Participant Information Sheet

Study title

Identifying and Formalising Features of Comics

Version number and date

Version 1.0: 10.26.2021

Researcher's name

Lauren Edlin, supervised by Dr. Joshua Reiss

Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee reference number:

[Insert reference number allocated to your study by the Research Ethics Facilitators]

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to participate in a research study where you will be asked to read and annotation some comics pages. Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please feel free to ask us questions if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participant requires no reason, and consent to participate can be revoked at any time.

What is the purpose of the study and what would taking part involve?

The purpose of this study is to assess how people identify features, such as panels, characters and backgrounds, across narrative comics. This is to help us look for patterns in the layouts of comic stories, and see if there are similarities and differences in how different genres of comics use space across the comics pages. In order to look for these patterns we first must create a corpus, or a large set, of comics pages that are annotated to show where the main elements of comics (e.g. panels, speech bubbles, characters) are drawn on the page. Therefore, this particular step of the study requires participants to (remotely) annotate, or "mark up", these elements on comic pages using a bespoke online tool that was developed specifically for this task. If the participants agree on what features they see on the page,

then we can continue to annotate comic pages with confidence that our dataset is well formed.

You will be given access to an online tool that will prompt you draw outlines around areas on a comic page that depict animate beings on comics pages. The instructions for exactly how to annotate the comics will be provided within the online annotation tool itself. You will be given 5 pages to annotate, plus a small survey that asks you about your comics reading habits. The entire study, including reading this page and the annotation instructions, takes about 35-40 minutes to complete. You will not need to meet with the investigator in person as the study is entirely remote, and can be done at your convenience.

The annotations and survey data will be collected by an online database, and immediately downloaded from the investigator after the annotation task is completed. This data will then be anonymised and stored on an encrypted hard drive.

Why am I being invited?

You are being invited to participate in this study because English is your first or second language, and you are over the age of 18. You should not take part in this study if you have a significant visual impairment that prevents you from perceiving and indicating images on a computer screen.

Do I have to take part?

This participant information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part in this study. It is completely up to you whether you wish to take part. If you decide to take part you will be free to withdraw at any time without needing to provide a reason, and with no penalties or detrimental effects.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

This research benefits the wider research community by gaining knowledge in how comics are created and why certain aspects of comics are combined in certain ways. This knowledge is a small step in learning about visual communication through markings, which could shed light into cognitive processes and also be used to create tools that can generate comics.

Also, participating in this research also gives you an opportunity to read some interesting comics!

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is potential risk is having a negative response to a comic story due to its content. The comics chosen for annotation are read through and screened for anything that could potentially be objectionable. Most of the comics are short, self-contained sci-fi and fantasy stories. If you are uncomfortable with any of the comics you read, you may withdraw immediately from the study with no detriment.

Expenses and payments

You will be paid £8.16/hr, which for 40 minutes of annotation is £5.44. This will be paid to you on Prolific using the regular protocols of Prolific.

What information about me will you be collecting?

In addition to the annotation task, you will be given a short survey with questions about your experience with reading and drawing comics. This survey will also ask you your age, gender, nationality, and first and second languages. No other personal information will be collected, and this information will be anonymised.

How will my data be stored and who will have access to it?

Your data will be stored in fully anonymised format on an encrypted MacBook hard drive, and only the primary researcher Lauren Edlin and supervisor Prof. Joshua Reiss will be able to access it.

When and how will my data be destroyed?

Your data will be stored for up to 5 years, which is in ordinance with Queen Mary's retention schedule. Your data will the destroyed through a complete re-formatting of the MacBook hard drive where the data will be stored.

How will my data be used and shared?

This anonymised data will be analysed with standard statistical methods and published in peer reviewed journals and conferences, as well as contributing to the overall PhD thesis. Any publications or presentations based on this data will include summary statistics and derived data rather than show the raw data (other than a few examples showing annotation markings on a page). The data will not be open access.

Under what legal basis are you collecting this information?

Queen Mary University of London processes personal data for research purposes in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task'.

Please read [Queen Mary's privacy notice for research participants](#) containing important information about your personal data and your rights in this respect. If you have any questions relating to data protection, please contact Queen Mary's Data Protection Officer, Queens' Building, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS or data-protection@qmul.ac.uk or 020 7882 7596.

What will happen if I want to withdraw from this study?

You may withdraw your participation in this study at any time without providing a reason. If you choose to withdraw during the study, your data will be destroyed if you prefer. Once you have finished or withdrawn from the study, you may ask to withdraw your data from the study within 3 months after you have completed the study. Keep in mind that after 3 months, your data will be used in an internal presentation in January 2021 and will also be included in a journal publication, and therefore cannot be retracted from these publications.

What should I do if I have any concerns about this study?

If you have any concerns about the manner in which the study was conducted, in the first instance, please contact the researcher(s) responsible for the study: Dr. Joshua Reiss (joshua.reiss@qmul.ac.uk). If you have a complaint which you feel you cannot discuss with

the researchers then you should contact the Research Ethics Facilitators by e-mail: research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Ethics Facilitators, please provide details of the study title, description of the study and QMERC reference number (where possible), the researcher(s) involved, and details of the complaint you wish to make.

Who can I contact if I have any questions about this study?

Prof. Joshua Reiss - joshua.reiss@qmul.ac.uk

Lauren Edlin - l.edlin@qmul.ac.uk