Drawing Anime as a Cross-Cultural Therapy & Rebellion for Young Girls in Foster Care

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Humanities

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Abstract

Adolescent girls in the foster care system are sometimes misunderstood, mistreated and negatively labelled. Along with changes in governmental social policies, the female foster demographic is at higher risk of becoming involved in the judicial system. Programs such as The Holistic Arts Based Program (HAP) aim to provide an environment that nurtures creativity and teaches resilience to young foster children/adolescents who have learning disabilities and have faced loss, neglect and trauma. This study focuses on a particular group of adolescent girls from the foster care system who attended HAP for 24 weeks to seek insight into their use of anime as a therapeutic process. Through textual analysis and psychoanalysis, I trace the difference between the anime inspired art produced in past HAP sessions compared to the art from the anime activity. Anime allows for a therapeutic revision of their past and engages an active identification process. The girls consciously use anime to oppose authority figures and structures that rejected them. The cross-cultural use of anime also serves as a vessel for defiance, creativity and therapy.

Keywords: Foster Girls, Anime, Art, Therapy, Rebellion, Adolescence, Feminist Psychoanalysis, Holistic Arts Based Program (HAP), Otaku.
Dedication

This study is dedicated to the tremendous support and encouragement from my loving parents. Thank you for always pushing me to become a better person. Because of you, I am where I am today. I have learned, helped and taught others the kindness and warmth that you shared with me. Forever grateful, your daughter.

I would also like to dedicate this study to past, present and future girls in the foster care system who struggle to find creative spaces. In a broken system, keep opposing and find your way. Use creativity, female support, and fantasy to transform negativity into positivity. Through optimistic defiance, you are the voices of our future change.

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I also think it is important to acknowledge all the young girls I have met through HAP. Your strength, perseverance and creativity has inspired this study, myself and others about the importance of defiance. Your stories, experiences, art and laughter will forever be with me. You have motivated me not only to assist and understand those who are marginalized, but persevere to make changes in our society for future girls in foster care. I hope I was able to make even half the impact you made on my life. Thank you girls, you are the rebels of our future.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

During my Masters, I was assigned as a Research Assistant and Co-Facilitator for the Holistic Arts Based Program (HAP). In my first year working with foster care youth in the program, I began to notice a trend in behaviour and a shared passion and creation of anime among female HAP participants in the Fall 2016 group. Anime was not simply used to bond with the participants and share their passion with others in the group, but rather was embodied in their modes of speech, style and was used to adapt and communicate their feelings in their art inside and outside of HAP. This use of anime also continued when the group ran for an extra semester as a repeat group. In winter 2017, two groups were joined together as a combined repeat group and more participants used anime in the same way. Working with this repeat group of female participants provided the realization that these girls were creating their own versions of HAP to suit their age and interests. Since HAP was originally created for younger participants, these adolescent females interacted with creativity and art differently and in a more complex and mature way than younger participants. The participants teenage girl culture and use of anime from popular culture in their art created a barrier between them and the HAP facilitators creating a generational barrier during sessions. This barrier stemmed from HAP’s implemented structure which assumed the adolescent girls’ mainstream non-culture. Due to the realization of the girls’ use of anime, I facilitated my own art activity catered to their passion for anime with the repeat 2017 winter HAP girl group. Since HAP contributes effectively to aiding foster care youths improve their resilience and mindfulness to cope with traumas and stresses from the foster care
system, the girls still benefited from HAP’s structure. However, since they relate to teenage girl culture more, this group of girls used anime to further aid in their therapy. Their storytelling and reinterpretation of anime in their art allowed for an effective form of therapy that related to them in a genre that they feel comfortable with. Their connections to anime’s themes, culture, medium and creative adaptations allowed them to cope with traumas while also opposing a mainstream culture that does not understand them. Working with these young girls allowed me to realize how much they are marginalized physically as a female adolescent, socially due to their involvement in the foster care and judicial system and culturally as a female otaku in a Western environment of authority figures. After creating and leading my own anime activity for the girls in HAP, their negative responses and shift in art creation allowed me to further understand their use of anime as a therapeutic and conscious rebellion against HAP and mainstream authority structures.

Western society tends to assume adolescence as being painful for parents and authority figures. Especially for girls, puberty and adolescence has been approached differently than boys. In the past, many sought to control young girls entering womanhood by domestication. While boys would be brought into the public sphere, girls during adolescence were kept in the private sphere (Kaplan, Adolescence 30-31). Although adolescent girls today may seem more treated equally into the public sphere, parents and authority figures still maintain a closer watch on girls compared to boys of the same age. Recently, researchers found that girls gain their independence from their parental figures much later than boys (Miller et al. 42). Close monitoring of adolescent girls demonstrates how parents are more apt to be troubled by adolescent girls’ behavior. This is evident with the large amount of parenting guide publications on teenage girls: *Raising Your Teenage Daughter: A Parental Guide to Curbing the Rebel* includes chapters titled: “Curbing Cattitude,” “The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly (How to Raise a Wild Child),” “RUIN
Her Life” and “Clothes!” However, compared to boys, girls are statistically less likely to act out violently and the rebellion in girls is more common to manifest through their imagination rather than by physical means (Kaplan, Adolescence 285-286). The way the girls in HAP used anime as a form of opposition demonstrates their effective use of rebellion via imagination and creativity, which provides more insight into the different way females cope, compared to boys. However, even though young girls are more apt to act out internally rather than physically compared to boys, adolescent girls are still more likely to be labelled as ‘bad’ and are ignored.

As Diana Coholic notices, “Young people involved with the child welfare system are some of the most marginalized children in our society” (Coholic 7: 2019). In another study, the researchers verify a cycle of power struggle and mutual frustration between foster children and the adults in their lives: “Girls who break rules, defy authority, and get in trouble with the law terrify, frustrate, and confuse the adults in their lives: parents, teachers, and helping professionals they may encounter” (Miller et al. vii). Adolescent girls in the foster care system are more apt to be ignored. Often times, contexts are overlooked which in turn contribute to further marginalization. Any act that defies the social structures put into place around them cause them to become more distanced, outcasted and scolded. Authority figures become an oppressive force against their creativity.

This study attempts to learn from a specific demographic of adolescent girls in the foster care system who struggle to find their space. As a result of their marginalization and trauma, they grow and rebel via various uses of anime in their art. Their use of anime proves to be a conscious opposition of their cultural realities and an alternate and modern form of therapy.

1.1 The Holistic Arts-Based Program
HAP was developed by Dr. Diana Coholic and colleagues from Laurentian University in 2006. It utilizes arts-based methods that are similar to play and art therapy for youth in the foster care system, and other marginalized youth. The program uses art materials, games, and specially crafted group led activities to assist children in the foster care system. HAP teaches youth mindfulness-based techniques as positive ways of resolving issues in their homes, school and social lives: “Mindfulness encourages us to live our lives focused in the present moment without negative judgments and with appreciation for our experiences” (Coholic 1: 2019). This holistic philosophy provides marginalized youth with a fun, creative environment that also fosters growth and resiliency. The goal is to foster self-awareness to cope with traumas and different emotions through the practice of mindfulness: “The holistic arts-based methods create novel experiences and an environment within which children are encouraged to explore their viewpoints, feelings and behaviors for the purposes of developing their self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience” (Coholic 14: 2010). The program allows youth to be part of a group environment that encourages imagination and exploration of feelings through creativity. HAP’s group format offers multiple benefits for children in need, including learned interpersonal skills, cooperation of a shared goal, learning values via others, and created a non-isolating space (Coholic 157: 2010). Many HAP activities are developed to enhance group cohesion as well as communication with others who share similar struggles. Each activity from HAP has been specially designed to incorporate certain themes and techniques of mindfulness using various art-based mediums. An outline of HAP’s goals and strength-based approaches are further outlined in Appendix A.

HAP is structured in groups. Participants attend for a 12 week period with weekly 2 hour sessions. This arts-based mindfulness group program has been tested on approximately 300
marginalized children to date. These children range from ages 8-12 years old and the same number of youths between the ages of 11-17 years (Coholic 7: 2019). The groups are divided by genders and matched accordingly by age. Though the group is led by facilitators in order to guide various arts-based activities with themes consistent of the group’s need, no child is forced to participate in an activity if the child chooses not to do so. This builds a unique program compared to educational models that have set rubrics, evaluations or limitations to creativity. There are also no distinct hierarchies between the facilitators and participants. Each facilitator also participates in the HAP activities. It is essential to note that though HAP activities have been created to reach certain goals or address certain issues, HAP does not aim to treat a specific issue in order to avoid bringing up specific traumas or triggers that can be harmful to a child (Coholic 14-15: 2010). HAP’s sessions follow a particular structure and method with varying activities in each group outlined in Appendix B. There is also a more detailed explanation of a HAP group activity called “Me as a Tree” in Appendix C. Appendix C demonstrates a general format of HAP activities and how they are presented.

Not only has HAP been developed to assist youth in foster care, it has also provided various students from differing disciplines with a model to bring into their future classrooms as well as in their personal lives. With HAP’s model, future teachers and social workers can gain knowledge and skills to communicate, understand and teach resiliency to children who have undergone traumas. HAP was also adapted by Laurentian University’s Masters in social work student Patricia Grynspan who explored mindfulness-based interventions. Her study examined a group of Northern Ontario post-secondary students who were enrolled in the concurrent education program. Grynspan used HAP’s activities to lower students’ stress while simultaneously teaching them the effectiveness of an arts-based program that can be used in their
future classrooms. Grynspan noted the importance of providing post-secondary students with mental health support needed to complete their educations: “Mental wellness on university campuses is a growing concern as university students reveal alarmingly high rates of stress-related challenges such as anxiety and depression” (Grynspan 12). Having been part of this group as a co-facilitator, I saw and experienced first-hand how therapeutic going to HAP for 2 hours once a week truly was. The stresses of life, education and jobs can be exhausting; but taking the time to sit, share and create art in a group setting allowed us all to realize how to deal with our stress in healthier ways. Something as simple as drawing was forgotten over time and busy schedules of pre-adulthood. It almost made us feel like children again because, for some of us, that was the last times we felt creative. It also provided an interpersonal environment where we got to meet new students our age and share similar struggles.

Nevertheless, my experience with HAP was not limited to that one group. I also co-facilitated groups for various foster care youths for 2 years. Though HAP has proven to be effective and beneficial for various ages, this study focuses specifically on HAP’s work with foster youth. With the overwhelming success of the program, some girls from the group I first co-facilitated in fall 2016 as well as others from a group which I did not facilitate asked to return for a first ever repeat session in the winter term of 2017. Therefore, HAP created a group with participants from two separate groups to make a larger “repeat group” for the first time. This group consisted of 8 girls who ranged from the ages of 12-15 years. During my time as a facilitator of the fall 2016 group and then the 2017 winter repeat group, I began to notice themes of fandom in anime art and culture. I was intrigued by the overwhelming enthusiasm. The majority of girls in the program shared their passion of anime and drew in this style during HAP group activities, during snack break and outside of HAP in their personal lives. Even the way
they dressed, spoke and drew all shared themes of Japanese animation and otaku behavior. Not only were these young girls some of the strongest girls I have ever met, but they also embodied such a passion for creativity and raw emotional expression when communicating about their works of art. I knew there was something deeper to their choice of drawing in anime style because “Interest and passion are both associated with a greater degree of personal and emotional engagement. Interest is motivated by a need to solve something (Bilandzic et al. 47). As their interest in anime was unlike anything I had witnessed and was such an integral part of their lives, I knew there was significance to their use of anime in their art, which inspired me to learn more about why and what they enjoyed about anime as a creative outlet.

Since anime proved to be an essential part of their creative process, I decided to lead an art activity catered to the theme of anime/self-empowerment. The 8 girls from HAP were asked to draw in anime-style (or style of their choice) a character that represents empowerment and strength from their perspectives. The aim of this activity was to foster their individual creativity in a genre that previously proved to be natural and comfortable to them. The theme of empowerment was chosen to motivate the girls to find strength from within and this maintains similar holistic philosophies in past HAP activities. As strength building and resiliency are key features in HAP, this was something that I wanted to be present in the activity in order to build up the girls’ confidence based on their personal strengths and attributes. Another aim of this activity was to see if they found strength and empowerment in anime. My hypothesis of the outcome was that the girls would draw in anime style and would show enthusiasm to having an activity catered to their art preferences. I also wanted to trace signs of empowerment in anime characters from a female perspective.
HAP’s research methodologies utilize qualitative and quantitative research approaches. HAP’s participants are gathered via referrals by local health agencies, local child welfare agencies and by other community-based mental health professionals. They are then assigned to groups based on gender, age and schedule availability (Coholic & Eys 5). Many of the youth in HAP differ in behavior and coping skills though most are noted to all struggle with social skills, emotion regulation, and difficulties with focusing and listening. The groups are usually comprised of 4 to 6 children in order to maintain an environment where each child can participate meaningfully (Coholic & Eys 6).

HAP’s data analysis uses standardized measures to investigate the effectiveness of the group structure, the measurement of children's self-concept and resiliency gained from HAP. Resilience is measured by collecting information and answering the same questions about the participant pre and post HAP. Comparing pre and post measures tracks if attending HAP improved anything significant in their lives. This measurement and comparison are scored by using the “Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale” (Coholic & Eys 6). This measure is comprised of 60 test items with statements that the children indicate whether it applies or does not apply to them by selecting a yes or no option. The entire test takes approximately 15 minutes for a child to complete and is then examined using a global score that reflects the child's self-concept. The score can be divided into six subscales: Behavioral Adjustment; Intellectual and School Status; Physical Appearance and Attributes; Freedom from Anxiety; Popularity; Happiness and Satisfaction. The research team also make note that higher scores are demonstrative of higher self-concept (scores ranging from 40-60). They use what is called the "Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents" (RSCA) in order to measure a child's
resiliency. These three global self-report scales are presented in a format that ranges from 0 (never) to 4 (almost always) (Coholic & Eys 6).

HAP's location and facilitation took place at Laurentian University's lab that has a space for the group work/activities and has video-audio recording for each group session along with pre and post-interviews (Coholic & Eys 8). The facilitators of HAP vary depending on year, though in an average group there are 2-3 facilitators in order to foster an environment that is not too over-bearing for youth. Many facilitators are professionals who have educational backgrounds and work experience in counseling psychology, youth care, social work, education and child/youth care. Part of the post-analysis from HAP also includes individual interviews with the child and guardian in order to further assess if there is an apparent change after participation in HAP. Though the guardian is part of the post-interview, the focus remains on the child's experience and feedback (Coholic & Eys 8).

After conducting her analysis, Coholic recognized two major themes, which include (1) children's positive perceptions about HAP that include wanting the group to last longer, and (2) benefits of participating in HAP. HAP can improve many facets of the children's lives such as: "(a) emotion regulation, (b) mood, (c) coping-social skills, (d) confidence and self-esteem, (e) empathy, and (f) ability to pay attention and focus (Coholic & Eys 9-10). HAP also uses a quantitative research analysis to note descriptive statistics and pre/post intervention scores. HAP has therefore proven that through arts-based methods and mindfulness, youth have improved their abilities to control their feelings and deal with them in a healthy manner: “To date, the children and youth who have participated in HAP have reported consistent experiences; that is, participating in HAP is perceived to improve emotion regulation, mood, coping and social skills, confidence and self-esteem, and an ability to focus and pay attention” (Coholic 23: 2019). HAP
encourages healing through creativity and allows for positive growth and outcomes for youth in foster care. This holistic model has also proven its effectiveness for children/adolescents who have undergone serious traumas. For this reason, this study uses similar strategies and frameworks as HAP in order to find out whether creativity is essential to female youth who have undergone trauma.

This study uses a qualitative research model. The way this group of participants came to be part of this particular research was not prearranged. It built on Dr. Diana Coholic’s existing work groups. Since I conducted my activity in an already established ethics approved research environment that has proven successful for many years; this allowed me to use HAP’s facilities and research room in the same way past activities have been held. It also allowed for the girls to be in a familiar and safe space. Using HAP’s code of ethics each participant’s drawings and dialogue used in this study remained unidentified and confidential.

As Coholic’s analysis of data and dissemination of results from HAP focus mainly on transcriptions and dialogue from the youth paired with quantitative data, I focus on the visuals produced by the group I co-facilitated in fall 2016 and the repeat group of female adolescents in winter of 2017. The visual analysis is supported and accompanied with some narratives and dialogue in order to provide context to the girls’ drawings and discussions of anime. Both narrative and visual analysis work together to contribute to a more accurate analysis. A projected drawing test allows the participant to reveal their background and side to their creations. Since some drawings analyzed were not always accompanied with dialogue or discussion by the participants, there will be an attempt to understand the meanings in the art work itself because youth communicate less feelings verbally.
Therefore, it is to be noted that this study’s hypothesis, themes, visual analysis, and outcome differ from that of HAP’s. The main methodology used to complete the visual analysis for this study was chosen due to its use with various demographics of youth and gifted children. Choice allows for a deeper understanding of the representations of specific themes used in the participants drawings. Claire Golomb’s *The Child’s Creation of a Pictorial World* pairs theoretical and empirical frameworks in order to capture and understand the mental processes of drawings created by various youth. Golomb’s work establishes the importance behind elements in a drawing, such as differentiation of spatial relations, the meaning of color, dreams, and how techniques and creative tools can embody a child’s artistic choice. Her wide demographic and her multi-dimensional study on various themes present in a children’s drawings proved most useful to this study. Many activities from HAP use specific themes and creative mediums in order to allow for a wide array of activities that suits every child’s preferences and needs. Having had participated in these activities as a co-facilitator allows me to apply Golomb’s visual analysis to HAP’s activities. By analysing the context, colors, shapes, timeline of drawings and personal narratives that accompany them, I formed a better understanding of the meaning-making process of each image. My interests concentrate on images and my analysis center around themes and discussion of anime, fantasy, dreams and the wild woman archetype.

The importance of creativity, especially in child development, is a crucial way for invoking independent expression. Creativity has a correlation to a child’s mood/feelings and is directly reflected in their art. It is widely understood that youth communicate distinctively differently than adults do. In fact, communication is often non-verbal for children. Instead, children’s communication take shape through creative activities. The arts provide shared activities to encourage understanding and sharing traumatic experiences: “With regard to
children, creative arts have been used to help with specific problems such as bereavement; to facilitate expression in hospitalized and traumatized children; and to deal with crises and trauma” (Coholic 26-27: 2010). For this reason, researchers/social work practitioners offer to provide youth demographics who have undergone life traumas with an environment that encourages and builds creativity. The use of creativity is essential when working with trauma in youth because they are less likely to discuss and share personal experiences due to fears of being misunderstood and reliving past traumas (Coholic 27: 2010).

Art forms the main vehicle of communication in HAP. Art activities provide a less threatening way of sharing and communicating about the girls’ homes, personal issues and tribulations. HAP’s mission is to teach mindfulness via art; art therapy has been proven effective especially for children who engage creativity on a daily basis. Most of the participants from HAP were chosen because of their foster background. They also tend to be interested in arts. Further analysis of the HAP girls’ drawings can provide understanding of their traumas, views and oppositions against authority figures, the foster care system and society. This understanding can help us see these girl’s rebellious behaviour sympathetically. Before HAP, many of the girls were labelled as troubled and in need of guidance. HAP provides the potential to build resiliency and independence with learned mindfulness and acceptance through creativity. They leave HAP with new skills to deal with stresses. In my experience, these girls have proved to be very strong, not afraid to embrace who they are and stand up to things they do not like. They are the ones who question what is wrong around them without fear of being punished or misunderstood. They fight and oppose tradition in any environment so that they are one step ahead. They do not wish to have their creativity understood; rather, they aim to share their gifted creations with the only person who matters: themselves.
1.2 Otaku as Globalized Outcasts

In order to understand the cross-cultural impact on a small group of Canadian foster girls, we may first understand anime’s context, rooted cultural themes, impacts and fandom. Before Osamu Tezuka created Japanese animation, commonly referred to as anime for short, he was known as the father of Japanese comic books (or manga). Using his influences and cultural themes in his manga, Tezuka literally brought his manga to life by incorporating his art style in manga with Disney inspired animation. At one point in time, anime seemed to be the underdog and outcast of animation. Anime’s content celebrates and embodies themes that appeal to the non-elite demographics. Tezuka noted that his manga and anime art style was inspired by the cross-cultural transfer of Walt Disney’s cartoons. It is also comprised of heavier subject themes, plots and content that push the limits and deal with mature themes. Some would say that anime to the East is what Hollywood movies are to the West in themes and style: “Unlike cartoons in the west, anime in Japan is truly a mainstream pop cultural phenomenon” (Napier 7). One of the main reasons that anime differs from traditional Western cartoons is due to their tween targeted demographic.

In the West, there were little television programs geared to the tween and adolescent demographic. Fortunately, with cross-cultural exchange, the gap between child and adult media content was fulfilled by Japanese anime: "Indeed, tweentoon is the only area in North American television that is dominated by foreign productions" (Cheu 295). Markets tend to focus primarily on child and adult content because these age groups extend for long periods of time, whereas tween content is often underrepresented and left unvisited leaving little age appropriate content for those aged between 13 and 17 years. It wasn't until the 90's that the media industry began to
pay attention to the tween market. While creating their own rather unsuccessful cultural products, North America decided to import from Japan in the 80’s and early 90’s because their content suited the tween market age group. Finally, Western tween and teens were able to feel understood by characters for the first time. The lack of representation and role models from children and adult programs were finally met by a culture that seeks to understand adolescence through its content and themes. The once ignored demographic of tweens and teens of the West joined forces and connected with Eastern anime that was once misunderstood and lacked popularity in the West: “The otaku are a strange and unique community that has come into existence as a result of interactions between the modern media environment and the adolescent psyche in Japan” (Tamaki 9). Anime and adolescents are a match made in rebel heaven.

Along with any artistic medium comes a community, and for anime this is the *otaku*. Otaku means having a shared passion, or as some may consider an obsession for anime: “The term refers to (…) passionate fans of anime, manga and computer games. They are known for their facility with computer technology and for their encyclopedic, even fetishistic, knowledge of particular strains of visual culture” (Vincent xiii). As the definition for otaku is simple, it is the characterization and profiling of the otaku that is constantly shifting. The spectrum of opinions of the otaku range on two polar opposite spectrums which are either positive or negative, making otaku a taboo and contested topic of discussion. Although their contested nature is what makes the otaku a fascinating community, the demographic is mainly seen as embodiments of various social anxieties. Most of the time, they are more self-aware than non-otaku who choose to live in ignorance of social reality. As anime is mainstream in its culture of origin and is beginning to make big head way in the West, this is not quite the case with its otaku yet.
The exact emergence of the first otaku is not completely known, although most say the 1970’s was the first decade when otaku communities were known to the public, but otaku communities could have been formed privately as early as the 1950’s according to Hiroki Azuma: “(…) otaku culture in reality originated as a subculture imported from the United States after World War II” (Azuma 11). The term to describe the otaku was not widely known to the public until its first use by writer Nakamori Akio in an article about manga in 1983. He used this term to describe anime fans since it was used by the otaku community who used it as a second-person pronoun when communicating with one another: “The term was discriminatory but gradually gained a quiet foothold in the subculture industry” (Tamaki 11). An interesting and positive definition of otaku by critic Nakajima Azusa draws on the literal meaning of otaku “your home” or “your family.” An otaku can be understood as a close group of fans who regard their subculture as a “family-like” experience: “(…) because even after the paternal or national authority has been toppled, otaku must search for a group to which they should belong” (Azuma 27). The otaku are not strangers discussing anime, but rather made up of people sharing their lives and interests with one another while creating a tight knit community.

For almost two decades, Western producers did not recognize the potential for success until anime fans took it upon themselves to show their appreciation for Japanese anime: “It was not until after the rise of grassroots anime fandom in the eighties that U.S. producers recognized the commercial potential of anime's cultural difference as expressed in its Japaneseness” (McKevitt 898). In the U.S., anime was held with marginal status since its debut in the 1960’s and all the way through the seventies and eighties (McKevitt 898). Anime was overlooked and overshadowed by Western media content created with the familiar structures of Western entertainment. Not only did anime fans independently create an entire community and launched
the success of future anime content in Western media, but they also demanded Western producers to keep anime’s Japanese authenticity in order to enjoy anime themes as Japanese viewers did. Western market driven media proved to be less favorable and a new form of entertainment and visual artistry and content became the preference to the middle class and non-elite Western population: "The commercial boom of the 1990s was the result of several U.S. companies rectifying this tension by giving the die-hard fan community what it wanted" (McKeviit 898). Anime proved to be a powerful force by providing audiences with entertainment and pleasure. Fans bonded cross culturally and globally using anime as a common thread of connectedness, and fan groups were able to create their own cultural interconnectedness to foster participation in a large global network.

Many researchers have examined the impact of anime’s globalization in America; however, there has yet to be ample studies on the Canadian otaku. What is unique about globalization is technology's huge role in connecting societies across different cultural masses in accessible and affordable ways. Technology and mass media allow for an easily accessible flow of cultural content which allows viewers to connect cross culturally in ways that were never before imaginable. With anime at children's fingertips via the internet, anime becomes not only a novelty, but an escape from the mundane content which takes up the majority of Western media. The public have the power to choose what they want to watch from domestic to foreign materials. Media and anime provide viewers with an expansion of ideologies. One can oppose the mainstream media that is chosen in their culture and oppose those ideals by choosing a different cultural media product.

With the expansion of the Internet, anime and its otaku quickly became more accessible cross-culturally and came with more positive, but also even more negative views and coverage.
The consumption of anime itself is positive for the otaku because it promotes growth and success that leads to the expansion of anime content; however, many otakus do not enjoy being labelled or seen. In fact, they do not like to be labelled as otaku by others outside of the community. Psychiatrist Saito Tamaki is known for his Lacanian tradition and interest in Japanese media culture. He uses psychoanalysis to understand “the beautiful fighting girl” figure in anime which leads to a psychoanalytical understanding of the male otaku. His work combines both psychoanalysis and fiction. Tamaki notes that the otaku’s interest in a fictional medium such as anime contributes to their negative reputation. He further explains that society’s misconceptions surrounding the otaku’s attachment to fiction rather than reality leads many to associate the otaku with immaturity and a disconnect from reality (Tamaki 13). Though many anime productions contain mature themes, anime as an artistic medium and its otaku remain known for their lack of maturity (Tamaki 10). This may be induced by the Western idea that cartoons are associated with a younger audience and are therefore not suitable for mature content. While most Western cartoons are geared towards children, some anime, such as films from Miyazaki, explore many complex social and political issues. His use of serious themes is handled with more care than some adult films in the West and demonstrates the maturity in anime.

Along with Western scrutiny, there are still many traditional Japanese natives who look down on the otaku: “While rabidly fanatical fans of anime are called by the pejorative term otaku and looked down upon by conservative Japanese society, anime is simply accepted by virtually all the younger generation of Japanese as a cultural staple” (Napier 7). Japanese society finds itself split into two possible categories: “otaku-phobes” or “otakuphiles.” As with many topics, anime and the otaku are not as simple as a fandom, but in fact symbolize the loss and release of tradition. Hiroku Azuma explains that the defeat from the war in Japan caused a drift between
the post war otaku generation and those who experienced pre war Japan: “The obsession with Japan in otaku culture did not develop from Japanese tradition but rather emerged after this tradition has disappeared. To put it another way, the trauma of defeat – that is, the harsh reality that we had decisively lost any traditional identity - lies beneath the existence of otaku culture” (Azuma 15). The loss is that of Japanese traditional identity for many. As some mourn the loss of tradition, others celebrate it causing a drift between both sides. It is for this reason that some avoid topics of anime or otaku altogether.

Studies based on anime and its otaku in scholarship are present but largely lacking. Many academics tend to overlook serious ideas/issues that are represented in less serious mediums/genres such as anime, manga, graphic novels, pop songs, etc. In order to contribute and expand the knowledge of cultural studies, I want to add a positive outlook on anime and its contributions to its otaku and viewers. Rather than looking at a specific element of anime or its otaku, this thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach in order to connect anime’s various influences. Anime’s history of battles of resistance will also be used to symbolize the rebellion of consuming anime in non-Eastern cultures. Looking at anime in an interdisciplinary way will allow me to celebrate and display it as not only a cultural text but as a psychological and social one. As many scholarly works study the male otaku, my qualitative research focuses on a female demographic of otaku who utilize anime not only for entertainment, but as therapy. There are ample studies which examine female anime characters, although studies catered to specifically anime’s female otaku has yet to be fully explored. Many studies on the male otaku have been at the center of academia due to the myth that the otaku are mainly comprised of the male demographic due to anime’s sexual content. Tamaki explains that though the majority of the otaku demographic was at first comprised of males, recent studies show that there is now a larger
female presence than ever with not only anime but manga and comics as well: “(...) one theory has it that fully 70 percent of the participants in the Comic Market are female” (Tamaki 14). In fact, I myself have met more female otaku’s than male. It has now become the norm to see an equal or if not larger demographic of female otaku who are involved in the anime community. There are many misconceptions that females cannot be anime fans or otaku because of the sexual content in anime, although once again sexuality is not one sided and there is far more to anime than its sexual content. Even in 2019, there are little to no studies that focus on the female otaku. The female participants from this qualitative research study used anime more than as a form of entertainment compared to the male groups in their everyday personal and private lives which motivated this entire study and thesis.

My study started in an entirely different direction. Previously, I focused mainly on anime and its portrayals of women in it. Rather than focusing on the fictional characters in anime, I learned to study the young girls who watch, adapt and recreate anime in their everyday environments. I was assigned to work as a research assistant in the Holistic Arts-Based Program, otherwise known as (HAP.) Their use of anime proved to be a vital part of their lives rather than just a form of entertainment. Not only has my experience in HAP allowed me to see first-hand how anime can be used for more than entertainment, it had also changed my focus to a demographic of female youth that are underrepresented. As Tezuka used manga and anime as an art form to cope with his cultural reality, the girls in the foster care and judicial system also use anime styled drawings to cope with traumas. In the following chapters, I will explore why anime is an optimal medium used to deal with personal traumas.

1.3 Limitations
Since art can be used as an effective communicator and coping mechanism for youth, it is also important to note the influence of such external factors as media. Since adults and youth are more apt to watch different mainstream media’s, this naturally creates a generational barrier between the facilitators understanding of the themes and feelings in some of the youths’ drawings. When the participants create art with themes and messages from Japanese anime, many facilitators have difficulties comprehending them because they know little about anime. However, when it comes to assisting these youth with HAP, facilitators need to understand the youth and their arts. Since the girls in the fall 2016 and repeat winter 2017 HAP sessions chose to use anime as a main conduit of their creativity, this study aims to understand why anime was a chosen style and how the girls used it to communicate.

Having only female participants who are part of the otaku culture for this study means a narrow demographic. But the study is valuable because female otaku are underrepresented in academic research. Though this study focuses on a narrow demographic with a small number of participants, it will aid in assisting others who may work with youth who have similar passions. With a holistic approach, the goal is not to understand all children in HAP because each child is unique and shares different uses of creativity and expressions.
Chapter 2

2 Textual & Visual Analysis of Drawings from HAP

After facilitating my anime themed activity, the outcome was different from what I hypothesized. I expected the girls to have a positive reaction for having an anime themed activity. Since they incorporated anime in so much of their art throughout HAP, I assumed they would be eager to have an activity catered to their preferred art style. As HAP’s activities were not catered to a specific art style or theme, the girls usually transformed the activity, regardless of the artistic medium into an anime style. I also expected them to draw in anime style since this was their preferred choice throughout most sessions and I expected the use of various anime characters that were in their conversations throughout HAP. As anime found its way not only artistically in the girls’ creations but as a way to bond with others in the group, I expected an anime themed activity to stimulate conversation and sharing with the other participants in the group. Since anime characters proved to be important figures in the girls’ lives, I assumed that they would discuss and create an anime character that symbolizes themselves or a figure that they look up to. I thought that creating a character they looked up to in anime, would allow them to find some of those strong characteristics in themselves. Finally, I expected the reception to the activity to be well received by the group. I thought that since I recognized their passion for anime, they would feel more comfortable to share their feelings through a style that they appreciate and understand. I assumed that my interest in anime would provide a more accepting and understanding environment for sharing and to feel comfortable. My overall hypothesis was
that my anime activity would be positively received by the group and would generate more
discussion and involvement for sharing personal feelings and positive role modeling in
themselves.

After the activity, my findings demonstrated that the girls did not react positively to my
anime themed activity as previously hypothesized. Rather than react positively, the girls
demonstrated overt signs of rejection and negativity towards the activity and to me. In group, I
usually felt as though the girls did not see me as a facilitator but as someone to share their
interests with. Often times, they would share a lot of their personal anime art work and stories
with me away from the other facilitators once they realized that I had a base knowledge about
anime. Before the activity, I felt as though they were able to confide in me because they knew I
understood an important aspect in their lives. However, during the anime themed activity that I
led they completely changed their behaviour towards me. The majority of the group were not
interested in the activity. After I explained the activity, some were hesitant to create anything at
all. They looked unhappy and they became very silent which was very rare in group. Some went
on their phones right away to look for an image to replicate. This was not usually the case since
they would draw anime characters from memory and would adapt them into something unique to
the meaning of their drawing/feelings. It seemed as though they were now detached and did not
want to create anything but instead copy a drawing that was obviously anime, but that did not
signify anything to them. The meaning and attachment to anime had been removed and the
drawings became meaningless. This was apparent by the discussion that followed. When it was
time to share their drawings, not many wanted to discuss them at all and some just described the
visual aspects rather than what it meant to them. Some didn’t even want me to see the drawing
which was not something they did with me in past sessions. Some in the group even seemed to
be visibly upset with me and wanted to finish the activity quickly. Usually, the facilitators in HAP need to end the activity to move onto the next because some girls would take a very long time to create detailed art work. With my activity, they rushed very fast to complete it and did not share with the other girls.

The differences between my hypothesis and the findings demonstrated that the girls reacted differently because of the anime themed activity. Having an activity that was catered to their interest created a negative response towards me as a facilitator. When the other HAP activities had no specific theme, they were able to bring anime in their art when they wanted to. They were acting independently and were able to share only when they wanted to and with who they wanted to. Their anime use was something they were able to control and use to communicate with others who understood. However, when I exposed this use of anime to the entire group and other facilitator, they no longer had control over their art. Instead of relinquishing control, they did not use creativity or meaning in their anime drawings. They ceased communication and no longer wanted to share because they may have felt that I betrayed their trust. Perhaps they also thought that I was now in control or wanted to extract their interest of anime for my own purposes. During the activity, it felt as though the girls were disappointed and saw me as an authority figure rather than on the same level as them. There are various ways to examine these findings to theorize why the girls rejected my anime themed activity. Due to the negative reaction to the anime themed activity, I draw further conclusions about why this was by tracing and comparing the difference between the large use of anime drawings in regular HAP sessions to the limited anime drawn in the anime themed activity. In order to trace an accurate interpretation about the girls’ drawings, this first section will analyse drawings created during HAP activities in order to serve as a comparison to those drawn in the activity posed for this
study. This visual analysis will focus on mainly drawings which contain themes of Japanese anime art style, themes of opposition and dreams since they were abundant in most of the girls’ anime drawings.

Regardless of the activities, anime has often been at the forefront of most of the young girls’ drawings, conversations and personal style. Many girls embody the otaku culture by having anime-like haircuts with bright kawaii colours including half red and half black hair with the trademark volumized hairstyle paired with cat, fox ears, and tails. Their clothing also sports any anime shows, characters and some comic book villains such as the Joker and Harley-Quinn. They have bright accessories that are kawaii inspired, those of which we do not often see in North America but are common in Japanese street fashion. In archetypical psychology, clothing choices personify one’s outer presence and acts as a persona/mask that one presents to the outer world. Clarissa Pinkola Estes notes that many adolescents’ fashion choices can be used as a way to hide a lot that is happening in their inner selves and only show the outside perspective of the perfect-persona they seek to show others (Estes 51). The bubbly, happy and bright clothing/personality can serve as a mask for one’s anger and grief that she shares. However, with one of the participants, her anime-like style can also be interpreted as a positive façade that perhaps hides sadness that resides from inside, but it can also be used as a strategic and rebellious opposition to mainstream Western fashion/society.

Not only are the girls’ dress style visually similar to an anime character, but their voices, mannerisms and personalities also resemble that of an otaku. The girls would use high pitched screeches and exaggerated movements when discussing topics that bring them joy. Their outer style and inner personas embody the anime fantasy. This body language is often depicted in most anime series and films as many characters are overly expressive and animated. For example,
when HAP participant 1 shared with the group how she wishes she could dress the way she would like all the time but instead had to wait until Halloween to do so at school. She stated:

I just love that I can dress up as anything I want and nobody’s going to give me weird glares. Usually I wear clothes really normal but I have a lot of things that quite literally if I was allowed I would or if there was no dress code; I would wear a onesie to school and I would wear that in my everyday. And I would just do that [dress up] like in an animal onesie cause its kind of like what I like to wear. Plus, Halloween gives me the ability to go to the dollar store and buy a bazillion things of fake blood and I just like having it (Participant 1 Fall 2016 HAP)

This demonstrates how her style is interpreted as “Halloween-esk” or as a costume, whereas to other otaku, her style would be accepted. As the girls’ clothing choices are seen as pushing mainstream boundaries, the same is true with their otaku conversations. Though many of the HAP facilitators do not understand the young girls’ discussions about anime and make an effort to listen, they often try and bring back the conversation to fit their agenda. The girls still interject quite often and find ways to bring anime into the conversation since they are producing anime in most of their drawings. The excitement from discussing anime demonstrates emotional and physical signs of personal connection to fiction. This connection often comes from reading fiction. Psychical signs occur in the body as an individual is experiencing those thoughts, such as “(…) increased heart rate, sweaty palms, or calm, relaxed breathing and so on” (Gold 30). Many participants recall anime related experiences and characters. They share their anime drawings and stories with physical and emotional signs of imaginative immersion. One participant often interjected in group with a long fast paced dialogue full of excitement about cosplay of a character from Homestuck called Tavros Nitram whom she refered to as “Tavs.” Her story
focused on her friend trying to complete his cosplay costume in a short amount of time before a fan expo by adding super glue to his head in order to attach realistic looking Tavros horns.

2.1 Textual Analysis of Anime Characters Used by the Group

Tavros Nitram is a character from a webcomic *Homestuck* written and animated by American Andrew Hussie. Though this is not an anime, *Homestuck* imitates characters and themes which have pleased many otaku. *Homestuck* is most known for its unique and controversial characters which are most popular at cosplay and anime conventions. The webcomic also takes on a unique writing style using mainstream Internet terms that make up the characters personalities and motives. This webcomic is a post-modern self-reflexive mockery and makes jokes about the process of writing. There are acts for various introductions of new characters with a length of over 8,000 pages as writer/creator Hussie warns on the front page: “A tale about a boy and his friends and a game they play together. About 8,000 pages. Don’t say I didn’t warn you” (Hussie 1).

What is interesting about the choice of anime/manga and other popular culture media discussed by the girls is a theme of opposition and defiance of society in the content, characters and stories. Tavros’ character is part of an alien species called “trolls” which are supposed to embody our Internet trolls. An Internet troll is someone who causes havoc in the comments on the Internet about someone or something they dislike or disagree. Internet trolls are known to be over-the-top in their insults. As *Homestuck* begins set on planet earth following the lives of children who are friends with one another via the Internet, the setting changes when the trolls are introduced. These other-worldly trolls represent the risqué part of the Internet that many outside the Internet culture do not understand. Each troll dramatizes an Internet personality that is
marginalized/controversial. In an interview, Hussie shares that celebrating marginalized characters has always been an important theme in his webcomic: "It also bears mentioning that one thing I think *Homestuck* has always done is take marginalized internet cultures that most people think are icky or incomprehensible or just completely laughable, and sort of humanize those things" (Hussie 10: 2012). Hussie favors the rejected and therefore allows marginalized youth to relate to the characters. Many characters discussed by the girls from HAP are villains and marginalized characters. That is not to say that they only favor characters who are “bad,” but in fact “ship” many who are powerful, brave, honest and unique. Another group of fans is the LGBTQ community. Many characters whose fans “ship” are in pansexual relationships and allows its readers to feel a sense of belonging in the LGBTQ Internet community. Many times throughout HAP, the HAP girls expressed their support for various sexualities and appreciation for fluid gender characterization.

For someone outside of the subculture, hearing fans to discuss this experience and story may seem trivial. However, as someone who understands many of the themes, I can appreciate the content and reasons behind the joy that it brings to these young girls’ lives. Participant 1 spoke with passion and anime-like gestures and sounds in her retelling of this cosplay experience. The total transcriptions for this story were 3 typed pages in length and she told this story in under two minutes! Her facial animation demonstrated how passionate she was about her love of animation as well as how much she wants to share with other HAP girls. Along with this example, there were many other moments before, during and after group when these girls would share drawings and stories of their favourite anime series and characters. What was most interesting about the animes, cartoons and films discussed were the themes present in the characters. Levi, a main character in an anime called *Attack on Titan* is the topic of a
conversation between three of the girls from HAP during their first session snack break. This was the group’s first time meeting and anime was a popular topic that bonded some of the girls together. Their discussion about Levi’s character focused on his strength and fighting abilities. The anime *Attack on Titan* is an archetype of the biblical story of David and Goliath. Levi’s character is an archetype of David, the son of Jesse of Bethlehem. David and Levi share similarities in their determination and skill to overcome what seems an impossible battle. In the original scripture, Goliath is described as being 6 cubits and a span and harasses the soldiers to fight him, but no soldiers are brave enough to fight him other than the youngest son, David. David is able to defeat Goliath with no weapons and instead with stones. Similarly, Levi is an unlikely warrior who is seen as an outcast of society. Regardless of his background, he is able to defeat many large Titans who are threatening the human race and their city. As his character is the leader of the human soldiers in the Survey Corps, his main qualities are bravery and his exceptional physical strength. Though Levi is young and a human, his courage allows him to become a warrior in the war against the Titans. Titans are giant monsters, similar to Goliath; roaming around crushing cities and eating people alive. In order to survive this war and protect their loved one’s, young adolescents’ band together to train and join the Survey Corps. After becoming part of the soldiers, they become the protectors of their land. Alongside his bravery, Levi has extreme strength in battle paired with a calm and almost cold demeaner. This creates mystery and isolation at times for his character: “He is not above provoking or belittling those who oppose or irritate him. His sense of humor tends toward the vulgar, insulting, and dark. All of this makes him unsettling to a great amount of people” (http://attackontitan.wikia.com/wiki/Levi_Ackerman). His cold demeaner which can seem off-putting to other characters makes sense once they learn about his past life before joining the
Survey Corps. Having lived in the underground city, he is a criminal and a rebel. He is independent and does not take orders from anyone, especially authority. Not until he joins the Survey Corps and meets people who he can truly trust can he submit to orders from their Commander and others in the team. Hence, this is why he does not deem people he does not trust as worthy of his respect. There are many episodes throughout the anime in which Levi resists and insults the authorities who oppress the Survey Corps. Along with his strong personality and defiance, Levi has strong morals and is sensitive to those he loves and to human lives. Once Levi gains knowledge that the Titans were once humans; he becomes sickened by the idea of having murdered them. Though Levi is at first glance cold and mean due to his life struggles, he is a very complex and deeply kind character.

Upon having watched some of this anime before, when the girls discussed their favourite character Levi in group, I thought they were discussing the main protagonist of the anime, Eren, because Eren’s character is usually a fan favourite. Having then remembered Levi’s character, it made complete and utter sense that the girls from group enjoyed his character the most because Levi’s personality and reputation is similar to that of the girls from HAP. The three girls shared qualities of opposition to HAP and other adults and authority figures. Participant 5 only attended HAP sessions for a few weeks before she had to re-locate foster homes outside of the city. Though she is included in some early dialogue about anime, not many of her drawings will be examined and she did not partake in the activity for this study. However, it is still noteworthy that she had issues with defiance and got in some physical altercations with her foster mother. Due to her arrest and issues with foster guardians, she was often moved to group homes. One of the other youths from HAP made a comment that participant 5 was not “bad” before her biological mother passed away. After such a loss at a critical stage of development such as
adolescence, it is only normal that one may oppose those around her out of grief and anger. It has also been noted by Miller et al, that though it may appear that many foster girls are violent towards their foster parents for no reason, they are usually only using self-defence in unsuitable homes and environments that they are placed in. Maryland’s juvenile justice system dealt with mostly family “assaults” involving such activities as a girl hitting or throwing an object at her mother. The mother subsequently pressed charges: “father lunged at daughter while she was calling the police about a domestic dispute [when] daughter hit him” (self defense) to “throwing cookies at her mother” (trivial argument)” (Miller et al 6). Girls in foster care are likely to receive inaccurate representations with new policy guidelines which target minor female related crimes and offenses. Though many described her behavior as destructive, she showed moments of bonding and vulnerability, not with the facilitators but with the other foster girls. Her defiant behavior only appears as so with adult authority figures probably due to her issues with the foster and judicial system.

Participant 2 also expressed feeling misunderstood by authority figures. She often discussed feelings of isolation and prejudice from some of her teachers because she is Indigenous. She shared feeling isolated at school because she looked different than other girls because of her skin color and “tom-boy” style. Whenever she spoke, it was usually of meaningful topics surrounding injustices in society and misunderstanding. Her demeanor was mature, and she always created art that related to her life struggles. With this context I make meaningful connections between Levi’s character and the lives of the girls. It is logical that they would gravitate towards a character who shares struggles at a young age and is misunderstood by those around him. Both Levi’s character and the girls embody an outcast personality, one that is
different and defiant but out of survival and loss. Relating to a character, even when it is a fantasy, can allow a child to feel understood in a world where her reality is not.

In order to interpret an art work, one must understand how figures and visual objects are organized in art to produce meaning. Any theme is reliant on its compositional groupings and can provide cues for the analyzer. According to Claire Golomb, meaning can be found within the space used in relation to its elements if they are “aspatial” hence unrelated to the overall image or related to the background of the image (165-166). Since anime differs in subject matter from Western animation, one can note these differences of themes and meanings simply by looking at drawings that embody critiques of society, anger, fear and sadness of reality. Many of the girls throughout HAP used anime’s mature and controversial themes in order to portray their feelings.

In order to explore these themes, one must first consider what is referred to as the composition of the image. Golomb describes the composition of the image as “the intentional arrangement of all the elements of a world. The primary function of composition is to arrange the elements of line, form, space, and color in a manner that indicated to the viewer what the work is about” (Golomb 165). The following visual analysis will concentrate on the overall composition of the drawings since composition arranges elements within art and provides clues of what the art work signifies and means to the creator. Examining the composition in the girls’ drawings will allow us to further understand hidden meanings in their art work.

2.2 Visual Analysis of Anime Drawings

Figure 2 was created by participant 2 during an activity called “Doodle Draw.” In this activity, we asked participants to draw one long continuous line into random shapes on a page without lifting the pencil. Then we asked them to look at the finished scribbles to create a drawing based
on hidden object they saw in the scribbles. Many of the drawings created in this activity contained themes of animals/nature that were not intended in the random scribbling. Figure 1 is an image of all the drawings created during the activity. The composition of the other drawings differed from Participant 2’s. The subject matter of the other drawings was not motivated by an original personal story before or during the scribbling; they were simply what the girls found in their random scribbling. The only drawing which had original direction and intention during the first step of the activity was participant 2 who drew scribbles shaping a character from the video game *Undertale* (See fig. 2). The composition of this drawing contributed to an overall theme as well as the adaptation of color and character. Not only did she recreate Toriel’s character from *Undertale*, but she transformed the character to the anime style. As we can see in figure 3, original Toriel is pixelated in black and white whereas the participants contains a rainbow scheme of colors and an anime style animation with added realism.

When discussing her drawing, participant 2 explained that the smoke stacks in the background represent the chaos brought from humans onto society that is destroying what is good in the world. She also explained that the angel is crying out rainbows to represent the good that is being destroyed. Many of her drawings have similar themes, and she always does a fantastic job at explaining what they represent. The narration of her visual creations added much more than what could be interpreted with solely
visual analysis. Since she did not mention that the drawing was based on a character from Undertale, many would not look further into other themes within the character. Knowing Undertale and its plot, I detect further themes, such as family and mothering.

Undertale is a choice-based game. It allows players to change the ending and interaction with characters by their actions and choices. Toriel is a goat-like monster. It is introduced to save the protagonist’s life; it serves as her guide and teacher throughout the game. Toriel is a caretaker and mother figure who knows what’s best (see fig. 4). Though choices affect the protagonists’ interaction with Toriel, her character remains quite the same in each case. As the protagonist begins the story, they find out that Toriel was once married to King Asgore. Toriel and Asgore had one child and then adopted the first human who fell into the Underground. After the death of both their children, her husband Asgore declared war on all of humanity and killed many humans. His horrific actions caused Toriel to escape and hide into the Ruins. Toriel’s kind nature follows her throughout the game as she teaches the protagonist that reasoning with monsters is better than murdering them. She keeps in contact and watches over the protagonist throughout the game to make sure they are safe. Toriel cares for all humans who fall into the Ruins and encourages them not to leave because of the danger. Since Asgore murdered many who left Toriel’s care, she trains the protagonist by fighting her in order to prove to her that she is strong enough to take care of herself. If players chose to spare Toriel’s life, she allows her to leave the Ruins and shows her appreciation with a mother-like embrace. If a player chooses to kill Toriel, depending on the scenario, she will give them a warning about what is outside the Ruins. She will also compare

Figure 3: Undertale Video Game Character Toriel. Copyright: http://undertale.wikia.com/wiki/Toriel
the protagonist to monsters which lie outside the Ruins. Or she will laugh until she dies because she realizes the evil and danger of the player/humans. In all scenarios, Toriel remains peaceful and kind to the human protagonist and puts their safety first. She teaches important life lessons and wants to believe the best in all humans regardless of their actions.

Her character traits fit well with the background and story of participant 2’s drawing. Knowing Toriel’s views on humans and her desperation to save them, we can now understand the theme in the drawing: the fault in humans. Toriel is crying in the drawing because she sees the destruction done by humans to one another. However, she remains hopeful by trying to guide them with her love and care. As she realizes there is little hope, she weeps tears of what is good and kind in the world with hope for humanity’s change. This theme of hopefulness in humans is captured well by the use of bright colors. The black smoke and soot spread by the nuclear plants in the background demonstrate fear and destruction whereas the rainbow is used to demonstrate the good in Toriel. Claire Golomb has noted that the use of rainbows in a children’s drawing represents happiness. Toriel’s rainbow coloured tears symbolize the remaining hope and happiness for human kind that she aims to spread onto remaining humanity with her tears. The participant’s placement of Toriel also indicates where the focus of the drawing is. As she takes up the center of the space, the drawing focuses on her rather than the background. The destruction by the humans not in the main frame of the page can also express participant 2’s opinion on humanity. They are smaller and less than Toriel, which holds Toriel morally above the humans and places her as the hero. The halo added on top of Toriel’s character reaffirms her kindness and angel-like qualities. Participant 2 sees not
only Toriel as a good mother in the game but also how she sees her mother. Knowing context about the character adapted in a drawing can help extract meaning from the art, thus adding additional understanding about the child’s feelings. Toriel’s mother-like figure from Undertale give insights into participant’s 2’s view of her parents/guardians.

Similar themes are found in other HAP activities, where the girls used anime style in their drawings to convey themes of isolation, sadness and confusion. In an activity that asks the girls to draw what mindfulness means to them, two participants express confusion of mindfulness as a principle. In Participant 1’s drawing, she drew herself in an anime styled animation with half purple and black hair (see fig.5). The positioning of herself takes up almost the entire frame, which places her as the centre of attention. Around her head there are many symbols and swirls which symbolize confusion. She explains that the swirls and stars symbolize her mind and how there are so many thoughts happening at the same time, and as a result, cannot understand them. She also expressed that many people do not understand her because of her different thoughts. Visual analysts and psychoanalysts including Golomb note that the overexaggerated size of a body part demonstrates the focus of the feeling in a child’s drawing: “(...) by exaggerating the size of a body part to indicate its emotional importance” (Golomb 155). The largeness of the head, big eyes and small mouth can also be a compositional choice in
regards to anime style. Anime style has trademark large eyes, big heads with bright big hair and tiny mouths.

An interesting feature to note about the girls' drawings are that they mimic similar anatomical proportions used in anime and Disney character animation. Characters in anime and Disney animation have a trademark style that is appealing to not only children but adults for a reason. Stephen Jay Gould explains that through time, Disney characters like Mickey Mouse evolved to appear more juvenile with changes that increased Mickey’s head and eyes to become much larger than before. He explains that this phenomenon is due to humans’ natural affection to babies. Since babies have large heads compared to the rest of their small bodies, we are conditioned to associate these features whether it is in a drawing, or an animal, to positive feelings of affection. Gould expands on Konrad Lorenz’ argument that humans are noted to use characteristics that differentiate babies from adults. This affection to characteristics of juvenility causes us to react positively when these characteristics are present. Gould explains that Mickey Mouse evolved as visually more juvenile through time for a reason: "Mickey Mouse's evolutionary road down the course of his own growth in reverse reflects the unconscious discovery of this very biological principle by Disney and his artists. In fact, the emotional status of most Disney characters rests on the same set of Distinctions. To this extent, the magic kingdom trades on a biological illusion" (Gould 104). Gould’s visual and evolutionary examination of Mickey Mouse demonstrates a key feature of meaning in artistic uses of proportions and characteristics. Since anime and Disney use juvenile proportions in their characters, we associate these visuals with affection and positivity. Therefore, the use of the anime-like features in the girls’ art is representative of their attraction to an art style that is naturally comforting. It also provides cues as to why they may enjoy anime as well as how they
see specific people in their drawings. If they use large features like the one in figure 5, she see’s herself positively, whereas if she drew a character with more pointed and adult-like feature, this can symbolize villainous qualities and feelings. Gould explains that adult features in art can be indicative of negativity since adults represent the opposite of juvenility: "Mouse villains or sharpies, contrasted with Mickey, are always more adult in appearance, although they often share Mickey's chronological age" (Gould 104). The size and shape of character’s body parts therefore signify more than simply an art style or aesthetic. In this case, the brain is the largest part of the image since mindfulness is a process that takes place in the mind, that is, though mindfulness is mind and body, this drawing has associated it with solely the mind. She finds mindfulness confusing because she notices too many unsettling thoughts in her mind. She uses many bright colors; these colors represent many different thoughts and emotions that she tries to understand.

The following image was also created during the same mindfulness activity in the same repeat group of girls from the fall and winter term 2016-2017. In figure 6, we can see that participant 2 drew herself in a similar way as participant 1. The composition attributes similar themes of confusion and feelings of being isolated and misunderstood. Similar to the last, what is central on the page is the head/mind. As the last participant illustrated confusion via symbols, this drawing uses words as labels for what society sees as needing to be erased or “cleaned” with the Clorox cleaner bottle and rag pointing at her brain. In this interpretation of mindfulness, the participant sees mindfulness as a technique aimed to change her. She wrote: “Don’t worry! We can fix your thoughts with a long hard impossible process!” (Participant 2: HAP Fall 2016). She labelled her mind as “The unfixable thought machine.” It demonstrates her acceptance of her mind remaining the same. That regardless of the many attempts from adults to change her, she cannot help but think the way she does and does not want to think like everybody else around
her. The technique used to separate her frontal lobes of her brain express the various “bad” things that she cannot control, which include “stress, imagination vs. hallucination, are you kidding me, memory, connection, sleep paralysis and crazy.”

Even without these labels, one can come to similar conclusions based on the expression on her face in the drawing. She appears sad and anxious while she stares into the Clorox bottle. Her artistic medium choice of using only pencil also provides an enhanced focus on the drawing and writing. Using color can also demonstrate feelings, although, as she noted, the point of this drawing was to demonstrate the cleansing and cleaning of her feelings. Her use of pencil can be symbolized as a grey and white dull process of conforming.

It appears that this participant prefers to use pencil as her medium when she depicts serious themes. We can see this in figure 7 where anime themes and styles are used to adapt the popular Western story/film Alice in Wonderland into a more gothic presentation. The use of Alice who is usually portrayed as curious is transformed into one who is terrified, sad and lost. She is wearing a similar dress to Alice but has added large angel wings and a halo. The halo and wings are used again in order to demonstrate to the viewer who is good and who is evil in the drawing. As the Mad Hatter does not have
a halo, is sneering at Alice and appears menacing; we can assume that this is an evil character who is trying to influence Alice. The composition of the sun above Alice and the pollutant smoke stacks behind Mad Hatter also aid in reinforcing the character’s roles. Each background is carefully positioned to accompany its main feature directly in front and centre. Focusing back on the composition of the characters, Alice’s expression appears frightened and longing to find another version of herself that she has drawn onto a piece of paper as she shows it to the Mad Hatter. She is crying in tears, which have formed a substantial river at their legs. Half of her hair is also slightly more shaded on the right side of the drawing, which may represent two sides of her personalities: one being curious and the other lost. Once again, the use of pencil allows the focus to stay on the narrative and the metaphor in the composition. As Alice is a character who undergoes changes and does not fit in her daily reality, this choice in character adaptation seems fitting for the metaphor implied. These compositional groupings express themes of fear and feelings of being lost/separated from oneself. The anime style paired with its compositional groupings convey the themes and emotions from the participants.

2.3 Color as Mood in Drawings

When co-facilitating HAP, there was one stylistic element that I did not consider deeply; this element was color. Colour adds more than a random burst of hues in a drawing; it adds feelings and meaning and can often contribute to the overall meaning of the piece. Golomb notes the crucial role that color play in children’s pictorial drawings since color has been a direct link to human emotions. Many clinical psychologists and even ethologists are fascinated by the use of color because mood states can be linked to our color choice and use in drawings. The link between colour and emotions has led to a wide fascination and study of the use of color in
patients and artists’ art work (Golomb 128). We are conditioned since birth to associate feelings with certain colors in our teaching and learning of objects and environments. For example, one activity in HAP called “Listen and Draw” allows the participants to listen to various one minute clips of music and draw whatever they feel from that song. During this activity, many would use blue for a sad sounding song and when a darker somber song was played the use of black and reds were dominant color choices. There are many instinctual visual hues that make their unconscious way onto paper due to social ideologies surrounding colors because color is a key element to our perceptions of our inner and outside worlds.

A final example of this participants drawings proves how composition via object placement, character style paired with intentional color usage and placement can influence the effectiveness of storytelling and meaning. In figure 8, pencil is again used as the tool although, additions of colours have been added to the character. Blue is added in the eyes and red onto the chest of the female character. As color has been noted to be expressive of a child’s feelings in drawings, we examine closely the areas in this drawing which has selected colour. With the contrast of the mostly grey pencil, the red and blue used draw our attention to certain areas of the character’s body. Along the colors, shapes/features are also major indicators of meaning: “Examination of the features that are most commonly singled out to portray feelings reveals that lips, eyebrows, and to a more limited extent eyelashes, gradually come to serve this function” (Golomb 134). The facial expression is enriched by using color as a double indicator of the sad emotion in the drawing. As her arms are crossed and her eyebrows point upwards framing the large eyes, sadness is indicated in the
expressions. The blue in the pupils of the eyes is a color choice that seems out of place since this participant has darker eyes. In this activity the girls were asked to draw what is called a “Feelings Inventory.” This activity entails drawing the amount/percentage of one’s feelings for that day. Since this participant drew her feelings, I assume that she was the girl in the picture. Perhaps it still is but she used a different eye color because she likes blue eyes, or wants to dissociate herself with the feelings in the drawing. Since she shares feelings of isolation due to her Indigeneity, she is drawing herself as what others want her to look like. Her self-identification is detached because it is visually not her. If she would draw herself with her features, others may know that she is bothered by what others think of her.

Continuing with the eyes, the eyebrows’ upward slant appears to represent sadness. There is also some red added above the eyelids and under the eyes creating eye bags. This addition of red adds tiredness to the eyes or perhaps reaffirms sadness with implications that she has been crying. The other area in the image with the most color is the chest. At first glance, it appears to be a red handkerchief or tie, although with closer inspection, considering that she is wearing a sweatshirt, it would not make sense to have an embellishment or accessory. The shape also appears as though it is a ripped or cut texture. Therefore, it appears that that red area is not a piece of clothing but a hollowed-out piece of her chest. This red color is quite literally a hint of blood/torn flesh.

The little characters who embody her emotions are colorless and look similar in style other than the expressions that demonstrate feelings of boredom, sadness, happiness and isolation. She has created a face and character for her feelings, which adds further details to her drawing. The personification of the characters as feelings also creates an idea that there are various different people within her which allows her to feel those things. This personification of
feelings is also used in children’s film such as *Inside Out*. At times, it is easier for children/adolescents to attribute their feelings to someone other than themselves when they do not understand what they are feeling inside.

Participant 7 also used pencil meaningfully in her art. She did not like to discuss her drawings because she said they weren’t good enough. Many facilitators would remind her of her talent and that there would be no judgement in HAP. Many children in HAP have low self-esteem. Often times this self-judgement comes from parental figures who place pressure or diminish a child’s feelings, leading her to doubt herself: “These children learn that their needs are not as important as others’ desires, and thus they can come to believe that they are not as important as others” (Coholic 42: 2019). Near the end of the program, she started to share some of her drawings.

In discussing her feelings, she often said that her mother loved her less compared to other siblings in her family. There seemed to be a lot of pressure and judgment put onto this young girl to be something that she wasn’t. This pressure affects her perception and self-judgment of herself and is reflected in her art. Having spent 24 weeks with this participant, I found that her personality and experiences aligned very closely to her use of artistic mediums. As Golomb notes, using mainly a pencil rather than color symbolizes a need for control: “Interestingly, among the older children, we also find an increase in monochromatic drawings, usually drawn in pencil. This finding need not be seen as an avoidance of colors. Most likely, it reflects a conscious effort to exert greater control over the medium” (Golomb 133). Her use of pencil demonstrates a need for control over her art, which in turn, expresses her lack of control over her mother’s comments and judgements. Her mother’s expectations and constant cutting down of her daughter causes the insecurity of the participant. It may be possible that her mother is insecure of
herself but we need more evidence than the daughter’s art to determine that. Psychologist Louise Kaplan elucidates, “Insofar as our children are the extensions of our own narcissism, we frequently find it intolerable if they do not mirror back to us all those glorious and wonderful things we could have been, or might still become” (Kaplan, Adolescence 232). Therefore, perhaps if her daughter is not exactly how she wants her to be, she inflicts too much pressure and expectations which explains why her daughter may feel rejected. Often times when a mother become disconnected from her wildish nature, creativity and freedom, she will become what Estes refers to as the “collapsed mother.” She has collapsed psychologically in the process of losing herself. Many times, she will be narcissistic in her ways and become a child herself rather than taking care of her children around her. She becomes the center of attention as she drains her children from theirs (Estes 175).

What is even more interesting is that her sister (Participant 8), who only joined our group in the repeat winter 2017 session did not express any issues from home and used various colours in her art pieces. It has been noted by psychoanalyst Gertraud Diem-Wille that it is possible for children of the same family to have differing views and experiences of their parents: “Children can see the same people, for example their parents very differently, and parents can also develop different relationships with each child” (Leeuwen & Jewitt 128). This reception can be learned in the drawing of their family and how they express the significance of each individual family member. As both sisters shared varying views of their mother, this was not only present in a verbal medium but also in their visual creations. Where one would use bright colours with an excitement to share with the group, the other used pencil and did not want to be seen in fear of judgement. Perhaps her mother is not “collapsed” but rather it’s a problem of favoritism. The use
of visual mediums can be held as credible as verbal communication for expressing and analyzing children’s perceptions of themselves and their families.

Though color, themes and composition can provide further insight into the story and communication of an art work, at times the context of the overall drawing can be significant to conveying and interpreting meaning. As we have seen in the above visual analysis, many anime inspired drawings were created during regular HAP activities by choice of the participants. Their use of anime in their drawings proved to be a conscious stylistic choice when conveying more serious themes of loss, sadness and confusion. In the following section, we will investigate how the drawings may change if we implement an anime-themed activity to the group.

2.4 Anime Themed Activity
I decided to facilitate my own anime themed activity for this group because of their extensive knowledge and creations of anime. I wanted to introduce an anime theme in an activity that followed similar mindfulness-based strategies as HAP’s past group activities. I introduced the activity to the girls and told them to create anything that came to mind. The activity centred around anime as I asked them to draw an anime character. I explained that they can take inspiration from anime characters that they like or make one up in the anime style. The method used during the activity for this study followed qualitative research methods to ensure flexibility for each participant. The participation and conversation were always open-ended and optional. There was also a focus on not probing the participants to answer specific questions after they finished their drawings. This was done in order to avoid swaying their opinions to gain a particular narrative about their use of anime. After the activity, if some girls chose not to share anything, they were not asked further questions. The main formulation of the activity/research
question was designed to stay gender-neutral and to have very little specifications in order to avoid making the participants feel forced to draw something specific that they might think was intended for the activity. The instruction was as follows: “Draw in anime-style (or style of their choice) a character which represents empowerment and strength from their perspectives.” Each girl participated in the activity completed the drawings and discussion in around 15 minutes. As the majority of young girls in this HAP group expressed a strong interest in Japanese anime, I hypothesized that the girls would all draw anime and that they would express feelings of excitement from an activity that was catered to their personal interest in a medium of contemporary popular culture.

As previously mentioned, having realized the girls’ fascination and use of anime in HAP activities throughout the first 12 weeks, I created this activity catered specifically for the girls. At the last repeat session with the girls in their 24th week of HAP, I was able to conduct my activity. Since HAP used activities to teach mindfulness, I wanted to incorporate this goal in my activity in order to support HAP’s holistic framework. After building my activity with the approval from HAP creator Diana Coholic and the main facilitator Patricia Grynspan, I incorporated my activity in a regular session. The girls were aware that this activity was for my study. Since my thesis differed at the time, this activity was originally made with the hopes of further understanding what kinds of characters in anime adolescent Western female otaku’s find empowering.

2.5 Outcome & Analysis

The result was unexpected. The girls reacted negatively; they did not draw anime and they did not discuss. As we have seen, many of the girls demonstrated a passion for anime not only in their artistic creations with anime styles, but also in their dialogue about anime, experiences in
anime cosplay, anime-like mannerisms/behavior as well as creations of anime outside HAP. The expectations around this activity expected that the girls would be pleased to have an activity that validates their subculture. However, after explaining the activity, many of the girls who would draw anime regularly seemed hesitant to draw anything at all. Since not every girl in the repeat group of HAP were fans of anime, they drew what they envisioned would be within the style. They even looked up examples online. There were even some girls who drew anime regularly who simply copied an anime character online from an anime they watched rather than creating it by memory or with adaptations.

In figure 9, participant 6 drew the character of Meliodas from *Seven Deadly Sins*. Meliodas is introduced in the anime as the goofy and friendly owner of the tavern Boar Hat. He is known for his terrible cooking. He has a childish look even though he is supposed to be thousands of years old. Upon developments in the anime, we learn that Meliodas was the former captain of the Seven Deadly Sins and leader of the Ten Commandments. All those in the Seven Deadly Sins were branded by the kingdom for their crimes. Meliodas is known as the “Dragon Sin of Wrath,” which is represented by the dragon tattoo on his arm. His character develops as he is not only fearless in fighting and in his approaches to women, but fearless also as the son of a Demon King, which makes him part of the Demon race. Therefore,
Meliodas is one of the strongest characters who grows in power and has hidden abilities when he becomes angry during battle. Having known about this character, in the discussion I asked participant 6 why she drew Meliodas and how he represented empowerment. She explained that she drew him because he was “funny” and “strong” as she giggled. She did not have much to say about her drawing which may be because she drew him based on a picture she found online or because she was embarrassed by her potential attraction to the character (see fig. 10). Though she drew almost a replica of Meliodas and did not discuss much about his character, her drawing did concentrate on his powerful body and the addition of broccoli and vegetables in the background that represented his bad cooking.

Based on her drawing for this activity, it is clear that she did watch this anime and enjoyed the powerful traits he has, although she did not add anything extra visually and did not adapt the character. This demonstrates the need to improve instruction. I should have asked them to create a character to represent empowerment instead of “draw a character.” She only produced Meliodas as simply as she could in order to fulfill what she thought I meant in my wording of the activity. Although upon further investigation of the developments of the anime one can see why she see’s Meliodas as empowering. His charm comes from not only his extreme strength, but his ability to be a strong demon while maintaining compassion for those around him which is unique to the demon race from the anime. Therefore, after further context about the anime one can conclude that participant 6 see’s empowerment as someone who is strong but simultaneously kind.

For participant 1, she drew in her usual anime style and was not afraid to spend time on the drawing as well as discuss the meaning. This participant lost her mother and her family kept her from knowing about the cause of her death. This caused her throughout HAP to not only
grieve, but try and figure out how she lost her mother. She often expressed feelings of guilt and anger. Having undergone a loss of her only parent as an adolescent caused her to express how much she wanted a mother figure in her life. Though this young girl underwent a serious loss of the little family she had left at a young age, she still maintained a positive attitude during the 24 weeks of HAP. She was by far the most exuberant of all the girls. She was always inclusive and friendly with each girl in group and was open to talk to the facilitators. She regularly showed me her anime drawings that she created on her animation and editing software’s and shared many cosplay and anime stories during group. In figure 11 there is an anime drawing that she drew for the HAP facilitators to display in the HAP room. She was always full of energy and had a difficult time not talking fast and for long periods of time during activities. She enjoyed sharing her facts and otaku vocabulary with the facilitators and was always eager to explain what certain Japanese anime terms meant. Along with her extreme love of anime and anime-like style and personality, she was also not afraid to show her vulnerabilities with the other girls. The loss of her mother was a regular theme in her drawings and she was not afraid to share moments of confusion and anger she had while coping. Her mother was who she
drew in the anime activity as someone who represented empowerment. She explained that her mother would still be with her even if she was not physically with her and that she looked up to, and she wanted to be like her one day. Looking at her drawing in figure 12, we can see her mother in the center caressing and protecting her.

In a projective drawing test, where adults draw their families, Gertraud Diem-Wille finds that asking them to draw their family added at times more details to their verbal narrative about their family (Leuuwen & Jewitt 129). It allows the participants to access deepened emotional conflicts from childhood by having another medium and expressing feelings they couldn’t verbally. Upon analysis of the drawings, Diem-Wille discovers that there are many principles to keep in mind during a visual analysis: “the subjects’ use of space on the sheet of paper, the order of appearance of elements and the symbols chosen. The most important figure in a family is drawn first, the size of the person in the picture shows his or her self-esteem, their perception of their position in the family” (Leuuwen & Jewitt 129). Since participant 1 drew a member of her family, it is essential to note how she does it and what the drawing represents. Her mother was drawn first, which demonstrated the importance of her mother. Then she drew herself second and her size was much smaller and hidden by her mother’s body, which could be indicative of her desire for the protection of a nurturing mother. Though a small self-image has been found to represent a child’s view of themselves in relation to their family members in a family portrait, it is not the case in this drawing because the embracing communicates a feeling of security rather than power. This drawing’s composition and theme demonstrates that she looks up to her mother and she feels protected. She feels more vulnerable without her. Although there are feelings of loss, she is comforted by the idea that her mother will always be with her spiritually, as her mother says in the drawing: “I will always love you, never forget that” (Participant 1). Her
mother’s figure is central in the composition of the page and takes up the most space with her large angel wings and halo. She is empowering because she is loving, kind and compassionate, as written literally in the bottom: “love, kindness, compassion = Mom” (Participant 1: HAP Winter 2017).

An added element to her mother’s figure is a long black cat-like tail with paws. Many anime characters have animal-like features, which often include cat ears and tails. One may attribute less significance to this addition because it is part of the style; however, there is added sentimentality for this participant. Knowing her for 24 weeks allows me to know that she sees her mother as an angel cat. In past sessions, she told us that her mother allowed her to have a black kitten, although they had to give away the kitten shortly after because her grandma was allergic. Drawing her mother as the black cat can be a visual memory of her mother. The cat features can symbolize two things she lost: the kitten and her mother. The longing for her mother is also presented in the lower bottom right of the drawing, which has lyrics of “You are my Sunshine.” She has told us that her mother used to sing to her: “You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You’ll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away” (Participant 1). This song is not only a cherished memory of her mother, but also an affirmation that her mother did not want to leave her: “Please don’t take my sunshine away.” Throughout the 24 weeks of HAP, she struggled with finding a reason and a story about her mother’s death because the adults around her did not share the story. She always hung on to the idea that her mother did not leave by choice.

The last drawing drawn in anime style is by participant 4 who usually creates drawings accompanied by poetry. Her poetry is usually in her drawings but in this activity, she does not add her usual poetic quotation. In figure 13, we can see her drawing of an anime character called
“Melody,” who is central to the page with her purple hair, piercings, black clothes and red heart. During the group discussion, she did not describe this character as someone she knew or as herself, she explained that Melody was empowering because of her kindness. Though her character does not look or have the same name as the participant, it is possible that the character is nonetheless a projection of herself. She shares many characteristics with the girl in the drawing, including a dark clothing with a kind and sensitive heart.

This participant is very mature for her age due to her family situation. Her parents are often sick and cannot care for the family; therefore, she was the main caregiver. She always places her younger brother before her and often shares her anxiety and stress from home which causes her insomnia and lack of focus at school. Her selflessness causes her to neglect her happiness and time being a child/adolescent. She is often hospitalized due to the stress, which she copes with poetry, drawing and self-harm. Melody may represent her strong exterior and her selflessness. She is aware of her job to nurture her siblings and parents. She is the person who empowers those around her because she does not have anyone who is taking care of her or serving as a role model. Her avoidance of associating her drawing with herself in naming her “Melody” can also demonstrate selflessness. She does not want to take credit for her strength. Though 3 out of the 8 girls did draw in anime style, 2 of them did not discuss much about why the character they drew was empowering to them. They also refused to spend a lot of time on the activity. Only 1 participant created an anime drawing that shared similarities to past anime drawings she drew in regular HAP activities.
The following 5 drawings were not drawn in anime style and did not have a positive response from some of the girls who regularly drew anime in HAP. As we saw in the previous section, participant 2 drew anime and adapted anime characters in many of her drawings. In this activity in particular, she resisted not only the activity but me as well, which was not felt before. She was hesitant in drawing anything at all and did not want to share in the discussion. She informed me that she did not want me to document her picture but still let another facilitator from HAP document it before she threw it in the garbage. She did not draw in anime style, but there was still a lot of detail and meaning in her drawing that depicted themes of disempowerment caused by racism and sexism. As seen in figure 14, her drawing reads:

Us living in Canada and Finland are very lucky with women who are getting rights in Finland and Canada women still getting rights. Women should be paid the same as men, and black and white shouldn’t disgrace each other. If there were no labels where would we be? Ask yourself that once disgracing black from white and men from women. I remember learning white people had it made with rights and no one disgraced each other, but black people got disgraced and had very few but someone changed that. Women go through being abused and disgraced with sexual comments and I know in some places boys get abused and get sexual comments. But boys get paid more and boys in some countries can hit a girl a slash for punishment. Women had to earn their rights but some women still don’t have their rights (Participant 2: HAP Winter 2017).

In the center of her drawing, there is a box divided by a vertical line. This symbolizes lower and higher classes, which she labeled with “class 1” & “class 2.” A figure of a girl is split between each class by the color of her hair. The color of the hair is not only used to distinguish both classes, but also demonstrates where she sees herself and how society classifies people by their
looks. Since this participant has partially colored hair on naturally dark hair, I assume that she is the girl in this drawing. Having expressed in HAP many times of her frustration towards adults and teachers who treat her differently because of her Indigenous background and tom-boy style, she feels as though others discriminate against her not only for of her race but also her look and idealism. This is symbolized in the drawing by her cracking face with a mask attached as she cries from the half on the right (class 1). In a thought bubble she writes: “I guess the mask held today,” implying that she only made it through the day because she pretended to conform.

In examining the visual and textual elements from this drawing, I notice why this drawing is important to her. This drawing demonstrates the disempowerment against lower class, non-white females. What she sees as empowerment are those who write about making changes and fighting against the higher class white social prejudice. Her opposition against this activity may have come from a perception that the white facilitators may judge her similarly. She has refused to share some of her other drawings with serious themes in regular HAP activities. Her resistance may be in part caused by her feeling the facilitators are authority figures; many of us are teachers, social workers, and graduate students.

The next 4 drawings are not drawn in anime style and does not follow up with much discussion. As the above drawing still contained narrative elements, which provide contexts for
interpretation. The lack of group discussion and textual illustration leads to a shorter and less accurate analysis: “As a source of information, a picture is incredibly inefficient when there is no verbal, that is, language, accompaniment. Without explanation, a picture is ambiguous, confusing” (Gold 69). Due to the lack of language cues, my interpretations can only be based on the visual elements and information gained over the 12 weeks of HAP about the participant. For this reason, these drawings will be discussed as a group. Figure 15 is by participant 7 who presents herself as a stick figure in pencil and has a blue tear with a thought bubble with a football inside. This participant usually draws more detailed and non-stick figure drawings and has shown signs of a gifted young artist. The simplicity and change in style may be a result of her resistance to this activity. However, the drawing still contains compositional elements that communicate deeper meaning. The use of blue in the tear draws attention to her sadness she has because she feels that she cannot do the sports she loves, which we can see by the football in the thought bubble. In previous HAP sessions, she noted that other kids at school made fun of her because she did not dress “girly” and preferred “boy” activities. She mentioned how girls should care less about how they looked and just be themselves. Drawing herself crying because she is judged demonstrates that she cares about what others think about her. Her smile and the flexing of her muscles in the drawing shows how physical strength is empowering to herself.
The stickman/emoji-like drawing belongs to participant 8, which represents happiness and laughing. She did not talk much to share about the image. She is known for being funny in the group, we can assume that the picture shows how not taking things seriously and laughing is empowering. In figure 16 we can see this reflected in her color choice and use of character via a yellow smiley face with a large happy smile with his top hat beside it. In her explanation, she shared that she liked to joke a lot. We may interpret that she is crying one single blue tear from laughing too hard; or perhaps there can be more to this drawing than she wanted to explain.

This participant does not mention any sadness or issues with her family during HAP. But her sister (participant 7), does as noted in the previous section. It is plausible that she is covering her sadness with jokes and laughter. Looking at the eyebrows, which are known to exemplify feelings in drawings, we can see they appear angry. The addition of the tear is also interesting, since there is a tear in the same eye in blue just like her sister is drawing in Figure 15. Her sister draws in pencil and adds blue to highlight the tear. The use of colour makes the tear seem as though it does not represent sadness in the context of the drawing. The background in figure 16 seems joyous due to the green grass, yellow shining sun and blue clouds; perhaps sadness is also central to how she feels inside underneath all of the laughter. As she is an older sister, she perhaps feels that she must hide her emotions and sadness in order to keep her younger siblings positive. She sees value in laughter.

In figure 17, we can see that participant 3 drew a horse in pink with the words “laughter, generosity, loving.” She did not explain much about her drawing other than that she found
someone who was generous, loving and who laughed as good qualities. The composition of the drawing is simplistic in the lines and details. The use of only one colour with the simple lines creates a soft visual experience where the white page dominates the drawing. Her drawings in HAP often have rainbows, bright colours, magical creatures, sparkles and some anime characters.

Interestingly, this drawing is not in anime style because anime style is consistent in her other HAP drawings.

Figure 18 shows Participant 3’s regular HAP drawing style. The drawing refers to the Nyan Pop Tart Cat which is a popular YouTube video and widely known Internet meme. Nyan cat was first introduced in 2011 and was associated with the Japanese pop song by Hatsune Miku. While this song plays, an animated cartoon cat with a pop tart as its body flies through space leaving behind a rainbow. Since Japanese animation is known to this participant, we can assume that she chose not to draw anime because she did not want to draw it for this activity.
The last drawing created in the anime themed activity was by participant 9 who did not tell us about the meaning of her drawing although she did mention that it was supposed to be an eye. In figure 19, we can see that oil pastels are the medium used. She blends and separates the section of the eye with hues of black, blue, yellow and red in the center. Having the eye take up most of the composition of the paper with no elements in the background highlights to the importance of the eye. Perhaps this participant sees empowerment through observing and making aware of things like an all-seeing eye. Reviewing their drawings made it clear that the girls don’t want to draw about what empowers them because their drawings do not say a lot about empowerment. They want to empower themselves rather than use an activity to do so. Many of the girls do not feel empowered and anime is their escape and/or expression of deviant thoughts such as anger, sadness, confusion, etc.

2.6 Observations & Findings

Having conducted an anime themed activity allows me not only to understand why the activity “failed” in generating anime contents, but also to realize that the girls use anime consciously as an act of resistance. The girls’ resistance to drawing anime and their negative reaction to this activity change the direction of my study. My “failed” activity became further investigation about how the girls from HAP were using anime in their art and personal lives for more than just empowerment and teenage culture/entertainment. I realize that anime is a creative expression and a therapeutic device for coping and opposing authority, including HAP itself. The girls are rebellious on impulse, which is why they misrecognize HAP as an authority figure. Due to their circumstances, these girls are rejecting any institutional structure. Their feeling of
betrayal from the foster, judicial and educational system causes them to reject programs such as HAP on impulse even though it aims to assist. The girls use their art to fight conformity. While expressing themselves, the girls are also constructing their own expressions.

With the context of anime’s themes, history and fandom, I came to understand why the girls from HAP chose anime in their creative process and understood more as to why my activity seemingly failed. Anime’s outcast themes and context allows for a different outlook on the HAP girls rebellious behaviour as well as defiance to my activity. Re-analyzing how they used anime in HAP before my activity helped me to realize its value and significance. With their resistance, the meaning and attachment to anime had been removed, which rendered the drawings less meaningful in comparison to their past drawings. Their use of anime is a conscious choice; it conveys themes of loss, sadness and confusion, and representations of themselves. All HAP girls mentioned one or more of the following feelings: isolation, prejudice, judgment and oppression from authority figures due to family status, behavior, style and culture. The girls identify themselves with marginalized characters.

At first, I assumed that the girls wanted to teach the HAP facilitators about anime and discussed it with me the most since I share somewhat of an interest in anime. Then I realized that this was not the case. After I conducted my anime themed activity, the girls would produce and discuss anime in abundance. Though once I conducted my activity, the girls were wary of creating anime content and did not want to discuss their drawings. Their use of anime was not intended for us. They used anime and popular culture to communicate with each other as their own group identity. It was a counter-cultural sentiment. Anime creates a fellowship and sisterhood that embraces girl culture. Anime became almost like a secret language, and my activity exposed HAP facilitators awareness to the girls.
Their drawings are, in a sense, another language that facilitators are not supposed to understand. Adolescence brings uncertain transformations to the human body. She is faced with new curves, blemishes, the growth of new hair in new places, menstruation, and much more. Her body becomes unknown to her, and she needs to understand it. In order to deal with these changes that she cannot control, she decorates her body. Along with the physical decoration, she finds much of this inspiration from media works she admires. In the case of this group, the majority of the girls choose to decorate themselves in anime style. Not only do they find power and control over their body by expressing themselves with self-decoration, but they also adopt a secret language. This body decoration and secret language represents her generation. It allows a separation between the older and younger generations that surround her: “The wild haircuts, obscene body decorations, and clothing are an assertion of the generational difference and are intended to repel the adult generation” (Kaplan, Adolescence 241). Their use of Japanese terms from anime along with the style and mannerisms display how they chose to take control over their changing bodies. They adapt it to look less frightening and confusing by integration elements and themes in which they find comfort and identification. Especially in their use of a cross-cultural art such as anime, they assume that the vast majority of adults/authority figures do not understand their secret languages as anime does not belong to the mainstream Western culture, it cannot be appropriated by adults and this makes anime the best form of self-expression and secret language for the girls. They think that they understand something the older generation does not, and this provides a sense of control that is usually lacking in an adolescents’ life. My animate themed activity becomes an intrusion to this generational space.

When the other facilitators were present during my activity, the girls might think that the adults were appropriating their use of anime: “To retain their value they should remain the
province of youth” (Kaplan, *Adolescence* 241). Kaplan refers to the use of decoration, secret languages and forms of adolescent expressions as metaphors for adolescence. She notes that if these metaphors are appropriated by the adult world, adolescents must release them and find new and more effective secret metaphors: “The more the adult generation usurps what belongs to youth, the wilder and more ambiguous the new metaphors are likely to be” (Kaplan, *Adolescence* 241). As the metaphor chosen by the girls from HAP were successful in their secrecy and ambiguity, having an anime activity that included the facilitators caused the girls to abandon their use of anime. They once believed that other facilitators did not understand their secret language; now, it has changed. They have since then reacted negatively, and the facilitators are aware of it. In addition, the girls used to share their interest of anime with me. They allowed me into their secret language because they knew I was part of their community and respected it. So why did they resist the activity?

I think it is because the activity has now integrated their anime world to the program. It is quite possible that the girls would have reacted differently to my anime activity had I conducted it without the other facilitators. Without the other facilitators, I might have a better chance to reassure that their secret language were not broken. I originally planned to have the activity as part of the program weekly. Unfortunately, it ended up becoming an add-on. However, as I analyze the situation now, I do not think doing the activity on a weekly basis would have been received positively either. Perhaps an effective way to remove the barrier safely between HAP adolescents and HAP facilitators would be to continue HAP the way it is rather than having activities based on the participants’ interests. Trying too hard to “speak their language” would make the activities seem forced, which may cause a even larger barrier. When the facilitators understand the group’s interests, they can let the participants drive the conversation. This way
the participants are still in control, and the facilitators can understand more deeply when they interpret the meaning making and the therapeutic outcomes.

My professor and supervisor Dr. Hoi Cheu used his personal experience to explain this phenomenon. He explained that while working on a film project with troubled youths for a Laura Sky film, he was able to connect on a deeper and more personal level with the participants compared to any other interviewer. As a high-profile filmmaker who was in charge of the project struggled to gain any response from the participants and had thought her project failed, Cheu’s responses saved the project’s outcome. Since he was able to recognize the hierarchal structures in motion between the participants and interviewers, he gave them chocolate “illegally” to break into their group. This trust and bond resulted in participants breaking down in tears and led to sharing things they never would have with anyone else there. This bond and trust demonstrated the power of listening, observation and ability to separate oneself from the “official” culture. Showing understanding about something that is important to the girls allowed them to use anime as a communicator and pathway to their personal feelings and struggles.
Chapter Three

3 Psychology of Anime Appropriation: Psychoanalytic Interpretation

“Psychoanalysis is such a method, for it gives an account of the interplay between the sexual and moral life, fantasy and reality, past and present” (Kaplan, Adolescence 99).

The following section uses feminist psychoanalysis to investigate how the girls’ resistance to the anime activity can be a conscious cross-cultural rebellion. Psychoanalysis allows us to investigate what the themes used in their anime drawings mean as well as how they are chosen. Anime is part of their identity formation; they use it to distinguish themselves from others.

3.1 Anime as a Cross-Cultural Therapy & Rebellion

As many of the anime characters and shows contain themes of rebellion against society and an overall hierarchal authority, the teenage girls relate to those feelings. They draw anime as a conscious rebellion against HAP. This is not to say that they do not like HAP, since they are returning participants. They find in HAP a place where they feel comfortable to share their creativity. They have control over what they want to share with the adults. Though the fact that HAP is a research project and is recorded visually and verbally, there are no secrets. HAP is a “safe space” even though girls know they are still being watched. HAP has rules created by the girls themselves, but there is still a hierarchy. The girls’ rebellion is not solely against HAP, but against authority figures. The use of anime provides them with an outlet that many authority figures do not bother to understand. Anime creates a barrier in reciprocation and further conversation about the drawings and stories shared by the girls. As the girls are aware of this
barrier, anime maintains a safe artistic style used to express themselves in a way which is often not understood. In my research of anime and my time spent with the foster girls from HAP, I have explored why anime is an effective medium for dealing with personal traumas. Anime’s history of being outcasted. I argue that anime can be used as an effective therapeutic tool for the female otaku. The way the girls use anime to deal with personal issues and struggles has inspired me to come up with the term cross-cultural therapy to describe how a media genre such as anime can be used. Cross-cultural therapy associates ways of coping with stresses/traumas of life via escape in a foreign cultures’ artifacts. This is beneficial for girls who feel misunderstood like the girls from HAP. If they cannot connect to their own culture or feel a connection to characters in mainstream media, they can seek another culture’ themes and mediums that resonate with their feelings and experiences. Rebellious themes in anime are not coincidental, both fantasy and characters can provide an escape and a sense of belonging. The young girls in our HAP group show various signs of using anime as therapy and escape in order to cope with their personal and social experiences from the foster care system. Based on my observations, so far, the use of anime is only therapeutic mainly when the girls choose it independently. When the girl’s imaginations and creativity are not confined, their passion for anime shines in their personal artwork. The girls’ preconceived notion that set activities, linearity of education practices in school systems, the changes in policies of the youth judicial system, stereotypes and perceptions of young girls in foster care are “bad” causes them to rebel. HAP’s holistic and creative approach allows the girls to open up, although it remains an established program in the social system. Using another cultures medium as a method of inner self-realization is resistance to conformity to one’s own culture. In fact, studies have shown that the vast majority of people only watch their own cultures media content: “For instance, one consistent finding concerns the preference
of audiences for their own national channels and programmes. This is mostly linked to the notion of ‘cultural proximity’, which implies that viewers prefer productions that are culturally familiar” (Bilandzic et al. 91). In other words, with today’s easy access to the Internet, viewers have the freedom to choose what they want to watch and from where. It is clear that these girls do not watch or find use for Western media products and rather they go out of their way to access a genre that is not “Canadian” or “North American.”

Use of rebellious themes in anime are not coincidental. The adoption and fascination with fantasy, characters and stories provides the girls with not only an escape from reality, but also with a sense of belonging. Fiction provides us with characters who resemble us and make us feel more understood. It is the process of identification. Being able to identify with elements in fictitious creations/worlds allows us to confront certain issues that may be too harsh to tackle directly. Fiction also creates an environment that is safe and open for interpretations. For many, including the girls from HAP, fiction is a therapeutic device used to deal with issues from their past in order to live fully in the present that leads to a healthy future.

3.2 Creative Adaptation of Digital Therapy as a Revised Bibliotherapy

The process of using literature, including fiction as a mode of therapy is bibliotherapy. Joseph Gold beautifully describes that reading fiction can allow readers to explore themselves deeply and change their attitude: “There is a direct link between what you feel about stories and what you feel about everything else, especially about yourself” (Gold 3). With fiction as an aid, they can find the root of where anxieties, fears, likes and angers come from. Fiction allows to see altered versions of their reality. The fictional world allows for what Gold calls “restorying” of oneself and provides a safe space for revisiting of one’s past and rewriting of one’s present. Gold
uses a metaphor comparing trauma or grief and helplessness to carrying a suitcase. He explains that if we grow up having suffered trauma/grief over a parent, accident, divorce, etc., we can easily feel trapped in those feelings. This helplessness is carried around throughout life, but it can be organized and filed away. If we can find a way to organize our confused and messy suitcase, we can carry it without fear of it falling out at anytime uncontrollably (53). This metaphor of organizing our past experiences like items in a suitcase demonstrates how heavy and daunting it can be to carry around trauma and grief for a lifetime without proper organization. There are various ways to reduce the fragility of experiences and emotions with coping strategies such as fiction, creativity and community. The process of fiction does not only make us feel things that relate to us, but also provides us with the origins and contexts behind those experiences and feelings.

The process of reading fiction allows us to find pleasure whilst also serving as an aid in coping with stress, crises, trauma and with the delicate and transitional period of growing up. Fiction is an intrinsic part of the girls’ lives during adolescence; especially for girls who have undergone traumas, grief, isolation and abandonment, fiction is a safe haven that allows coping via a pleasurable creative experience. Their fiction of choice differed slightly from bibliotherapy although still working within the same concept. Although bibliotherapy has been proven a successful clinical tactic for helping children and adults to cope with traumas, and various authors and researchers have contributed ample new knowledge in their fields of study, we still lack a full understanding of how different storytelling media paired with art can be used as a successful coping mechanism and tool of therapy. Using digital media as therapy still remains a highly contested topic. However, since the HAP girls find value in less traditional forms of
fiction, I argue that cross-cultural media productions like anime can be effective when paired with creative activities.

Though Gold attributes reading fiction with the pleasures of reading, the creation of art inspired and adapted by visual media can also serve as a coping vessel. Just like many in the past have mistaken that reading fiction was a ‘waste of time’ and served only as a ‘guilty pleasure,’ visual entertainment is also not a guilty pleasure. As with anything in life, there can in fact be mindless consumption. However, this should not diminish the possible therapeutic outcomes of visual entertainment. There are few positive associations between therapeutic methods and media. As many associate media as a negative contributing factor to youth’s mental health, many are too quick to dismiss the effectiveness of fiction in media. Many do not attribute television as successful stimulators for imagination due to its lack of language engagement: “Not only is language a minor accompaniment of TV images, but the thousands of hours spent in silent viewing are hours stolen from other forms of language practice-reading, conversation, story listening or telling” (Gold 59). There is no questioning this fact that media does lack language engagement on its own, though alternative media products can still have benefits to the viewers. Visual media can provide a gateway to a more imaginative process than reading. When the girls watch anime or read manga, they are not consuming mindlessly or passively. They actively seek it independently since it is not yet mainstream on Western channels and they explore the foreign world as a conscious rejection of conformity. With the endless possibilities to travel the world for entertainment from their devices, those who are not satisfied by the content produced by their society will search to find content that suits their needs and taste.

It is also important to recognize that these young girls in foster care have greater difficulty finding positive role models. A significant part of bibliotherapy’s success has to do with the
readers being able to relate to a character or a situation in some way in order to process difficult issues through the fiction. This process of identification allows a connection: “Well, for one thing, it makes you feel less alone and more ‘normal.’ When you see that someone else can have known about how you feel, you are being recognized, understood and known” (Gold 45).

HAP and the otaku culture can make use of narratives that are different. HAP allows the girls to learn and share similar narratives that can create a sense of belonging never before felt at school, home, books or Western television. Finding a genre such as anime that contains many mature themes with adolescent characters can provide a sense of belonging not only through connection to fictional characters but in the otaku community as well. Anime is easy to access, which is good for children who have difficulty reading. Anime also carries many themes of the awkwardness of growing up. Some anime’s such as Michiko & Hatchin illustrate the reality of living as a girl in foster care. Many themes such as trauma, violence, abuse and assault are present in anime and manga, which allows those who have been through these situations to feel less alone. Anime does not only discuss mature themes that can relate to these girls’ experiences, but it also highlights emotions that may seem over the top to Western viewers.

In HAP, many girls have mentioned about their lack of confidence in their writing/spelling skills. When we had some activities that required writing on a large poster board, many girls apologized for their misspelling of words. They would ask how to spell something correctly. Perhaps their lack of engagement with reading fiction in books weakens their writing skills. Fictional mediums such as anime and manga provide more visual cues but also offer more textual elements that can further assist those who struggle with reading or writing. Reading subtitles (because most animes are not dubbed) are normal. The irony is that Japanese cultural products help improve English. Unconscious learning and improvements can take place more so with anime or manga compared
to Western television and cartoons. Better language skills can lead to improving self-confidence with literacy and can lead to a joy for reading in the future. Children involved in unstable family situations are more apt to have learning disabilities with things such as reading: “Children trapped in extremely controlling family systems, or in poverty, can easily feel helpless and grow up feeling helpless, in a cycle of seemingly inescapable repetition. Reading can greatly assist such children, yet sadly it is precisely these children who are least likely to get it” (Gold 141). Gold acknowledges the barriers of reading for children in unfavorable family lifestyles and environments. Those who have learning disabilities, which is most often the case with children who have undergone trauma and those in HAP, are not always able to gain accessibility to reading. Participants from HAP are recruited based on their engagement with creative arts and therefore visual media is by far the most diverse and accessible for most participants in HAP. The artistic mediums of choice in HAP based on discussion and use are by far anime, television, cartoons, music, video games and art. In the groups I participated in, sports and books were not often mentioned in the HAP sessions.

As we have seen examples of participants discussions and drawings, many elements of anime series, webcomics and comic books are present in the girls’ drawings and styles. As Golomb observes, “These sources provide children with popular themes, ready-made images and a graphic vocabulary to express their hope, dears, and wishes. The dramatic action is often played out on a seemingly impersonal plane of fantasy, on which superheroes and archvillains enact their struggle” (Golomb 157). Marjory and Brent Wilson as well as Paul Duncum have also found that, along with using characters as inspiration for re-enacting their feelings and worries, they provide resolutions for their inner conflicts. The resolutions allow children and adolescents to resolve traumas safely by creating unique narratives in their visual creations. Golomb also
notes that many times these characters are representations of the child themselves: “The truly devoted and also gifted serialists populate their world with protagonists who, though they bear a resemblance to the heroes and villains of the popular youth culture, are nevertheless the offspring of their maker, carrying his very personal, at times even idiosyncratic, imprint” (Golomb 157). The use of anime can therefore act as a therapeutic vessel for these young girls to cope with traumas via the adaptation of characters within their art.

Once she has chosen anime, she engages a process of identification with themes and characters. After she actively chose her own fictional environment, she goes a step further by adding additional elements and meaning to what she has seen. Since anime, like other visual entertainment, has been created for the viewer to guide what to imagine, how to feel and what the messages are, the viewer has to take this fictional world and free it from its confines and borders. As the mature and creative viewer, she has to find meaning in this visual and cross-cultural fictional world. However, something is missing: her view. She applies and identifies with themes, events and characters, and she adapts them in her own unique artistic interpretation. Her identification process requires her to reach into her memories, which can be painful and confusing. Therefore, the identification process moves her to revisit them. She redraws them with some imaginative changes. For example, HAP invites the girls to “redraw” a bad experience into a positive one. HAP’s activity “Bad Day Better” is based on this concept. In the activity, the group is asked to paint on half the page a bad day; then on the other side of the page paint a good day. Before the paint dries, the group folds their page in half placing the bad day and good day together. The folding of the page mixes the paint of the good day onto the bad day. The purpose of this is to remind them that even in bad days, there are elements of good present. This process is present in art. She draws a character that is physically not her, but emotionally is tied to
herself. She can then look at her experiences differently by viewing them from a safe distance. She acknowledges their importance and can adjust them if the experiences become too much to bear. This is one way to engage the wondrous art of the creative process of art-based therapy, which can serve as a vessel as effective as bibliotherapy. The visuals from the anime are no longer confined to its original creator but have been passed down to the girl who seeks to re-draw and re-write her story. She is ‘restorying’ the anime and herself simultaneously.

Joseph Gold defends that fantasy is indeed connected to “reality”: “This suspicion of fiction reading as an activity divorced from the practical life comes from a cultural devaluing of feeling, imagination mental pleasure, and language” (Gold 6). He explains that escaping into a fictional world of someone else’s story exercises the mind, imagination, emotions and language. Temporarily diving into an imagined life allows us to feel taken care of and provides clues on how to deal with confusing or difficult paths. We can see how imaginary arts can be comforting for those in the foster care system who do not have much control over their lives. In the world of fiction, there is no betrayal, or abandonment, but rather a chosen guardian. The sure method of plot development creates a beginning, climax and ending that is always guaranteed. Stories will be resolved and the resolution ensures structure and order. There are critics who discredit anime due to the otaku’s attachment and obsession. However, this problem can only be the case if it is only used as a form of escape. In this study, the use of anime is not an obsession. The girls’ creative and personal adaptations of characters align with their feelings and act as a vessel. As the media takes up such a large portion of young adolescents’ lives in our digital world, we need to understand how creativity and media intertwine as a coping mechanism.

Therefore, media on its own is not therapeutic. The users have to move beyond a passive form of entertainment. However, when media is paired with active creativity and identification,
creative adaptation of digital media works like the girls’ anime drawings can be effective. The way the girls use and adapt anime in their creative art process and tell their stories via adapted anime characters provides an active therapy using anime as the vessel and stimulant for their therapy. As anime supplies the themes of identification and fantasy, the process of inner adaptation and reflection is moulded into art where the participants can revisit their past safely. This creation process is the therapeutic element to the cross-cultural fantasy. Cross-cultural therapy allows the participant to keep a safe distance from her own social world where she feels abandoned and confined. Creativity and media consumption intertwine to form a coping mechanism and revision process which proved successful for many girls in HAP. Fiction is pleasurable partly because we receive intellectual and emotional rewards. Anime is integral to the process of art creation and therapeutic process because it engages the identification and revision of the girls’ own narratives. Themes of rebellion, isolation, maturity and confusion from anime are used as analogues; the way the girls use these analogues is an effective/cognitive act for understanding and changing their own narratives about themselves. Themes present from a cross-cultural medium such as anime are relatable to the girls from HAP for multiple reasons, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 Therapeutic Fantasies from Anime: An Artistic Restorying

In her analyse of the wild woman archetype, Clarissa Estes has identified three different forms of fantasies. First, the pleasure fantasy is used for pleasure and occurs in daydreams. Second, there is intentional imaging used to aid and grow an individual into action: “All successes-psychological, spiritual, financial, and creative-begin with fantasies of this nature” (322). Third, fantasy hinders and places an individual in an idle state. One becomes unattached
with reality and uses replacements that temporarily make them feel better. These types create a lack of focus on reality and are not productive for growth. In light of Estes’ categorization, we can apply these points to the HAP girls. Since the girls use fantasy to inspire a critical therapeutic creative product, they regard fantasy as intentional imaging. This fantasy acts as a vehicle that transports them forward psychologically by dealing/coping with their past issues though art therapy, and therefore it touches their spiritual and creative selves. This usage perhaps explains why the aspect of “cross-cultural therapy” is so important.

The process of cross-cultural therapy helps the HAP girls to find heroines and role models that are not accessible in their own culture. By trial and error of identification with Western characters in fiction, the Eastern characters are the ones who prove to serve the girls better. The fantasy and themes in anime are motivators for self-discovery, that lead to transformation and maturity. By embracing a genre that brings a rush of pure joy the girl can leave behind her past childhood fixations to find a new source of inspiration. That may be comparable to metamorphosis; and growing for her future through adventure: “Like a caterpillar that must be enclosed in a cocoon and undergo a quiet, unseen metamorphosis to then emerge from the chrysalis as a butterfly, the girl undergoes transformation to maturity, but by way of imaginary adventures” (Kaplan, Adolescence 32). This growing process often takes shape through identification of mythic heroines/fictional characters who are also going through a similar growth period. As anime supplies the themes of identification and fantasy, the process of inner adaptation and reflection is moulded into art where the participants can revisit the past safely. This creation process is the therapeutic element to the cross-cultural fantasy. It is therapy by ways of artistic restorying. Through the use of fictional identification and reanimation of the past, the HAP girls can learn to acknowledge the past without fear of being found out by those
who view the art. Her memories and experiences are safe in her drawings because the fictional world is not “real.”

Cross-cultural therapy acts as a safe mode of therapy because it allows the participant to separate herself from her own culture that has abandoned her. She finds her own “family” through the otaku community and distances herself from those who try to conform her. She finds it easier to face her past through characters and heroines she admires, because she finds power in their strength and hopes that she can be strong like them: “Like the heroines she impersonates, the girl is infinitely creative and virtuous” (Kaplan, Adolescence 32). In order to do this, she knows she must face her past like an arch enemy that plagues her. Just like the characters in her favorite anime, she faces her demons in order to be free from harm. Once she has faced them, she can then continue her adventures. Though she may feel alone in reality, she connects and feels understood in fiction. Her sense of community from anime fandom helps to her connect and that skill may have been lacking at home. The HAP participants change their journey with anime, finding ways to escape the limitations placed on their family and home situations. Kaplan explains a similar process as symbolic liberation: “When the girl undertakes a cosmic journey she is symbolically liberated from the limitations of her household or village” (Kaplan, Adolescence 32). She explains that a girl can find a path that liberates her from the constraints of her situational environment. Therefore, the HAP girls use anime as a symbolic liberation from their foster care environments. With the ability to connect and cope through the symbolic, she no longer feels like a child. Through anime’s provocative themes, she can explore adulthood without having to live them. Anime helps her to find solace and comfort in an artistic medium that is similar to that of childhood cartoons. Anime provides the perfect haven for adolescents who wish to engage fantasy that is age appropriate for their maturation.
Louise Kaplan explains that struggling with social structures is part of growing up in adolescent psychology: “When a person is rigidly possessed by a social structure, she begins to look deviant only if that structure slips or if her role is no longer acceptable or if it becomes obsolete” (Kaplan, Adolescence 143). Many adolescents only appear defiant in the eyes of their culture because they embody a shift in ideological perceptions and change. If a social structure is too different from her personal beliefs and values, she seeks a new one that fits her. Especially for adolescents who feel rejected from society and labelled as juvenile delinquents, it is natural for them to want to escape the dominant social narrative. Travelling cross-culturally through fantasy creates a sense of acceptance and fulfillment not granted in their immediate environment. Though many adolescents give into their society’s expectations and conform in order to fit in, some find alternatives. It is the true that creatives and misfits must create their own world for them to thrive and grow. However, due to their use of foreign cultural materials, others misunderstand or even look down at them.

What distinguishes the HAP girls is that they have the potential to change. Their use of anime themes as a cross-cultural therapy, and their rebellion allows them to grow from their difficult pasts and face reality. Home is not limited to a physical place. Estes explains that women can find home and comfort in various different things and experiences: “The vehicles through and by which women reach home are many: music, art, forest, ocean spume, sunrise, solitude” (Estes 284). Home especially for the girls in HAP is less associated with physical spaces that they inhabit. Metaphorically, anime becomes their “home”. Since the physical spaces they inhabited did not provide feelings of home, they created their own psychological homes through the otaku community. Finding home is essential to finding balance in one’s life. Without a physical or psychic home, there is no space to safely deal with the tribulations of the past and
present. Drawing anime as an art style stimulates a more engaged community because of its otaku. Conversation, storytelling/listening, and creating are all part of being in the otaku community. A family is formed that fully embraces anyone and everyone through the shared passion and love of anime. Fan fiction is formed and original fan manga is written and drawn. Seemingly stagnant fixed anime characters are transformed and created by the otaku. They have full creative control and even have influence on future anime stories and characters. There have even been instances where otaku have been able to fully create a character for popular anime’s/comics. The re-telling and re-formulation in the otaku community focuses on a principle of everchanging and inviting creativity.

Their experiences and association with rebellious themes from anime shows that the HAP girls seek more than what society has offered them. This is the true formation of a future rebel who can make changes. With HAP that nurtures creativity and assists foster youth to develop resilience, these “bad” girls can change the world and become “wild” girls. Rousseau believes that only once you learn to love yourself, can you begin to love others around you. If the girls learn to love themselves, they can as Rousseau believes—love the human species (Kaplan, Adolescence 227). The girls are on this path. Near the end of the HAP’s repeat sessions, they would write each other inspirational quotes on the white boards to motivate each other as seen in Figure 20. This sense of community and fellowship encourages the girls to receive love and gain self-love for themselves. It is a
compassionate family-like structure that allows the otaku to connect on a creative and emotional level with others who share similar passions.

Even though these girls are held by their pasts, griefs, traumas, anxieties and dreams, they are simultaneously striving to construct a new environment filled with new experiences and people to share them with. As any adolescent, she must find herself by finding what she likes and dislikes. This process is one of trial and error and finds itself with friendships, partners, phases, styles, and interests. Often times when she finds what/where/who she likes, they will assist her in her final transformation to her future self. This is where the power of the otaku community takes shape. Having peers who share similar styles and interests such as anime creates a completely new tight knit community that thrives on the love of fantasy and maturity. If she is missing the nurturing comfort from her family, she can find this in the otaku community. Many from the otaku community are embracing of those who are seen as an outcast in their society. This embracing community supplies an adolescent with a sense of pride never before felt. She is able to fully embrace her uniqueness and can distinguish herself from conformists around her because she now has a social network of friends who support her like family. Being able to relate to others allows for others to look up to her for once. Where she is usually looked down on by peers at school for being different, in the otaku community she has gained a sense of purpose and becomes a mentor-like parental figure that has knowledge others seek.

As anime embodies cultural remnants of varying themes such as guilt, rebellion, fantasy, adolescence and transformation from historical context; the girls from HAP are able to connect through their isolation and opposition that came from their culture and backgrounds. They are able to adapt and evolve through cross-cultural themes and transform them into active agents of psychological change and revision through artistic adaptations. Not only are the themes and
contexts from anime relatable to the girls, but they inspire change within themselves to not only create but recreate their past and present. This use of anime allows for a healthy therapy not only for those who have undergone trauma and loss but for adolescence.

3.4 Adolescence: The Foster Child of Psychoanalysis

“Adolescence, more like a work of art, is a prospective symbol of personal synthesis and of the future of humankind” (Kaplan, Adolescence 109).

As previously noted, anime first came to North America during a time when Western television programming lacked tween/adolescent content. Anime’s content essentially created new fictional possibilities that adolescents in the West had yet to develop. In the past, media broadcast companies would select what anime or cross-cultural products they air to Western audiences thus maintaining control over cultural intercourse. However, with today’s internet, adolescents have greater access to alternative programs. This change creates a tsunami of cultural exchange around the world. Since the girls choose anime, they are actively engaging animate “therapy” as a life resource. This cross-cultural interaction allows for introduction to new knowledges and ways of thinking for growth of a new culture, although usually others are at first hesitant to accept it: "(...) importing is a way to accelerate cultural transformation because the different cultural contexts enrich cultural resources for inventing new metaphors and stories" (Cheu 304). As the import was previously selective by the Western media programs, the exchange is now chosen by viewers themselves. Mediation and control are gone. Especially for young girls, age appropriate content that also celebrates female empowerment has proven to excel on the Western market, which explains why the number of female otaku have surpassed the male demographic greatly.
Many successful animes in North America have strong heroines. Cheu notes the importance that female characters such as *Sailor Moon* play in the role of adolescent girls' lives. As second-wave feminism was active during anime’s emergence on the Western market, public demand for strong female roles were high. Young girls desired to look up to strong female fighters to find empowerment: "As an action hero, *Sailor Moon* fulfils the feminist agenda in American popular culture's demand for strong female figures" (Cheu 295). He explains that TV channels tried to fulfill what they thought was the feminist agenda. Along with female strength, age also plays an intrinsic role in identification. *Sailor Moon* shares the same struggles as the young girls watching. She is a metaphor and a representation of the girls.

As North American films concentrated on live action adult films rather than in animated children’s films, anime quickly supplied tweens and adolescents with elements of a visually familiar cartoon-like style with grown-up issues. Anime’s mix of real adolescent struggle and fantasy allows its young viewers to feel understood and empowered. Many adolescents find comfort in feeling the power and control of omnipotence through fantasies. In imagining herself as an anime character, she can be an omnipotent deity that she feels she cannot be in reality. If she cannot find power and control in her current culture, she finds strength in a cross-cultural medium that can supply her that fantasy of omnipotence that she craves. She shifts her idolization of her parents to characters who relate to herself. Characters from anime are desirable to Western adolescents because they deal with their problems. They face issues like awkwardness, difficulties in school, rebellious behavior and heart ships. When mundane characters find themselves in the fantastical roles of the superheroes, this gives viewers a fictional metaphor for inspiration and belonging.
Adolescence is one of the most important growth periods for human beings. During adolescence we re-examine and choose what stays in the past and what we bring into the future. Kaplan revises Freud’s views on the emphasis of infantile past and psychoanalytical neglect of adolescence. Kaplan argues that adolescent individuation is different from the separation individuation of infancy and that separation-individuation only occurs once (95). Kaplan’s work captures the essence of adolescence not as a temporary negative period, but rather a period that must be understood and cherished. Without the revision in adolescence of past events, adults would be plagued by resurfacing traumas and griefs that might never be dealt with from their past. We learn how to deal with mistakes in adolescence. Adolescence respects the laws of time by keeping the past in the past. Just like a narrative, there needs to be structure. Without it, the past would take over the present and there would be no growth, journey or closure. Life would become dysfunctional.

Essential to an adolescents’ pursuit for independence from their parents via defiance is pacing and control. If she retreats too quickly from the home for long periods of time with extreme oppositions of her family’s value, appearance, and social class, she may develop an avoidance of sorrows and anxieties that can resurface later on in life (Kaplan, *Adolescence* 139). The detachment process can become toxic and can be difficult to repair. Though there are girls in other HAP groups who have demonstrated hasty retreats from their foster homes causing them to follow unsafe paths, the girls in my study do not show signs of such retreat. Though they had reported conflicts and disputes with authority figures in their lives, they did not leave the family nest for prolonged periods of time. Instead, they isolated themselves by spending more time with friends. They connected with the rebellious sensibility and used it to cope with their own rebellious impulses and difficult pasts. They distanced themselves from their parents mentally.
rather than physically. Since anime is a product from another social class and culture, the
difference allows for a detachment of family values and societal ideals to avoid direct conflict.

Kaplan refers to adolescence as the “farewell to childhood.” The process of adolescence
prepares an individual to reach psychological adulthood (*Adolescence* 109). In some cases, this
process can be unbearable, treacherous, and lonely. Though this time can be sombre, it can also
be transformed into a fantastical journey that is shared with others in order to make it bearable.
With one participant in particular, she approaches adolescence differently than most. Her focus
on positivity and fantasy keeps her spirits up, even though she is going through a lot in her
family-life. At times, it seemed that she was living in a fantasy world rather than reality. Her use
of anime in her cosplay, style, storytelling and drawings sparked such joy in her. Knowing that
childhood had passed, she knows she is not finished imagining and creating. She is not ready for
the adult world yet, but she is aware of this. She finds herself in between two times rather than
stuck. She suffers tremendous loss and is not afraid to feel that but at the same time she is strong
and composed, keeping fun and fantasy alive with anime. She shares it with the entire group and
is not afraid to experiment with her relations to others. Her use of fantasy from anime allow her
to embrace her childhood before she bids farewell to it forever. Her attachment to fantasy may
explain why she chooses to focus less on reality. By avoiding growing up, she can avoid dealing
with her current issues. She may want to preserve the past because that is the only place she
preserves her memory of her mother. She is afraid to completely lose her and therefore remains
attached to ideas of childhood. Adolescence, on the other hand, introduces new possibilities and
growth, she is aware of this new and exciting place and tries to build her own family with the
otaku community. While she is grieving, the past will remain in reach and will be revisited in her
anime fantasies and creations.
Kaplan describes adolescence as the intermediate zone of being half child and half adult. She lives in reality but often finds herself inside fantasy. This intermediate zone allows for unity to take shape. Fantasy is a healthy dose of desire to fuel her inner child (Kaplan, Adolescence 244). Once she was ready to move forward, she would then be able to realize that her mother was not glued to the past but in fact would stay with her. But for now, she was still tied to her childhood that caused her to act like a child. The participant sometimes acted immaturely during group sessions, which demonstrated her fight against growing up. Kaplan describes the loss of infantile desires of an adolescent as a period of mourning. This period of mourning differs from the actual grief and loss of a loved one because, even though the symptoms are similar, she is not aware of what she has lost.

This particular HAP participant was not only mourning her infantile desires but a simultaneous mourning of a loved one. As a reminder, this participant’s mother recently passed away and the people around her were keeping the cause of her mother’s death from her. The recent loss of her mother shares similar unknown mourning symptoms as those felt during the loss of infantile desires. Though one mourning is understood and attached to a particular event (the loss of her mother) and the other is unknown (the loss of childhood), the circumstances make them similar. Her mother’s passing not only caused grief but confusion thus she kept on creating re-visitation and re-narration of how her mother died. Each time she discussed the loss of her mother during HAP sessions, she would struggle to find a coherent story and reason for her mother’s passing. As her family wanted to shelter her from the grief corresponding to how her mother died, they created a narrative that had many holes. She realized the holes, so she would regularly re-construct stories that made more sense to her than the story told by her caretaker. However, she was unable to cope and grieve healthily since she did not know the
truth. Her actual mourning became incomprehensible and unrepairable because of the missing puzzle pieces. She often reported having conflicts and struggles with her grandmother, her familial caregiver. She transferred her griefs and angers towards her grandmother. For the girls in HAP, they find much meaning and therapy through anime because they cope with more complex issues on top of their adolescence. However, the oppositional behavior during adolescence also encourages strength building and resilience. Without adolescence, there would be no development, change or progress. As noted by Cheu, adolescence: "(...) preserves in humanity a space for nonconformity, rebellion, and imagination that can transform self-awareness into social consciousness" (298). Not only does adolescence change the individual, but it can also bring great changes on a social level.

Escaping her culture that she does not feel connected to allows her to connect to one who sees her, and for these girls, Eastern culture understood them. In a society that often rejects “troubled” youth the HAP participants are already ignored. Not only are they unseen because of their backgrounds, they are also misunderstood for seeking creative outlets that differ from the norm. Often times, society aims to control and choose what is seen and requires those who do not fit the mould to be left in the dark: “Though her soul requires seeing, the culture around her requires sightlessness. Though her soul wishes to speak its truth, she is pressured to be silent” (Estes 171). All cultures place expectations that if not met, will reject whoever does not comply. This happens in various different ways and with varying messages such as what gender should be, and how people/children should behave. The wildish woman is exiled in two ways from her culture: personally, through the inner self and externally through her culture (Estes 172).
3.5 Feminist Psychoanalysis of the Wild Child

“Defiance is the mark of the outsider” (Kaplan, Adolescence 127)

Rebel, outcast, manipulative, misbehaved and wild are a handful of negative connotations attached to adolescent girls in the foster care system. But the terms wild, rebellious and delinquent can also be a positive attribution to describe young female rebels. These wild girls are faced with many challenges, but they also have key shared features of strength, independence, and creative spirit. I will be using Clarissa Pinkola Estes’ book Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype to trace the demonization of rebellious girls and link it to the current delinquent system. Estes produces a refreshing shift of rhetoric surrounding contemporary societies portrayals of women. She contextualizes what people now call “wild” or “bad” as negative associations and uses the previous sense of the words “wild” as someone who is free rather than tainted: “So, the word wild here is not used in its modern pejorative sense, meaning out of control, but in its original sense, which means to live a natural life, one in which the creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries. These words, wild and woman, cause women to remember who they are and what they are about” (Estes 6). According to Estes, the primal woman is someone who has been wiped out and endangered along with our natural environments. Though Estes makes note of this devastating loss, she regains hope in discussing how the wild woman still exists in our minds and bodies. The wild woman is not one who is assimilated and passive, but one who is strong, creative and in touch with nature. Examining the ways that the girls interacted rebelliously and artistically will demonstrate a connection between the two as characteristics of a strong female archetype.
In this section, I will refer to two participants by letter rather than number in order to differentiate them from the other participants because participant A & B are not from the repeat group that has been analyzed previously. They are from a later HAP group in a Winter 2018 session. Participant A is integral to this thesis because she has shared her experience and discussions about the foster care system. She speaks openly about her involvement in the judicial system as well as her feelings of judgement surrounding her court case. According to her, she has been trying to be positive to make changes in her life. Even though she made mistakes in her past, she aims to grow from them rather than get lost in them. Her desire to be reunited with her birth mother and brother is very important for her and it motivates her attendance at school, personal growth and good decision making. She often expresses her anxieties about her mother and brothers’ health. She does not feel comfortable with her foster family and she is stressed about dealing with everyday duties and social life. She is worried about not being reunited with her birth family. Due to her trouble with the law, she feels judged by authority. In a group session, we had a discussion about negative labelling where I shared what I was writing about in order to make the girls realize that even though they were sometimes labelled as “bad,” it is not always a “bad” thing. I told her that circumstances had to be taken into account and we could look at rebellion in a positive way. She responded very positively: “That’s really cool! They [people/society & authority figures] look at me like that [bad]” (Participant A: HAP Winter 2018). As soon as I opened up to the girls about understanding their struggles and behavior, they became more comfortable, and those who at first refused to participate, participated.

All it takes for these girls to trust me is to share my understanding. I want them to know that I do not judge them but rather listen and support them. I do not try to fix them. Many girls that attend HAP have told me their diagnoses and labels by doctors and psychologists. Though
labelling by health care professionals can be beneficial for better assisting a patient, it can also become problematic with adolescent girls who identify themselves by their “problems.” Some girls introduce themselves by their mental health labels rather than their name. Estes notes that traditional psychology can often misdiagnose or misunderstand girls: “Traditional psychology is often spare or entirely silent about deeper issues important to women” (Estes 4). She explains that traditional psychology often ignores issues that are important to women including the importance of creativity, intuition and woman’s knowing. She warns that “A woman’s issues of soul cannot be treated by carving her into a more acceptable form as defined by an unconscious culture, nor can she be bent into a more intellectually acceptable shape by those who claim to be the sole bearers of consciousness” (4). She argues that a woman’s issues cannot simply be treated with a psychological mould created for every woman. She also warns that often times, traditional psychology aims to correct and make “more acceptable” forms of women who are defined by the culture she is a part of. She proposes that instead of labelling or changing women, psychologists should understand and “retrieve” women’s creativity and intuition. Estes’ point on the general approach to psychological treatment explains that it can cause more harm than healing, which seems to still be an issue today. Participant B in particular introduced herself as having Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) before presenting her name in her first HAP session: “I was in the hospital because I don’t know how to follow rules and I’m ODD. The reason I was in the hospital for so long last time was because I kept getting in trouble [laughs]” (Participant B: HAP Winter 2018). During HAP, it seemed as though she was purposefully opposing the art activities in order to demonstrate her ODD behavior. We introduced an activity called “Group Rules” where HAP participants were asked to create their own rules together as guidelines for the next 12 weeks. Participant B remarked sarcastically: “Fantastic, I don’t follow em’ [rules]
just saying. There’s no point in telling me. Let me guess, there’s a rule on there about phones?” (HAP winter 2018). Even though nobody mentioned rules about using phones in HAP, she already made assumptions that HAP would not allow phone usage. But HAP “rules” were not “negative.” We encouraged the girls to think positively, like “respect others in sharing” and the “no phone” became unnecessary. In participant B’s case, since she noted having been diagnosed with ODD, she used it as a defense for her to maintain anti-rule behavior. In a sense, her oppositional behavior was intensified by the label, which in turn became her identity.

This phenomenon happens often in various HAP groups. In another group of girls ages 15-19 years, when facilitators explained the need to respect others by not looking at mobile devices, the girls would argue that they need to be on their phone and they could still pay attention. The facilitator told them that the use of mobile devices was not prohibited in HAP since many used their phones as a strategy to cover social anxiety. The facilitator assured the girls that: “we try and make realistic goals” (HAP Facilitator: winter 2018). Interestingly, once group began, the girls did not even glance at their phones.

Facilitator: “So with the phone thing, how does everyone feel about that?”

Participant A: “it’s okay, It’s not a distraction or anything. And it’s not like when she (Participant B) has her phone out that it will distract us, so we’re okay with that.”

Participant B: “I can have music blaring in my ears and still pay attention.”

Participant C shared how she likes pictures of herself and that she doesn’t mind if she would take pictures but participant B said that she “wouldn’t do that because of confidentiality.” (HAP Winter 2018).
Though defiance might not be apparent to authority figures as a good thing, it is a step into the future. Kaplan explains that breaking rules that were enforced in childhood allows her to question morality. With opposition of moral standards, an adolescent is taking an essential first step towards a more ethical form of conscience. Though she and her family are not aware of the importance of rule breaking, it is part of the process of leaving childhood behind along with the rules that children are bound by (Kaplan, Adolescence 189). She must be able to gain independence and realize what rules are negotiable in order to make decisions independently.

Even with the short time spent in HAP with participant B, we could see that she knew she would follow the rules in order to respect the other girls. She knew she would never use her phone to capture private information of the other girls. Even though she said she did not like rules, she still followed them. But she had to be the one to figure that out and she would not let other’s do it for her. She was independent, defiant and gracious at the same time. When asked if she wanted to add anything she said, “Why would I want to add more rules?” (Participant B: Winter 2018).

As she continued to demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the idea of the group rules, I mentioned that perhaps we can all agree to change the title of the activity to something less rule based and proposed changing the activity name to “Shared Group Environment.” This way the girls could think less about creating rules, and instead they chose what kind of environment they wanted to create for themselves.

Once she realized that HAP was not a ruled-based environment, she was able to “reframe” her outlook, mood, and openness with the other participants. Gold notes that “reframing” is used to describe “what happens when someone learns to think about some person, situation, or problem differently” (Gold 40). Participant B was able to “reframe” her outlook on HAP’s structure once she realized it was not a rule-based space. Finding an equal balance of
freedom and rules can be a seemingly impossible task for those who interact with adolescents. Though many adolescents seem to disfavor rules and constraints, lack of structure in an environment can cause a child to seek cult-like structure in order to feel a sense of order (Gold 50). As with anything, too many rules constrict growth and freedom and too little rules can be overwhelming. As rules are needed in places like at home and school, it is in most cases beneficial for adolescents. Though if these environments are off-balance in an individual’s public and private life, there can be some issues with the idea of rules. Participant B’s refusal to follow predetermined rules may be the result of not having rules growing up or an extremely fluctuating experience with rules in previous foster homes. This imbalance mixed with her experience with too many constraints at school can confuse her judgement on when and how rules work. HAP’s middle ground approach on rules and freedom allows her to realize that rules are chosen by the group, for the group in order to create a safe space for the participants.

As control is active and constraint is passive, someone who may have lived in a passive environment or felt passive can have a need for active control over other parts in her life. Participant B’s use of color, theme and metaphors in the beginning of HAP activities reveal a need to be in control. Her way of resistance is to oppose in order to feel like she is in active control. Through art and the realization that the environment of HAP does not seek to constrain her, she relieves the feelings of constraint. Her distaste for glitter and color proved to be a conscious effort to oppose anything that society associates with bright, happy and positive. Since she uses dark colors as metaphors for her feelings, she uses them to oppose any feelings of happiness in her art. Throughout group, she began only communicating verbally when asked a question. She opposed many of the activities, claiming that she did not want to participate. She complained about how adults often told her that she did not listen but that she did not care.
Fortunately, when we started the second activity called “Warm Fuzzies,” where participants decorated envelopes and clothes pins with things that they liked to represent them, she began to show interest. As the other girls worked on their envelopes, she decided to join. She remarked that she did not want to use the glitter or coloured pencils and asked if we had a “Sharpie” for her as she pushed the glitter away from her: “I don’t like glitter. Glitter makes me sick” (Participant B: Winter 2018). Repeatedly during group, she characterized herself in relation to dark colors as she referred to herself as cold and dark. Her opposition to colours and glitter and her need to identify herself as “dark” to the group demonstrates her need to identify herself as rebellious.

During the third activity “Me as a Tree,” participants were asked to draw themselves as a tree (Appendix C). At first, she did not want to participate, but once she saw the other girls creating their trees, she decided to join and finished her drawing very quickly. She used only black markers to draw a Halloween like tree and described how she only used black in her art:

**Participant B:** “It’s a tree in the winter time. Because the winter is the coldest time of the year. Dark like my soul [laughter from other girls].”

**Facilitator:** “Is that how you see yourself? Where it takes a while to warm up to people, to trust people?”

**Participant B:** “Sometimes.”

**Facilitator:** “It looks really complicated. Do you see that as being something as you represent yourself as?”

**Participant B:** “Yah, I’m complicated.” (HAP Winter 2018).

As another participant was using a lot of glitter in her art, participant B decided to try some glitter for the first time. Once she added some onto her drawing, she smiled and then put some all over her hands. At the end of the activity, a facilitator asked her if there was anything she liked or learned from the activity, she responded, “That I actually do like glitter” (Participant B: Winter 2018). The change was interesting. Clearly, she associated her ODD with dark colors in
order to demonstrate her opposition to authority. We got this conclusion by noting her attitude and use of color throughout HAP. Golomb notes that older children pay closer attention to the art supplies or mediums and to the cultural conventions of color in their works (131). The use of color for adolescents and adults are not used idiosyncratically but thoughtfully. Once she felt comfortable in the HAP environment and realized that it was not a place of imposed rules and that we were accepting of her use of darkness, she began to connect with the other girls, laugh and create with styles and tools she did not consider before. In an environment where she feels less pressure to uphold her defiance, she realizes that she enjoys more freedom to create.

As is the case for many defiant adolescents, defiance is developed as a cover up for their vulnerable interiors. When someone acts cold purposefully (such as Participant B), it is known in archetypal psychology as a state of being void of feeling: “There are stories of the frozen child, the child who could not feel, the corpse frozen in the ice, during which time nothing could move, nothing could become, nothing could be born” (Estes 182). In order to protect oneself from hurting, sometimes it is easier to not feel at all. However, without feeling there is limited creativity or ability to cope. She seems safe for now, as she avoids feelings of pain, but the avoidance can be dangerous because she can become lost in a void with no feelings of happiness or hope. Based on my observations, participant B attempted to reject the group to remain in her coldness. When creativity was encouraged, she moved away from her frozen state. In the process of being frozen emotionally, she is not only ceasing connections with her outer world but also with her inner self. She purposefully disconnects herself from growth by keeping her past frozen: “While it is a self-protective mechanism, it is hard on the soul-psyche, for the soul does not respond to iciness, but rather warmth. An icy attitude will put out a woman’s creative fire” (Estes 182).
Often times, children are taught to hide their emotions from their parents, whether it is pain, anger, sadness or confusion. Supressing too many emotions for long periods of time can cause a child to become fearful of revising past experiences. It is easier at times to avoid feeling altogether in order to bury any possibilities of digging them back up. Based on my observations, participant B is undergoing the defense process referred to as dissociation. This process threatens ideas/feelings that have become separated from other parts of the psyche. Painful memories become “frozen” in time and causes a disconnect from consciousness. This conscious disconnect/dissociation can be re-connected neurologically when an individual reexperiences the painful memories which causes them to remember and deal with them (Doidge 232-233).

Psychologist and psychoanalyst Norman Doidge explains that dissociation is a natural process that our brain’s use to cope with traumatic situations. He notes that we all have different ways to cope with painful feelings: "We all have defense mechanisms, really reaction patterns, that hide unbearably painful ideas, feelings, and memories from conscious awareness" (Doidge 232). Therefore, dissociation occurs when a traumatic experience causes our neuronal groups encoding our memories to disconnect the painful memory, making them now unconscious until we re-visit them (Doidge 233). Her ODD is a symptom from her struggles with family and authority figures. Her defense mechanism against those who originally hurt her has caused her to resent everyone. Her ODD is against the foster care system. It hides painful memories that are too painful to relive. This numbing of feelings can attribute to the way she refers to her soul as “cold” and “dark.”

As psychoanalysis is used to understand the human psyche, an essential part of understanding the psyche can also be attained via neuroplasticity. Doidge explains that even before brain scans of the orbitofrontal cortex existed, psychoanalysts observed patterns and
characteristics of children who were separated from their mothers in the early critical period. As these children were found to be in a "paralytic" state where the infants were not able to control their emotions and entered a "turned-off" state causing them to become unresponsive to people who tried to show affection towards them. He found that this "paralytic" state can occur in adulthood. Through his observations with one of his patients, he was able to discover that the human brain can register traumatic early experiences via memory (Doidge 228). Doidge’s combination of psychoanalysis and neuroscience allowed him to further understand how the brain deals with trauma. His book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, is a breakthrough in neuroscience and changes old notions that the brain is fixed and unchangeable. Doidge’s work explains that through neuroplasticity, the human brain can in fact change itself. Doidge notes that people who are traumatized in their first three years usually have very little to no memories of the trauma they experienced. However, even if the individual does not remember, procedural/implicit memories for these traumas still exist in the brain and can be triggered when faced with a similar traumatic situation. This retention of memories explains why a traumatic experience can resurface in adulthood (Doidge 229). With neuroscience, psychoanalysts are able to help patients bring their unconscious memories into a context which makes the memory conscious: "In the process they plastically retranscribe these procedural memories, so that they become conscious explicit memories" (229). With psychoanalysis and neuroscience, Doidge is able to understand why people act the way they do as a result of trauma.

Doidge has studied a patient referred to as Mr. L who had suppressed the loss of his mother until his adulthood. This loss in his mind has affected not only his romantic/personal relationships but also his sleep and personality. Mr. L has commitment issues that causes him to push away those who want to help him: "I want to be consoled for my pains and losses, yet don't
come too close to console me. I want to be alone in my sullen misery. Which you can't understand, because I can't understand. It is a grief that is too big" (Doidge 234). His past trauma causes him to lose sense of himself and isolates him from relationships until late adulthood. Since he suppresses a painful memory for such a long period of time, Mr. L changes his neuroplasticity. Doidge explains that due to Mr. L's early loss of his mother, Mr. L would reject consolation which contributed to his remoteness and disconnect in relationships. His coldness was used as a defense mechanism that was placed since childhood which helped him block off the trauma of his loss. Doidge found that in the repetition of this defense, the brain plastically changes itself which pronounces his character trait of remoteness. Therefore, because this trait is leaned through repetition, neuroplasticity shows that one is not born genetically predetermined with traits of remoteness but rather is plastically learned and must then be unlearned (235). Just like Mr. L, Participant B does not obtain her remoteness/ODD genetically, she learned through the act of repeating that defensive behavior over and over. A trauma from her past may have created an unconscious defense mechanism used to deal with a past trauma. Therefore, her need to break rules and oppose authority could be plastically learned which causes her to oppose unconsciously until she is made aware of this defense mechanism. The only way for one to change this learned defensiveness is to unlearn it by first becoming aware of it. Her repetitive behavior can provide clues on how to break this pattern. With psychoanalysis and neuroplasticity, participant B would need to undergo the process of “regression” at a neuronal level which precedes psychological reorganization (Doidge 235). Rather than staying in emotional denial of her traumas and losses, she needs to face them and feel them in order to move forward and love herself and others.
In the first session, she shared with us that her foster dad was so excited for her joining HAP that he waited downstairs until she finished the group. She was annoyed by his enthusiasm and the pressure to continue the group. This poses a dilemma for her because even if she likes the group, she doesn’t want to do what her father wants her to do. Her annoyance of her father and her need for opposition can be further understood by what Kaplan refers to as “removal.”

She notes that in order to shift from childhood to adulthood, a displacement of desire must occur. This displacement at adolescence is attached to incestuous desires which is directed away from the parents and is irreversible. This displacement is known as “removal.” In an effort to avoid incest taboo, adolescent’s use many strategies to aid in their “warfare” on desire including focusing their desires on non-familial relationships, leaving the nest and opposition towards parental authority (Kaplan, Adolescence 135-136). Participant B’s change from “love-desire” into hatred for her parents allows her to believe that she does not need to depend on her parents anymore, that she is able to be independent and take care of herself. This could potentially be more common with foster children due to their lack of stability and dependence from their birth parents. If she grows up struggling to get back the love she sees for her parents, her distrusts from them is then transferred onto her future caregivers: “With the reversal of love-desire into hatred and compulsive disobedience, nothing remains but hostility, suffering, and pain for all involved” (Kaplan, Adolescence 140). If hatred towards the parents becomes too much during the process of “removal,” it becomes even harder to transfer her love-desire even outside of the family and they risk negative consequences including delinquency and ongoing battles with desire (139).

According to Kaplan, in order for some adolescent girls to shift hatred onto their parents, they invent a narrative that the parents hate them. They then carry this notion onto society, creating an idea that the world is their persecutor and aims to oppress them. In some
cases, the girls turn to self-hatred and self-harm in order to reaffirm the notion of imposed hatred. Having noted different occasions of hospitalizations in the first HAP session, participant B is likely suffering from hatred of parental figures and herself. If one does not want to become like the parents, the girl is sometimes faced with ideas of suicide as a form of escape and self-preservation (Kaplan, *Adolescence* 140-141). As noted, rebellious behavior in adolescent girls, especially those in the foster care system, can be healthy and productive. In the case of participant B, she demonstrated a case of defiance that is less favourable for feminine growth and empowerment. Her nature is less wild in Estes’s sense of the term but more destructive. As she shut out feelings completely, she also shuts off creativity and personal self growth. Her opposition is working against herself rather than for herself. This perhaps explains why she dropped out of HAP after the first session.

Before HAP, the girls presented signs of “untransformed rage.” This type of rage is what Estes refers to as a way of living with pain and keeping oneself in a state of being wounded. Rather than keeping the pain in the past, they carry it into their future in a suitcase ready to explode at any given moment. Especially in cases of trauma, it is essential to deal with it as early as possible because, if it is left too long, it becomes much more difficult to revisit and heal. Estes compares past psychological trauma to physical post-trauma work. She explains that with a physical injury, the sooner it is dealt with, the sooner it can heal rather than leaving it broken which would cause disruption to other systems in the body. If psychological trauma is ignored, it becomes an “untransformed rage” (Estes 353). Similar to Estes’ approach to trauma, HAP teaches the girls to question their rage and in turn find causes and solutions to it via the practice of mindfulness. HAP allows the girls use “anger as a creative force” which Estes explains is a healthy way to redirect rage into a learning experience (Estes 354). They are able to use their
wild nature to access and revise their pasts in order to move onto the present/future. Defiance and opposition are spectacular tools that allow a woman to gain strength and independence, but she must use it wisely.

3.6 Art and Dream: To Drive Away the Ghosts of the Past

Both art and dreams serve as stimulators of the mind. Not only do they access creativity, but they also serve as effective forms of personal story and identity. Kaplan uses Paul Ricouer’s distinction between dreams and art as a looking glass for the past: “Infancy is the realm conveyed to us in dreams which look backward to the past” (Kaplan, Adolescence 108). Hence both dreams and art are used as a vessel for an adolescent to peer back into the ghosts from their childhood. As dreams are made of past memories and art is conceived from an individual’s memory bank, it is logical that they serve as manifestations of the past. For this reason, art produced from HAP is essential for understanding the girls’ relationships and feelings about their past. Dream is a reoccurring theme in the girls’ art throughout the 24 sessions. There are a couple of dream related activities in HAP that encourage the girls to keep a dream journal and discuss their dreams. Many girls have reported experiences with sleep paralysis, insomnia, déjà vu’s and reoccurring dreams. Participant 2’s experience with sleep paralysis and reoccurring animals seemed to plague her quite often:

I had sleep paralysis just last night. My eyes were wide opened and I couldn’t move. I was in full consciousness and I was like oh god, oh god, it was around three in the morning and I saw something in the corner of my eye and it was just scary, like blackness just walking by. It’s like when you’re lying there and someone’s face is over you and you’re like oh god. My heart was racing. I didn’t sleep (Participant 2: Winter HAP 2017).
In the session, she noted that this event of sleep paralysis happens regularly. She also explained that when this was happening, she always saw a large black figure in the corner of her eye or hovering directly above her. She drew animal figures that appeared in her dreams since childhood and she also expressed her fear of these animals. After having spent 24 weeks with this participant, I saw clearly that she wanted to remain disconnected with her aboriginal culture while simultaneously wanting to be proud of it. Her father seemed to be the source of her defiance against her Indigenous characters. She mentioned that her father plays an important role in advocating for the Indigenous in our community. Throughout HAP, she mentioned various disputes with her father and often depicted him as a monster. She expressed feeling misunderstood by him because of her interests and style, while he remained traditional in his beliefs. His expectations of traditions were placed onto her and caused her to oppose. Many parents are quick to place blame on teenage angst for their adolescents’ defiance, although, with further self-examination a parent can see they are the ones who are placing heavy burdens and expectations that can be debilitating for youth: “We had better tie them down, flagellate them, isolate them in the family cocoon, carve their bodies into our kind of manhood and womanhood, indoctrinate them into the tribal laws and make sure they kneel before the power of the elders” (Kaplan, *Adolescence* 116). This struggle of upholding traditions often causes tension between a parent and their maturing adolescent. Having once been the apple of their eyes in childhood, the parents have now become enemies rather than allies.
In examining figure 21, we can further understand her connection to her Indigenous culture as well as the fear she feels from it by the controlling voice of her father. Let us begin with her discussion about this drawing: “It’s a big cat and this is a cross between a Siberian tiger, albino and an arctic wolf. It has like fire abilities and it has white fur with a fiery pattern on it, and his eyes are purple and he has a white glow like a wolf. I’ve seen this thing since I was a kid. I just feel paralyzed like sleep paralysis when I see this thing” (Participant 2: Winter HAP 2017). The response she has to her re-creation, discussion and interpretation of her dream in the drawing can provide us with hints about her feelings. In her own explanation, her tone was soft, low, and almost shook. The same occurred in the discussion of anime and in the discussion of the meaning of their drawings. As previously mentioned, Participant 1 would show excitement in her tone and mood when discussing anime. Leeuwen and Jewitt note that analysts observe how a patient reacts to an interpretation to receive cues about how they may feel about it. They explain that interpreting drawings in child psychoanalysis is not only about the drawing, but rather the process and interaction that the child has while creating and sharing it. The child’s use of materials and their freedom to create is part of their communication. Therefore, her delivery of her discussion about her drawing contributes in a symbolic way. Her reservation through the tone of her voice accompanies the symbols of fear from her dream and drawing. They further explain that children express themselves in a
symbolic way that uses the same archaic and primary process that we use in dreams. Both archaic and primary process are used to express an individual’s fantasies, wishes and experiences through dreams, art, and play. They argue that we can only understand their symbolic language if we understand how to interpret dreams (Leeuwen & Jewitt 121-122). Simply paying attention to the delivery of communication of a drawing/story/dream can contribute ample information for looking into the participant’s past. Leeuwen and Jewitt note that in dreams, we do not isolate symbols, therefore we cannot isolate single symbols for the interpretation of drawings. There must be attention directed to chain associations and context of the dreamer and artist. One figure is not necessarily tied to one meaning, it is always possible that there are multiple meanings to one symbol for the individual (Leeuwen & Jewitt 122). By examining participant 2’s drawing in a similar way as we would her dream, we can observe that there are multiple meanings to her drawing. Her interaction with the drawing reiterated her feelings of fear about the drawing of her frightening dream. Colours and elements in the drawing work together to make coherent the overall meaning and source of her drawing and dream. Dark colours used for the dark figure and tiger include red, black and orange and are accompanied by a moon as a symbol for the night. Since she only sees these figures in her dreams, the moon and dark colours hint at where she battles with this monster/creature. Her interaction with the drawing, use of elements and colours all work together symbolically to make meaning. The context of her conflicts with her Indigenous identity and issues with her father from past HAP sessions act as symbols in the drawing as well. By contextualizing and pairing symbols rather than isolating them, I was able to gain more insights and multiple meanings in her drawing and discussion of it.

Having established that the analysis of drawings depends on similar strategies used to interpret dreams, we can gain more insight about the girls’ context via their experience and
patterns with dreams. As noted earlier using Kaplan’s term of “removal,” I explained how a participant from HAP exhibited “unconscious warfare” against her love-desire through opposition, disconnect from her parents and self-hatred. Similar to Participant B, many HAP participants from the repeat session dealt with “removal” using similar patterns of behaviour. Kaplan notes that the process of “removal” of desires often takes form through the refusal to eat, sleep, lack of care for the body, interest in body modification, obsessions with one’s reflection and removing body hair (Kaplan, Adolescence 136). Many of the girls encompassed at least one or many of these features of “removal” of desire. Many reported hospitalizations for cutting, had piercings, bold hair colors, would draw on their bodies and faces during HAP to resemble tattoos, over or underrate, and had issues with insomnia/night terrors. Even though participant 2 shares issues regarding her Indigenous identity, struggles with her father, insomnia and night terrors, I can only interpret so much based on what she chose to share. Leeuwen and Jewitt argue that there are more limitations to understanding verbal communication rather than symbolic communication via other mediums: “Pictures, drawings and metaphors show a person’s emotional state of mind much better than verbal definitions or descriptions” (Leeuwen & Jewitt 119).

According to Leeuwen and Jewitt, we can gain more insight into an individual’s state of mind through drawings and dreams. With only verbal communication from participant 2 about her drawing, I am limited strictly to what she knows consciously, whereas, with dream interpretation, I can link her context to a chain of symbol’s that are unconsciously interconnected.

By interpreting the participants drawing using dream interpretation processes paired with dream content from her reoccurring dream, more symbols can be revealed. Leeuwen and Jewitt use Freud’s topographical model from his 1900 publication the Interpretation of Dreams in their
psychoanalytical interpretations of children’s drawings. They use a psychoanalytical approach that considers drawings as expressions of the unconscious. In order to understand how drawings are expressions of our unconscious alongside dreams with the use of similar process, we must first understand dream-work and its process. In Freud's explanation of dream-work, he notes the importance of "latent" dream content. Rather than developing a solution of the dream from manifest content which is retained in the memory, it is through latent content that we can obtain an interpretation of the dream. Even though dream thoughts and dream content are representations of the same meaning, Freud explains that they are in two different languages where "the dream content appears to us as a translation of the dream thoughts into another form of expression, whose signs and laws of composition we are to learn by comparing the original with the translation" (Freud 260). The dream thoughts can become comprehensible once we are presented with the dream content. This dream content is presented in "picture-writing" and those signs can be translated into the language of dream thoughts. As sometimes our dreams appear to be nonsensical, with proper interpretation and attention, the meaning and representations in the dreams are no longer meaningless. When comparing dream thoughts with dream content, investigators have found that condensation occurs. He elaborates that the range of content in dream thoughts outnumber the dream.

As dream thoughts are seen as the complete material, with further interpretation new thoughts can be revealed that were not originally known to the dreamer. Therefore, though analysts may think they fully interpreted a dream, there is always more meaning left to be uncovered and "Thus the amount of condensation is-strictly speaking-indeterminable" (Freud 261). This is why when we awaken and recall having a dream, our recollection is only a small portion of the total "dream-work." As dream "condensation" attributes to the moulding of the
dream, so does dream "displacement." This second activity in dream-work is referred to as "displacement" and when this occurs, the dream content does no resemble the core of the dream "the dream reproduces only a disfigured form of the dream-wish in the unconscious" (Freud 286). Condensation is the part of the "primary psychic process" which is the first system followed by the secondary system referred to as the "secondary process." The primary process aims to discharge excitement which aids in establishing a "perception identity, whereas the secondary process abandons the excitement and instead brings "thought identity": "The state of thinking must take an interest in the connecting paths between the presentations without allowing itself to be mislead by their intensities" (Freud 477). Condensation that occurs in the presentations impedes the retrieval of end-identity in its substitution of one idea for another. Since condensation derails the path which contained the original idea, these processes are avoided in secondary thinking. He further explains that no psychic apparatus can possess only the primary process, it must be accompanied by the secondary process to then work together. The primary process is present from the beginning and the secondary process develops with time throughout our lives. As the secondary process develops, it covers the primary ones and gains control over time. Due to this process, our unconscious wish feelings cannot take control or be stopped by the foreconscious. It is instead restricted to the most suitable path for the wish feelings which originate in the unconscious: "In consequence of this retardation of the foreconscious occupation a large sphere of the memory material remains inaccessible" (Freud 479). The two psychic systems and their relation to consciousness offers an effective interpretation of the condition of their substitute. These functions belong to the normal structure of our psychic instrument and the dream is what helps us understand this structure. As mentioned, when we are awake, suppressed material is prevented from our perception "by the
antagonistic adjustment of the contradictions, finds ways and means of obtruding itself on consciousness during the night under the domination of the compromise formations" (Freud 482).

Therefore, Freud's interpretations of dreams is a road map to uncovering and understanding the unconscious in the psychic life. Using Freud's dream-work, I can gain further insights into participant 2's drawing of her dream. As it appears nonsensical to her, which is apparent in her description of the dream, this is the natural process of condensation. Dream displacement then occurs through the white tiger-wolf. This symbol pulls the dreamer away from the core of the dream by introducing something that appears unrelated. Her fear felt from the dream is masked by an unknown creature. This creature can be a disfigured form from her dream-wishes unconscious. Through the primary process, fear is substituted by the idea of the tiger-wolf creature as the secondary process. Since the tiger-wolf with fire abilities is part of a chain of symbols which contributes to a deeper context that is only apparent in the dream, we cannot simply use the tiger-wolf to understand the entire dream. The fire from the tiger can represent rage and the albino characteristic of the tiger can be a symbol of innocence and purity placing the tiger as participant 2. This symbol paired with her response and approach to her drawing adds to the interpretation.

Leeuwen and Jewitt present Freud’s model of the mind in a more simplified way. They explain the primary process as the pleasure principle and the secondary process as the reality principle. Since Freud notes that dreams use visual thought processes that are expressed via images compared to when we are awake, we think with concepts, they argue that with imaginative and creative products including drawings, instinctual wish-fulfillment can be permitted (Leeuwen & Jewitt 121). Through play and game which includes the creation of art,
children express their fantasies and wishes in a symbolic way: “It uses an archaic, primary process, which we know from dream” (122). The way that drawing can provide insight into the unconscious in a similar way as we can through dream is the child’s response to the interpretation of the drawing which can be shown with relief or increased anxiety.

They further explain that what happens in a session between the analyst and a patient is a product of the immediate reality and the patient’s view of reality. Both these realities are derived from their unconscious fantasies which remain rooted in their history. The projection and transference of a patient onto the analyst is key to gaining insights into the patient’s unconscious: “The analyst observes how the patient reacts to an interpretation. Does he or she ignore it or show relief or anxiety, feel criticized or turn away from the topic altogether to avoid painful feelings?” (Leeuwen & Jewitt 122). Therefore, using both Freud and Leeuwen and Jewitt’s insights on the interpretations of dreams and drawings allows for a clearer interpretation of figure 21. Her reaction to the dream activity with a fearful tone and confusion about what it represents provides us with another link to the unconscious behind the drawing and dream providing me with a hint that she is fearful of her reoccurring dream because it still revisits her since it has not yet been dealt with. The symbols which make up her dreams are hints and a map to her unconscious but she is missing the language to translate them. With further analysis on the drawing or her dream, we will see that her reaction to it mirrors issues that she struggles with throughout HAP. Her negative reaction to the anime activity and toward me also demonstrates and reaffirms that through the analysis of drawings and dreams, we can indeed gain insight into the unconscious through symbols and reactions in the interpretation.

Another key element from participant 2’s dream is that it is a reoccurring one. Doidge explains that reoccurring dreams maintain the same structure through neurological plastic
change. Since she has not yet dealt with the trauma from her unconscious, her dream haunts her continuously: "Patients are often haunted by recurring dreams of their traumas and awaken in terror. As long as they remain ill, these dreams don't change their basic structure" (Doidge 238). This constant reoccurring element which takes form as the dream is trauma from the neural network. Reoccurring dreams contain persistence of reactivation if there is no change or re-transcription of the trauma. When we dream, brain scans show that the part of the brain that processes emotions, sexuality, survival and even aggressive instincts are much more active than the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for inhibiting emotions and instincts: "With instincts turned up and inhibitions turned down, the dreaming brain can reveal impulses that are normally blocked from awareness" (Doidge 239). Similar to participant 2 who describes her recurring dream of the albino tiger and dark man, Doidge’s patient Mr. L also suffered from a reoccurring dream which was probing him through his unconscious to make way into his consciousness. Perhaps a suppressed memory is attempting to make its way through to Participant 2 in order to resolve it sooner rather than later like Mr. L. One of Doidge's patients reported having reoccurring dreams and sleep paralysis throughout his life. What Doidge uncovered was the meaning and reason behind his patients dreams. Even though the patient did not understand his own dream at the time, his dream demonstrated signs of searching for something which was representative of an unconscious memory/trauma that he suppressed. The symbol inside his reoccurring dream was a clue that his present issues and suffering were tied to childhood loses. When this happens, the past and present become intertwined and activates transference (Doidge 230).

Estes notes the importance of what is referred to as the “injured-animal dream.” In this dream, there is an animal who is injured that signals the dreamer about her environment. This
dream can symbolize the deterioration of nature or even “deep lacerations in the collective unconscious regarding the loss of the instinctual life” (Estes 275). The dream occurs if her culture is prohibiting her from her freedom and self-fulfillment. In the case of Participant 2’s drawing of her albino white tiger, the tiger symbolizes not an injured animal but also one who is fierce and even frightens her. Rather than her culture killing her, it is calling her forward. As she attempts to reject her Indigenous culture that is placed upon her by her father, her unconscious attachment to her spirituality and culture is trying to awaken inside her dream. The tiger is calling her to the wild, but it scares her.

Estes notes the importance of “The Dark Man in Women’s Dreams.” This dark man/figure plays a significant and symbolic role in women’s lives and emerges in integral moments: “There is a universal initiatory dream among women, one so common that it is remarkable if a woman has reached age twenty-five without having had such a dream” (Estes 62). Often times after awaking from the dark man dream, the dreamer will wake up with a rapid pulsing in her chest along with anxiety or fear. The response to the dream is usually very physical with signs of distress. She is often alone in this dream with the dark man figure that carries a dangerous and threatening presence. Estes notes that the dark man in women’s dreams can shape shift into various forms depending on the dreamers worries. As many women have reported having dreams of the dark man as thieves, rapists and other dangerous persons, participant 2 had hers as quite literally a dark man with no particular identity. Her dark man lurks and hovers around her bringing her fear with his black mysterious presence. He is less of a person and more of a shadowy monster, almost those that can be seen in films, television or anime. Regardless of what shape the dark man takes inside her dreams, it is urging her to realize and deal with a problem that she is facing. The dark man may even represent her super ego if she
is being too self-critical or stopping herself from doing something she loves. Estes argue that because of the visit from the dark man in her dream, she now knows that something must change. This fear in her encounter with the dark man provides her with courage and striving to face something in her life that she gave up on fighting against. Though she wakes up terrified, she awakens stronger and fiercer than she did before sleep (Estes 64). If one was to psychoanalytically interpret participant 2’s drawing and discussion of the black figure that revisits her since she was a little girl, we can use Estes’s analysis to see that this figure revisits in times of intervention in order to jolt her to face her fears. As participant 2 has noted a struggle with her father and often refers to him as mean and cold, this dark man may represent him as much as her own super ego. Gaining the courage to fight back and defend herself in verbal disputes, she learned to overcome her fear.

Another interpretation of the dark man can be a warning that something is wrong on a social-cultural level. As participant 2 has noted feelings of anger and isolation from Western society, the dark figure may personify her anger. She expressed feeling proud of her Indigeneity as well as resentment towards it, the dark figure embodies this contradiction. The dark figure is terrifying, however, also causes the dreamer to realize an issue that is causing mental harm. By drawing attention to the issue, the dark figure scares and helps the dreamer simultaneously. The dark figured man represents her contradicting feelings about her culture. Her case has a dual context and meaning because she has struggles not only in her family life but cultural family as well. Estes notes the importance that culture plays in an individuals’ life because: “(…) culture is the family of the family” (64). Therefore, when a family’s culture dealt with heartaches and tribulations, it is likely that the next generation will also feel that pain. This is especially true to the Indigenous people because the older generations had to fight so many battles against
colonization and cultural cleansing. With a deteriorating culture for example, the Mohave peoples once power-giving dreams began deteriorating and some even ceased to continue at all (Bulkeley 28). Both external and cultural forces affect how one experiences dreams. One may now understand why culture is so important to participant 2’s father and why he tries so hard to share his cultural pride with his daughter. However, because of her fragile relationship with her father and feelings of isolation in the Western culture, she has yet used her own culture to cure her struggles. Ironically, she finds Japanese anime culture as a form of expression. By doing so, she seeks rebellion through Japanese culture.

Women who remain connected to their instinctual nature and roots have less sleep paralysis than those who are disconnected from their culture/selves (Estes 65). Estes’ theory may explain why participant 2 has reoccurring sleep paralysis; the sleep problem may associate with her disconnectedness of her Indigenous culture as she seeks to replace her culture with Japanese culture. Therefore, if she aims to disconnect herself for her Indigenous or Western culture, she will also disconnect herself with that society: “Culture is the transitional space that brings the individual and society together” (Bulkeley 51). Her mind, body and soul are all aware of the suppression of her culture for the wrong reasons, and this manifests in her sleep/dream patterns. Though these dreams of the dark man and experiences with sleep paralysis can be terrifying, they are the body’s signals that warn and motivate: “The dark man dream is a scary dream, and scary dreams are most often very good for creativity (…) At the very least, she can create work which elucidates the dark man in her own dreams. Many associate bad experiences or bad dreams with complete negativity, although one might be surprised to learn that frightening dreams are fuel for creativity” (Estes 66). Likewise, participant 2’s dark man motivated her artworks. Even if she expressed fear of these figures, she drew it from her dreams. Her lack of understanding of the
Dark Man dream reinforces Bulkeley’s theory: “Most dreams are groping to understand problems that cannot yet be adequately grasped” (Bulkeley 65). The same is true for life experiences. Using an arts-based approach can open our mind to embrace negativity, as many negative experiences are transformed into therapeutic works of art for the girls. Without negativity, there would be no creativity or personal growth.

3.7 Negativity Turned Creativity

HAP’s effectiveness for improving resiliency through arts-based methods and mindfulness demonstrates how youth in foster care are able to evolve positively from a negative starting point. Kazimiers Dabrowski’s psychoanalytical theory of *positive disintegration* views disharmonies and struggles as positive building blocks for personality development. He proposes that without these disharmonies, personality cannot evolve healthily. Positive disintegration of an individual allows creativity to flourish and in turn stimulate a healthy growth in intelligence and personality. Dabrowski describes positive disintegration as “disharmony within the individual and in his adaptation to the external environment.” (Dabrowski 3). He suggests, “Anxiety, psychoneurosis, and psychosis are symptoms of disintegration” (3). By “disintegration,” he refers to its opposing term “integration.” As integration denotes evolution, mental health, and adaptation of the inner and outer self, disintegration refers to an “involution” and regression of a lower psychological functioning of one’s self and environment. He explains, “The term *disintegration* is used to refer to a broad range of processes, from emotional disharmony to the complete fragmentation of the personality structure, all of which are usually regarded as negative” (Dabrowski 5). Drabrowski theorizes that disintegration is a natural developmental instinct where humans can evolve from being in a lower level of personality to a higher one. Disintegration of the primitive structures disrupts the psychological structure. Through the
disintegration of the primitive structure, we develop feelings and empathy. With only primitive
instincts, humans would not evolve but rather remain stagnant and act on basic urges and
instincts (Dabrowski 3). Someone who has undergone a trauma can develop their personality to a
higher degree than someone who has not. Dabrowski believes that with disintegration one can
further develop a secondary integration at a higher level. Those who conform to society and do
as authority figures say act on primitive impulses and therefore carry low disintegration. Not
having the urge to question and oppose predetermined rules can become detrimental to the
development and change in society (Dabrowski 5). Those who oppose existing implementations
can create positive disintegration in society.

Dabrowski notes how essential it is for educators and psychiatrists to understand the
power of positive disintegration. He states that positive disintegration allows for an awareness of
difficulties and learning disabilities and leads to respect between the patient and the psychiatrist.
Positive disintegration shifts the view of what is ‘normal’ and ‘illness’ to the needs and
potentials of the “patient.” This positivist view on mental health is relevant to HAP’s holistic
approach because it focuses on creativity as a driving factor for healing and personal growth.
HAP engages what Dabrowski appreciates in puberty: “Loosening of structure occurs
particularly during the period of puberty and in states of nervousness, such as emotional,
psychomotor, sensory, imaginative, and intellectual overexcitability” (Dabrowski
6). Adolescence is an integral period in an individuals’ life where disintegration is more active
because children have greater brain plasticity. Effects of positive disintegration include enhanced
creativity, magical thinking, difficulty in concentration, mood swings and overexcitability:
“During periods of developmental crises (such as the age of opposition and especially puberty)
there are many more symptoms of disintegration than at other times of life” (Dabrowski 18). Not
only are the girls from HAP more apt to positive disintegration due to their age of adolescence, but they are also affected by external stresses by the foster care system.

At first glance, especially to authority figures opposition, distress and bad behavior in adolescents are marked as problems rather than as positive disintegration. However, crises and distress are intrinsic to periods of personal growth, especially in younger adults: “Crises are periods of increased insight into oneself, creativity, and personality development” (Dabrowski 18). It is important to recognize the line separating two types of disintegration. If consciousness, self-consciousness, and self-control, capacity of mental transformation, and creativity are active in the individuals’ disintegration process, then it is marked as positive (19). Nevertheless, disintegration is not always positive. In order for disintegration to be positive, an individual must assist and strive for growth. Creativity must be celebrated rather than shunned: “Disintegration is described as positive when it enriches life, enlarges the horizon, and brings forth creativity; it is negative when it neither has developmental effects or causes involution” (Dabrowski 10). As discussed, the girls from HAP demonstrate positive disintegration. They take active roles in seeking girl culture and community through anime and its otaku. They take their negative familial experiences and transfer them to create and search for a new cultural family that encourages their creative urges. The HAP girls also celebrate their creativity and use it to revise their pasts in order to create positive futures. They go beyond their primitive instinct through opposition and defiance. They are not afraid to question a system that is broken.

The HAP girls’ reluctance to my anime activity makes me realize their adaptation of rebellious anime themes to express their distrust in the foster care system and authority figures. Since HAP provides the girls with mindfulness techniques through arts-based methods to deal with issues of focus, trauma and mental health, they show positive signs of development in
mindfulness so much so that they request to repeat the group for another 12 weeks. Their participation and growth in HAP demonstrate the potential to grow from negativity. Their pre-hap personality structures are “destroyed” and “replaced” by a reconstructed personality that is able to function at a higher level. This is apparent in their management of stress, anxiety and temperaments. The girls learn and apply therapeutic devices to themselves with the assistance of HAP and creativity. Each girl before HAP were recruited based on their involvement with creativity and experiences in the foster system. This correlation between all HAP participants are not coincidental. It is clear that their negative experiences influence and shape their creativity which assist in their healing.

The HAP girls’ reconstruction of their personality via positive disintegration can be further understood with the neuroplasticity of the brain. Doidge’s work on neuroplasticity explains that without re-visitation of trauma paired with high levels of stress can lead to memory loss. Some patients forget periods of their lives such as adolescence due to the shrinking of the hippocampus. This shrinking of the hippocampus is caused by childhood trauma that leads to super sensitization which alters the plasticity of the brain neurons that regulate what are known as glucocorticoids: "Depression, high stress, and childhood trauma all release glucocorticoids and kill cells in the hippocampus, leading to memory loss" (Doidge 241). Studies have shown that the longer an individual is depressed, the smaller their hippocampus becomes which causes memory loss. It is effective for programs such as HAP to provide creative activities that stimulate the use of identification and re-visitation to avoid further stress that can lead to memory loss of an important stage of life. As all the girls from HAP have undergone childhood traumas, extreme grief that led to depression, anxiety and learning disabilities, it is essential for children/adolescents to have a place such as HAP that stimulates their creativity in order to
access past memories which improve the brain’s retention of new ones. Once they have the tools such as art and HAP, they can revisit and begin to question reoccurring dreams, themes, sleep paralysis, lack of sleep and childhood traumas. Brains literally change due to traumas and depression therefore it is essential to find ways to re access and change its plasticity: "If the stress is brief, this decrease in size is temporary. If it is too prolonged, the damage is permanent" (Doidge 241). In events of depression recovery, memories are known to return and even cause growth in the hippocampus.

Even if they aren’t aware of their progress during HAP, it is apparent in their creation and interaction with their art. Cross-cultural uses of media, culture and therapy allows an individual to avoid repetition. Doidge notes that those who succumb to unvaried repetition of their job, culture and even skills can lead to rigidity in the brain and this is due to neuroplasticity (242). It is for these reasons that cross-cultural exploration allows for not only an escape into a world that suits the girls but also provides a therapeutic divide through identification, and spontaneity. This spontaneity and re-learning of a new way of living and thinking allows neuroplasticity to become more flexible rather than ridged, allowing for more change to occur in the brain. The girls' rebellious attraction to cross-cultural themes from anime allowed them to neurologically re-access and find different paths to deal with their past traumas and issues.

3.8 Conclusion

“Howver, in saying farewell to childhood, some adolescents are on their way to becoming adults more concerned with expanding the boundaries of human existence than with preserving the social order as it is” (Kaplan, Adolescence 144).
My anime art activity for the girls in HAP has given new insights on how being “bad” can be “good.” The foster girls’ defiance and opposition to mainstream Western culture cause them to resist conformity and find a place where they belong creatively. They find a path towards well being through a cross-cultural exchange. Their reluctance to participate my activity makes me realize the importance of respecting their cultural space and secret language built upon their shared passion for anime. I gain new understanding as to how, why and when anime is used in their art so as to turn the cross-cultural experience into a therapeutic process. Arts-based methods paired with cross-cultural therapy and rebellion allows for improved resiliency and growth for youth who feel outcasted. Since girls are often misunderstood and under-represented, their marginalization, trauma and rebellion are able to transform through anime into an effective therapeutic act. As the HAP program is built on healing through art, the girls learn the necessary tools to revisit, revise and move forward from their pasts. Artistic creativity brings these two groups together. With their increased resiliency and mindfulness gained from HAP’s arts-based methods paired with anime as a cross-cultural therapy, the girls leave HAP with the tools necessary to transform their pre-HAP impulsive rebellious behavior into positive identity formations for growth and change.

“If you have ever been called defiant, incorrigible, forward, cunning, insurgent, unruly, rebellious, you’re on the right track. Wild Woman is close by” (Estes 196).
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Appendices

The HAP Map: A Conceptual Diagram

Program Goals

1. Teaching and facilitating mindfulness skills and concepts in accessible, relevant and meaningful ways
2. Improving self-awareness and understanding/expression of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors
3. Developing self-compassion and empathy
4. Recognizing and shoring up strengths

These objectives lead to the development of other abilities and skills such as improved mood and coping/social skills, better emotion regulation and self-esteem, and more effective performance at school.

Appendix A: Conceptual HAP Map
Appendix B: HAP Session Structure
Appendix C: 'Me as a Tree' HAP Activity

ME AS A TREE

PURPOSE
Me as a tree helps people symbolize themselves as a tree. This is a good "get to know you" activity.

HOW TO
1. Participants are asked to draw themselves as a tree.
2. Participants are encouraged to share their tree and how it represents who they are.

LEARNING
Everyone can draw a tree, but everyone's trees will always be different and unique. This helps to understand how diversity is important.

THE EXPERIENCE
"Me as a tree shows people that it's okay to be different."
"Me as a tree lets me have fun with who I am."

"Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP)" www.dianacoholic.com