first language, he appreciated that the visuals allowed him to make guesses about difficult English vocabulary, and skimming through the pages gave him a sense of the narrative. He argued that the visuals stimulated his interest in reading the text itself. Erin claimed that "with just pictures alone, you kind of get a

dramatization of what's actually going on. If you were to transfer a lot of books into a comic style, I'm sure you could get a lot more of a following." Additionally, Heather wrote in one of her journal entries that "*March Book Two* showed me how informative a story could be just through the pictures; you can really capture what the writer is trying to say." My classroom observations also suggest that students were engaged with the visuals in the graphic narratives we read. For example, as we read "The Underground War" by Joe Sacco in class to prepare for *March*, I felt that students noticed many details in the artwork. Students also noted that the visuals allowed them to make connections to the characters more easily.

By making these connections between themselves and the people in the story, my students demonstrated how reading and discussing a graphic narrative had affected them. As I mentioned earlier, my students linked *March* to a number of historical figures, like Nelson Mandela, and modern examples of racism and activism. But students were explicit about the role that the graphic narrative had in making those connections. For example, Geoff wrote, "I feel engaged to this book because it really connects you through the pictures and makes you feel what it may have been like." Warren suggested that reading *March* helped "to get a better understanding of like the history on [civil rights protesters'] background, and like understand the story a lot better." In one journal entry, Heather wrote, "I feel reading this story has introduced me to other forms of storytelling. I enjoyed reading the comic, and I found the visuals to be informative. I also believe the pictures tell much of the story; this helps to give reason to the reader as to what may have happened through the eyes of the writer." Geoff wrote something similar: "I really felt what they felt on the inside while I was reading. I made sense of the story by really taking the time to look at the comic pictures and

imagine how it happened years ago." Additionally, Erin went further by stating how taking

on the perspectives of the characters in *March* can affect the world: "the thing is, with *March*

… it pulls you into somebody else's reality. Which is very different. Because it's not saying,

'How does the world affect me?' It's 'How can I affect the world?' Which is a very different

type of thinking. And I think, creates a decent amount of conversation which is very

positive." But my students' using *March* to make connections between themselves and others

were not the only results of reading and discussing *March*.

Students reported that reading and discussing *March* resulted in a variety of activities

that demonstrated how the graphic-narrative format supported their learning. As I noted

earlier, Erin and Heather found that their perceptions of comics were challenged by *March*.

Erin noted that, "The new and exciting world of comics was introduced to me." Several

students noted how they reacted emotionally to the depictions of racism and violence in

March. Additionally, Cameron felt that reading *March* had been a positive experience, yet he

noted many of the examples of brutality and racism in *March* made him sad. Geoff echoed

these feelings:

> When [the Freedom Riders] arrived [in Birmingham] and got attacked, the scene
> really got to me because of what they were cursing at the African Americans. Within
> the picture, the mob looked like animals running after and beating the Freedom
> Riders. It's sad to see how they were treated, and still surprises me that most of them
> never retaliated to the violence, even when it got bad.[434]

Rachel also found different sections of *March* upsetting, citing first, the example of E.H.

Hurst, a member of the Mississippi state legislature, being found not guilty of murdering a

Black American farmer who was involved with registering voters and second, the bombing

of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham at the end of *March Book Two*. In a

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[434] See Fig. 15.

post-semester interview, Richard noted that he had found the violence in *March* shocking. Warren told me something similar. When we were reading *March*, he mentioned that he felt angry as he connected the violence and racism of the police in *March* to his experiences witnessing police brutality as he grew up on a First Nations reserve. As Geoff suggested in one of his

Fig. 15 Panel noted by Geoff. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 73.

journal self-evaluations, being emotionally engaged with the graphic narrative "help[ed] a lot to make sense of things, and especially during the marches because of how brutal it was."

March influenced other classroom activities. For example, Cameron suggested that reading *March* promoted interesting discussions. In addition, students made connections between *March* and the other course texts throughout the semester. For example, Erin compared John Lewis's heroic resistance to racism and segregation in *March* to Frank Meeink's descent into the neo-Nazi White-supremacist movement:

[*March* is] very similar to Frank's book as well … I think it's a good contrast between the two books because you see both sides of it very equally. And you can't hold either person accountable for any kind of negative or positive actions. Because like, this is the movement; this is what's going on. This is how they're dragged into it

… So it's kind of an interesting way to look at it because you can't look at John Lewis or Frank Meenik as like victims; you can't look at them as heroes either. They're kind of both products of their situations.

Additionally, as I noted earlier, Heather wrote that *March* introduced her "to other forms of storytelling." However, students also used *March* to compare the graphic-narrative medium to other mediums, including movies, books, songs, and cartoons, as forms of storytelling. For example, early in the semester, Warren linked the racism in *March* to the movie *Shot Caller*, released in 2017, about a man who is sent to jail and joins the Aryan Brotherhood, an ultraviolent White supremacist gang in prison. Geoff used the images in *March* to create a movie to play in his head in order to deepen his understanding of the narrative. Additionally, in one class discussion, Erin cited a juxtaposition in *March* of a singer at Obama's inauguration and a firebomb being thrown on the next page to argue that *March* handled transitions more easily than a movie; he suggested that the comic could shift more quickly back and forth between eras. Students' positive responses to *March* and their engagement in these activities confirm that the graphic-narrative format aided their learning. However, students did not accept *March* uncritically.

As in my discussion of student willingness to act or intervene when witnessing racism, student criticisms of *March* demonstrate how they reflected analytically on the text. As I suggested earlier, both Cameron and Rachel reported how they initially struggled when learning to read a graphic narrative for the first time. Erin suggested that *March* would benefit from a form of author commentary emphasizing important information because he suspected that he was missing many of its "deep" ideas. Heather echoed this concern in a journal entry: "I found the second portion of the book to be a bit more challenging to understand. I know little about politics and was unsure of added characters of the law brought

into the story. I was uncertain of whom they were or the roles they played." Finally, a month after I had entered my students' final grades, I opened a sealed envelope of anonymous unofficial feedback that I had arranged for my students to complete. I noted in my reflexive journal entry that "Some students liked the comics, stating they 'introduced them to a new style of writing,' or they liked the 'social injustice with *March*.' However, one student wrote [anonymously] that he or she 'had a hard time understanding some of the stories like the story of *March*, or maybe because I'm not just into comics.'" While these criticisms of *March* are minor, they do indicate how my students did not accept *March* uncritically, but rather approached it through the lenses of their individual experiences with graphic narratives.

Despite these criticisms, the data from these first three major themes suggest that reading and discussing *March* had a positive effect on students' perspectives on racism and activism, as well as their learning. The fourth major theme extracted from my research involves the other aspects that affected my students throughout the semester.

Major Theme #4

There were many other factors in the course and my students' lives that contributed to internal changes throughout the semester.

Despite my focus on graphic narratives, my data support this fourth major theme. These factors include interactions with each other, other texts in the course, personal beliefs of human development, previous experiences with racism, and events external to the class. The first two of these factors relate to the various events that occurred in our classroom throughout the semester, while the remainder are external to the course.

Predictably, students reported that they were influenced by their interactions with their peers in class. My unofficial anonymous student feedback suggested that the class was an "encouraging environment to learn," was "well structured," and had a "good atmosphere." Students also anonymously suggested that the class "got motivated from each other," liked "other people's point [sic] of views," and "worked well together/were engaged, and gave good feedback." Cameron felt that Erin was a positive influence in class discussions. Conversely, Erin cited stories from both Cameron and Rachel as important examples of how racism was still present today. During a post-semester interview discussion about an event Cameron described in class, Erin told me that he was "dumbfounded" by the racist comment Cameron described witnessing in a public space. Cameron and Rachel also appreciated that Richard was willing to share his experiences in America with the class. Conversely, Warren noted that the discussions he felt were most interesting were the ones where he was able to help the other students "about what they didn't understand, like with the international students, who [didn't] know much of the North American history, all of the bad stuff anyway." These interactions indicate how students perceived that their learning in our ABE course was a holistic experience.

While students suggested that they had been influenced by reading and discussing *March Book Two*, they also established that they had been influenced by the other course texts as well.[435] Students noted that all of the texts we read were linked with themes of racism

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[435] As I described in Chapter Three, besides *March Book Two*, the texts we read for this course included "Because My Father Always Said He Was The Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' At Woodstock," by Sherman Alexie, which, among other topics, describes the legacy that a violent act at an antiwar protest has on the son of a Native American protester. In addition, we read the play *Berlin Blues* by Drew Hayden Taylor, which humorously illustrates cultural appropriation and exploitation of Aboriginal culture on a fictional Ontario reserve. Prior to reading *March Book Two* in class, we read a short article by Joe Sacco titled, "The Underground War in Gaza," written in the form of a comic, which examines the bulldozing of Palestinian homes on the border between Palestine and Egypt. The final text we read is titled *An Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead* by Frank Meeink and Jody M. Roy. This text describes Meeink's life in

and oppression. Students connected "Because My Father Always Said He Was The Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' At Woodstock," by Sherman Alexie and the play *Berlin Blues* by Drew Hayden Taylor with Indigenous issues, including Canadian residential schools, racism, stereotypes, discrimination, segregation, environmental concerns, struggles with oil and gas companies, pipelines and protests in North Dakota, RCMP abuse, high suicide rates, gang lifestyles, family splits, parental neglect, poor access to education, poverty on reserves, and a lack of job opportunities. In contrast, students connected *An Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead* by Frank Meeink with gangs, poverty, sleep deprivation, brain-washing, White supremacy, life in jail, drug abuse, violence, parental abuse, and murder. At the end of the semester, Rachel, Erin and Heather expressed their fondness for Meeink's *Autobiography*. Heather wrote that, "Out of all the readings in this course, I would have to say the *Autobiography* had to have been my favorite. I find it holds my attention to learn of real life stories." Additionally, Richard lamented that reading *Autobiography* when he was younger could have made a difference in his life and that of his friends. He wrote, "Too bad we did not read this book in middle school in Portland, Oregon, before my friend and classmates became Aryan Brotherhood." As he did with *March*, Richard felt that reading and discussing Meeink's *Autobiography* had affected him in a meaningful way: "[Making] connection[s] between ideas is a good way to show someone's perspective to the story… it can give you a new way to think that you can utilize in it in life. Especially, when I read *An Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead*. It

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and out of the American White-supremacist movement, his relationships with his alcoholic biological father and abusive stepfather, his time in jail, his drug addictions, and his experience being sexually abused while hitchhiking.

change[d] my perspective to people like Frank." Like *March*, the other texts my students read and discussed in class affected each student to various degrees.

Throughout the semester, students reflected on their beliefs regarding human development in order to provide context for the texts they were reading. Generally, students expressed that human development was heavily influenced by environmental factors such as parental guidance and childhood experiences. As I noted before, Richard felt that his development had been influenced by his

Fig. 16 Another panel noted by Geoff. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 75.

experiences with racial tensions as a child in Portland, as well as his relationship with his stepfather. Warren linked Frank Meeink's troubled childhood with Meeink's struggles with racism, violence, and addiction: "Frank chose a path that took most of his life away. He didn't live with a proper childhood. Men like that never do." Geoff referenced a violent incident in *March* to demonstrate his understanding of how racism in the south was perpetuated. In one of his journal entries, he wrote,

> Another thing that caught me off guard was the kid named 'Donny' in the section who was also beating on an African-American. It seemed like his parents were supporting at the time, and said 'That's my boy, git him, them eyes, git them eyes.' This showed that at no matter age, if you're White, you're basically brainwashed into these terrible things such as racism, cruelty, brutality, judgement.[436]

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[436] See fig. 16.

Other environmental factors that students cited as developmental influences included

education, social pressures, and economic status. Only Rachel, linking her experiences with

the Syrian civil war to Frank Meeink's actions, suggested that taking pleasure in violence is

inherent for humans.

Students also reflected on their own experiences with racism throughout the duration

of the case study.[437] Warren suggested that the high school he had attended had similar racial

divisions to the ones that Frank Meeink experienced. Additionally, Richard described how

White and Black children drifted apart from each other in Portland when he was in school.

He noted that sports were sometimes the only connections both groups would have:

> We could get together in our early years, and play basketball from grade 4 to grade 8.
> But by middle school, we were alienated by our race if we could not carry on with a
> common interest of sports. Most high-school sports teams were all African Americans
> because it was an outlet for them to excel. But they developed quicker into adults than
> us White males. That is the start of racism I found was when we stopped hanging out
> together.

However, Richard was also explicit about how his views on racism had shifted:

> Like my views have definitely changed. I remember growing up in the States, a friend
> of mine showed me a, like a sign of the Klan, "Join our Klan, save our land." And it's
> still in my mind today. And I remember that he'd got it off a telephone pole, and had
> a Klan guy on a horse with the Klan outfit … So I still remember that slogan, even
> though a guy just showed me it. But yeah, it's uncool today, and we all have to, we're
> all humans together, and we all have to work together, and work on our differences.

Conversely, as I suggested earlier, Erin reflected on his lack of experiences with racism.

Besides these experiences with racism, my data give some indication of how my

students' lives outside of the class affected them. Richard spent time talking about his family,

both his children, parents, and brothers, and how his previous views on racism had led to

struggles in the past. But through his family, Richard was able to experience life in various

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[437] This includes both the January to April English 045 semester and the post-semester interview period.

parts of America, Prince George, and First Nations reserves. He even described an incident in

Prince George: when shopping at a local grocery store with his daughter and his daughter's

non-White boyfriend, he experienced racism directed at the group. Reflecting on *March* at

the end of the semester, he wrote,

> I was touched by the *March Book Two* about the racism that was so violent and
> brutal. I knew there was hatred against colour[ed] people, but not so bad. Not until
> last week have I felt such racism unfold. I was with my daughter and [her] boyfriend
> at Superstore, and [could] feel the glare at her boyfriend who was coloured. At that
> moment, I felt racism more than I felt before.

Other students confirmed their external influences differently. Warren and Heather

demonstrated that connections in their external lives were influencing their senses of social

justice though engagement with various community events. Both students noted how they

participated in a presentation for International Women's Day and potluck lunches hosted by

the Aboriginal Resource Centre at CNC.

As a summary of this theme suggests, students felt that the changes that they

experienced transpired in a holistic manner. Both experiences in class and aspects of their

external lives affected how students shifted their perspectives. Correspondingly, my final

major theme examines how my research data suggest that leading and participating in this

case study had a similar effect on me.

Major Theme #5

Leading this research study enabled my reflective and reflexive practice.

This conclusion is supported with evidence that I reflected on my values and beliefs

regarding education and activism; I engaged in self-criticism; I collected student feedback;

and I evaluated my pedagogical and research practice based on these concerns throughout the study, as well as after the semester ended.

I reflected on my educational values and beliefs throughout the entire process of this study. I began reflecting in a History 745 class taught by Dr. Holler in the fall of 2017 when she asked our class to write an "intellectual autobiography." I titled mine, "How Comics, Progressive Politics, History, English and Education Became My Academic Focus." In it, I began to reflect on my influences, including my activist parents, which would later influence my researcher positionality. Later, as I began teaching English 045 and collecting data in January 2018, I was simultaneously taking an independent study course, History 799, with Dr. Holler, where I completed the majority of my research connecting the theory of critical pedagogy to theories of historical understanding and historical consciousness. As I read Siha's case study involving critical pedagogy in ABE classes and the act of replacing marginalized discourses with dominant academic ones,[438] I reflected on my own teaching practice, explicitly discussing this issue with my English 045 class on several occasions. Throughout the semester, I discussed my educational background with the students, using my experiences as a graduate student at UNBC to model effective organizational skills, such as demonstrating how I compiled an effective outline by highlighting notes with different colours of felt pens to quickly visually categorize concepts and information for an English 650 course I had taken with Dr. Karin Beeler during the Fall 2017 semester. I later saw Cameron doing the same highlighting with his notes.

In addition, I was explicit with aspects of my researcher positionality on several occasions. I discussed how I had degrees in History, English, and Education with Richard

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[438] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 5.

and Erin, which led me to engage in some reflection after class. They had asked me if my undergraduate degree had influenced the texts I had chosen for the course. While I had replied that they had not, I later felt that I had been inaccurate, with several undergraduate instructors helping to shape my values. However, as I disagreed with the politics of several of my favourite instructors, I reflected back to my intellectual autobiography for History 745, noting that my radical values, which led me to pick stories that would "stir up trouble" were instilled by my parents. On a different occasion, I told the class about being quoted in the newspaper for criticizing the provincial government's decision to begin charging tuition for ABE courses. Additionally, I linked the class discussion to the Quebec student strikes in 2012 in response to increases in tuition. I felt that being open about these issues and my values were ways that I could address the ethical concerns regarding action research and indoctrination that I describe in Chapters One and Two.

As I noted in Chapter Three, I used my reflexive research journal to brainstorm explicitly about aspects of my researcher positionality, including my values and beliefs, but also my experiences with police. My reflexive research journal demonstrates how I spent time during the reading break in February 2018 brainstorming about my values and beliefs as part of my case study, but also my History 799 class with Dr. Holler. I brainstormed about my values connected to *March* and pedagogy such as justice, equality, fairness, antiracism, empathy, community, action, engagement, and history. I attempted to link my beliefs to these values explicitly. For example, regarding the value of empathy, I wrote, "Because many Canadian ABE students are First Nations people, I want to be sensitive to their experiences – so a story about racism in Black American history may allow them to make connections without triggering negative emotions." Regarding the value of action, I wrote, "Meaningful

sustained change requires collective action because of the hegemonic barriers in civil society," and "Talking about historical examples of racism and how it was effectively (?) resisted may encourage students to actively resist racism as well." My reflexive journal allowed me to demonstrate how my practice was affected by my positionality in ways that were initially invisible to me. For example, I noted that perhaps my relatively new role as a parent and sensitivity to children's issues may have unknowingly influenced how I created example discussion items centered on child development for our discussions of Frank Meeink's *Autobiography*. My reflexive journal also provided me an opportunity after the class was over to examine further how my experiences and biases regarding police forces may have affected my research. As I was transcribing my post-semester interview with Cameron, during a portion where he talked about his own minor experiences with police, it occurred to me that I should reflect upon my own. Thus, I described three incidents in my life where I interacted with the police, first at an anti-globalization protest in downtown Calgary in June 2002; next in a local park late at night where, as teenagers, my friends and I were hanging out; and finally, one night where I witnessed the intimidation of a family member picking me up from CNC by an off-duty police officer who had followed them from a few blocks away. These incidents, combined with my knowledge of police from the Canadian media and my students, may have also shaped how I approached this research, including selecting a text like *March* that is critical towards police forces. While I have attempted to engage in reflective practice throughout my career as an instructor, my careful attempts to document reflection and reflexivity for this case study certainly aided me.

My data also suggest that I engaged in some self-criticism. My reflexive journal entries reflect how I "second-guessed" myself multiple times during the semester. For

example, regarding a class discussion of the play *Berlin Blues*, I wrote, "Again, discussed

how the play uses humor to present serious situations – juxtapose[d] cultural appropriation

with severe poverty on reserves (eg. 30% unemployment rate) – maybe I handled it

inappropriately."[439] After my presentation on the historical background of *March*, Lewis, and

the civil rights movement, I wrote,

> Went ok – Too much teacher talk … I mentioned how there were incidents of White
> police murdering Blacks – and hesitated as I tried not to draw the obvious connection
> to how things have perhaps not changed much – and rein in my bias. But students
> picked up on it, and I think got what I had implied. Maybe people were more bored
> than the last presentation, maybe not.

This quote also is one example of how I questioned whether I was allowing my biases to

influence my practice in negative ways. My reflexive journal also records how I missed

multiple opportunities for further discussion on activist topics. For example, after a

discussion of formal and informal language in academic essays midway through the

semester, I wrote "Missed an opportunity to discuss the hidden curriculum." I also mentioned

that I had missed opportunities to explicitly bring International Women's Day and Black

History Month into the classroom. One serious concern I had with my practice stemmed from

my post-semester interview with Richard. After I transcribed the interview, I wrote in my

reflexive journal:

> We sounded racist. It certainly seems like we represent a White perspective on Black
> people. And I was reminded about how my own privilege influences what I say… I
> (and Richard) also use poverty as a reason for racial tensions now, but I am sure the
> issue is much more complex and historical than that. This probably is an expression
> of my own class focused values (including an ignorant White perspective on race).

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[439] The remainder of this entry states, "Asked class to consider which character's perspective they agreed with (Angie who resists selling out culture for development on such a huge scale – but works selling kitschy trinkets at a gift shop – and Donalda who wants to use the money from tone-deaf/ignorant OjibwayWorld to address issues of poverty/unemployment in their community at the expense of authenticity and mockery of their true heritage)."

Listening to Richard's interview also led me to notice that I was being more deliberate in discussing certain issues with him. I wrote in my reflexive journal that,

> It seemed like I was being more active in the interview process with him than perhaps with other students (e.g. following points/picking his brain/pushing him further off script – which may have led to useful data, or not). It also seemed like I was trying to provide positive reinforcement for opinions and change that I believed were progressive/antiracist/just. I wondered if that is more important than gathering data anyway. It seems like another tension between researcher and teacher.

Finally, reflecting on the end of the semester and my student success, I wrote, "I worry that some students fell through the cracks. Many students dropped out of the course (because they weren't interested or able to attend)." These examples of data certainly suggest that engaging in this research gave me opportunities to self-criticize. My students also gave me feedback that I reflected on.

Generally, students gave me positive feedback. In my anonymous informal class evaluations, students wrote that I was funny, smart, considerate, "strict (in a good way)," patient, and understanding. Contrary to what I had written earlier about letting students "fall through the cracks," one student wrote that I helped them by having a timely manner in responding to students about submitting missed assignments. In the post-semester interview, Erin told me that "Some teachers like to tiptoe. Some teachers like to kind of pick fights. You're a pick-fights teacher." But students were not uncritical of my practice, and challenged me (kindly) when they felt I had been unfair. In my unofficial anonymous student feedback, one student wrote that I was flexible, but "people took advantage of it and didn't always attend class," and two students wrote about how they found it distracting that I "let people talk off topic too much." More specifically, after I told a student to add another page to a journal entry, Richard noted that I had originally asked students to do one page or spend 20 minutes on it. I acknowledged that he was right, and said that it was a learning experience for

me (as a reminder to hand out paper copies of assignments instead of relying on oral instructions). Additionally, when I was giving students feedback on their final research presentations, Erin stated that many of my suggestions for the future were "new to him," suggesting that I had done a poor job preparing students to do their presentations. These examples of student feedback supported my efforts to be reflective and reflective during this case study.

After the semester finished, I wrote in my reflexive journal that I was happy with the results of the class and how the study proceeded. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, I noted that my in-class observation notebook was not especially helpful, in that I was often too busy to make detailed observations, with a few meaningful exceptions during class discussions. In regards to my post-semester interview with Richard, I felt proud that my reflexive practice had led to recognizing a meaningful example of tension between my roles as researcher and teacher. I felt that my strategy to protect my student participants had been effective, and that I had followed ethical research practices by explicitly reiterating my research process and accompanying protections for students when necessary. Finally, I felt proudest that I had managed to successfully link my teaching practice of bringing political and social-justice-related concepts into my classes with my personal educational goals. Clearly, a summary of this qualitative data indicates that action research is a tool that enables instructors to be both reflexive and reflective.

While the major themes emerging from my data suggest that reading and discussing *March Book Two* affected my students' perspectives on racism and activism in a positive manner, these themes also suggest that the graphic-narrative format supported their learning. Additionally, the data recognize that students were influenced by sources other than *March*

during the semester, and that engaging in action research encouraged me to be reflexive and reflective. However, my data suggests two additional supplementary findings: that reading *March Book Two* supported historical thinking, and students considered a variety of other issues besides racism and activism throughout the semester.

Supplementary finding #1

Students connected various aspects of historical thinking to *March* during the period of my case study.

A number of students recognized how graphic narratives could be useful for teaching history. For example, Cameron noted that both *March Book Two* and Joe Sacco's article "The Underground War" were both interesting ways to learn "real history." Geoff suggested that *March* "really connects you to what happened, and also really shows you a piece of history everyone should recognize." Erin demonstrated an understanding of racism as a historical construction when he stated, "there's a reason for the way people think," in a classroom discussion of racism's being replicated generationally. Personally, my process of reflection during the semester led me to believe that as a history textbook, *March*, with its clear bias for radical activism, could be used to supplement more traditional texts in establishing historical understandings for the context of the American South in the 1960s.

Students also recognized how the historical context of racism and police brutality in the civil rights era is different than today's. During the post-semester interviews, I asked each student to think about how they would react if they witnessed an event today similar to one depicted in *March*: a young White male spitting on a Black protester in front of a movie theatre. In response, Erin noted that racism like this was "accepted and well-established of

the time." He contrasted this expectation with his own upbringing: "I've been raised a certain way so I've developed a certain way, my mind's a certain way. And currently, I would obviously try to step in and see what the hell's going on; you don't want to, like nobody wants to get stabbed." By contrasting the context of the civil rights era with the modern era, Erin is demonstrating historical empathy, a form of perspective taking and an important component of historical understanding.[440] In addition, Heather argued that *March* illustrates this contrast between racism in the civil rights era and today, by shifting between the 1960s and Obama's inauguration in 2009. Cameron linked police brutality in the past and the present, distinguishing the present from the past with the ability today to resist police abuses through the use of cell phone videos and social media to encourage accountability. Richard suggested that the inequality depicted in *March* has shifted today from a focus on race, to a more inclusive definition that includes other issues like employment, religion, and class. As I cited before, Richard also noted that racism itself has become publicly unacceptable in a different way than it had been in the past.

Students also demonstrated that they felt ignoring or erasing histories, even racist histories, is negative. Rachel discussed the Armenian Genocide Memorial Day, 24 April, in the context of Turkish people's visiting Armenia and the justified resentment that many older Armenians still feel towards Turkey. Heather suggested that while racism may never be eliminated, that it could be faced and "forgiven in our hearts." Additionally, Warren recognized that many Americans in the south have felt attacked with the recent practice of removing statues of Confederate leaders: "The south has received a big blow towards their way of life or part of their culture. A big part of the American government has torn down

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[440] Yilmaz, "Historical Empathy and Its Implications," 331.

their Confederate statues. Yeah, sad for them; everyone is happy; not them. It's their little history that they believed in." Finally, Erin described how Whoopi Goldberg introduced a historical edition of Bugs Bunny cartoons, which included content that would be considered racist today. He wrote that how she introduced the cartoons was "ground-breaking" to him, reporting that Goldberg stated, "It's one thing to remove [these examples of racism], it's another to leave them in. And it is my opinion, and the opinion of the studio, that leaving them in shows this was the case at one time, and that this was the way it was at one time. And removing them is like saying it never happened." However, while students felt it was valuable to recognize how things were in the past, they also demonstrated how they felt it was valuable to recognize how the past has affected the future.

Linking *March* to the ethical dimension of historical understanding, several students recognized how the civil rights protests represented in *March Book Two* had had a positive impact on the present and future. Cameron wrote, "We have to remember those heroes who fought for equality and we have to show them respect. For what they have done for our future." Similarly, Geoff commented, "to see what the African Americans went through and accomplished to just gain rights, freedom and much more is crazy. I am sure that we are all thankful for what they did for the world and our future." Even more explicitly, Geoff added, "When reading about struggle and harsh racism back then, it makes you realize how lucky people are today. Makes you think as well, if that all didn't happen, would it still be the same today." Heather also thanked "those brave men and women who put their lives on the line for changes we have today." Later, she wrote, "Could you imagine living in a world where no one stood for equality and civil rights? Where would we be today in society? Thankfully, the

ones who speak their minds, stand up for justice, and what is right, help us to get where we are today."

That students were able to demonstrate these components of historical thinking in an ABE English course supports the scholarly consensus regarding teaching with graphic narratives that I summarized in Chapters One and Two. As Richard emphasized, more education on the civil rights movement and the Freedom Riders could be useful in addressing issues of racism in North America. However, the last supplementary finding extracted from my data suggests that students considered a variety of other issues besides racism during the semester.

Supplementary finding #2

Students recognized issues other than racism and activism during my case study.

These issues included a variety of forms of division: poverty, differing perceptions of Canada, suspicion of politicians, and police brutality. While students linked poverty to racism, they also linked poverty to a lack of education and crime. In a post-semester interview, Erin suggested that a lack of education combined with poverty for marginalized Black people would lead teenagers to sell drugs. Erin also suggested that White supremacy was linked to having a low income. Cameron argued that poverty, violence, and corruption were results of cobalt-mining operations in the Congo. As I noted earlier, Heather identified that many First Nations people experience poverty in their reserves, but also that she believes many Indigenous students experience financial burdens as they attempt post-secondary education. Growing up in "an area of poverty," in Portland, Richard was keenly cognizant of poverty in America, which he demonstrated by researching average family incomes for both

White and Black Americans. He discussed how poverty influenced marginalized people in

Portland: "There's no safety net type thing, or there's no programs for them. Everyone just

goes through the cracks of life." Conversely, he wrote about how his daughter and wife help

people "that are less fortunate," and how "there's nothing wrong with poverty, as long as

[people experiencing poverty are] trying. To succeed and go to school, and have goals and

dreams." Despite Richard's concerns with poverty, he is arguing that people who experience

material poverty should not be stigmatized as they try to address their financial stability.[441]

In addition to analyzing poverty, a few students demonstrated some cynicism about

government and politicians. Of course, as I have previously mentioned, students did

recognize Nelson Mandela, John Lewis, and Martin Luther King jr. as positive leaders.

However, Warren criticized the apology Stephan Harper made to victims of residential

school and praised Justin Trudeau's. Cameron criticized the current president of the Congo.

Rachel discussed how racist politicians need to be opposed. While Heather and Richard

insisted they were uninformed regarding politics, Cameron and Erin linked the current

American president Donald Trump to racist and unethical behaviours. Erin discussed several

scandals linked to Trump, including insulting people from Mexico, offending African

politicians, and alleged collusion with Russia during the presidential election in 2016.

Suspicion of Trump was linked to another issue: a disagreement on Canadian identity.

Generally, students saw Canada in a positive light compared to other places. Canada,

students indicated, was safer than America. Rachel had not witnessed racism in Canada. She

felt that Canadians are "kind of diverse people." Cameron felt that Americans were less

polite than Canadians. He compared how Canadians and Americans talk: "Here you can see

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[441] Thomas and Hirsch, *A Progressive's Style Guide*, 9.

people, 'Hey my friends, how's it going?' ... But there, 'Oh yo, nigger.' How you gonna say

that?" In comparison to Trump, Erin suggested that Justin Trudeau would never be "called

out as a racist." Finally, Richard, who had experience living in both Canada and America,

told me in a post-semester interview that,

> There is a difference between America and Canada. The Canadians as I see, are more multi-racial, and there's not such a divide by income. So that's how racism is done in the States. It's more or less done by income… There's a lot where you do not have safety nets in the States. That's why you see people living on the streets. And in poverty. And many people in jails. And things like that. A lot of mental illness being dealt with and stuff like that. You do not have it, say like a town like Prince George … we have a middle class in our area. And in certain areas of the United States, there is not as much middle class, where you could have someone renting across the street, or a basement suite. And people struggling, all different incomes on the same block. You wouldn't per say have that in certain areas of, areas I know, in the States.

However, Richard's views were more nuanced. In an early writing assignment, he suggested

that Prince George had limited opportunities for employment. His final research paper on the

effects of the pine beetle in British Columbia included gloomy economic predictions from

the north and how the Prince George community will suffer from the loss of good jobs and

the accompanying economic benefits they bring. Additionally, as I mentioned earlier,

students recognized that Canada has issues with child poverty, human trafficking, the

Highway of Tears, Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, and modern racism. One issue

that students also contrasted between Canada and America was police brutality.

Police brutality is the last issue that my data suggests my students considered during

my case study. As I previously noted, students were upset and shocked by the racism

presented in *March Book Two*, including the degrading behaviour of the police. Students

focused on the violence of Bull Conner against the child protesters, how the jail guards used

collective punishments, and the vicious beatings depicted throughout the story. Rachel wrote,

"I couldn't imagine how could [the police] treat [the protesters] in such a dehumanizing way.

When they took their mattresses, toothbrushes, and they didn't give them underwear."[442] As students recognized that the historical context of racism in *March* differed from their own, they also recognized the difference in context of police brutality in Canada and elsewhere.

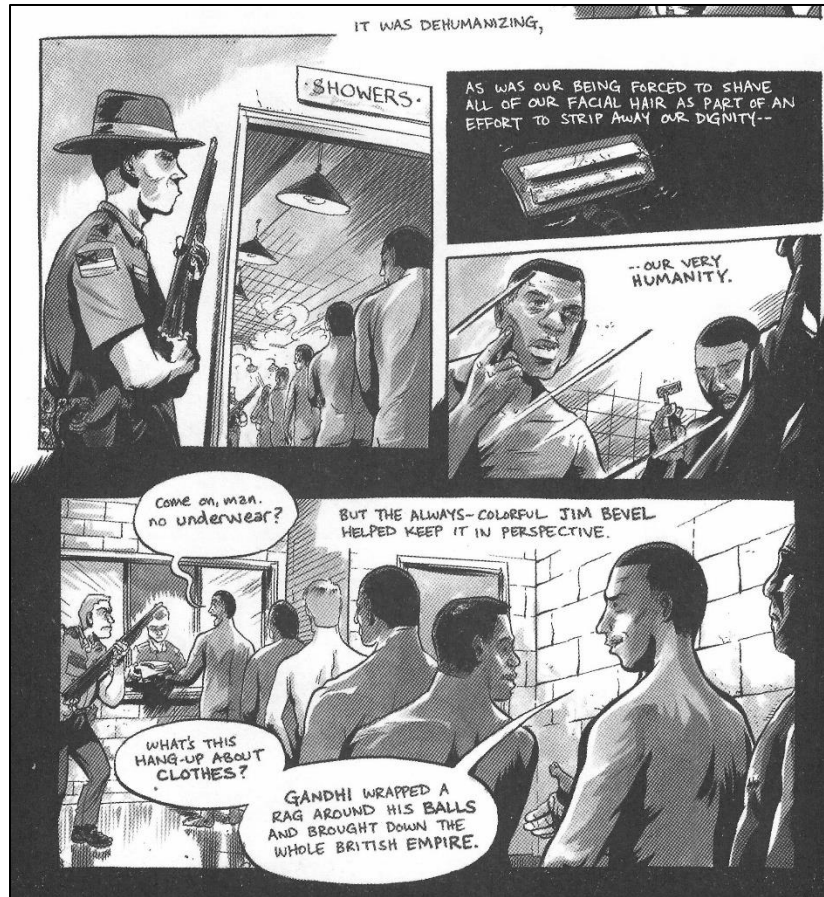However, students still linked the police

Fig. 17 Panels noted by Rachel. Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March Book Two*, 102.

brutality depicted in *March* to modern examples of brutality. As I mentioned earlier, Erin compared the civil rights protesters to the Black Lives Matter movement. Cameron noted that the police in the Congo are far more dangerous than the RCMP because of their lack of pay and corruption. He suggested that police in Canada are able to avoid brutality through their training. Rachel argued that the police in Syria had to be brutal in order to deal with jihadists and rebels. Additionally, Richard distinguished between the police in Canada and America, identifying a higher willingness of American police officers to shoot someone. In a post-semester interview, he talked about his interactions with American police:

> I was even at the border, three months ago, and I pulled up to the border, and the guy kept telling me to go forward a few inches, and I went like this, like 'What the heck do you want?' and the guy goes, 'I want to stay behind you, so I can watch your

[442] See Fig. 17.

hands, so you don't shoot me.' … And even police brutality when I grew up in Portland was, we were kind of bad kids, and they would work on the sewers, we were one of the worst neighbourhoods, and we would throw everything in, and I was trying to jingle out, one of the big lights' batteries there, and this cop cruiser comes up; someone called the cops on me, and I was probably, I don't know, twelve, and the policeman goes, 'What are ya doin'?' and I just said, 'I'm taking a battery here. I seen the Black guy do it.' And the cop even told me, he goes, 'You know those people aren't supposed to be in our neighbourhood.' And that was two blocks away.

As with their perceptions of Canada, students clearly demonstrated their belief that the RCMP were less dangerous than police officers elsewhere.

However, as a young First Nations male, Warren had had experiences with the RCMP that were much more negative than those of his classmates. Growing up on a reserve, he saw the RCMP as just a large gang themselves. He spoke of witnessing a number of negative encounters with the police. In a post-semester interview, he told me about witnessing the death of a homeless Indigenous person: "I was working outside one of the homeless shelters, building a fence, for one of my bosses, and one guy overdosed, and the paramedics were gonna revive him, but the RCMP pulled them off, and just let him die. 'Cause, I don't know how many times they revived him that week." He compared the behaviour of the RCMP to Nazi Germans in occupied Europe during World War II: "they told my one buddy to move aside when they're walking, and the last time I heard that was when the Germans were in Poland telling the Jews to walk in the gutter." In addition, he wrote about how the RCMP would stereotype and harass him:

> I have to jog in the gym, not outside. Where I used to love jogging outside but I can't anymore. The RCMP will pull me over and ask what I'm running from and be randomly nosy. I get pulled over from coming home from a late-night movie. Walking home, pulled over, stopped, can't go anywhere until I show them my ID. If they are driving by and I look at them wrong, they pull me over and search me for no reason at all.

Warren even described how he had witnessed RCMP officers abuse his friends:

I've heard a lot of my friends getting the shit kicked out of them, like they were spitting dirt out of their mouth, and like the RCMP are like just beating up on them, and dogs sicced on them for no reason, and I've just learned not to get involved. And it's just a shitty thing to see, getting, seeing your buddies getting shit-kicked by the police. And if you do get involved, that's what you're gonna get. And they're not nice about it either.

However, Warren noted that not all RCMP officers were bad. He spoke positively about the RCMP's Integrated Gang Task Force, suggesting that the IGTF actually cared about making things better for people. Warren's experiences clearly contrasted with those of the other students in the study, who had only experienced police brutality through the news or entertainment media. But as I noted earlier, students felt that more accountability would help address these issues of racism and police brutality. Students generally felt that the proliferation of cameras and social media would lead to more recording of abuse, which would lead to a drop in police brutality.

To summarize my results, the research data that I collected during my case study have suggested five major themes and two supplementary findings. Reading and discussing *March Book Two* in class influenced my students' perceptions of racism and activism, supported their learning, and influenced how they perceived a variety of topics during my case study. Leading my case study also supported my reflexive and reflective practice. The next section of this chapter addresses how I maximized the validity of my data.

Validity

To increase the validity of my data, I planned my data-collection techniques to follow common practices in qualitative action research, including recording classroom observations

and personal reflections; reading student work; and recording interviews.[443] By collecting

data from these multiple sources, my goal was to triangulate my results, as suggested by

Sagor in the *Action Research Guidebook*.[444] I did this by referring to events and information I

extracted from my reflexive journal entries and files of photocopied student work during

post-semester interviews. Thus, I was able to corroborate the validity of the data from five of

my seven participating students. In addition, as I noted in Chapter Three, I used a form of

member checking during the interview process to validate my data, by giving each student

the opportunity to read the transcript of our interview and make any changes or

corrections.[445] Finally, as I mentioned earlier, I attempted to manage concerns of

indoctrination or influencing my data by both being explicit with my research positionality in

class and designing the case study to protect students who wished to complete the course

without participating.

Discussion

Comparing my data to the "Measuring Change in Student Attitudes and Values after

Reading *March Book Two*" chart I described in Chapter Three suggests that there was a wide

range in shifts in student attitude and values on various topics. Based on his responses, I

argue that Warren did not demonstrate a shift in his writing or speech regarding racism or

activism. Conversely, I argue that my data suggest that Rachel, Heather, Geoff, Cameron,

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[443] Judith C. Lapadat, "Thematic Analysis," *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos and Elden Wiebe (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2010): 2, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397.n342.

[444] Sagor, *The Action Research Guidebook*, 109.

[445] In addition, as I noted in Chapter Three, I asked both Richard and Warren to check my results by reviewing an edited draft of this chapter. While Warren declined to review the chapter, Richard read it and wrote in an email, "It looks great, from my point of view we discussed in class in writing."

and Erin experienced minor shifts in writing or speech regarding racism and activism.

Finally, I argue that Richard's responses indicate that he experienced a major shift in his

writing or speech regarding racism and activism. Further to this, I will discuss how each

major theme that I presented in my results can be linked to the scholarly literature regarding

the four domains of my research: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy,

transformative learning theory, and action-research methodologies involving adult students. I

will only discuss the supplementary findings in my data in terms of how they support my

major themes.

Reading *March Book Two* helped change my students' perceptions of racism.

My first major theme demonstrates that my students experienced perspective changes

as detailed in transformative learning theory. As I note in Chapter One, experiencing

disorienting dilemmas can lead to both sudden and incremental changes.[446] I argue that the

changes in perceptions of racism that my students report may be the result of learning the

brutal extent of racism that Lewis and the other civil rights activists faced through the

synthesis of visuals and text in *March Book Two*. Supporting this conclusion is my students'

feedback regarding my teaching that suggests that they felt I had created a classroom where,

as Mezirow recommends, they felt safe to critically reflect and discuss their various beliefs

and values. Additionally, my student responses suggest that the images in *March* and our

classroom activities enabled the three ways I recognized how transformations occur: through

discussions where assumptions are critically evaluated; critically examining the assumptions

of others and our own; and imagining and taking on the viewpoints of others.[447] My students'

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[446] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 86; Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 106.
[447] Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 78; Mezirow, "Learning to Think," 86-87.

responses certainly indicate that the narrative and images in *March* had emotional impact, connecting emotional responses to transformations as Tisdell does.[448] My results also suggest that students made "empathic connection with people different from themselves," which as Daloz suggests, can aid transformations involving the development of concepts of social responsibility.[449] However, as in Robinson and Levac's study that I described in Chapter Two, there is no evidence that most of my students have completed the process of transformation by engaging in reflective action.[450] Thus, I maintain that the slight shifts in perspective regarding racism suggest that five of my seven participants may be experiencing a gradual process of transformation. Accordingly, I argue that Richard's act of taking photos of historical sites of racism combined with his reflection on his previous and current views of race demonstrate that he has transformed his perspectives on racism by becoming sensitive to Black history. Like the studies involving transformative learning theory that I examined in Chapter Two, my results indicate the potential of graphic narratives to support emancipatory changes. My results also suggest that ABE has the potential to be transformative for students, echoing an additional theme I presented in Chapter Two.

Students developed an appreciation for nonviolent activism.

Components of my second major theme can be linked to the theory of critical pedagogy. As I noted in Chapter One, contradictory consciousness or regressive hegemony can be defined as holding negative stereotypes involving race, gender, and class differences. As in Parkhouse's study described in Chapters One and Two, despite shifting their views on

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[448] Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy," 63-64.
[449] Daloz, "Transformative Learning," 110.
[450] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 123.

racism, students in my study still expressed racial stereotypes similar to those held by the students Parkhouse observed.[451] In addition, I argue that one student's statement that interventions should be avoided in order to encourage social change because "bad things" need to occur first is a form of regressive hegemony, or consent to domination through passive stasis. On the other hand, the same student was cognizant of the concerns regarding presentism, or recognizing that people during the civil rights era had different values, attitudes, and beliefs than our own.[452] Warren's belief that there are no options when a politician says something racist is also an example of regressive hegemony through passive stasis. Additionally, as I suggested earlier, my students did not demonstrate that they had engaged in reflective action, or begun "to take action against the oppressive elements of reality,"[453] and I cannot argue that they have become conscientized as Freire describes. In addition, my students' ability to evaluate danger before engaging in action is a form of privilege. By being able to choose to engage in activism when it suits them, my students are exercising agency that many victims of oppression do not have.[454] However, students generally did recognize that history was mutable, and that, like the activists in *March*, people had the ability to change the world.[455] By recognizing that other possible events could have occurred, students are demonstrating an important component of historical understanding and critical pedagogy that I summarized in Chapter One: being aware that history did not unfold in a prescribed manner.[456] Finally, unlike the studies I examined in Chapter Two, my results

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[451] Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 74-76.

[452] Huijgen, et al., "Promoting Historical Contextualization," 4.

[453] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 17.

[454] Collins, "What is White Privilege."

[455] Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation,* 79.

[456] Gallie, "The Historical Understanding," 157; Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals,* 129.

do not indicate that I explicitly encouraged my students to act. Instead, my results indicate

that students correctly perceived that one of my goals was to encourage them to act.

The hybrid visual-textual graphic-narrative format supported student learning.

The third major theme of my results corroborates the themes I highlighted in my

literature review regarding graphic narratives. My students did require instruction with

specific skills to read *March*,[457] and unsurprisingly, like Romagnoli, I found that my

enthusiasm for graphic narratives was not universally shared.[458] Additionally, as my students

reported reading *March* enabled them to make connections between themselves and the

characters in the narrative, they "personalize[d] and problematize[d] ... historical events," as

Clark suggests graphic narratives are capable of doing.[459] The comments students made

about being influenced by each other reflect the themes I presented in Chapter Two regarding

the effectiveness of learning through group dialogue,[460] as well as the development of a

classroom that is "safe, supportive, collaborative and learner centred."[461] Finally, as I

suggested in Chapter Three, after reading *March*, students demonstrated that they were able

to address the learning outcomes set by the provincial government:

> … recall and interpret information (identify subject/topic, main ideas, supporting
> ideas, and sequence); … draw conclusions; … respond to information; …
> demonstrate effective listening skills and respond appropriately to listener feedback;
> … respond appropriately to thoughts, opinions, and work of others; … critically
> evaluate, make inferences, and draw conclusions; … identify, discuss, and evaluate
> literary elements (plot, theme, character, setting, conflict); … establish co-operative
> working relationships with others; … recognize and respect diversity and individual
> differences; … [and] challenge assumptions constructively.[462]

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[457] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 173.

[458] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 195.

[459] Clark, "Encounters with Historical Agency," 503.

[460] Siha, "Imagining the Moon," 164.

[461] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 117.

[462] Government of British Columbia, "Adult Basic Education," 97-99;

Consequently, I am confident that *March Book Two* is a useful text for ABE classrooms.

There were many other factors in the course and my students' lives that contributed to internal changes throughout the semester.

My fourth major theme echoes the academic research regarding ABE that I presented in Chapter Two. My students detailed how they were affected by external circumstances, similar to the ones detailed by Willans and Seary.[463] As I suggested earlier, the shifts some students expressed during this study can be linked to transformative learning theory and the studies conducted by King and Wright; Raynolds and Johnson; and Willans and Seary.[464] However, unlike the students in the studies I examined in Chapter Two, my students did not report changes in their confidence, sense of empowerment, or academic ability.[465] My supposition is that my participating students may have previously developed confidence in their ability to succeed in their education, possibly in prior ABE classrooms or during high school. Additionally, I hypothesize that students from overseas who were unfamiliar with the Canadian post-secondary education system were affected by the clash between their expectations for their instructors based on their cultural experiences and how I presented myself and my educational practice. Cameron supported this guess with a comparison between teachers in Canada and teachers in Africa: "[Here] we have a chance to talk, make a joke, you know. The teacher in Africa? How you gonna make a joke with the teacher?" I suspect something similar may have occurred with Rachel, coming from a place where public

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[463] Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 438.

[464] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 121; Reynolds and Johnson, "Pillars of Support," 46; Willans and Seary, "'I'm Not Stupid After All,'" 450.

[465] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 108-109.

criticism can be dangerous, to a classroom where public criticism is encouraged. Despite or perhaps because my behaviour subverted their expectations, these students may have felt uncomfortable or unable to report changes in their confidence, sense of empowerment, or academic ability.

Leading this research study enabled my reflective and reflexive practice.

My final major theme supports the research on action-research methodologies that I highlighted in Chapters One and Two. For example, my reflexive and reflective experiences substantiate Villacañas de Castro's argument that action research encourages reflexivity.[466] My data show how I wrestled with the ethical issues involved with being both teacher and researcher. Indeed, by following the methods of Clark and Siha, I feel that my plan to give students the ability to present the appearance of participation was successful. While acknowledging that I may receive personal benefits from completing this research, I have exposed my decisions and actions to public scrutiny in order to remain accountable regarding my emancipatory goals, as Jeyaraj and Harland suggest.[467] Finally, I feel that I have benefitted from participating in this research in an intellectual way. I certainly feel that my data demonstrate how I have improved my reflective practice. Conversely, my results do not indicate that my students have become reflective learners, as in Johnson et al.'s study.[468] But unlike Johnson et al.'s study, my research did not specifically ask my students to reflect on their learning experiences in ABE.

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[466] Villacañas de Castro, "Meta-Action Research with Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study," 545.
[467] Jeyaraj and Harland, "Teaching with Critical Pedagogy," 592.
[468] Johnson et al, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 65.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the major themes and supplementary findings that resulted from my study, the validity of these results, and a discussion of how the five major themes of my study link to the academic literature regarding my four research domains: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action-research methodologies involving adult students. While I answered one of my sub-questions in Chapter Three, these themes and discussion effectively answer my remaining research question and sub-questions: Can historical nonfiction graphic narratives be used as resources in adult history and English courses in such a way that they meet the requirements of the courses but also foster critical awareness of social issues? These results suggest that, yes, the graphic-narrative format of *March Book Two* supported my students' learning. How did reading and discussing *March Book Two* affect my students? Among other factors, reading and discussing *March Book Two* helped transform my students' perceptions of racism and nonviolent activism. How did leading this research study affect me? It assisted my reflective and reflexive practice as a teacher of adults.

In my final chapter, I will discuss the significance and limitations of this study. In addition, I will suggest opportunities for further research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has been an attempt to address issues of racism in Canadian society through my educational practice as an instructor of an ABE English 045 course at a small Canadian college. This thesis describes how I designed and implemented a case study based on the four theoretical domains presented in Chapter One: teaching with graphic narratives, critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and action-research methodologies involving adult students. In Chapter Two, I described how I synthesized my theoretical framework and examined the themes in the scholarly literature linking my four theoretical domains. Chapter Three included a description of the methods I used to collect data regarding changes in student affect[469] that resulted from reading, discussing, and writing about *March Book Two* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. Chapter Four detailed the major themes and supplementary findings emerging from my study, as well as a discussion of these results. Chapter Four concluded by explaining how my results answer my research question and sub-questions: historical nonfiction graphic narratives can be used as traditional textbooks in adult history and English classes with the additional benefit of fostering critical awareness of social issues. The results of my study demonstrate that among other factors, reading and discussing *March Book Two* helped transform my students' perceptions of racism and nonviolent activism, but also that participating in this research process aided my reflective and reflexive practice as an instructor of post-secondary

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[469] Popham, "All About Assessment/Assessing Student Affect," 85; as I noted in Chapter One, Popham describes student affect as, "the attitudes, interests, and values that students exhibit and acquire in school."

education. In this final chapter, I discuss the significance of my study, its limitations, and my recommendations for future research.

Significance of Research

As I suggested in Chapter One, my study is significant because it addresses gaps between the theories of critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and comics studies. Most importantly, my discussion of results in Chapter Four demonstrates how reading and discussing *March Book Two* encouraged my students to shift their perspectives on racism and nonviolent activism as described in transformative learning theory. This result represents a significant extension to transformative learning theory because as I indicated in Chapter One, while research exists that suggests reading fiction and viewing art can lead to transformations,[470] no research has previously demonstrated that reading and discussing graphic narratives, as a synthesis of visuals and text, can lead to transformations.

My research also builds upon the work of a number of scholars. By presenting teachers with research linking critical pedagogy to transformative learning theory and graphic narratives, I have answered Ross and Parkhouse's call for research on different approaches to critical pedagogy.[471] By demonstrating the use of graphic narratives as a tool to facilitate transformations in ABE courses, I have also responded to King and Wright's appeal for more materials and models to assist the professional development of ABE educators interested in transformative learning theory.[472] My results also demonstrate that graphic narratives can be connected to the development of conscientization, as Carleton

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[470] Jarvis, "Fiction and Film," 498; Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 22; Clark and Rossiter, "Narrative learning," 66; Lawrence, "Powerful feelings," 67; Tisdell, "Critical Media Literacy," 52.
[471] Ross, "Broadening the Circle," 615; Parkhouse, "Critical Pedagogy in US History Classrooms," 199-200.
[472] King and Wright, "New Perspectives on Gains," 120.

suggests.[473] Indeed, while many scholars recognize the links between Freire's conscientization and Mezirow's transformative learning theory, my study is significant as it demonstrates that transformative learning theory can be used by critical pedagogues as a tool to study shifts in student affect regarding issues related to social justice.

Limitations

As I noted in Chapter One, my study is limited by bounds common to qualitative action-research studies in classrooms: a short period of time and a small group of participants.[474] In addition, I recognized that there are limits on the reliability of the data that I gained from my interviews with my students.[475] During a conversation with Erin near the end of the semester, I mentioned that nobody seemed to be saying that they hated to read comics. Erin replied, "Out loud, anyway." I laughed, but Erin's comment demonstrates that even my students were aware of the limitations of self-reported data. Reflecting on the progression and conclusion of the study, I recognize that my study has several other limitations. Like Robinson and Levac, in their study, I am only seeing a "snapshot" of my students' progress through the process of perspective transformation.[476] Additionally, similar to students in Hoggan and Cranton's study of how reading a fictional text encourages transformations in students, my students' transformations are linked to the content of the texts they read this semester. Reading different texts could lead to different

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[473] Carleton, "Drawn to Change," 16; Carleton suggests "politically progressive" comics can be connected to the development of critical consciousness, but does not test this hypothesis in a case study involving human learners.

[474] Romagnoli, "Comics in the Classroom," 66.

[475] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 13.

[476] Robinson and Levac, "Transformative Learning in Developing," 109.

transformations.[477] My data could have been affected by the inconsistent attendance of my students throughout the semester, or as I described in Chapter Three, when we ran out of time to complete activities in class. A further limitation of my study is that my students had minimal involvement member checking the results of my analysis.[478] Finally, my participant-protection process limited my ability to begin thematic analysis, as I was not able to begin coding my data until I was able to tell which students agreed to participate after the semester was finished. However, several of these limitations can be addressed in future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future action-research studies can address some of the limitations of my study. Studies could be conducted over multiple semesters, in other locations, outside the classroom, or with multiple classes of students. Future researchers could avoid observing their own classes, in order to negate the teacher/researcher conflicts I experienced. However, if an instructor conducts research on his or her class, classroom discussions could be videotaped in order to maximize opportunities to extract data. With proper preparation, student involvement with the case study could be increased during data collection by building on student input such as student-developed discussion questions. Participating students could also be invited to review and comment on research results.

The research I have presented could be extended in a number of ways. As I suggested earlier, as my results were limited by the content in *March Book Two*, additional research could examine how other graphic narratives affect students. For example, graphic narratives like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* could lead students to shift their perspectives on the status

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[477] Hoggan and Cranton, "Promoting Transformative Learning," 12-14.
[478] As I noted earlier, only Richard reviewed a draft of Chapter Four.

of women or perhaps their perspectives regarding Iran; Rosalind B. Penfold's

Dragonslippers: This is What an Abusive Relationship Looks Like could help students

transform their perspectives on domestic violence; and *Tyranny* by Lesley Fairfield could

help students transform their perspectives on anorexia, bulimia, and addiction.[479]

Longitudinal research studies that examine if students complete the process of perspective

transformation are certainly required. Researchers could extend the bounds of their studies by

including an additional interview component after a period of time has passed. Further

studies could compare how reading graphic narratives affects students in non-ABE classes.

Conclusions

My study has three main lessons to offer the academic community. First, like other

genres of literature and art, historical nonfiction graphic narratives such as *March Book Two*

may be used effectively as texts in English and History courses with adult learners. Second,

these graphic narratives have the potential to contribute to emancipatory transformations in

students. Finally, while action research contains many challenges for teachers interested in

conducting research with their students, action research does provide many opportunities to

improve practice through reflection and reflexivity.

Therefore, teachers who wish to address social issues in their classrooms require

knowledge of historical understanding and historical consciousness in order to communicate

an important goal to their students: while the past seems fixed, it was not predetermined;

thus, the present is the same, and despite the limits of individual agency in the face of

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[479] Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (New York: Pantheon, 2004); Rosalind B. Penfold, *Dragonslippers: This is What an Abusive Relationship Looks Like* (New York: Black Cat/ Grove Press, 2005); Lesley Fairfield, *Tyranny* (Toronto: Tundra Books, 2009); for an extensive list of graphic narratives that may support positive transformations, see Carlton, "Drawn to Change," 157-158.

widespread regressive hegemony, improvements to society both were and are possible through collective action. Critical pedagogy can provide a guide for these teachers, while transformative learning theory can provide teachers with the tools to understand and measure the changes that their students experience. Historical nonfiction graphic narratives like *March Book Two*, which describes one student's experience as an activist in the civil rights era, can be effective teaching tools when students are properly prepared to read these non-traditional texts.

Completing this study has been a positive experience, and I encourage my colleagues in post-secondary education institutions to do the same: engage in action-research projects with their students in order to add to the academic literature in various forms, while they inform and improve their educational practice. As I note in Chapter Two, students can benefit from participating in action research by becoming more confident, assertive, and reflective learners.[480] Perhaps more importantly, I would like to encourage instructors, as responsible citizens concerned with various issues today, to reject the hegemonic appeal for objectivity, and engage in teaching that not only supports student learning, but models values of diversity, justice, fairness, and equality in order to contribute to the improvement of human society. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks, like Paulo Freire, would approve.

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[480] Askham, "Context and Identity," 90; Johnson et al, "A Tale of Two Adult Learners," 65.

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Appendix A: Classroom Documents

ENGL 045 Winter 2018

STUDENT INFO PAGE

Please fill out this form completely so that I can learn a little more about you and what you would like to achieve in this course.

My name: _____

What I prefer to be called: _____

Email address: (one you check regularly): _____

Best phone number to reach me at: _____

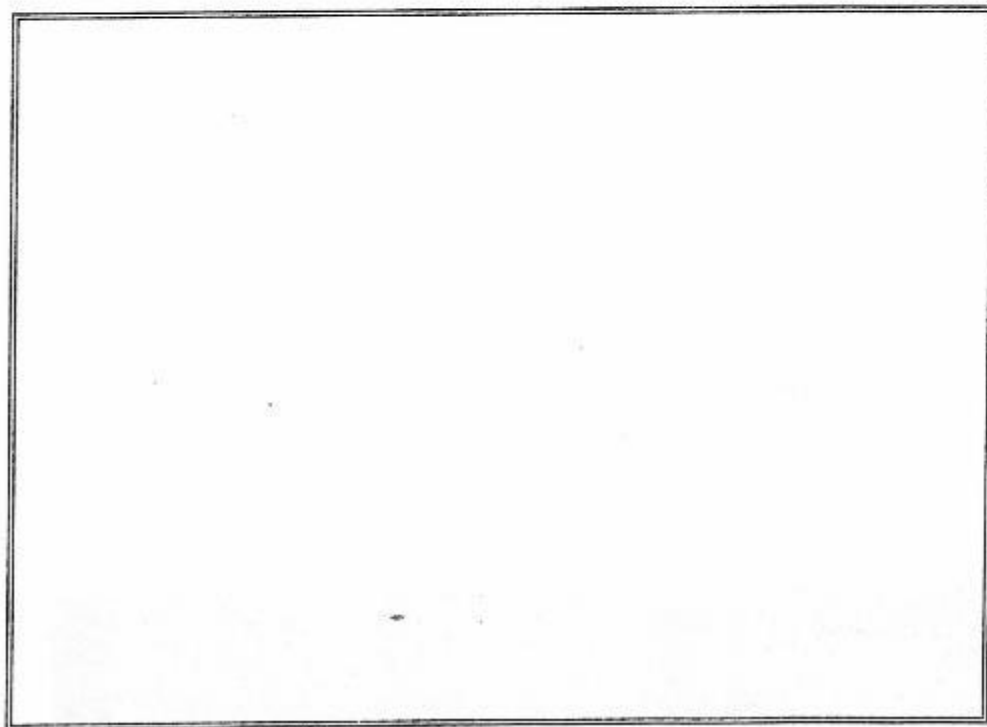The last English course I took (course level & year you took it): _____

My strongest skill in English: _____

The skill I need to improve most is: _____

What skills you would like to work on in this English course? Check all that apply.

☐ improving my grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure
☐ organizing my thoughts in my writing
☐ becoming a faster, better reader
☐ developing my critical thinking and analytical skills
☐ overcoming procrastination and/or writer's block
☐ improving my research skills
☐ giving oral presentations
☐ participating in class discussions

Please write a paragraph about yourself in the box below.

ENGL 045
Reading Journal Assignment (Semester-Long)

WHY A READING JOURNAL?

Reading journals are one way for students to become better writers. They can help develop fluency (the ability to write smoothly without stopping) while getting your ideas out of your head and onto the page. This helps you avoid writer's block when it comes to, for example, in-class essay writing, or take-home essays.

They are also a good way to ensure that you keep up with your readings, so we can have better class discussions. If you aren't doing your readings, you won't be able to write a useful reading journal entry. It's a record of your thoughts on the literature that we read.

Reading journals also help you engage with the texts we read. Reading requires thinking about the text and making connections to other things you have read, watched, heard, or experienced. It will also provide you with a collection of ideas you can then use in class discussions or to write your assignments.

THE DETAILS

How much do I need to write?

You will need **a minimum of two double-spaced handwritten pages[1], or one double-spaced typed page** for each reading assignment.

You can write more if you want, but you have to write at least one page. At first this may come more slowly, but with practice over the semester, it will be easier.

What should I write?

You should be **responding** to what you read. Did you find the reading difficult or easy? Was it fun, boring, or impossible to understand? Why do you think you felt this way about the text? You will need to back up what you say. You might have been bored by the story—and that's okay—but you will need to give reasons why; they'll need to show thoughtfulness. Explore why you feel the way you do about the text. E.g. "I think/ In my opinion …"

Show evidence that you have thought about the story. Mention specific sections or events in the story. If you are merely writing general comments or plot summaries,

---

1   of normal-sized writing; if you have large or small writing, adjust accordingly.

and if you do not include frequent references to specific parts of the story (use page numbers for stories, novels, or plays, and line numbers for poetry), this will not be enough.

Make connections between the text you're reading for the assignment and other things we've read in class, or discussions we've had, or things you've read/watched/experienced outside of class. Make connections between the stories and current events. But you'll need to explain those connections clearly; I can only understand what you've explained on the page, because I can't see into your head. E.g. "This story/event reminds me of …"

Ask questions about the material. If something happens in the story that you don't understand, write a question. You can bring it up in class and see if others wondered about the same thing, or if someone has an idea for a possible answer. E.g. "I wonder …" "Why would …"

There aren't right or wrong things to write in your journal, but I'll expect to see evidence of your thought process as you wrote them down.

How will these be graded?

I'll collect them periodically—I will let you know the day before I intend to collect them—and I will expect that you have completed an entry for every reading assignment up to that point. I don't recommend that you wait until I announce I'm collecting them for you to start doing entries. Catching up on five entries in one night is more painful than doing them as they're assigned.

I'll be assessing you on two things (you'll need both for complete credit):

> 1) having **completed** the assignment according to requirements (i.e. it's long enough and you've completed one for every assigned reading; it's readable and doesn't contain too many errors)

> 2) for evidence of the **quality** of your engagement with the literature (did you think about what you read – did you connect the things you read to your own knowledge – and did you show this with your words?)

If you do both of these things, your journal entry will receive 100%. If you do one of these things, your entry will receive 75%. If you do neither, your entry will receive 50%.

ENGL 045: Reading Journal Self-Evaluation

Before you hand in your reading journal entry, you will need to do a self-evaluation. This will give you a chance to really reflect on whether or not you are meeting the requirements of the assignment.

This entry follows the formatting guidelines (e.g. font size, header, page numbers).	yes	no
It is at least 2 pages long, double-spaced.	yes	no
I made direct references to the story.	yes	no
If I quoted from the story, I provided page numbers.	yes	no
I used examples to support my ideas.	yes	no
I made connections between the story and other outside materials (my experiences, or other literature/ media).	yes	no
I have proofread my writing.	yes	no

How thoughtful, insightful, and engaged is this journal entry? To what extent is it evident that you are trying to make sense of the stories you're reading?

What grade would you assign for it? (100%, 75%, 50%)

❑ I am ready to hand in my journal entry.
❑ I want to revise my entry and hand it in tomorrow.

March Book Two – **Pg 1-65 Discussion Questions**

Be ready to discuss these questions on Monday.

(Write your answers down so you don't forget them)

1. How do the students use nonviolent protest tactics (at the restaurant and movie theatre)? What reactions are they getting in response?

2. What is Lewis doing in 2009? Why is the story split up this way?

3. Lewis goes to jail willingly. Is it worth it? What do you think about people who break the law to protest?

4. Who are the Freedom Riders, and what do they do? Why are they important? What happens to them?

5. How are the people in the south (Alabama & South Carolina) different than the people in Nashville? How are the police different?

March Book Two – **Pg 65-125 Discussion Questions**

Be ready to discuss these questions on Wednesday.

(Write your answers down so you don't forget them)

1. What happens in Montgomery, Alabama when the bus arrives? Which government representatives try to help? Who is responsible for this incident?

2. What does Martin Luther King jr. do in this section? How do people respond to his actions and decisions?

3. How was Lewis' experience in Mississippi jail? What challenges did he and his fellow riders face?

4. What challenges did the activists in the civil rights movement face in this section? From Whites? From each other?

5. What comic panels stand out the most to you in this section?

March Book Two – **Pg 125-179 Discussion Questions**

Be ready to discuss these questions on Tuesday.

(Write your answers down so you don't forget them)

1. What happened when the children of Birmingham marched? What were the results?

2. What was the march on Washington about? Who organized it? Why didn't SNCC support it? How did it go?

3. What do you know about Malcom X? How is he different from Lewis/MLK?

4. Why did people have a problem with the first draft of Lewis' speech? Was he right to make the changes he made?

5. How was reading this comic? Would it have been better as a normal book/short story/play?

6. What do you like to read? Do you notice a difference when you read fiction or nonfiction?

Pic is from *The Complete Maus* – page 110
The narrator is talking about sending away their children to a different family so they would be safe from the Nazis.
Which text to read first?

Cover of - Understanding Comics (published in 1993) – an incredible book about comics – that influences most of this presentation.

Pic is *Understanding Comics* pg 61
Panels = rectangle (usually) that contains one scene
Gutters = space between panels
Speech/ thought balloons = signals someone is saying something or thinking something
Captions = provide info about a scene (like a narrator)
Sound effects = pow, bang, crash!

He's talking about how we use "closure" to fill in blanks all the time in the real world (and comics)

How to read a page = left to right, & top to bottom – usually!
How to read dialogue = left to right & top to bottom – usually!

Pic from *Louis Riel* pg 192
Riel and Gabriel Dumont leading a group of heavily outnumbered Metis who are
running out of ammo in a battle against Canadian soldiers. Eventually Riel is captured,
and Dumont escapes.
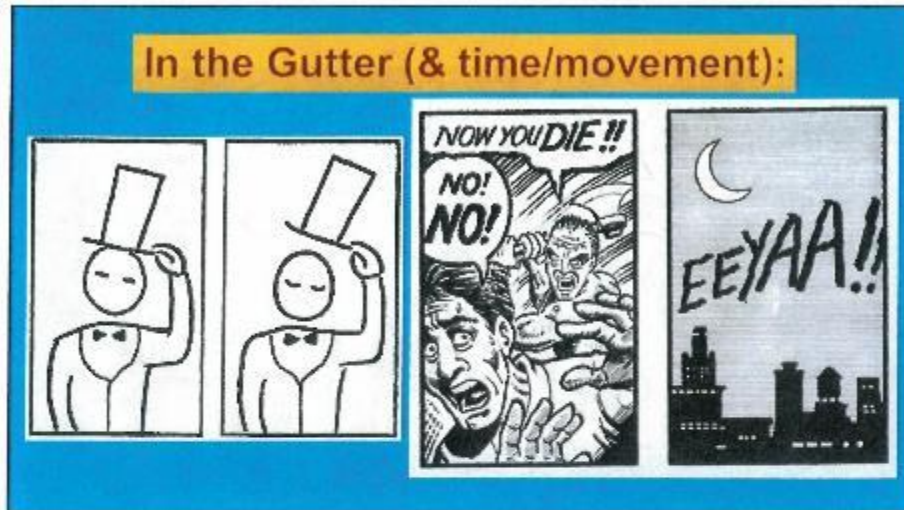
Pic is *Understanding Comics* pg 9 & 68

Left pic is simple example of Sequential art

Right pic = "I may have drawn an axe being raised in this example, but I'm not the one who let it drop, or decided how hard the blow, or who screamed or why. That, dear reader, was your special crime, each of you committing it in your own style." – He's talking about "closure" again.

Pic is from *Understanding Comics* pg 95

Time – is everyone saying something at the same time?
Nah – flashbulb, everyone talking in order, this panel occurs over like a minute of time
time as a rope winding through the panel
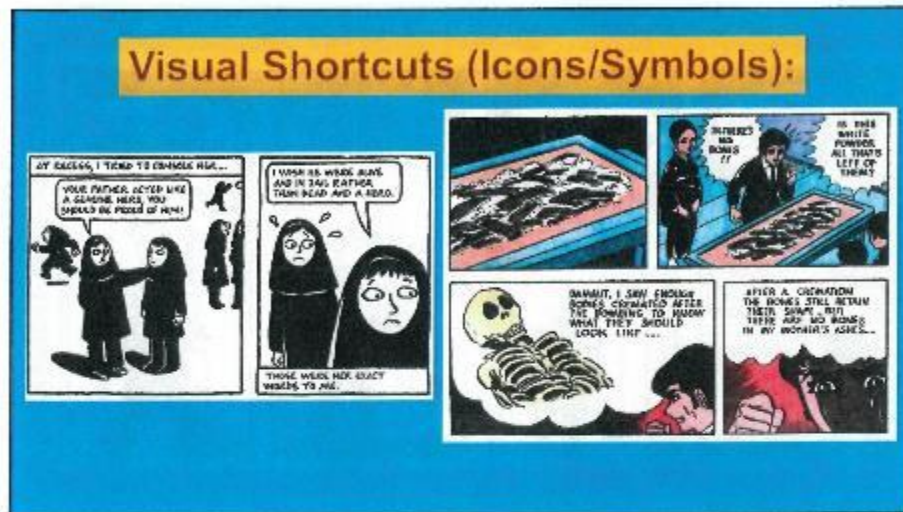
Pic is from *Understanding Comics* pg 97

Pic is Understanding Comics pg 98

Frozen time vs unfrozen time

Pic is from *Understanding Comics* pg 115

Comics don't just need lines/pov/closure to show movement

Pics are from *Persepolis* pg 86 and *I Saw It* pg 44

Both have examples of visual symbols used to add information (water droplets) but both are from different contexts and have different meanings (western/Japanese comics).

In *Persepolis* (left pics) Marjane is talking about her friends father, a military pilot who was in jail for questioning the Iranian government, but released to fight against Iraq.

In *I Saw It* (right pics), the author's mother's bones have weakened and disintegrated during cremation as a side effect of living through the atomic bomb blast in Hiroshima. This incident would inspire him to tell the story of his and her survival of the atomic blast (something which is shunned in Japanese society)
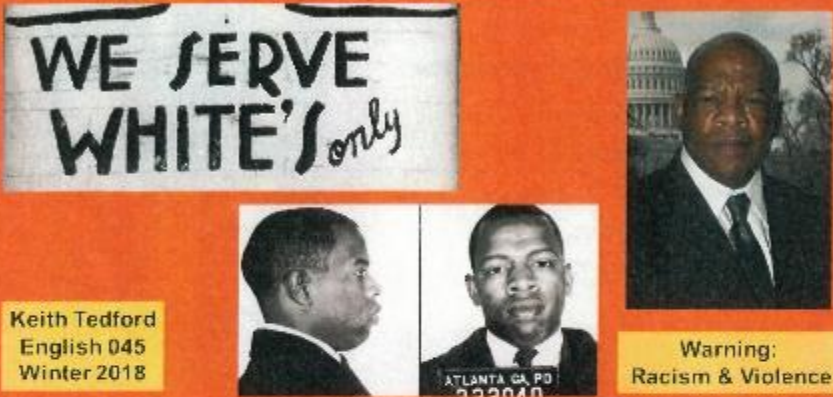
- Pic is from *March Book Two* pg 45 -- freedom rider bus being firebombed by white racists in Alabama

Works Cited

Brown, Chester. *Louis Riel*. Drawn and Quarterly Publications, 2010.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March Book Two*. Top Shelf Productions, 2015.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. HarperCollins, 1993.

Nakagawa, Kenji. *I Saw It*. Educomics, 1982.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. Pantheon, 2003.

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus*. Penguin, 2003.

- The historical context of the text *March Book Two* & its authors
- Segregation in the south (Jim Crow laws – separate but equal laws as tools for racism and discrimination)
- Lewis has been to jail many times as an activist
- Has been, and still is a member of the US congress representing part of Georgia since January 1987

- The cover of *March Book One*. It is available on reserve (behind the front desk) at the CNC library.

Racism & Segregation in the American south
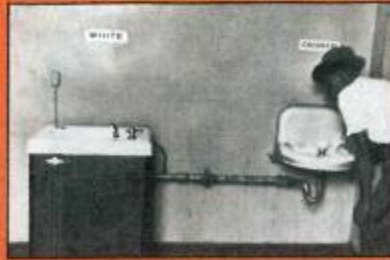
- Segregated facilities for whites/non whites led to extreme discrimination. Buses, bathrooms, movie theatres, restaurants are some examples of places that were segregated.
- When segregation (Jim Crow) laws started being thrown out by the Supreme Court of America, many whites violently resisted as they resented how their social systems/cultures of racial superiority were challenged. Brutal beatings and murder were some of the results.

Lewis' background

- Lewis grew up in rural Alabama (a state in the US south) in a poor family.
- His job was to take care of the chickens. He wanted to be preacher when he grew up.
- He was inspired by the work of activists like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King jr.
- He went to American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville where he learned about the concept of non violence from Jim Lawson, a member of an activist group, The Fellowship of Reconciliation
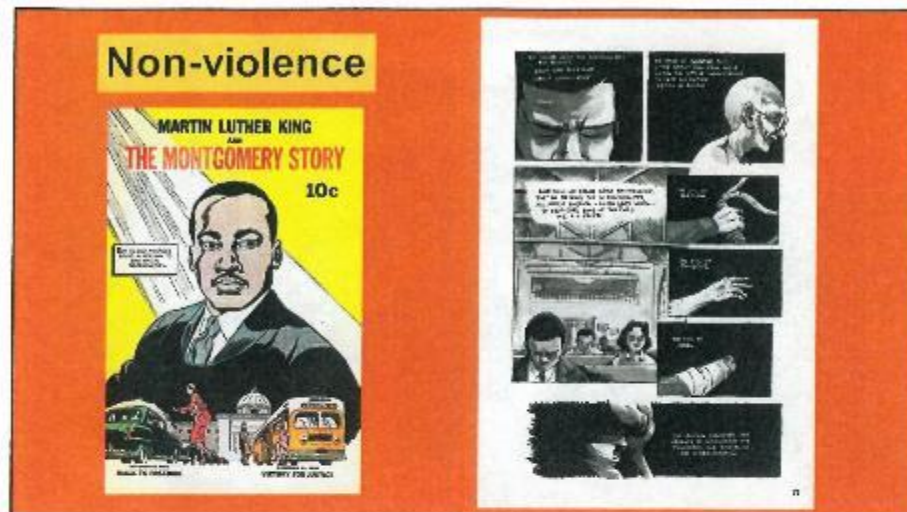
- The left image is the cover of *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* – a comic that describes how MLK jr. helped organize and lead a group of protestors to boycott the bus system nonviolently in Montgomery, Alabama, not far from Lewis' home. The comic was used to help others learn about nonviolence.
- The right image is page 77 of *March Book One*.

The Movement

- Many groups took part in the Civil Rights Movement
- One of them, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was made up of young people, and was considered more radical because of its impatience for the slow change advocated by more conservative groups. Lewis was eventually elected chairman of the SNCC.
- MLK jr. led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), one of the more conservative civil rights groups. They worked with the SNCC, but members of these groups didn't often see eye to eye on the best ways to combat racism.

Lunch Counter Sit-ins

- To protest racist policies at downtown Nashville department stores, where blacks could shop, but not use dressing rooms or eat at the lunch counters, a group of students (who would eventually become the founders of SNCC) carefully planned non violent sit in protests. Racist whites resisted, sometimes becoming violent. Police often were absent when protesters were beaten, but would arrive and arrest the non violent protestors after the white attackers had left. Protestors would not receive fair trials from racist judges, and refused to pay bail. Eventually, under pressure from the protests, the mayor of Nashville endorsed desegregating the lunch counters. *March Book Two* begins shortly after.
- The front/left picture is from March Book One page 102. It depicts Lewis' first arrest for civil disobedience.
- Website?

https://kaylawinandywd.weebly.com/methods-of-protest.html

Conclusion

- The image of Powell, Lewis and Aydin is from *March Book Two* page 189.
- Lewis was eventually elected to the US congress.
- Andrew Aydin, on the right, works for Lewis as Digital Director and Policy Advisor. He convinced Lewis to turn his autobiography into comic form, and helped him write it. Aydin wrote his masters thesis on the previously mentioned comic *MLK and the Montgomery Story*.
- Nate Powell (on the left) is the artist who drew the pictures. He has published several of his own comics.
- The trilogy concludes in *March Book Three* (also on reserve behind the front desk of the library – you just have to ask for it).

Images Cited

"We Serve Whites Only" Sign @ https://fortworthcivilrights.wordpress.com/jim-crow/

Lewis' Mug Shot @ http://www.dailypnut.com/2017/01/john-lewis-vs-donald-trump/

Photo of Lewis as member of congress @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lewis_(civil_rights_leader)

Photos of segregated water fountains and anti integration protestors @ https://kaylawinandywd.weebly.com/types-of-segregation.html

Photo of American Baptist Theological Seminary @ http://www.abcnash.edu/

Photo of young SNCC protestors@ https://snccdigital.org/

Photo of MLK jr. @ https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/99315652/songs-of-the-civil-rights-movement

Photo of a lunch counter sit in @ https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/23/politics/john-lewis-sit-ins/index.html

Works Cited

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March Book One*. Top Shelf Productions, 2013.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March Book Two*. Top Shelf Productions, 2015.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March Book Three*. Top Shelf Productions, 2016

Post Semester Interview Script:

Note: These interviews are intended to be semi structured. These questions will form an interview framework for each student, but will be adjusted based on what occurs during the semester.

1. **Introduction:** I will ask you questions about the comic *March Book Two*, and things we discussed in class. If answering a question gets too upsetting for you, I will stop. I am recording this interview so that I can refer to it later when I write my final essay, but remember that I will destroy this recording along with all my other notes five years after I finish my degree. Depending on how you answer each question, I may ask follow up questions to get you to tell me more. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

2. **Questions (with follow up questions):**

Nonviolent protest

- How do you feel about John Lewis and the other student protesters in the SNCC?
    - Describe your feelings about student protesters today.
- If you had to explain nonviolent protesting to others, what would you say?
- Remember, John Lewis truly believes in nonviolent protest, but other famous protesters like Malcolm X did not always think protests should be non-violent. Did reading and discussing *March Book Two* change the way you see nonviolent or violent protesters?
- If a politician said something you thought was racist, for example, like George Wallace saying "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," what would you think?
    - What would you do?

Racism

- How did you react to the racism in the book?
    - How do you see other people in the class reacting?
    - How do you think people outside the class would react if they were to read the book?
- How do you react to racism or police brutality when you see it in real life?
    - Did reading and discussing *March Book Two* change the way you react now?
- Truthfully, what would you do if you were in this scene where John and the other protesters were in the line at the movie theatre, and the White teenager spat on them?
    - Before you'd read and discussed this comic, what would you have done?

Police Brutality

- When we were talking about the connections between the comic and today and police brutality in class, how did you react?
- If you were in Birmingham on May 3, 1963 when Bull Conner ordered the use of firehoses and dogs on child protesters, what would you do?
    - Would you behave differently to any of the other incidents in the text involving the police?
- Have you ever seen police brutality in real life?
    - How did you react? Give an example if you can.
    - Do you believe anything will be different if or when you see police brutality now?

Conclusion

- In your opinion, how are the problems in this comic present today?
    - What current events remind you of the problems in this comic?
- What were the most interesting discussions when we were studying this comic in class?
- How would you say reading and discussing the comic in class affected you? Either negatively or positively.

Appendix B: Research Documents

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Keith Tedford

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **2 May, 2017**
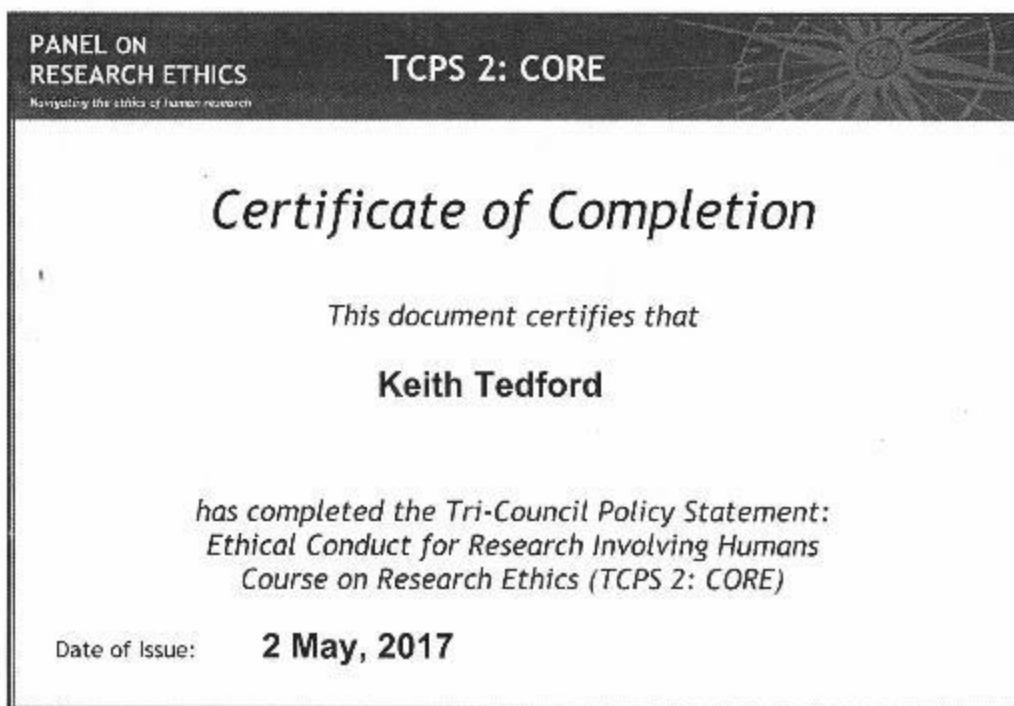
College of New Caledonia
Research Ethics Board

November 24, 2017

Keith Tedford
CNC (via email)

Dear Keith,

Re: Application for CNC Ethics Approval
Research Project: A Case Study of March Book Two in English 045: Engaging Students with Social Issues

Thank you for your application for Ethics Approval from the CNC Research Ethics Board. I am delighted to inform you that your application has been **APPROVED** *based on the submission of your revisions.*

The approval number for your research project is EO2017-0921-058.

Should you have any questions, please contact the REB Administrative Assistant, Jessie Ducharme. She can be reached by email at reb@cnc.bc.ca or by phone at (250) 562-2131 ext. 5360. Please be sure to quote your approval number in any correspondence. Please notify the REB once your research is completed.

On behalf of the REB, I would like to extend our congratulations! We look forward to the results of your research.

Sincerely,

Chad Thompson
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/jd

3330 – 22nd Avenue, Prince George, BC V2N 1P8

UNBC *UNIVERSITY OF*
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To:	Keith Tedford
CC:	Jacqueline Holler
From:	Henry Harder, Chair
	Research Ethics Board
Date:	October 24, 2017
Re:	E2017.0907.066.00
	A Case Study of *March Book Two* in English 045: Engaging Students with Social Issues

Thank you for submitting revisions to the Research Ethics Board (REB) regarding the above-noted proposal. Your revisions have been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the REB.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Henry Harder
Chair, Research Ethics Board

UNBC *UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA*

INFORMATION LETTER / CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM

Date: January 3, 2018

A Case Study of *March Book Two* in English 045: Engaging Students with Social Issues

Investigator: Keith Tedford (I do not represent CNC with this research project)
College of New Caledonia
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada
(250) 562-2131 ext. 5474
E-mail: tedfordk@cnc.bc.ca

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Jacqueline Holler
University of Northern British Columbia
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada
(250) 960-6343
E-mail: jacqueline.holler@unbc.ca

What am I trying to learn?

I am hoping to learn if reading and discussing a comic book about resisting racism, inequality, and police brutality encourages adult students to think about things related to these topics and resist them in their own lives. This study will help me learn more about how teachers can work with adult students and engage students to talk about social issues. I will invite you to participate in my study after the semester is over because you are going to think about these issues in our class this semester. The information I learn in this research project will be used as part of UNBC thesis research (which is the final essay of my master's degree)

What will happen during the study?

If you think you will want to participate in the study, you have to decide if you want to be contacted after the semester is over. This is because I need to manage the problem of being a researcher and your teacher, while also making sure you are protected.

We will work together like any normal English 045 class. Eventually, we will read the comic book *March Book Two*, by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin in class. The comic is about part of John Lewis's life as a young black adult student in the 60's and how he protested against racism in the American south. As we read it, you will talk about the book with your classmates. Finally, you will write three journal responses about your thoughts and opinions about the book. I will take notes about what people say in class, and I will make photocopies of your journals before I mark them.

After the whole class is over, and I have given your final grades to the college, I will go to the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and finally see who has agreed to be invited to participate in the study.

Do you have to participate?

No. Participation in the study is voluntary, which means you do not have to agree to participate in this study. Because I will not know who will participate until your final grades are finished and the class is over, you will be safe to participate or not participate without worrying if I will mark you easier or harder.

Participants can withdraw from the study at any point without consequences, which means you can change your mind about participating at any time. Just go to the **Centre for Teaching and Learning** in room 2-375 and say that you want to change your consent to contact form. You don't need to give a reason or answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

- **What happens if you say "No, I don't want to be in the study" or you ask to not participate after the semester is over in the future?**

I will shred the copies of your work that I have and any notes I made about what you said or did in class. I will carefully destroy any information that I can tell came from you. For example, if you were in a big discussion, and I can't tell who the information came from, I won't destroy it. But if I noted you making a clear point, and you decide not to participate in the study, I won't include that point in my research.

- **What happens if you say "Yes, I want to be in the study"?**

We will arrange a time that works for you to do the interview in a classroom at the college. If you want to participate, but can't come back to the college to do the interview, I will accept your consent to participate through email or over the phone.

The interview should probably take around thirty minutes. I will just ask you some questions about your thoughts about the book and the project, and record the answers with a smartphone or on paper if you want.

For example, I might ask, "How did you react to the racism in the book?" or "How do you think reading and discussing the comic in class affected you?"

I will use the photocopies of your journals, any information from interviews, and any notes I made about what you said or did in class to help me write my final essay for my master's degree. I might even write an article about the project for an academic magazine.

I will keep the information I get from this project for five years after I finish my master's degree, but then I will shred my copies of your work and my classroom notes. I will also delete your interview recording if you agreed to be interviewed.

Who will know what I said or did during the study?

All my notes and photocopies will be locked in my office or in my personal possession, and only my graduate supervisor at UNBC and I will get to see them. When I am summarizing the results of the study, and writing my final essay, I won't use your real name unless you really want me to. If you do want to use your real name, we will have a conversation about additional risks that you could be exposed to. I will try to avoid using any information that someone could use to figure out if you participated, but because the study is so small, someone might be able to work out who participated.

Is there any way participating in this study could hurt you?

You may be shocked or embarrassed to learn that you might believe some racist ideas, or some parts of the comic or interview might make you feel uncomfortable or upset you, so I will remind you of the list of people and groups you can go see, including information about counselling at CNC or in Prince George.

You might have another problem if other students want to talk about whether you decided to participate in the study or not and the interview after the course. Other students might pressure you to join or quit the study. Tell them it is your choice, and they have to respect it. They will never know what you really decided. I recommend that you not tell anyone about participating in the study or the interview at the end, as it could lead to pressure.

Will being in this study help you in any way?

The research won't help you directly, unless you are or become a teacher who is interested in how comic books can be used in classes with adult students.

Other teachers will be able to read my reports and it will help them decide how they want to use comic books in their classes, or how to deal with the topic of racism, inequality or police brutality in their classes.

Will being in this study help you in any way?

The research won't help you directly, unless you are or become a teacher who is interested in how comic books can be used in classes with adult students.

Other teachers will be able to read my reports and it will help them decide how they want to use comic books in their classes, or how to deal with the topic of racism, inequality or police brutality in their classes.

If we're really lucky, the study might help people better understand how to deal with problems about racism, inequality and police brutality in Canada.

How do you find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately August 31, 2018. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: tedfordk@cnc.bc.ca or 250-564-2131 ext. 5474. If you want, you can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Holler at jacqueline.holler@unbc.ca

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant, you can contact UNBC's Research and Ethics Board at reb@unbc.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the College of New Caledonia Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:
Research Ethics Board
Chair Chad Thompson
Telephone: (250) 562-2131 Extension 5666
E-mail: reb@cnc.bc.ca

CONSENT TO CONTACT

I have read the information in the information letter about the study that Keith Tedford is doing at the College of New Caledonia.
I have had the chance to ask questions about my participation in this study and to get extra information. I understand that if I agree to be contacted about participating in this study, I may withdraw that agreement at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

A. **I AGREE** to be contacted about participating in the study after the semester is over.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Please contact me at: _____

OR

B. I **DO NOT AGREE** be contacted about participating in this study after the semester is over.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

AND

C. Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.
Please send them to this email address _____
or to this mailing address: _____
_____

OR

D. No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

INFORMATION LETTER / CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

Date: April 23, 2018

A Case Study of *March Book Two* in English 045: Engaging Students with Social Issues

Investigator: Keith Tedford (I do not represent CNC with this research project)
College of New Caledonia
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada
(250) 562-2131 ext. 5474
E-mail: tedfordk@cnc.bc.ca

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Jacqueline Holler
University of Northern British Columbia
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada
(250) 960-6343
E-mail: jacqueline.holler@unbc.ca

What am I trying to learn?

I am hoping to learn if reading and discussing a comic book about resisting racism, inequality, and police brutality encourages adult students to think about things related to these topics and resist them in their own lives. This study will help me learn more about how teachers can work with adult students and engage students to talk about social issues. I will invite you to participate in my study after the semester is over because you are going to think about these issues in our class this semester. The information I learn in this research project will be used as part of UNBC thesis research (which is the final essay of my master's degree)

What will happen during the study?

We have worked together like any normal English 045 class. We read the comic book *March Book Two*, by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin in class. The comic is about part of John Lewis's life as a young black adult student in the 60's and how he protested against racism in the American south.

As we read it, you talked about the book with your classmates. Finally, you wrote three journal responses about your thoughts and opinions about the book. I took notes about what people said in class, and I made photocopies of your journals before I marked them.

Now the whole class is over, and I have given your final grades to the college. I have gone to the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and finally learned who has agreed to be invited to participate in the study.

Do you have to participate?

No. Participation in the study is voluntary, which means you do not have to agree to participate in this study. Because you have your final grades, you will be safe to participate or not participate without worrying if I will mark you easier or harder.

Participants can withdraw from the study at any point without consequences, which means you can change your mind about participating at any time. Just send me an email or call my office and leave a message, and let me know that you no longer want to participate in the study.

- **What happens if you say "No, I don't want to be in the study" or you ask to not participate after the semester is over in the future?**

I will shred the copies of your work that I have and any notes I made about what you said or did in class. I will carefully destroy any information that I can tell came from you. For example, if you were in a big discussion, and I can't tell who the information came from, I won't destroy it. But if I noted you making a clear point, and you decide not to participate in the study, I won't include that point in my research.

- **What happens if you say "Yes, I want to be in the study"?**

We will arrange a time that works for you to do the interview in a classroom at the college. If you want to participate, but can't come back to the college to do the interview, I will accept your consent to participate through email or over the phone.

The interview should probably take around thirty minutes. I will just ask you some questions about your thoughts about the book and the project, and record the answers with a smartphone or on paper if you want.

For example, I might ask, 'How did you react to the racism in the book?' or 'How do you think reading and discussing the comic in class affected you?'

I will use the photocopies of your journals, any information from interviews, and any notes I made about what you said or did in class to help me write my final essay for my master's degree. I might even write an article about the project for an academic magazine.

I will keep the information I get from this project for five years after I finish my master's degree, but then I will shred my copies of your work and my classroom notes. I will also delete your interview recording if you agreed to be interviewed.

Who will know what I said or did during the study?

All my notes and photocopies will be locked in my office or in my personal possession, and only my graduate supervisor at UNBC and I will get to see them. When I am summarizing the results of the study, and writing my final essay, I won't use your real name unless you really want me to. If you do want to use your real name, we will have a conversation about additional risks that you could be exposed to. I will try to avoid using any information that someone could use to figure out if you participated, but because the study is so small, someone might be able to work out who participated.

Is there any way participating in this study could hurt you?

You may be shocked or embarrassed to learn that you might believe some racist ideas, or some parts of the comic or interview might make you feel uncomfortable or upset you, so I will remind you of the list of people and groups you can go see, including information about counselling at CNC or in Prince George.

You might have another problem if other students want to talk about whether you decided to participate in the study or not and the interview after the course. Other students might pressure you to join or quit the study. Tell them it is your choice, and they have to respect it. They will never know what you really decided. I recommend that you not tell anyone about participating in the study or the interview at the end, as it could lead to pressure.

Will being in this study help you in any way?

The research won't help you directly, unless you are or become a teacher who is interested in how comic books can be used in classes with adult students.

Other teachers will be able to read my reports and it will help them decide how they want to use comic books in their classes, or how to deal with the topic of racism, inequality or police brutality in their classes.

If we're really lucky, the study might help people better understand how to deal with problems about racism, inequality and police brutality in Canada.

How do you find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately August 31, 2018. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: tedfordk@cnc.bc.ca or 250-564-2131 ext. 5474. If you want, you can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Holler at jacqueline.holler@unbc.ca

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Research Ethics Board
Chair Chad Thompson
Telephone: (250) 562-2131 Extension 5666
E-mail: reb@cnc.bc.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read the information in the information letter about the study that Keith Tedford is doing at the College of New Caledonia.
I have had the chance to ask questions about my participation in this study and to get extra information. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

A. **I AGREE** to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

I ALSO AGREE to be interviewed and understand that I can always say no.

- o   Yes. Please contact me at: _____

- o   No.

OR

B. I **DO NOT AGREE** to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

AND

C. Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.
Please send them to this email address _____
or to this mailing address: _____
_____

OR

D. No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

The CNC Wellness Coach can:

- Provide support to students in addressing personal and academic issues
- Work on stress management and coping skills with students
- Work on time management skills with students
- Explore career interests and options with students
- Provide crisis intervention and safety planning
- Assist students with the application process for medical withdrawal
- Provide information on resources available to students at CNC including:
  - Financial Aid
  - Academic Advising
  - Testing and Tutoring Services
  - Accessibility Services
  - Student Union
  - Counselling, Health and Wellness support
- Provide referrals to counselling at CNC
- Provide information on other resources available to students in the community
- Assist in connecting students with these internal and/or external supports

The Wellness Coach is located in the Academic Advising Office (Room 1-753). To see the Wellness Coach, students can drop in between 8:30 and 4:00 PM, or students can make an appointment in person or by phone at the front desk.

Telephone: 250-561-5818 ext. 5231

Some PG Mental Health Supports

- **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)** – Mental Health related supports – 250-564-8644
- **CNC Wellness Centre** – Counselling and Physical Health supports: 250-562-2131 (ext. 5377).
- **Community Counselling Centre** – Northern Health/UNBC – 250-562-6690
- **Community Response Unit (CRU)** - Northern Health Mental health and addictions counselling supports: 250-565-2668
- **Crisis Line** – for immediate 24/7 mental health support, information, and referrals: Toll free: 1-888-562-1214
- **Elizabeth Fry Society** – Victims Services and Supports for Women: 250-563-1113
- **Emergency Support: call 911** or contact the **University Hospital of Northern BC**: 250-565-2000
- **Native Healing Centre** out of the Native Friendship Centre - Counselling: 250-564-4324
- **UNBC Counselling** – 250-960-6369

CNC Health & Wellness Centre

Room 1-460 (located in the Dental and Early Childhood Education wing)

Have a health concern?

We can help. We are a full-service medical clinic with 2 nurse practitioners and a physician. We provide the following services:

- Health assessments, diagnosis, management and monitoring
- Prescribe medications
- Order diagnostic tests
- Referral to other healthcare services
- Men's health (STI testing)
- Women's health (contraception, PAPs, STI testing, IUD insertions)
- Publicly funded immunizations
- Chronic disease management

Hours*

	9:00–11:00 am	1:30–3:30 pm
MON	Walk-in**	Appointments
TUE	Appointments	Appointments
WED	Appointments	Appointments
THU	Walk in**	Appointments
FRI	Appointments	Closed

*We close daily between 12 noon–1:00 pm.
**Walk-in is first-come, first served.

Booking an appointment

- Drop by the clinic
- Call 250-562-2131 ext. 5377
- Email health@cnc.bc.ca

For more information

Check out the Health & Wellness link at www.cnc.bc.ca

Emergency
After Hours Contacts

**University Hospital of
Northern British Columbia (UHNBC)**
250-565-2000

24-hour Crisis and Information Line
250-563-1214 or 1-888-562-1214

Sexual Assault Centre (SOS)
250-564-8302

24-hour Suicide Support Line
1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-784-2433

24-hour-Youth Support Line
(For ages 13-21)
250-564-8336 or 1-866-564-8336

Unplanned Pregnancy
1-888-875-3163

Nechako Walk-In Medical Clinic
(Spruceland Mall)
Monday to Wednesday 4 pm to 9 pm
Thursday/Friday 1 pm to 9 pm
Saturday 9 am to 7 pm
Sundays/Holidays 10 am to 7 pm

Salveo Medical Clinic
(Inside Real Canadian Superstore)
Monday to Friday 9 am to 6 pm
Saturday/Sunday 10 am to 2 pm
Closed statutory holidays

College of
New Caledonia
www.cnc.bc.ca

Final Code List

*These codes appear in multiple categories.

Category: School/Learning	Abbreviation: LEARN
o Educational background	LEARN-BCKGRND
o Perceptions of me	LEARN-PRCEPT/ME
o Perceptions of the class	LEARN-PRCEPT/CLASS
o Reflecting on classroom activities/interactions	LEARN-CLASS
▪ Importance of group work	LEARN-CLASS/GRPWRK
▪ Importance of discussions to hear different sides of stories	LEARN-CLASS/DISCUSS
▪ How others influenced the student	LEARN-CLASS/OTHERS
▪ Relationships with classmates	LEARN-CLASS/RLTIONS
▪ Struggles in class	LEARN-CLASS/STRGGL
▪ Considering the effects of in class activities	LEARN-CLASS/EFFECT
▪ Talking about myself with students	LEARN-CLASS/TALKME
▪ Connecting the class with activism	LEARN-CLASS/ACT
▪ Evaluating activities	LEARN-CLASS/EVAL
▪ What the student learned	LEARN-CLASS/TAKEAWAY
▪ Making connections between class texts and the world	LEARN-CLASS/CNNECT
• Making connections to the comic's content*	LEARN-CLASS/ CNNECT/COMIC
• Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead	LEARN-CLASS/CNNECT/ARS
▪ Reading/discussing the comic*	LEARN-CLASS/COMIC
▪ Helping other students	LEARN-CLASS/HELPOTHERS
o Thoughts on student activism	LEARN-SSACTIVISM
o Expressing interest in reading	LEARN-INTRESTREAD
o Realizations/Changes/Growth/Transformations*	LEARN-CHANGES
o Expressing willingness to participate in future class/research discussions	LEARN-RESEARCH
o Recognizes the importance of education	LEARN-EDUVALUE
▪ Proud to participate in research	LEARN-RESEARCH/PRIDE
▪ Discussing the project	LEARN-RESEARCH/DISCUSS
▪ Evaluating the project	LEARN-RESEARCH/EVAL
▪ Student protections	LEARN-RESEARCH/PROTECT
o Attendance issues	LEARN-ATTEND
o Time constraints	LEARN-NOTIME
o Student suggestions/criticism	LEARN-SSCRITISISM
o Self-criticism	LEARN-MECRITISISM
o Humor in the class	LEARN-HUMOR
o Demonstrating critical thinking	LEARN-SSCRITTHINK
o Flexibility with students	LEARN-FLEXIBLE

Category: **Identity**	Abbreviation: ID
o Reflections on demographics/identity/culture	ID-RFLECT/DEMO
▪ Age	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/AGE
▪ Race	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/RACE
▪ Gender	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/GNDER
▪ Class	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/CLASS
▪ Sexuality	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/SEX
▪ Religion	ID-RFLECT/DEMO/RELIGION
o Expressing/considering/connecting different perspectives	ID-PERSPECT
▪ Syrian/Armenian perspective	ID-PERSPECT/SYRIA
▪ Black/African perspective	ID-PERSPECT/AFRICA
▪ First Nation's perspectives	ID-PERSPECT/FN
▪ Of international students or people from other countries	ID-PERSPECT/INTSS
• How people see them	ID-PERSPECT/INTSS/ PRCEPT
• Challenges	ID-PERSPECT/INTSS/CHALL
• Differences	ID-PERSPECT/INTSS/DIFF
• Education	ID-PERSPECT/INTSS/EDU
o Family	ID-FAMILY
▪ How students refer to their family	ID-FAMILY/REFER
▪ The role family plays in the student's life	ID-FAMILY/ROLE
o Considerations on social/human development or why people become the way they are*	ID-DEVELOP
o My bias	ID-BIAS
o Self-reflection	ID-SELFREFLECT
o Goals	ID-GOALS
o Health issues	ID-HEALTH

Category: Issues and solutions	Abbreviation: ISSUE
○ Problems	ISSUE-PROB
▪ Human rights violations	ISSUE-PROB/HRIGHTS
▪ Different forms of inequality	ISSUE-PROB/INEQUAL
▪ Persecution/bigotry	ISSUE-PROB/PERSECUTE
▪ Divides in society	ISSUE-PROB/DIVIDE
▪ Segregation	ISSUE-PROB/SEGREGATE
▪ Stereotypes	ISSUE-PROB/STEREOTYPE
▪ Poverty	ISSUE-PROB/POVERTY
▪ Free speech	ISSUE-PROB/FREESPEECH
○ Action/Activism	ISSUE-ACT
▪ Its importance to students	ISSUE-ACT/IMPORTANCE
▪ The dangers	ISSUE-ACT/DANGER
▪ As a sacrifice	ISSUE-ACT/SACRIFICE
▪ Changes in student affect regarding these issues	ISSUE-ACT/AFFECT
▪ Thoughts on student activism*	ISSUE-ACT/SS
● Goals/effectiveness/awareness	ISSUE-ACT/SS/OUTCOME
▪ Importance of organization	ISSUE-ACT/ORG
▪ Importance of numbers	ISSUE-ACT/NUMBERS
▪ Importance of leaders	ISSUE-ACT/LEADERS
▪ Why intervening isn't always appropriate or effective	ISSUE-ACT/PICKBATTLE
▪ Reasons for protesting	ISSUE-ACT/REASON
○ Attitudes toward arguments	ISSUE-PRCEPT/ARGUE
○ Importance of positivity in face of oppression	ISSUE-POS
○ Protests	ISSUE-PROTEST
▪ Nonviolent/	ISSUE-PROTEST/NONVIOLENT
▪ violent	ISSUE-PROTEST/VIOLENT
● Willingness to participate	ISSUE-PROTEST/PARTICIPATE
○ Talking to others about issues	ISSUE-TALKOTHERS
▪ What	ISSUE-TALKOTHERS/WHAT
▪ Who	ISSUE-TALKOTHERS/WHO
▪ Why	ISSUE-TALKOTHERS/WHY
▪ As evidence of changes in affect?	ISSUE-TALKOTHERS/CHANGES
○ Realizations/Changes/Growth/Transformations	ISSUE-CHANGES
○ Reflections on violence	ISSUE-VIOLENCE
▪ Experiences	ISSUE-VIOLENCE/EXP
▪ Connections to organizations	ISSUE-VIOLENCE/ORG
▪ Connections to places	ISSUE-VIOLENCE/PLACE
▪ How it shapes students	ISSUE-VIOLENCE/EFFECT
▪ Guns/school shootings	ISSUE-VIOLENCE/GUNS
○ Reflections on racism*	ISSUE-RACISM

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▪ Comparisons between racism in different places	ISSUE-RACISM/PLACE
• How Canada isn't as bad as other places	ISSUE-RACISM/PLACE/CANADA
▪ Experiences (or lack of)	ISSUE-RACISM/EXP
▪ Changes in history*	ISSUE-RACISM/HIST
• 1960s to now*	ISSUE-RACISM/HIST/1960
▪ Assertion racism will never go away*	ISSUE-RACISM/4EVER
▪ Connections with violence	ISSUE-RACISM/CNNECT/VIOLENCE
▪ Connections with organizations	ISSUE-RACISM/CNNECT/ORG
▪ Connections with places	ISSUE-RACISM/CNNECT/PLACE
• International relations	ISSUE-RACISM/CNNECT/PLACE/IR
▪ How it shapes students	ISSUE-RACISM/SS/EFFECT
▪ **Identifies role of whites in racism**	ISSUE-RACISM/WHITES
▪ Segregation	ISSUE-RACISM/SEGREGATE
• Where it exists	ISSUE-RACISM/SEGREGATE/WHERE
• Its modern forms	ISSUE-RACISM/SEGREGATE/NOW
○ Reflections on police	ISSUE-POLICE
▪ Interactions	ISSUE-POLICE/INTERACT
• Racism	ISSUE-POLICE/RACISM
○ Mistreatment of First Nations people	ISSUE-POLICE/RACISM/FN
▪ Ignoring human rights	ISSUE-POLICE/HRIGHTS
▪ Comparing RCMP to US/Congo/Syrian police/Nazi Germans/KKK	ISSUE-POLICE/COMPARE
○ Police Brutality	ISSUE-POLICE/BRUTAL
▪ Experiences	ISSUE-POLICE/BRUTAL/EXP
▪ Assertion that police brutality is the same everywhere*	ISSUE-POLICE/BRUTAL/UNIVER
▪ Suggestion: being an older age enhances the ability to deal with police brutality	ISSUE-POLICE/BRUTAL/DEAL
○ Jail	ISSUE-POLICE/JAIL
○ Realizations/Changes/Growth/Transformations*	ISSUE-CHANGES

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Category: Theory	Abbreviation: THEORY
o Connections to learning theories I've studied	THEORY
▪ Critical pedagogy	THEORY-CRITPED
• Evidence of conscientization	THEORY-CRITPED/CRITCON
• Hegemony	THEORY-CRITPED/HEGEM
• Contradictory consciousness	THEORY-CRITPED/CONTRADCON
▪ Transformative learning theory	THEORY-TLT
• Evidence of transformations	THEORY-TLT-CHANGES
• Disorienting dilemmas	THEORY-TLT-DILEMMA
▪ Historical thinking*	THEORY-HISTTHINK
• Evidence of historical understanding*	THEORY-HISTTHINK/HISTU
• Evidence of historical consciousness*	THEORY-HISTTHINK/HISTCON
• Evidence of historical agency*	THEORY-HISTTHINK/HISTA
o How students make sense of the world through stories/narratives	THEORY-STORY
▪ How stories are not replacements for experience	THEORY-STORY/VSEXP
o Considerations on social/human development or why people become the way they are*	THEORY-DEVELOP
o Realizations/Changes/Growth/Transformations*	THEORY-CHANGES

Category: External Factors	Abbreviation: XFACT
o Current events	XFACT-CUREVENT
o Reflections on media	XFACT-MEDIA
▪ News media	XFACT-MEDIA/NEWS
▪ Social media	XFACT-MEDIA/SOCIAL
▪ Entertainment media	XFACT-MEDIA/ENTERTAIN
▪ Media literacy	XFACT-MEDIA/LITERACY
o Place	XFACT-PLACE
▪ Thoughts on life in Prince George	XFACT-PLACE/PG
▪ America	XFACT-PLACE/US
▪ American South	XFACT-PLACE/US/SOUTH
• Perceptions of life in the US	XFACT-PLACE/US/PRCEPT
▪ Canada	XFACT-PLACE/CAN
▪ Congo	XFACT-PLACE/CONGO
o Considerations of politics	XFACT-POLITIC
o Considerations of politicians	XFACT-POLITICIAN
o Considerations of government	XFACT-GOV

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Category: History	Abbreviation: HIST
o References to history	HIST-REF
▪ Evidence of historical thinking	HIST-HISTTHINK
▪ Evidence of historical understanding*	HIST-HISTU
▪ Evidence of historical consciousness*	HIST-HISTCON
▪ Evidence of historical agency*	HIST-HISTAGENCY
▪ Evidence of historical empathy	HIST-HISTEMPTH
▪ How do students see/use history/the past?	HIST-SSUSEHIST
o Technology today vs the past	HIST-TECH
o Evaluating the comic's effectiveness*	HIST-COMIC
▪ in teaching history*	HIST-COMIC/TEACHHIST
o Considering how past events influence the future	HIST-PAST2FUTURE
o Reflections on racism*	HIST-RACISM
▪ Changes in history*	HIST-RACISM/CHANGES
• 1960s to now*	HIST-RACISM/CHANGES/1960

Category: Comic	Abbreviation: COMIC
o Reading/discussing the comic*	COMIC
▪ Evaluating the comic's effectiveness*	COMIC-EVAL
• who the comic wouldn't reach/affect positively	COMIC-EVAL/FAIL
• in teaching history*	COMIC-EVAL/TEACHHIST
▪ Benefits of being a visual/textual hybrid	COMIC-HYBRID
▪ Making connections to the comic's content*	COMIC-CNNECT
▪ how the comic changed/affected how students saw the south	COMIC-CHANGES/PRCEPT/ US/SOUTH
▪ the effects of reading the comic	COMIC-EFFECT
▪ experiences reading comics	COMIC-BCKGRND
▪ Learned how to read a comic	COMIC-CANREAD

Category: Values/Beliefs/Ideology	Abbreviation: VBI
o Children	VBI-KIDS
▪ The dangers they face	VBI-KIDS/DANGER
▪ As the future	VBI-KIDS/FUTURE
o Expressions of attitude	VBI-ATTITUDE
▪ Positive	VBI-ATTITUDE/POS
▪ Negative	VBI-ATTITUDE/NEG
▪ Optimism	VBI-ATTITUDE/OPT
▪ Pessimism	VBI-ATTITUDE/PESS
o Values	VBI-VALUE
o Constructive Values	VBI-VALUE/POS
▪ Money is not the most important thing	VBI-VALUE/POS/MONEY
▪ Patience	VBI-VALUE/POS/PATIENCE
▪ Making sacrifices for the benefit of the future	VBI-VALUE/POS/SACRIFICE
o Pessimistic Values	VBI-VALUE/NEG
▪ Racism will never go away*	VBI-VALUE/NEG/RACISM/4EVER
▪ Police brutality is the same everywhere*	VBI-VALUE/NEG/ POLICE/BRUTAL/UNIVER
o Role models/heroes	VBI-HEROES
o Emotional reactions	VBI-EMOTION
o Considering the importance of communication	VBI-COMMUNICATE
o Attitudes toward arguments/activism/action	VBI-ACT
o Realizations/Changes/Growth/Transformations*	VBI-CHANGES